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CARAVANS
OF

MARS

Ed Andrews



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CARAVANS OF MARS





CARAVANS OF MARS

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Caravans of Mars

ALL ACROSS THE FACE of Mars, caravans follow the trace of dead canals carrying passengers and goods to the remote cities of the desert. **Caravans of Mars** provides extensive rules for running caravan journeys, background information on the Great Eastern Desert and its fierce nomadic inhabitants, and a complete adventure ideal for introducing players to this dangerous and colorful environment.

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Eastern Desert

THE EASTERN Desert is, as the British put it, a "godless span of red dunes and dust, and no rain cloud in sight." Known sometimes as the Aetheria/Elysium Wastes, the desert is flanked by steppe grasslands and arid hills, and the dry wind blowing across the sea of sand leeches the moisture from everything. Even though the Haiuk Canal vanished centuries before, some deep underground remnants farther to the west must supply that land with just the barest traces of water for the tall grasses of the steppes to flourish. The Eastern Desert, however, enjoys no such luxury; its surface is doomed to perpetual windstorms stirring bone-dry expanses of sand.

Despite its hardships, however, the Eastern Desert is home to a variety of native Martian species, although they are often widely dispersed. Sparse packs of scavenging roogies prey on the occasional gashant and ruumet breehr that wander in from the adjoining steppes. Even the mighty steppe tiger—lean and ferocious—can sometimes be found ek-

ing out its existence on an expansive domain of rock and sand.

The desert nomads, just like the land they live in, are hard people with few expectations from life. As with most hostile environments, the desert has given birth to a warrior race, and the nomads take pride in their fighting prowess and their difficult, demanding lives. They consider humans to be the softest of weaklings.

A branch of the Hill Martians, the desert nomads have a legacy all their own. The tribes have settled and claimed territories for themselves, thus creating something of a primitive feudal region. A number of "warlords" hold domain over a handful of tribes. Wars have broken out over territorial disputes, particularly between the three strongest warlords, but large-scale battles are very rare.

LEADERSHIP

THE INDIVIDUAL desert tribes are led by a lord, usually someone who has proven himself in battle and

in the hunt. Directly beneath him are three chiefs. The old chief is the lord's advisor and sage and is often a shaman. He is the eyes and ears of the lord in his absence, and he is often sought out for counsel by members of the tribe.

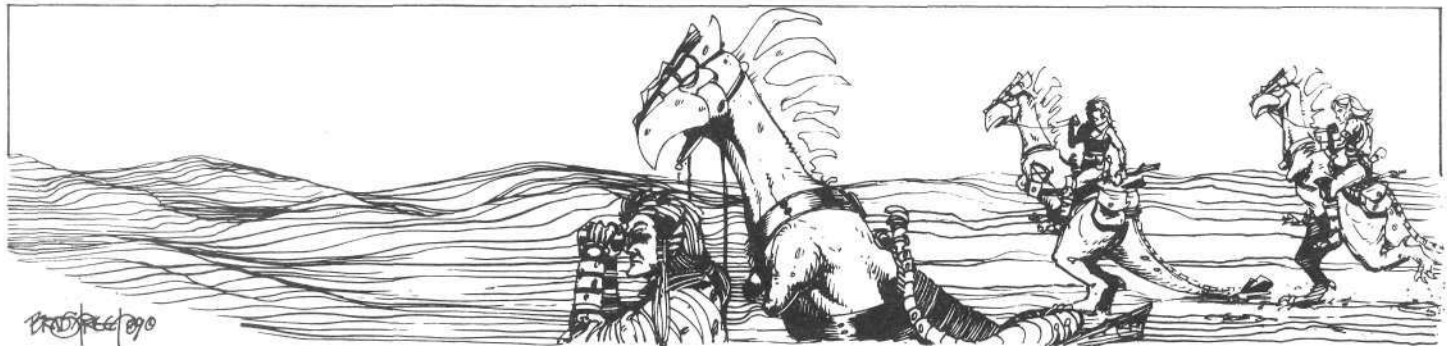
The war chief is the military strategist of the tribe. He plans the attacks, recruits the troops, and leads the army into battle—either alongside the lord or on his own. A war chief is chosen for his cunning and longevity in battle.

The hunt chief is solely responsible for food gathering. The young tribesmen he chooses are something of an elite group, as gathering food is considered the most important task in the tribe. The young Martians also use their position to prove themselves worthy as warriors. The hunt chief must weed out the young Martians who are old enough but too weak to be considered for positions as warriors and huntsmen.

COUNCIL

IT IS NOT unusual for the desert nomads to hold council once a month. The elders of the tribe—as well as the lord, war chief, hunt chief, old chief, and any shamans—will meet to discuss the business of their tribe. Decisions are made at these meetings, and the tribe is expected to heed the word of the tribal council.

Sometimes, if political pressure



dictates, lords and chiefs from several tribes will gather on neutral ground to iron out any problems they may have. These problems would include boundary disputes, courtship debates, and dealing with the "red

men" from Earth. If no resolution is achieved, the tribal leaders then decide whether they will just disagree on this issue or if it is worth going to battle over. If a battle is imminent, the leaders are allowed to break

council and return to their homes to plan battle strategy. Ironically, as ruthless as the desert nomads are in regard to the British, they have a staunch code of honor among themselves.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE DESERT NOMADS

Professor R. L. Forbes-Hamilton, The British Museum

TRUE RACIAL Hill Martians can be found all across Mars, including the broad, flat grasslands and prairies of the seabeds. The Hill Martians of the seabeds, however, generally speak dialects of the dominant Canal Martian language of the region. Culturally these hunters and gatherers have as much in common with the sedentary Canal Martians as they do with their wild nomadic brethren of the arid highlands and deserts. It is among those proud and fiercely independent Hill Martians of the uplands that genuine native languages, vigorous and rich with idioms, are to be found. Although our studies of these have, for all intents and purposes, scarcely begun, it is fair to say that there are four principal families of Hill Martian languages: Tempes, Alaanawaak, Moabite, and Rugoraant.

The first two of these can be quickly disposed of, as each consists of but a single language of the same name as the linguistic family. Tempes is spoken in the Tempe region, from the area around Medtis Palus and Ruumitia east to the western escarpment of the Mare Acidalium. Alaanawaak is the language of the aboriginal hunters of the southern polar cap, as well as the nomads of the broad, arid re-

gion lying between Electris and the Thaumasian Mountains.

The Moabite family of languages is more widely spoken and consists of three similar but distinct languages: Merovangian, Aerial, and Edenti. The first of these is the language of the fascinating Wagon Masters of Meroe, whose bands range as far west as Cydonia. Aerial is the language of the violent and insular tribesmen of the Aerial Hills, whose mastery of guerrilla warfare and ambush tactics has frustrated the efforts of both the Oenotrian and British empires to subdue them. Edenti is spoken by the predatory bands of desert wanderers who sparsely inhabit the desolate badlands that stretch from the western slopes of the Aerial Hills to the eastern foothills of the Chryse Mountains.

Most widespread of all the families of Hill Martian languages and richest from a cultural point of view is Rugoraant. It is spoken by the tall, handsome inhabitants of the north country from the Nepenthes-Thoth Steppe clear across to Tempe. Three distinct languages make up the family: Nepenthes, Aethani, and Amaash. The first is the language of the steppe nomads who inhabit the area between the Umbran-Syrta Grand Canal in the west and the Polodaar-Syrta Grand Canal in the

south and east. Amaash is spoken by the warlike tribes inhabiting the steppes and deserts of Amazonia, Mesogaea, Memnonia, and Arcadia, excepting only a few scattered bands in Amazonia which speak a pidgin of that old Arcadian tongue, Euxine. However, within the vast, sandy desert which stretches from Aetheria east to the foothills of the majestic Amazonian Mountains, the *lingua franca* among the desert nomads is Aethani.

As these desert nomads are closely related, racially and culturally, to their steppe nomad brothers to the west, it is not surprising that Aethani and Nepenthes are quite similar in grammatical structure, and they share a considerable number of words. For example, the Aethani word "GOF-lont" is clearly descended from the same root as is the Nepenthes "GOS-hont" (which has even penetrated the totally unrelated Canal Martian Parhooni language as "ga-SHAANT"). While knowledge of Nepenthes is hardly sufficient to communicate effectively on a social level in Aethani, any speaker the Nepenthes tongue should be able to make himself understood on a simple, basic level as far east as the slopes of Amazonia.

THE BURDENSOME, difficult lives of the desert nomads have given these individuals a determined, single-minded nature. They have also given the culture an independence and a will to survive unmatched by the Martians of more pleasant lands. Often the desert nomads' independence has led to terrible conflicts with other cultures sharing borders with the sea of red sands.

COURTSHIP

COURTSHIP CAN be a very important tool to the tribal leaders, as it helps reinforce boundaries, seal alliances, and ensure at least some continuation in the family line—the very strength of the tribe. Courtship among the Desert Martians is a serious affair. The young male Martian must first meet the approval of the intended's mother. The mother must then speak with her spouse, who presumably will know something of the youngster's reputation. If both parents agree, the male may begin his very formal ritual of public meetings—the actual courtship—in front of the female's family tent. As this progresses, he may eventually bring along a huge blanket, under which the two young lovers may converse in private, as long as they are in full view of the tribe.

In courtship, it is not necessary for the parents to be offered trade goods for the young wife, but the male must continually prove his inner self, his bravery, and his belief in the tribe and its chiefs. Any time a husband proves unworthy, the wife may seek the counsel of the shaman to have the marriage ended.

This is a very serious matter, so much so that the complaining female must sacrifice a fleshy section of her



ear lobe. This serves several purposes. First, it prevents separation due to petty squabbles or boredom. Second, it shows that the female is true to her tribe and not afraid to lose a little flesh in order to expose a coward, a cheat, or a lazy warrior. Third, and most important to all of those single males in the tribe, it provides something of a warning to prospective future husbands that this spouse could be trouble (there are all kinds of jokes among the men about females with so many notches they have no ears left). Unfortunately, the male spouse does not have the same recourse. He is expected to endure any marital hardships.

SHELTER

ONE OF THE more interesting aspects of the desert nomads' existence is their living quarters. They most often live in huge tents of an octagonal shape with low roofs. The tents are made of assorted skins woven together in a manner that makes them appear seamless and airtight. The living quarters were originally created to be transportable; the nomads use a menagerie of animals to haul their homes and belongings during tribal migrations across the desert. The tents are supported by flexible poles and rods, and the larger dwellings could comfortably



house three families. Like the tents of Earth's nomads, the Martian tent sports a smoke hole in the center of the roof to allow a fire for warmth and food preparation.

British science has speculated a great deal on the importance of the octagon shape to the Desert Martians. Not only are their dwellings this shape, but many aspects of their lives utilize the octagon. Jewelry, armor, basic camp setup, battle formations, etc.—all hold the basic eight-sided circular pattern.

ATTITUDE TOWARD HUMANS

THE ATTITUDES of the desert

nomads toward the tiny people from Earth are as numerous as the number of tribes among the dunes. Some lords welcome the humans for their trade goods and knowledge. Some despise the "red men" as intruders and despoilers, while still others see them as simply a harmless novelty. The nomads of the eastern deserts seem to favor two human trade goods: cigars and binoculars. They will always try to trade for rifles, but the British frown on that. The Americans are not as particular, however, and have been criticized frequently by other countries for what those countries see as their lack of good judgment.

TESTS

THE DESERT nomad youngsters must pass a rigorous test before they can move into adulthood. This test has three parts, each designed to test different attributes. The first is the agility test, in which a hopeful warrior must stalk and then outrun, or at least keep up with for a distance, the swift eegaar, occasionally encountered near the watering areas of the desert wastes. This is, naturally, a test of endurance as well. As the eegaar has a short endurance, most strong Martians can keep up, and those who cannot are quickly dismissed.

The next test is one of patience. The young Martians are given any one of a variety of tests that would tax one's patience. A test may be as tedious as hanging from a pole by bound ankles, or as simple as being told to wait and not move from a bench until the chief returns, only to have the chief go home for the night.

The final test is one of the soul, as the young hopefuls are left at night far away from the campsite where, without food or water, they must confront their own weaknesses. Perhaps they will be visited in the night by a desert creature (always considered a good omen). The next morning, each young hunter must tell the chief of the hunt and the tribal shaman of his experiences and what he has learned about himself. Then the chief and shaman decipher the experience and decide upon the youth's future.

RELIGION

THE DESERT nomads believe in simple things: the sands, the winds, and the animals. Many children's stories are of animal encounters with Martians wherein the Martian learns a great lesson from the animal. The tribal shaman is continually consulting the ground or listening to the wind for knowledge, and this knowledge is passed on to the tribe through lessons and lectures. Like our Earth fables with a moral, the Martian tales and stories teach about life. A smart Earthman should remember the stories if he is to survive in the wastes. Among the nomads, religion is a belief in the elements and realities of their harsh existence, and the shaman is their interpreter of nature.

THE MEANING OF THE HUNT

THE BOY stormed out of the tent, angry with his father for not including him in the hunt. "I'm a man," he proclaimed, "and I deserve to go." Outside the camp, he saw a charo bird circling, and he watched as it dove at a sand bore skimming a dune. The two tangled, feathers and blood flying, until the charo retreated to its lofty domain without its prey. The boy went to the wounded bore, lying bleeding but unbeaten. It told the boy, "The hunt is not a game to be proud of, nor a right to be protected. In the desert, the hunt is merely for survival and nothing more." And the bore tunneled back into the dune.

—A Traditional Desert Fable

DESERT SHAMANS

ONE OF THE character classes not in the **Space: 1889** game book is the desert shaman. In the adventure "Caravan to Aubochon," the shaman—or witch doctor, as the British call them—stirs up the peasants against the warrior prince of that desert-locked city. While this character is already available as an NPC, the referee may wish to allow players to create a shaman player character for other scenarios. Below are guidelines for creating your own Steppe Martian shaman.

The shaman of the tribe is always considered the wise one, the Martian of honor whose counsel is sought by all. He is not necessarily the oldest of the tribe, but he is considered to be the one whom all seek out for their problems. The shaman is given the seat next to the tribal lord. In many ways, the shaman's counsel is given priority, even over that of the tribal lord's spouse.

Each shaman chooses his successor. The elder shaman passes on his knowledge to the apprentice, much of which is unknown to the rest of the tribe. The British believe that succession occurs when the elder shaman simply decides he is tired of his position and seeks out the most obvious candidate from among the tribe's young. In typical British fashion, they don't really give any of the Martians much credit for their ways or beliefs.

When a chosen Martian reaches the appropriate age, about 12 human years, he is given a double duty. By day he is trained as a warrior along with all the other young warriors. By night he is schooled in the ways of magic and medicine. He (or she, as

shamanhood is not a segregated field) is taught to respect the land and how the intricacies of nature affect everyday living for his people. He is also tutored in politics and the art of effective speaking. The shaman must learn how to sway people with his words because words are, in reality, his most powerful tool. After four years of training, the apprentice is sent out into the desert with only a skin of water. There he must spend eight days in meditation, presumably aligning his soul to that of the land. Some do not survive the ordeal, but those who do are greatly changed. The British claim that the heat gets to them, but the nomads believe that a greater force now rules the shaman's life.



In battle, the shaman will often ride alongside the lord or the war chief, depending on whether the battle is worthy of the lord's presence. He will also be the most protected of all the warriors, as it is considered a bad omen to let your shaman die or, worse, be the Martian standing closest to him if he does die. (It is considered the duty of all the warriors to protect the tribe's shaman, even at the cost of their own lives.) While the shaman is allowed to be fully armed, he usually goes into battle with only his blessing staff (a length of wood that is believed to have some magical significance) and a protective chestplate. The staff is decorated with bits of tribal history—scalps, medallions, fragments of

signed treaties, etc. This staff is used just as a standard is for the British armies. As with all the desert nomads, the shaman rides a gashant with the best of them. He may have just as much fighting spirit as the warriors, or may preach peace and fellowship with the humans. But he is still a Martian of the desert, and in his blood sings the battle cry of 100 generations of warriors.

Medicine is very important to the tribes, as the elements can be cruel to the nomadic people of the dunes. Whether good health is conjured with beating drums, great ceremony, and chanting, or simply applied by a minor balm or root, the shaman is in charge of the administration of the tribe's medicine.

PLAYING THE SHAMAN CHARACTER

THE SHAMAN is played like any other character. His actions are really up to his player's own whims and desires. Although in some instances a shaman NPC may appear to be an evil muck-raker, he may actually be trying to claim the throne for the one person whom he considers to be the rightful heir. Remember, humans will often find the motivations of Martians unfathomable.

The shaman character should be created utilizing the Hill Martian generation system found on page 178 in the **Space: 1889** rules.

SHAMAN STATISTICS

Strength: 4-

Endurance: 2 +

Charisma: 4 +

Skills: Riding (gashant) 1, Fieldcraft 1, Medicine 2, Theatrics 1

A shaman may have influence over several groups of desert people, or be solely committed to only one. He will never accept payment in any sort of money or wealth, though he may accept such things for the benefit of his people. Bound to poverty, the shaman will use his influence only for the betterment of others, never for himself. A shaman's enemies are the enemies of his people. Of course, shamans have no real magical powers except those powers they are perceived to have by people who believe in their abilities.



COMBAT

SINCE THEY are a warlike people and have to depend on strong bodies more than the Canal Martians, the desert warriors have a rigid training which rivals most military training on Earth. At a young age, the males and females are both put through a rigorous physical program to keep them in shape. As the youths reach puberty, the females are allowed to return to their daily routines unless they choose to become warriors or hunters. This is not at all unusual for the nomads, although to the British it may be something of a shock to watch the women working as equals alongside the men. This may even cause some problems if the British try to force their Victorian

beliefs of "women in their place" on the Martian people.

The Martians are trained in a deadly, unarmed combat skill that relies on sweeping kicks and wide, full-armed, backhand punches. The Martian martial art seems to be based, once again, on the octagon. Movements, stances, striking blows, and weapon defenses are all based on an eight-point rotation. Many a cocky young Brit has gone toe-to-toe with a Martian warrior and found himself facedown in the dirt. All training is overseen by the war chief and his apprentices. The desert Martians are master riders, and they are just as much at home on the back of the gashant as they are on foot. They think that Earth horses are weak and useless.

WEAPONS

NATURALLY, THE Martians, particularly those of the deserts, are well trained in the use of weaponry. Although their firearms are inferior to Earth's, the Martians' edged weapons are equal to those of the Japanese swordmakers. The desert warriors have a number of standard weapons that each is adept in using. All mounted troops learn the bow as soon as they learn to ride. The desert bow is a short, recurve bow that is similar to those of Earth's early Mongols. It has a good deal of power for its size, but its accurate range is extremely short. This bow is the best type for mounted combat.

The single-edged sword is another popular weapon of the warrior. So superior is the quality of the blade that many of the cloud captains have taken desert Martian blades and had European craftsmen fashion hilts and scabbards. Worn back on the hip, the Martian hilt is abruptly curved in such a way that it can be drawn either backhanded or regularly (that is, either right- or left-handed). A proficient warrior can fight well with either hand. The method is, however, a little unorthodox to the common British swordsman. Instead of a polite parry/thrust, the Martians tend to fight with great circular, sweeping strokes that create a wall of steel. The best warriors can fight equally well with two blades, and double swordsmen are legendary in the annals of Martian history.

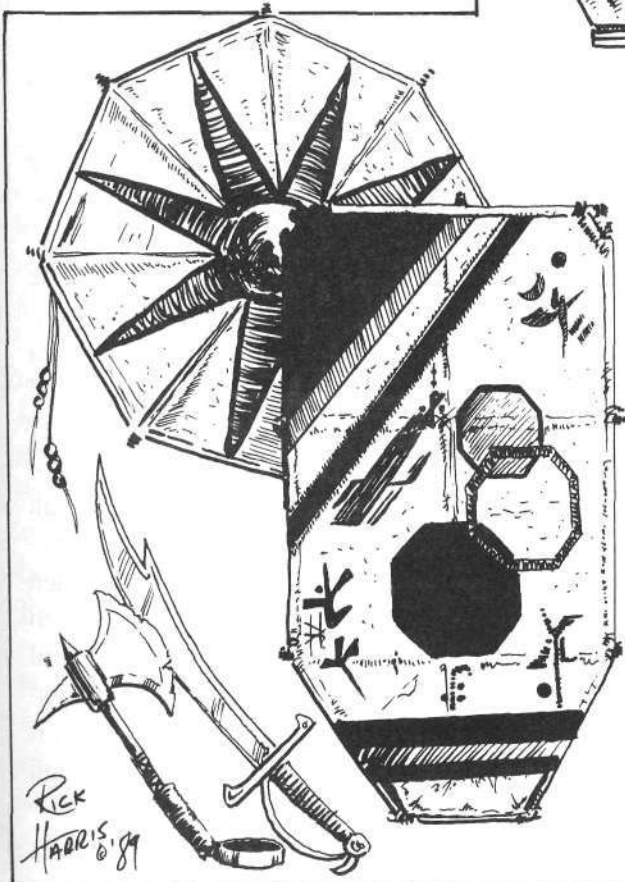
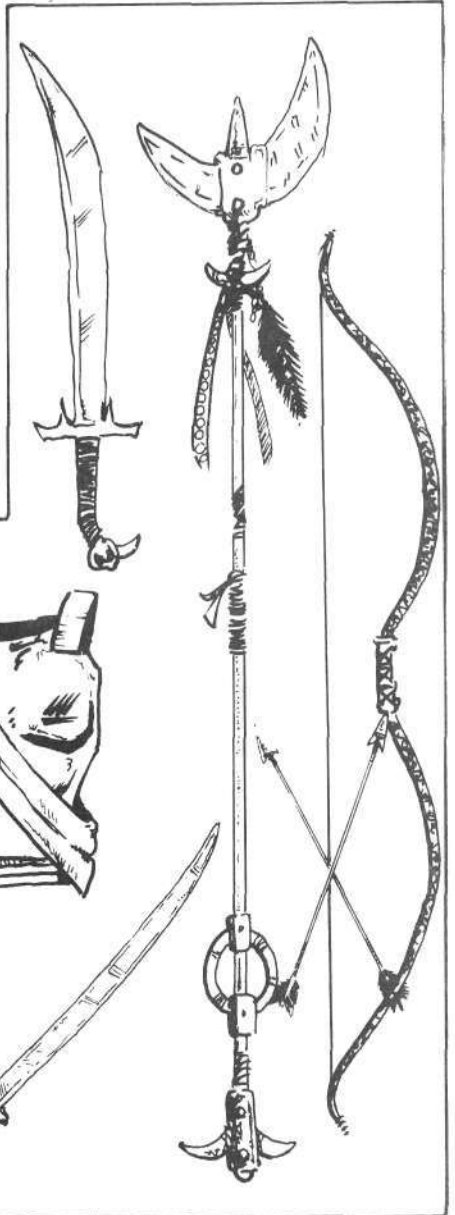
The Martian throwing ax is not really an ax, but a many-bladed knife secured to a single haft. In combat, the trained warrior can hurl one accurately about 30 feet. The ax is excellent for fighting on gashantback.



Used with great pride, and carrying great honor with its use as a preferred weapon, is the *bajuy* or war staff. The *bajuy* is a wooden staff roughly six feet in length. Usually a warrior is given a clean smooth one when he first becomes a warrior. As the years go on and the events of his life unfold, these events are documented on the staff. Gracing one end of the staff is a crescent of steel, its edges honed to sharpness equal to a sword. An incredible weapon in the hands of a trained fighter, the *bajuy* is seldom used on a mount. Because it is considered to be too honorable a weapon to use on a mount, a specialized, almost religious type of combat has evolved around the *bajuy*. It is the primary dueling weapon of the steppes. This weapon counts as a pike for gaming purposes.

ARMOR

THE DESERT MARTIANS only use two types of armor. The first is the chestplate, which is really two octagonal shapes curved to fit the chest and back, and which is secured by leather straps. A simple slash mark over the left breast denotes rank, at least to fellow desert Martians. Each slash mark places a Martian a step up on the pecking order. Even though the tribes use no official titles, the one with the most marks gets preferential treatment.



The second piece of armor is the shield. The desert shield is lightweight, made of a wooden frame, and covered in a skin, preferably that of the ruumet breehr since its hide is so tough. The shield is more than just a simple defense in battle. The Martians believe that the shield, once anointed by the tribe's shaman, keeps the Martian warrior from spiritual, as well as physical, harm. The shield is often decorated with mystic symbols important to the warrior.

She-Devil of the Desert (Elite NPC)

THE SHE-DEVIL of the desert is something of a legend to both Martians and humans. According to legend she was proving her worthiness as a warrior by spending the night far from home when a great tiger came upon her and said he would eat her. Legend has it that she agreed, but warned him that she was going to be his most disagreeable meal ever. Laughing, the steppe tiger gave her life back to her but told her that one so brave would do better free from the shackles of her tribe; she would better serve those she loved by tending to the wilds of the desert sands, forever wary of any danger that might befall the people who dwell upon them. When she saw the logic in this, she agreed, and the great tiger left, sending her two large steppe tigers to companion her and to aid her in her task.

That is the legend of the She-Devil of the desert. Many caravan leaders claim to have spotted the She-Devil, and there are those who claim that she has even helped them in times of trouble. She will pop up



from time to time, and each time she does, she will stir up new stories and legends.

Motives: Just, Stubborn, Cautious.

Appearance: The She-Devil is something of a heroic figure to the young Martians, as she exhibits the true tribal spirit and the ultimate sacrifice for her people—alienation from all in order to secure peace for the future. The She-Devil really is a living, breathing being. She wanders the desert with her two companions. The party will see her from time to time in the distance. She may even turn up when they need help. She will not speak, and if anyone tries to approach her, the two steppe tigers will step in. Her weapon is a double-headed spear, which she is quite skilled with. She is very lean, with black hair. She always dresses in

skins and leggings that protect her from the elements.

Possible Encounters

THE SHE-DEVIL of the desert can be an interesting NPC to keep in your "back pocket," so to speak. She can very easily enter into any situation without causing too many problems in your plot. By her very nature, she can simply emerge from the sands and just as quickly disappear back into them.

Combat: You might wish to bring the She-Devil in on the side of the player characters if a battle with bandits is going poorly. Her fighting prowess will tend to tip the scales and most likely drive the bandits away. Also, her command of the two steppe tigers will no doubt frighten both sides in such a melee. Once the combat is settled, the She-Devil may stay to help the injured, but will probably not stay to chat—she will be gone as quickly as she came. The guards will be awestruck and heartened in knowing the She-Devil is on their side and watching out for this caravan.

Survival: In a situation where a caravan or individuals associated with it are in need of water or other assistance, the She-Devil may help. To the best of her ability she can give aid to the needy, even carrying injured parties to safety when required. If possible, though, do not actually present the She-Devil to the characters, only her actions. Let them decide who it was that left them water as they crawled through the desert.

Att.	Skills
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 5 (pole arm)
Agl: 5	Stealth 4, Marksman-ship (bow 3, rifle 2)
End: 5	Wilderness Travel 5 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2, Tracking 2
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 2	Eloquence 1
Soc: 4	Riding 4 (gashant)

The Witch Doctor Kur (Veteran NPC)

THE CANAL MARTIANS refer to them as witch doctors. Their own people, the warriors of the deserts, refer to them as shamans. They are advisors and healers to the desert peoples. To the Canal Martians, shamans are the shrewd business dealers of the wastes, their tribes depending on them for their intelligence and bargaining power in the city market.

Because of this, Kur plays a vital part in the adventure. His role is a wholly selfish one. Kur lives in the city of Aubochoon, just outside the market square. He is tied to no tribe of the desert, yet all tribes call upon him for help when dealing with the Canal Martians.

The lords declared a designated area outside the city, as well as the city itself, neutral ground so the tribes may enter the city to do their trading and business without fear of conflict. Kur advises each tribe which seeks him out as to the order of the day—who's bargaining and who is not, where the best prices are, and what to look out for in the city.

Kur is an old Martian, yet he is as healthy as a young warrior. He is well provided for. The steppe tribes pay him for his advice, and the city merchants pay him for a favorable word to the prospective buyers, which can certainly affect their attitudes.

Kur believes that Altin Hirsiz is bad for business. Altin's actions have caused unrest, making trading chaotic and haphazard. Kur has drawn on all his old powers as a



shaman to stir up the city folk, particularly the poor and the merchants.

Motives: Driven, Loyal, Leader.

Appearance: Kur is a proud, old warrior who still carries himself erect. He has a wise, yet stern, face, and his black hair is shocked through with gray. Though a steppe Martian, he wears the clothes of the Canal Martians. He does keep his staff, and his old charms have been threaded onto a thong around his neck. His voice does not quiver with age, but it still holds that richness that age brings the vocal chords. He hopes to frighten off the caravan, knowing that it probably brings support for the mad prince. He feels that a few more days will be all he needs to turn the tide on the self-proclaimed prince. Kur would be more than willing to receive help from the caravan, but he does not trust the British.

Further Dealings With Kur

If Kur is foiled in his plans during this adventure, he will most likely remember the humans and forever curse their names. Remember, Kur is powerful throughout the Aetheria-Elysium deserts from his position as sage and advisor. He has very long arms and will no doubt use them

against the player characters should he hear about their exploits in the future.

In Cerebus, Kur has organized several desert tribes into an effective blockade, all but stopping caravan trade into and out of the city. His aim is to force the people there to trade for foodstuffs from the grassland peoples to the south—at highly inflated prices, of course. Kur does not directly share in the profits, but this activity strengthens his influence in the area.

Close to Thoth, where the desert tribes are particularly hard-pressed from several straight years of terrible sandstorms, Kur is attempting to abandon the area altogether. The traditionalists in the tribes are wary of a move to the west, claiming their sacred lands are where they must live and die. Kur, on the other hand, sees the desperate plight of the people and is trying to convince the elders to consider the move for their sake.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 4 (edged weapon)
Agil: 2	Stealth 3
End: 6	Wilderness Travel 5 (foraging), Fieldcraft 1
Int: 5	Observation 4
Chr: 5	Eloquence 4, Theatrics 2, Bargaining 2, Linguistics 2 (Koline, English)
Soc: 3	Riding 3 (gashant), Medicine 2

Kai Urukta (Veteran NPC)



OF THE three most prominent warlords of the deserts, Kai Urukta is considered the fiercest (and he is also quickly becoming the most powerful). Urukta has a genuine hatred for the world around him and seems to truly enjoy the emotion. He has fought hard to achieve what he has and is not likely to let it slip through his fingers. He is arrogant and condescending to the point of being cruel, and everyone under his rule is very cautious when talking to strangers about the ways of Kai Urukta. He is a good

rider and believes that a tribe can only survive when it is able to mount and ride into battle. Therefore, Urukta will always take a personal pride in the breeding, buying, or stealing of gashants.

He is very interested in humans, even though he has never met one. He is continually listening to the stories about the "red men" and all the marvels that they bring with them. Urukta is particularly interested in their weapons, and how powerful he would be if he could obtain such things. Kai Urukta is always to be treated with great care, especially by humans.

Motives: Hatred, Arrogant, Aggressive.

Appearance: Kai Urukta is handsome by desert standards, with a mane of black hair, sharp features, and a permanent sneer on his face. He is quite good with a *ba-juy*, and what he lacks in ability, he makes up for in sheer and utter ruthlessness. No one has ever defeated him in a personal combat challenge—at least no one who has ever lived to tell anyone about it.

Att.	Skills
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 4 (pole arm)
Agl: 5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 1 (bow)
End: 5	Wilderness Travel 5 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 5	Observation 4
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3
Soc: 1	Riding 3 (gashant), Leadership 2

Karkem Kubla (Elite NPC)

KARKEM KUBLA is every bit as aggressive as the younger warlords, but his plans are well tempered with the maturity of his years. He has often spoken out against trusting humans and warns all tribes not to lean on the new "colonies." He does not consider the humans to be a part of the divine plan in Martian life, nor does he like them bringing their technology with them. Even at this, Karkem Kubla will not turn his back on the humans should they need his help in the desert, for he also knows Kai Urukta and trusts him even less than he trusts the humans.

Motives: Boastful, Wise, Aggressive.

Appearance: Karkem Kubla is the oldest warlord of the desert. His hair is a mass of grizzled gray, and wrinkles are trying to etch their way into his tough skin. His face and chest are marred with claw marks, a souvenir from his younger days as a hunter. The teeth of the steppe tiger that attacked him still hang from a braided thong around his neck. The people of his tribe fondly call him "Old Tiger."

Kubla loves to tell stories, especially when they deal with himself (and they all do). He will call meetings just to be able to tell of one of his adventures. Humans might make the mistake of becoming bored with this old Martian, and they will pay for that. Part of the reason for the story-telling ritual is for Kubla to weed out the people who do not give him the respect of listening. He feels that someone who is not interested in the wisest man in all the steppes must not be worth dealing with.



Att.	Skills
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 3, Close Combat 5 (bashing weapon)
Agl: 4	Stealth 3, Marksmanship 1 (bow)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging), Fieldcraft 1, Tracking 1
Int: 5	Observation 4
Chr: 5	Eloquence 4
Soc: 4	Riding 5 (gashant), Leadership 3

Uruz Yuni (Veteran NPC)

UCUZ YUNI is the youngest of the three most prominent warlords of the desert. As such, he is also the most driven. His strength is legendary, and his prowess as a warrior cannot be argued. However, the driving sense that compels him to continually prove himself has almost cost him his life on more than one occasion.

The wisdom of his shaman is what keeps real catastrophe from occurring. Yuni will pay heed to his shaman's advice, and will often change his entire direction if he is told a move could do harm. He loves his people, and he wants to see them prosper.

He considers Kubla to be too old to pose a threat. Urukta is the warlord he has to defeat—and quickly, before he can claim any more land. He welcomes the humans for what they can bring, but he makes the mistake of trying so hard to impress them that he often forgets to take advantage of what they have to offer.

The Canal Martians believe that Yuni will be the next major warlord to fall at the hands of Urukta. They fear that this will unbalance the desert and turn it into a totally impassable trade route. Yuni has been particularly gullible to the words of the Belgians and trusts them more than he should.

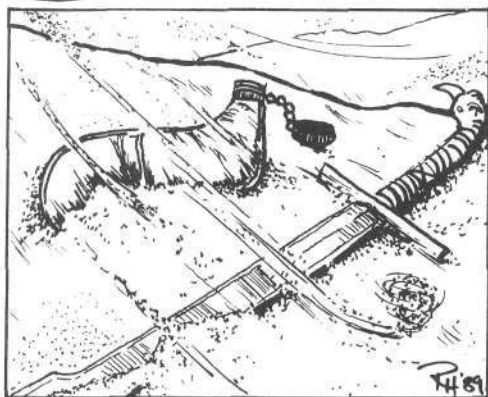
If confronted by any other warlord, he will be quick to challenge him to combat with the *bajuy*. He is so confident in his ability that he is somewhat fearless.

Motives: Ambitious, Fair, Driven.



Appearance: Yuni is young, but he has seen many battles and many hunts. His face and arms are scarred by a multitude of wounds. He refuses to wear the traditional headdress and trappings of his tribe's leaders, convinced that they interfere with his ability to fight effectively. He is seldom without the companionship of one of his several young wives—it is said the tent of Uruz Yuni will one day burst with the number of children he has sired.

Att.	Skills
Str: 5	Fisticuffs 4, Throwing 3, Close Combat 4 (pole arm)
Agl: 4	Stealth 3, Marksmanship 1 (bow)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging), Fieldcraft 1, Tracking 1
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 3	Eloquence 2
Soc: 3	Riding 4 (gashant), Leadership 1



A WARLORD'S CAMP

A TYPICAL warlord's camp is laid out on the accompanying map on the facing page. If the adventurers are planning to make a rescue attempt or engage in some other covert operation, they should first learn the camp's layout and the location of the sentry posts. Considering the armed nature of the camp, such a probe could be very dangerous. If the players have been invited, they may notice and remember the general layout of the camp rather easily. A typical invitation scenario could be presented as follows.

The humans and the caravan master enter the camp flanked by young warriors. The entire camp turns out to see the travellers, tugging at their clothes and eyeing their equipment and weapons. The master warns the party to stay calm and smile often, even though they are being treated like a new life form. Any human women in the group are given particular interest, since they are probably in the minority and will stand out. Naturally, the male humans will act protective, and this will be met with aggression. One or two of the young warrior-hopefuls may even try to taunt the men into action.

The camp is composed of about 20 large octagonal tents that form a rough outer ring. Small work stations are all about. Hides are being tanned,

weapons are being repaired, and arrows and bows being constructed. At either side of the camp are two food preparation places with low tables, stone mortars, and water buckets made from skins and held upright by woven grasses. Two large fires are nearby, making access from them to the food area easy. Blankets, skins, and squat, crude stools are placed around each fire. Twenty-five people could sit comfortably around a fire. An octagon is marked out with stones at the far end of the camp. The caravan master tells the players that this is the combat circle for training young warriors, as well as the spot where challenges are fought.

The tribal leader appears from the largest tent and is met by a scar-faced warrior. The entire time he listens to the warrior, the chief is studying the humans with interest. The crowd of Martians grows silent in his presence, and a pathway appears amidst them as they make way for him. Slowly and deliberately, he walks toward the humans. It is easy to see why he is a leader. He is aware of his own presence and makes the most of it. The chief looks at his new guests and takes in everything from mustaches to brass buttons. At last his eyes fall on their weapons, and he smiles. He speaks to the caravan master briefly, then turns to his people and makes an announcement that the humans are welcome and that a feast must be prepared.

The tribe immediately begins preparation. Eegaars roast over the fires, along with other food. The young warriors show off their skills in the combat circle. A few still taunt the humans but the caravan master warns the adventurers not to try the warriors for fear of the consequences.

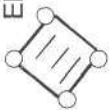
The music, such as it is, fills the air. Reed pipes and drums provide the rhythm for the dances of the young Martians, which Victorian humans will find both intriguing and morally disturbing. Food is served as darkness falls, and the entire tribe is involved in the meal. Throughout the festivities, the chief sits in a well-crafted high-backed chair. It is obviously out of place amid the barbarity of the camp. This "throne" places him well above the heads of all others, who sit on blankets and short stools. During the meal, the chief is ever the stone-faced warlord. He contributes little to the conversation, being content to listen to the British officers talk of their adventures and encouraging them to drink the thin wine he has served.

Abruptly, the chief stands and bows to the party, and leaves for his tent, followed by an entourage. The party winds down soon afterward and the adventurers are shown their quarters, a large tent with a small central fire. If they try to explore the camp, they will see a pair of armed guards standing outside their tent.

The next morning, the chief greets them and wishes to see a demonstration of their weapons. The players will oblige for the sake of diplomacy, shooting at targets. The war chief then asks to see one of the British rifles. He shoulders the weapon, aims and fires once, not even hitting the target. He looks at the target, though, grunts and nods, then hands back the weapon to its owner. He then walks away without so much as a word, and the caravan master tells them that they have been dismissed. On returning to the caravan, the party will find that nothing has occurred out of the norm.

WARLORD CAMP

ELEVATED SENTRY POST



WEAPONS REPAIR



SKINNING

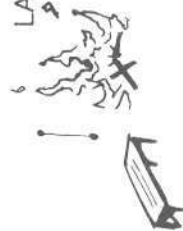
LARGE FIRE



FOOD PREP

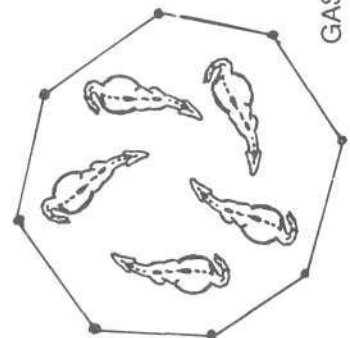


LARGE FIRE



COMBAT CIRCLE

GASHANT PEN



TENTS

TENTS

DESERT ENCOUNTERS

DURING A long caravan journey through the desert, the referee may need to administer an added side adventure. The referee shouldn't worry about his group encountering an occasional distraction. Below are the encounter charts for the desert. Roll one die.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

Die Roll Result

1	Roogie Pack
2	Eegaar Herd
3	Steppe Tiger
4	Bush Monkey
5	Herd of Ruumet Breehr
6	Wild Gashant

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS DESCRIPTIONS

THE FOLLOWING apply to the Animal Encounters table.

1. A roogie pack (with about 30

roogies) passes the caravan. If left alone, they will keep right on going. If bothered or frightened, they may attack one of the pack animals (roll one die; they will attack on a 1, 2, or 3).

2. A herd of eegaar is running alongside the caravan about 40 yards out. This would be a good opportunity for fresh meat if the party is so inclined. But they will only get off a few good shots, as the herd will sprint off when the first round is fired. Pursuit through the sand would be difficult and time consuming. Unless the caravan is in terrible need of food, the caravan master will forbid it.

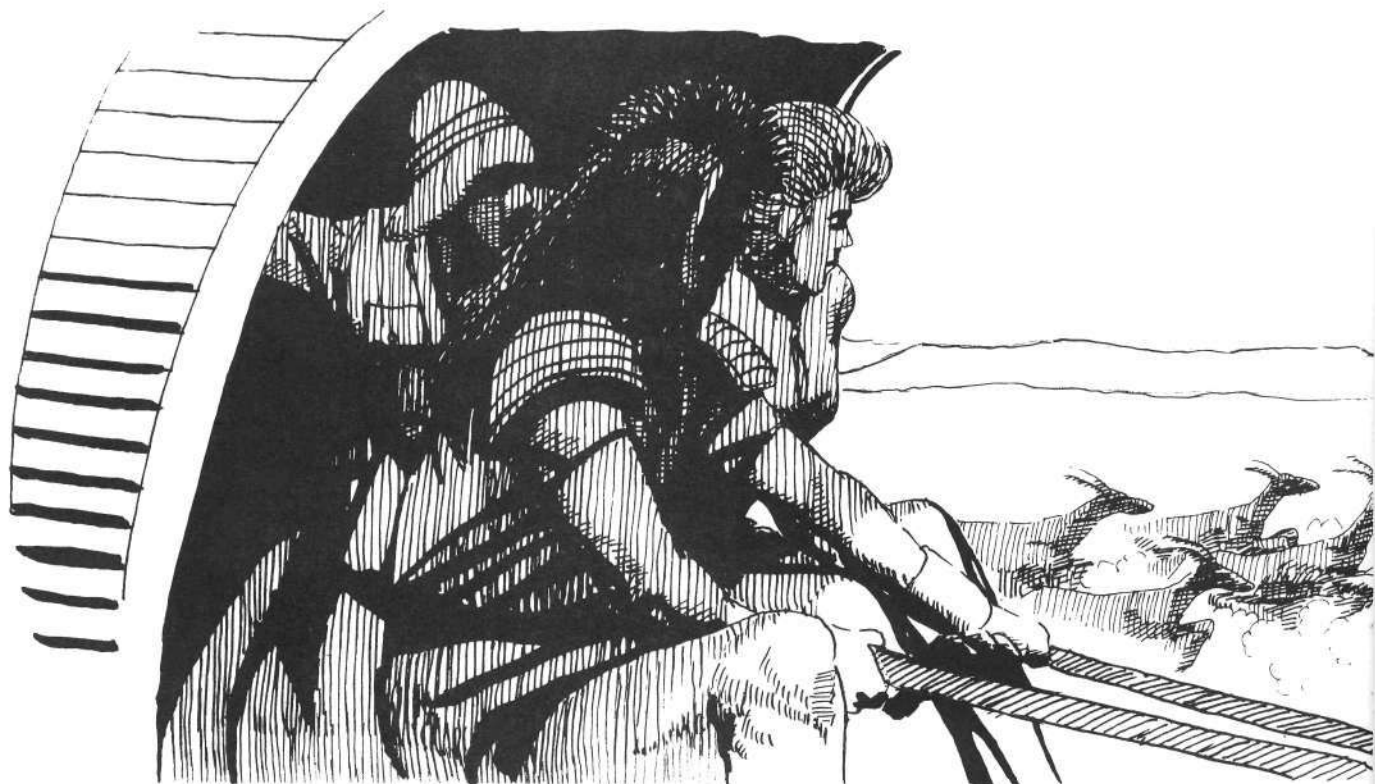
3. A steppe tiger is feeding on a fresh kill, so it is not likely to disturb the caravan. But it is clearly not afraid of the caravan either; so if any players try to shoot it, their first shot had better count.

4. Bush monkeys will actually be

caught eating and frolicking. At the first sign of danger, they will ball up and remain utterly motionless. If bothered, they will only attack with as much force as needed to repel the enemy.

5. A herd of ruumet breehr is in the distance, grazing and bothering absolutely no one. The caravan should try to pass quietly, as a stampeding herd makes a mess of caravans.

6. Wild gashants roam freely across the steppes. Should one of the players decide to try to catch his own wild gashant to train, he may find that a gashant's kick demands more respect than he had bargained for. Also, bandits in search of new mounts often track gashant packs for days at a time. At the referee's discretion, bandits may spot the caravan while going unnoticed themselves. They may attack later that night or later in the week.



GENERAL ENCOUNTERS

Die Roll	Result
1	Remains
2	Disease
3	Sandstorm
4	Devil Wind
5	Food Loss
6	Bandit Attack

GENERAL ENCOUNTERS DESCRIPTIONS

GENERAL encounters follow.

1. The remains of a human expedition are found. The remains are not fresh, and the equipment has been picked over. The players assume that the expedition was French, based on the journals and equipment that are left. Nothing can really be discerned from the skeletons, except that one has a bullet hole in its skull.

2. Disease takes its toll as a strange virus runs through the camp. The disease is not fatal, but the nausea

and stomach cramps make one wish he were dead. The real danger comes from dehydration, which could cause an even weaker state that could prove fatal. All characters in the caravan should roll one die; on a 5 or 6 they have contracted the disease. Anyone contracting the virus will have his Strength and Endurance (and all associated skills) reduced by one until the end of the current week's travel.

3. Sandstorms can literally bury a caravan or other group in a matter of hours. Roll for the severity of the storm: The result of rolling one die is the number of days that will be lost digging out of the storm. Caravan drivers have devised means of protecting animals and cargo with their wagons; the caravan will only lose time from a sandstorm, but combining this mishap with a bandit attack might liven up the adventure.

4. Devil wind will strike occasionally, whipping up a great gust of

wind like a miniature tornado. It causes no real danger unless things were not well tied down, in which case anything weighing less than a rifle will be sucked up by the wind and carried off.

5. For some reason, food suddenly has to be rationed. It could have been lost due to a bandit raid, stampede, theft, or whatever fits the current adventure. Rationed food means angry and frightened people. This could lead to hoarding and theft of what little food is available, as well as outbreaks of violence.

6. Bandit attacks are common and easily repelled, as few bandits have the superior firepower of the players and caravan. Every PC should roll a die; a 1 means the player has to make a saving roll against attack—whether missile or melee. Of course, at the referee's option, such encounters may be played out instead.



BUSH MONKEYS

EACH MORNING as the camp prepares to journey, the party will notice hundreds of small clumps several hundred yards from the camp. They look like small bales of hay. The disturbing thing about this is that no one can remember seeing them the night before, when the caravan made camp.

These innocent-looking bales of hay are actually animals usually seen nowhere else but the steppes. No one in the caravan knows what they are called, but Martians will tell the party that previous human explorers called them bush monkeys, named after the furry little Earth creatures. The little animals are generally playful and have begun following caravans into the desert—in short, they are camp-following pests.

But these bush monkeys share little in common with their Terran namesake. What appears to be long spiky hair is really many little points of scales that overlap. The structure of this outer covering helps the monkeys conserve water. A bush monkey has the ability to pull its head down into its body, leaving only its scale points exposed so that it looks sort of like a bale of hay. Bush monkeys travel as apes do; their short, almost nonexistent legs are useless for walking. By unfolding their arms and using their knuckles against the ground, they swing themselves forward for locomotion.

No one really knows what they eat. (In truth they are scavengers,

which is why they follow the caravans, stopping to eat the refuse.) They have been known to kill a man but never to eat one. They will follow the caravan until it approaches a city, then they will vanish from sight. Until discovered, these little guys could give the party the eerie feeling that they are being watched at night and that "clumps of grass" have been following them.

Bush monkeys are live bearers, and a young monkey will cuddle beside its mother when in the "baled hay" position. If someone tries to capture one, he will be woefully sorry, as the Martian bush monkeys have twin rows of sharp teeth which they can use as weapons. Their spikes provide excellent armor, although they have yet to realize that they make excellent weapons. (Players should try to avoid falling into a herd of them.) If any are shot or killed, others in the herd will let out a mournful wail and will beat the ground with their hands. After this period of mourning, they will converge on the perceived attackers like a horde of enraged tumbleweeds, biting and grappling with anyone. These attacks are short-lived but brutal. The bush monkeys will not bother anyone unless they are provoked.



BUSH MONKEY STATISTICS

App: 1D x 10

Size: 1 x 1

Move: L20

Wounds: 4

Save: 6

Weight: 35

Weapons: Teeth (2, 2, 0, 2)

DURGE FLIES

THE DURGE fly is named after Morgan P. Durge, the man whose unfortunate fate was to be the first Earthman ever to be eaten alive by these desert flies. The Durge fly is about 1.5 inches long, with a body that looks like polished bronze. Many Martians have been known to use the insect's carapace as jewelry. They have the appearance of the average Earth horsefly, except for their multiple mandibles that serve as teeth. The Durge fly can strip the skin from a creature in a relatively short period of time. They always appear in swarms of 100 or more. Durge flies do not really attack as much as they swarm, land, and eat, but they will attack if their swarm is disturbed.

The Durge flies only appear once a year, when they hatch, dig their way to the surface, and crawl out onto the tall grass until their wings dry. Then they begin their month-long feeding frenzy, consuming everything in sight. The air is filled with the buzzing of their wings, loud enough to frighten pack animals. After this feeding, they mate for three days, after which the male dies. Then the female lays her eggs in the soil and dies shortly thereafter.

The desert Martians try to keep the flies out of camp by burning large smoke pots around the camp's perimeter. They believe the flies are the spirits of their dead that have risen to begin their new lives, and that once the flies die the spirits are set free. They do not wish to kill the flies because this would be disrespectful to the dead. But they also do not want their camp to be eaten away, so they do whatever they can to protect their

homes. They will even slaughter a ruumet breehr and leave it outside camp in the hope that it will misdirect the insects.

The caravans try to avoid travel during the month of the hatchings, but sometimes subtle changes in weather conditions will affect the hatch date, and a luckless merchant train may find itself beating off the flies in the steppes. Expeditions caught unaware have been devastated—their supplies destroyed and even a few casualties inflicted on the unlucky.

If left alone, the Durge flies will probably remain harmless. But if disturbed, they will attack the largest moving body and begin feeding on it. They can be easily held at bay by smoke and flame; otherwise, they attack as a swarm and will continue to attack until the victim is dead and they can begin eating or until they are chased off.

Referee: Durge flies are so common an occurrence that they do not appear on the animal encounter tables for the desert. It is assumed that any expedition will have an unpleasant encounter with a Durge fly swarm at least once per week, if not once per day. They are generally not fatal, being more of a nuisance than a threat to life.

DURGE FLY STATISTICS

App: 1D x 100

Size: 1 x 1

Move: F10

Wounds: 1

Save: 1

Weight: N/A

Weapons: Swarm (1,4, 1, 1)



Travel by Caravan

THE MOST COMMON means of moving trade goods on Mars is by canal boat. When expensive cargoes must be moved quickly, cloudships are used. But when the cargo is not expensive and there is no working canal between the origin and the destination, caravans are used.

Caravan Routes: Caravan routes invariably follow the trace of dead canals, as this is the only place in the desert that water can reliably be found. Not all dead canals are caravan routes, however, because some are too long or too dangerous to risk. In general, major caravan routes tend to follow the shortest dead canal route between two intact grand canal networks. For example, the major caravan route east from Aetheria is from Alclyon to Hyblaes to Hecates Lacus. This route links several large intact canal systems together with a minimum of overland travel.

Minor caravan routes link otherwise isolated cities to the canals, such as those routes which radiate from the desert city of Aubochon. Minor routes are travelled less often, as they are financially less rewarding. These routes are usually more dangerous as well, since there is less close protection by military forces, and the infrequent caravans are more vulnerable to desert raiders.

Caravan Frequency: One caravan will leave from (and another will

arrive in) a city along each major caravan route every 2D6 days. One caravan will leave from (and another will arrive in) a city along each minor caravan route every 1D6 weeks.

Cost: Passage with a caravan costs £1 per 100 miles travelled along a major route, and twice that along a minor route. Although this fee is always negotiable, it tends to be about half that amount for Canal Martians, travellers in obvious financial distress, travellers providing their own transportation, or very large parties. Normal passage consists of a seat in a howdah or a wagon along with other travellers. For twice the normal fee, a riding gashant is provided.

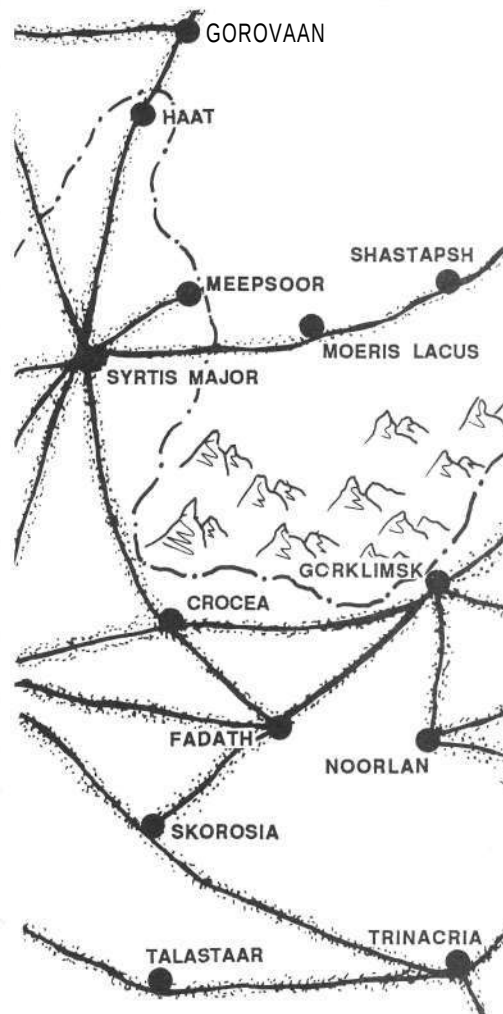
Composition: All caravans include a water and a kitchen wagon, each towed by a ruumet breehr. In addition, the caravan will consist of 6D6 ruumet breehr, each towing a wagon or carrying a howdah (divided up as the referee sees fit). Each ruumet breehr has two handlers. If called upon to fight, the handlers are trained NPCs armed with a mixture of knives and swords.

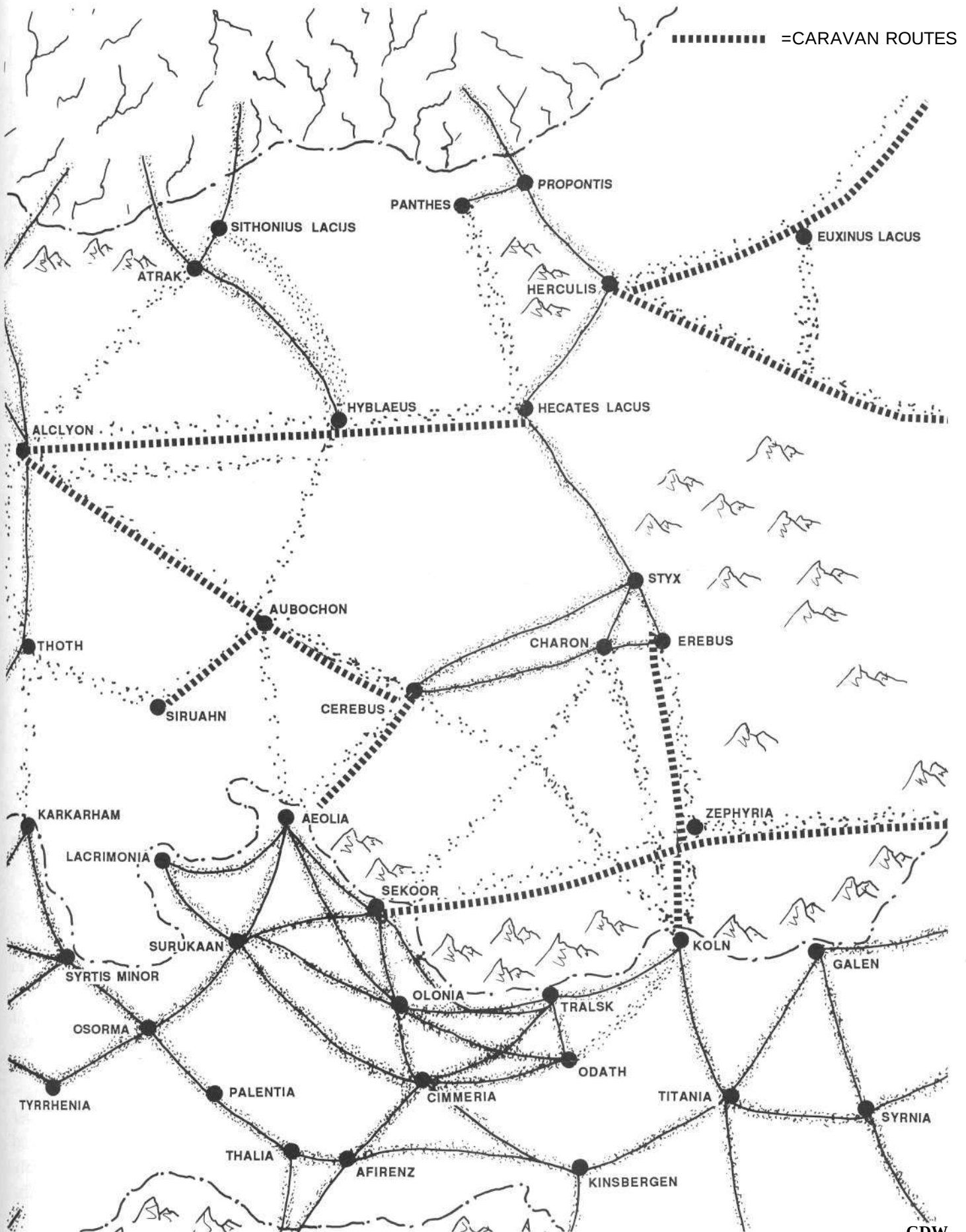
The caravan will be guarded by 1D6 squads of guards, each squad consisting of 10 men mounted on gashants and equipped with a helmet, doublet, shield, sword, spear, and bow. A guard captain is always in overall command of the guards. Half the guard squads (round fractions up)

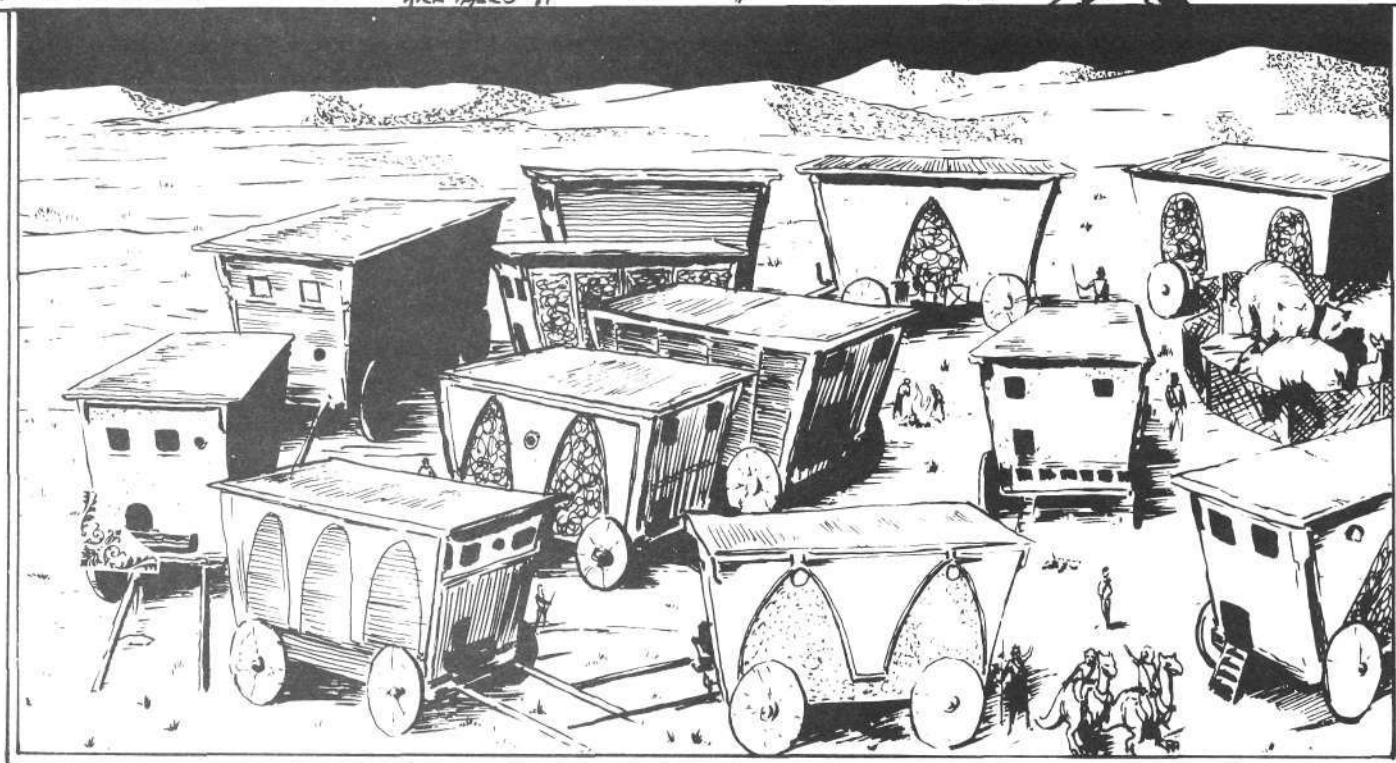
are Experienced NPCs, while the other half are Trained NPCs. The guard captain is a Veteran NPC.

Travel Times: Caravan journeys are quite long. Typical distances between cities are 500 to 1000 miles. At a speed of between 10 and 20 miles per day, a caravan trip can take months. Rather than resolve every day of travel, caravan journeys are resolved in weeks. Each week of travel represents progress of 100 miles (one hex on a mid-scale travel map).

Encounters: Roll the die once per week. If a 5 or higher is rolled, two encounters occur during the week; otherwise, there is only one. A wide variety of encounters are presented in this chapter, and the referee has the option of selecting an encounter or rolling for one randomly.







CARAVAN LIFE

CARAVANS ON Mars have existed since the first canals began drying up. The routines of the caravan masters and wagon handlers have changed little since those times, as they are firmly grounded in the availability of animals and materials to make the treacherous journeys where canals no longer go.

PACK ANIMALS

THE RUUMET BREEHR is the most versatile animal on Mars. The beast can carry an incredible amount

of weight for its size, and it is used across Mars because of its dependability. Special racks are constructed to fit the animal so that the baggage weight is distributed evenly over its back. Usually, space for a rider is provided. The ruumet breehr is steered by a giant headpiece connected to reins of leather or hemp. When a rein is pulled, the beast moves in that direction (just like a horse). The heavy headpiece is often utilized as a battering ram or a lever for lifting and pushing. The ruumet breehr, because of its docile nature, is in wide use throughout Mars. But

as tame as the pack animal is, its brother in the wild is skittish and can stampede without warning.

ORDER

THE FIRST PART of the illustration on this page shows the order in which the caravan train will progress. To circumvent any chance of stampede, the ruumet breehr pack animals are spaced between wagons as much as possible. This arrangement makes the caravan a little easier to control. The cook, provision, and water wagons are divided evenly throughout the center portion of the

train, with the caravan master's wagon almost exactly in the middle. This positioning and spacing helps protect the wagons in case of attack. The guards are shown relative to the caravan. For protection, the humans and players will ride close to the caravan master's wagon, and the guards will not allow them to wander too far from this position.

The second part of the illustration shows the relative position of the caravan at night as the characters make camp. The wagons will be pulled into a tight circle, with the water, provision, cook, and medical wagons in the center with the caravan master. Most of the guards will re-

main within the circle, while posts are placed at eight points outside the circle proper, with five guards at each post. Two guards ride the perimeter, checking with each post in turn. The pack animals are corralled in a portable stable—a large structure of stakes supporting a net-like webbing that can be taken down each morning, rolled up, and stored.

THE CAMP

CAMPING ON THE trail is not as uncomfortable as travelling. When the caravan sets up camp at night, lavish tents are erected, and simple but comfortable furniture is unfolded. The tents are large and can house

eight people. Usually each tent will have its own fire. Inhabitants of each tent are assigned a time when they line up at the cook wagon, thus keeping the waiting to a minimum. Everyone assigned to a tent is in charge of taking care of it. Not taking care of your share of duties is looked down on by other travellers, but the player characters may think to hire one of the young Martians to do the labor for them. This, of course, is in the true British spirit and will be fully anticipated by the Martians. At dawn, everyone will be expected to strike camp and load up. The caravan master will not want to hold up the caravan for one late riser.

FEAST OF THE ONSET

TRADITIONALLY THE caravan master will hold a feast to gain the favor and good will of whatever minor spirits may watch the canals and roads. Here is an example feast. (Samon Khuratta is presented as a typical caravan master. He is the master in the scenario, "Caravan to Aubochon.")

Samon Khuratta has gathered his guests in Alclyon for the Feast of the Onset. It is here that any military players will meet with the rest of the crew. Attendance is mandatory. Many merchants have been dismissed from a caravan for not considering the feast important enough to attend.

Colorful lamps hang from the trees and poles that have been placed around the feast area. Rows of tables are laden with food and drink. The human guests are all at one table, which doesn't seem to bother the humans, but it gives the

Martians something to laugh about (much to the humans' misunderstanding). The human players are not really sure if seating them all together is professional courtesy or Martian prejudice.

A Martian band provides its strange, harmonious music for the dancers. Even though alien in nature, the dancers provide an enticing display with their movements. Enticing or vulgar—depending on how Victorian the mindset is. Khuratta is making the most of the feast, navigating his way about the tables and joining in with the dancers, although he doesn't dance very well.

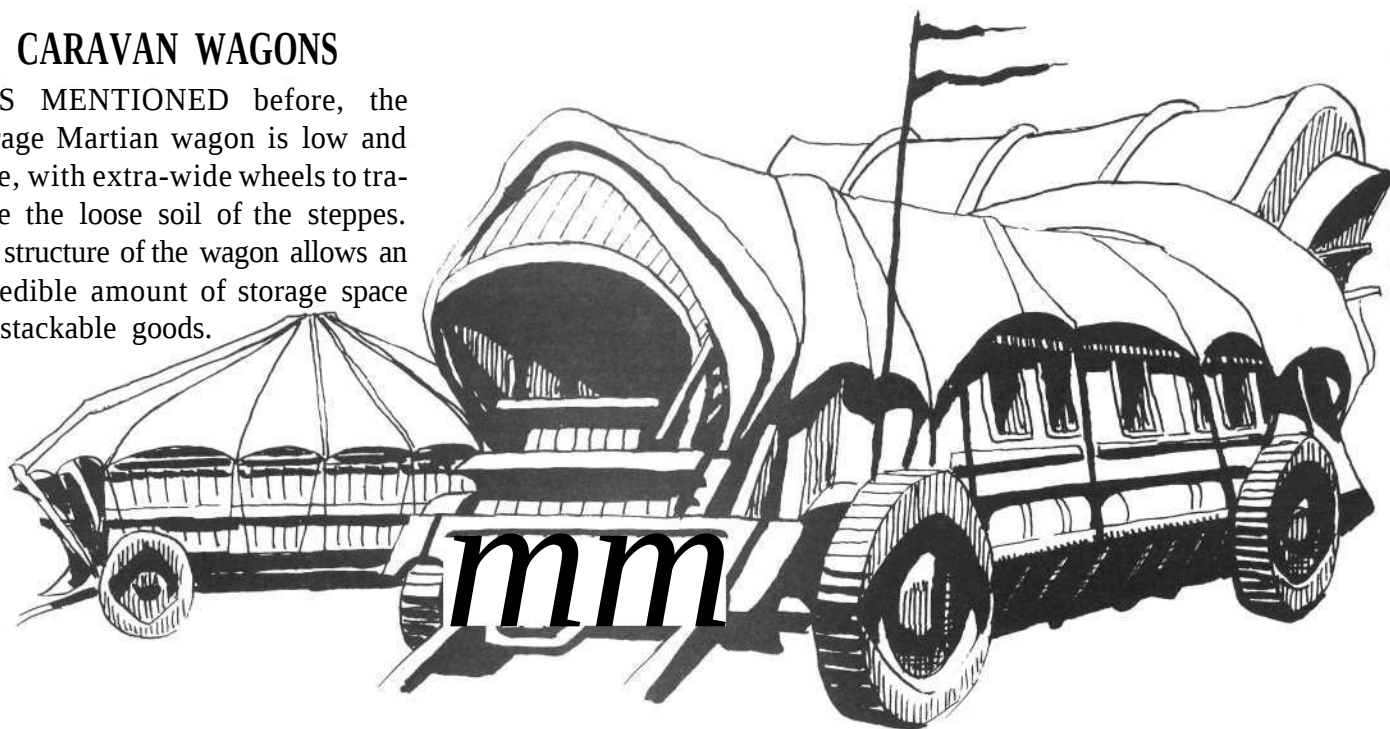
Upon returning to his place at the head of the table, Khuratta finds a hideous doll on his plate. The Martians at the party will all express great concern and shock, and a nearby Martian who speaks English will explain to the players that the doll is considered to be a bad sign, much

like a voodoo doll on Earth would be. Khuratta, seeing how much commotion has been caused, chooses to toss the doll over his shoulder and shrug, saying it was undercooked anyway. He then stands and offers a toast to the players and the caravan, wishing all a pleasant and profitable journey. Gradually, the party returns to its previous volume.

It should be noticeable from the start that this caravan is not exactly a high-class operation. The few humans who are travelling appear to be lower-class merchants, thieves, and beggars. The Martians of the group look to have lived a much harder life than the average merchant, and being from the rougher side of the canal, the party goes tend to get a little wilder as the night progresses. Players may decide either to party the night away or get to bed early and be prepared for the trip.

CARAVAN WAGONS

AS MENTIONED before, the average Martian wagon is low and wide, with extra-wide wheels to traverse the loose soil of the steppes. The structure of the wagon allows an incredible amount of storage space for stackable goods.



Besides the typical merchants' wagon, several wagons are assigned special tasks. Of course, the cook wagons are fully supplied kitchens on wheels. Behind these will be the supply wagons, which hold the provisions for the trip. The bulk of the supplies are dried or dehydrated so they will be safe for the trip. Most of the food Martians eat is considered too spicy by human standards, so players—if experienced—will know to take their own food. If not, then they may be in for a shock, at least a gastric one. (The referee may decide if the caravan master thought of his human passengers or not.) What this means is that preparation for mealtimes will be long, as the Martian food will have to be soaked or cooked for quite some time before it assumes an edible status.

The caravan master's personal wagon, jokingly called "the comfort wagon," is perhaps the largest wagon on the whole train. It is generally twice as wide as any other merchant wagon, and is supported by struts

and iron springs. About six people can live comfortably in the master's wagon. Steps were built into the side of the wagon to allow entrance. The four "rooms" in the wagon are separated only by strings of hanging beads. Though caravan masters are typically hard and stern men, they obviously appreciate comfort. Pillows and cushions are scattered all about, as are incense burners and occasional bird cages (in which brilliantly colored birds sing). In one corner is a small kitchen, where all the master's meals are prepared separately from the rest of the caravan's. The wagon is so heavy that it takes two ruumet breehrs to pull it.

Every caravan master has several aides. They include a bookkeeper, a cook, a messenger (who keeps the caravan master informed of the latest news up and down the caravan), and a personal servant. Caravan masters also often have some young Martians who run odd errands for them. All these aides are loyal to the master—although if pressed, the young ones

might tell a little more than they should.

WATER WAGON

THE WATER WAGON was invented by the Martians, even though many humans have tried to patent the creation. A water wagon is a necessity on long trips, if the travellers hope to survive. The water wagon is basically a giant water bucket on wheels. Shaped like all the other wagons, the wooden "pan" is sealed and watertight. Attached to the wagon is a giant umbrella that is ribbed and unfolds to cover the whole wagon. During the day, the umbrella folds up and lies down to protect the water from evaporation. At night, as the caravan makes camp, the umbrella is unfolded and draped over the wagon. As the temperature cools, water condenses in the umbrella and drips down to collect into the wagon, supplying the camp with water. This technique is copied from the desert insects, many of which use their carapace to condense water out of the

morning air in the same manner. Two of these wagons are on the journey. The Martians do not depend entirely on the wagons, as they are often the first thing bandits will attack; the Martians carry a large personal supply of water as well, to supplement the water wagon. Water quickly becomes the most prized commodity in the Martian deserts, and the supply is well protected.

MEDICAL WAGON

ONLY ONE MEDICAL wagon

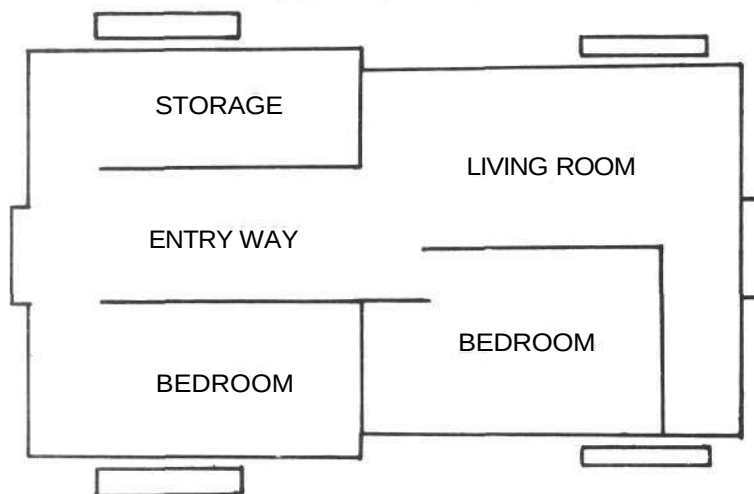
serves the entire caravan, and it is equipped to treat most common Martian ailments. The wagon has enough supplies to treat anything up to and including minor surgery. While the humans will find what they may need on the wagon to administer first aid to their own, they would do well to carry additional supplies.

ANIMAL SUPPLIES

WAGONS OF animal fodder and water follow the provisions wagon. The animals are allowed to graze

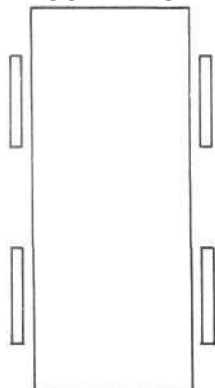
along the route (the spotty desert brush supplements their diet). Both the gashants and ruumet breehr can go for days without water, but their endurance will diminish gradually, affecting their performance. Therefore, the animals are well tended by a handful of young Martians, who watch over them and report problems to the caravan master. Keeping the animals in good health is of basic importance to a caravan, as without them goods and wagons may have to be left rotting in the desert.

COMFORT WAGON

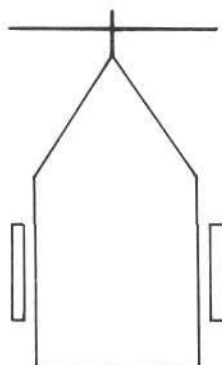


TYPICAL MERCHANT WAGONS

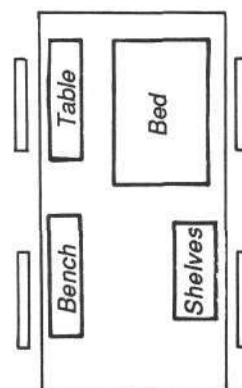
TENT OR CANVAS COVERING



TWIN-ANIMAL DESIGN



MEDICAL WAGON



CARAVAN ENCOUNTERS

AT THE BEGINNING of any caravan trek across the sands, encounters of many kinds can alter the character of the adventure. At any point along the caravan's route, especially at cities and towns, the referee should consider implementing any number of these encounters. Also, you may wish to create your own encounters for these tables to set the tone of a particular caravan adventure.

CITY ENCOUNTERS

Die Roll	Result
1	Beggar
2	Drunk
3	Assassin
4	Street Merchant
5	City Guard
6	Young Martian

CITY ENCOUNTERS DESCRIPTIONS

THE FOLLOWING section details city encounters.



Beggar: The old beggar is like so many others you would meet—every city has them. He is thankful for a handout but hateful if you ignore him. Never ignore the beggars, for they are the eyes of the street. Of course, the players may be taken for an easy mark if they are too generous, and every beggar in the street will follow them around.

Drunk: The drunk is also a common sight in the cities. He can be any number of things: the friendly, laughing fool; the sad, jilted boyfriend; the mean fighter; or the pretender, who plays the game only to gather information that may be useful.

Assassin: The assassin could also be many things. The players could witness an assassination and pursue the killer. Or the reverse is possible: The players have to run because they are the only ones who saw the killer, and he is after them.



Street Merchant: All city adventures would be incomplete without the city merchant. He is the shifty, silken-voiced wonder who always happens to have just what you are looking for, whether it is goods or information. He will bow, scrape, and be the loyal servant, then sell everything he knows about you to your mortal enemy.

City Guard: The city guard is often the heavy in an adventure, simply because he happens onto the scene after all the action has occurred and the real guilty party has left. The city guard may be a true-blue loyalist, or his loyalty may only be as deep as his pockets. Chances are that the guard will stop any human characters

and question them because of any incident involving a human. After all, humans all look alike to the Martians.

Young Martian: A youngster adopts one of the player characters and won't go away. He may be a nuisance or helpful, or both. He will cry whenever the character tries to leave him.

CHARACTER ENCOUNTERS

Die Roll	Result
1	Missionary
2	Big Game Hunter
3	Old Martian Scavenger
4	Nomad Hunters
5	Young Martian Warrior
6	Lost Explorer

CHARACTER ENCOUNTERS DESCRIPTIONS

THE FOLLOWING section details character encounters.



Missionary: The missionary is travelling the land trying to find those who will join him in looking for the "true way." So far, he hasn't been very successful, as only a small Martian boy accompanies him, riding on the back of the gashant that pulls a meager wagon full of supplies. The priest is worn and perhaps a little rattled due to the Sun. He tells the players that the deserts are godless and that all humans should beware the devil-spawned steppelords.



Big Game Hunter: The big game hunter is on full safari and has about 20 humans and Martians toting his kills around. The hunter has bagged a few impressive pieces, and the party must watch as the hunters' spear carriers parade by with their poles, hoisting eegaars and even a steppe tiger. As the hunter strolls by, his clipped British accent highlights the story of his hunt and his near run-in with death embodied in the tiger. He reveals that he is really in search of the fabled bronze tiger of the deserts. He invites the party to go along with him and offers to split whatever prize money may be had in bringing the beast in.



Old Martian Scavenger: The old Martian scavenger is scouring the steppes for whatever is useful. He will be loaded down with all kinds of junk that the elements have already had the best of. He will jabber the whole time the caravan is within earshot; even out of range, he will chortle and polish his "treasures" lovingly.



Nomad Hunters: The nomad hunters will not be afraid of the caravan, and will even be friendly unless they see the humans—then they will be very curious and full of questions. They will discuss the route ahead with the caravan master and tell him that the road is clear until he reaches Kai Urukta's domain. The warlord has set up a blockade and demands tolls from all who pass.



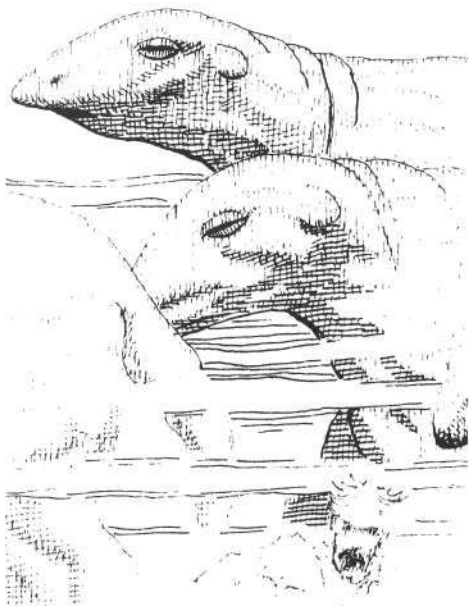
Young Martian Warrior: The young Martian is a warrior who is on his trek of proving himself and must not converse with anyone. He feels proud that a steppe tiger came to him last night and stared at him. The caravan master wishes him well and tosses him a British pocketknife, bidding the boy to tell his elders that the fat tiger of the west gave it to him.



Lost Explorer: The lost explorer is in sad shape. He is ill from exposure and will die shortly. He is German, and unless someone can speak German, his adventure is lost forever. If one or more of the players speak German, then he will tell them that he is an archaeologist and that his expedition was ambushed by a pirate ship. His group had nothing of value, so it seems that the attack was purely a destructive one. The German says that his soldiers put two solid rounds into the pirate ship, but rounds of what will never be known, as he dies even as he speaks. He also warns the adventurers to avoid the sacred mound of the dead.

SPECIAL CARAVAN EVENTS

REGARDLESS OF the specific caravan, its destination, its origin, or its cargo, caravans all come upon the unexpected. The dunes and patchy grasslands of the deserts are home to myriad inconveniences which may beset a caravan. These are presented for use by the referee whenever the caravan's progress seems too easy.



STAMPEDE

AS THE CARAVAN travels along the road, the adventurers see a dust cloud rising up from the west. Soon the ground begins to vibrate, and the animals grow nervous. Their nervousness soon turns to real terror, and they become harder to control. Fear violently grabs the adventurers' hearts as they see a herd of ruumet breehr thundering directly toward them. Try as it might to get clear, the caravan is going to have a hole punched through it somewhere along the line. The stampede will unleash total chaos on the caravan. Goods will be scattered and people and animals trampled. It will take the better part of a day to clean up and ad-

minister aid before the caravan can move again. The referee should decide how much damage has been done, depending on just how bad the situation is (food, personnel, and animals) at this point.

BUSH MONKEY ATTACK

ONE OF THE humans tries to capture a baby bush monkey to sell to a university back on Earth. He assembles a few men, and they net one while the herd is in its "bailed hay" mode. The mother bush monkey is furious, and she attacks the men and has to be killed. The human and company bring the little bush monkey back to the camp and tie it to a wagon, where it screams in terror.

Toward dusk an unnerving howling begins around the perimeter of the camp and increases in intensity for about 15 minutes. The adventurers grab their guns, and the guards are alerted. The caravan master tries to convince the human to let the bush monkey go, but he won't give up his prize to a "bunch of howling ban-shees."

The players can hear the thumping of the bush monkeys as they beat the earth. The pack animals are growing restless and threaten to bolt. Suddenly, with a howl, the bush monkeys are over the wagons and pack animals and into the camp. This is one of those no-win battles where nearly everyone in the camp will be hurt, either by the monkeys, by stray gunshots, or by panicked pack animals. Players should be asked to throw one die and make that number of saving throws. (If a player rolls a 3, then he must save three times.)

As fast and furious as the attack is, it ends just as quickly. When the dust

clears, the baby bush monkey is nowhere to be seen; its rope has been chewed through.



WRECKAGE

THE SCOUTS come galloping back from the horizon, reporting that they have seen a shipwreck. The players and an expeditionary force set out to investigate. The players should take the appropriate equipment for breaking into the shipwreckage. It appears that the ship crashed to the ground slowly, leaving a furrowed wake nearly half a mile long. Pieces of the ship are strewn about. The ship itself looks like it broke in half amidships, and the two halves are overlapping each other, as if the bow of the ship hit first, causing it to buckle and snap. The ship is irreparable, and the liftwood is useless. The wreckage has been here for some time, as the bodies are nothing but skeletons. Investigating the ship will be somewhat dangerous, as the interior is a mass of furniture, skeletons, and crates.

It looks as if the ship was either a merchant or pirate ship, and was loaded down. The perishables have long since decayed and dried up. The air is stagnant, though, and smells of rotted vegetation. The crew must have been very surprised by the wreck, as it looks as if nothing was secured. No logbooks or identifying papers can be found. The nature of the damage done to the ship seems to indicate that the ship was probably not in a battle. The adventurers find what they believe to be the captain's quarters, and upon searching the rooms, they find a chest with a heavy lock on it. When they choose to break the lock, they find that the chest is full of raw gems. The caravan master values the booty at about £80,000. Naturally, he thinks that he should get the chest, since, after all,

it is his caravan. Doubtless, the players will argue the point, and eventually the master will agree to give in: 50 percent for him and 50 percent for the players. If the players push this too far, they will find themselves on the end of a spear point with the master reminding them nicely that they could easily disappear in the desert.

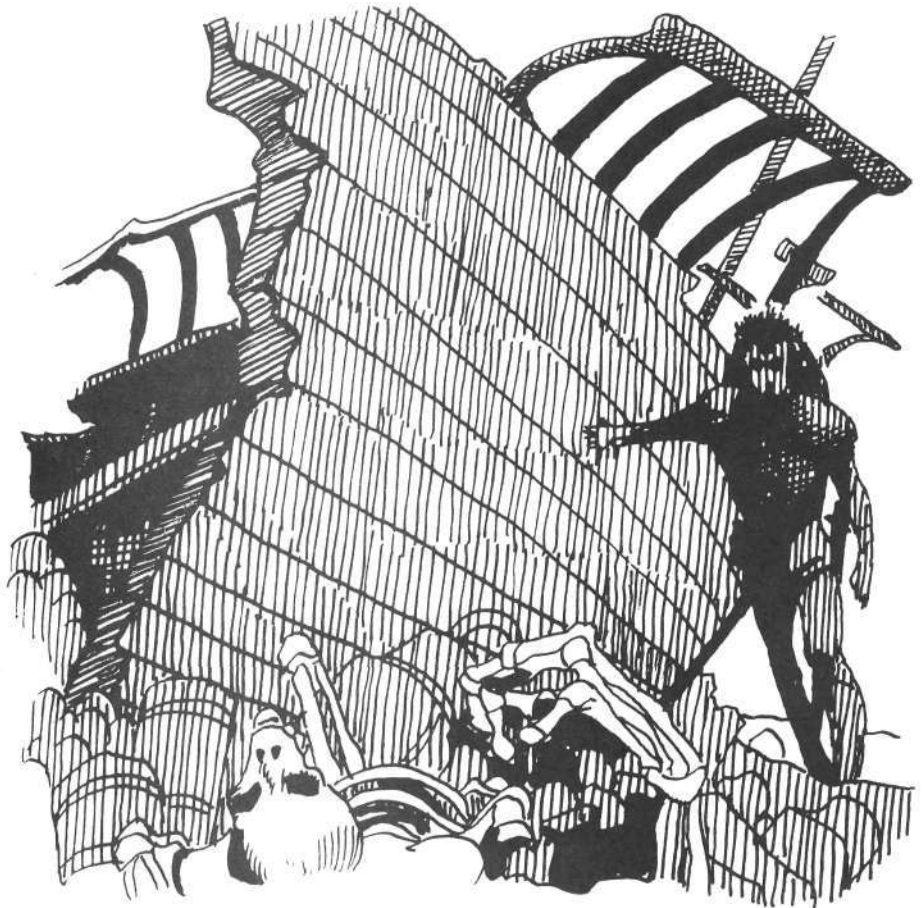
SHE-DEVIL

IT IS NIGHT. The caravan is settled down for the evening. One or more of the players are up for some reason, maybe a night stretch, and find the She-Devil pilfering some delicacies from one of the supply wagons.

If the players are smart, they will let her go her way with whatever food she wants. If they initiate

violence, the She-Devil will respond by wounding characters using unarmed melee attacks to knock them unconscious. (See the **Space: 1889 Referee's Screen** booklet for temporary damage rules pertaining to unarmed melee attacks.) If she is attacked with a gun or wounded with a melee weapon, she will retaliate with her two-headed spear until her two steppe tigers appear a round later. The tigers will make a pathway through the caravan, and all three will escape, with the She-Devil riding on the back of a tiger.

If the She-Devil is treated with respect, or at least decency, the referee may decide to use her later as an aid to the caravan in a bandit attack or other incidents. The She-Devil of the desert is described on page 12.



Caravan to Aubochon

THIS ADVENTURE draws upon the source material presented in the beginning of the book. A caravan is assembling for a journey to Aubochon, a city completely surrounded by dead canals and the dust of the eastern deserts.

You can well understand why the Martians refer to all Earthmen as "red." Looking at the governor general's flushed face above his unbuttoned wool collar is enough to convince you. The governor general sits behind a massive desk of British make, its top clean except for a few notes, an inkwell, and a picture of his wife. Behind the governor general is a map of British territory on Mars. The offices are not comfortable, even though the governor's fan bearers—both young Martians—do their job with the huge woven fans. The governor general mops his brow and sighs. He regards the men as-

sembled before him with something just a notch above boredom.

"Please listen, gentlemen; this is of utmost importance." The governor stifles a yawn. "We have made contact with one of the primitives, one Altin Hirsiz—calls himself the warrior-prince of Aubochon. Now, we have had absolutely no dealings with this Hirsiz fellow, nor do we know anyone who has, but he sent us a letter of invitation. The little bugger either wants something or is genuinely interested in having the British Crown in his favor. You men are to find out which."

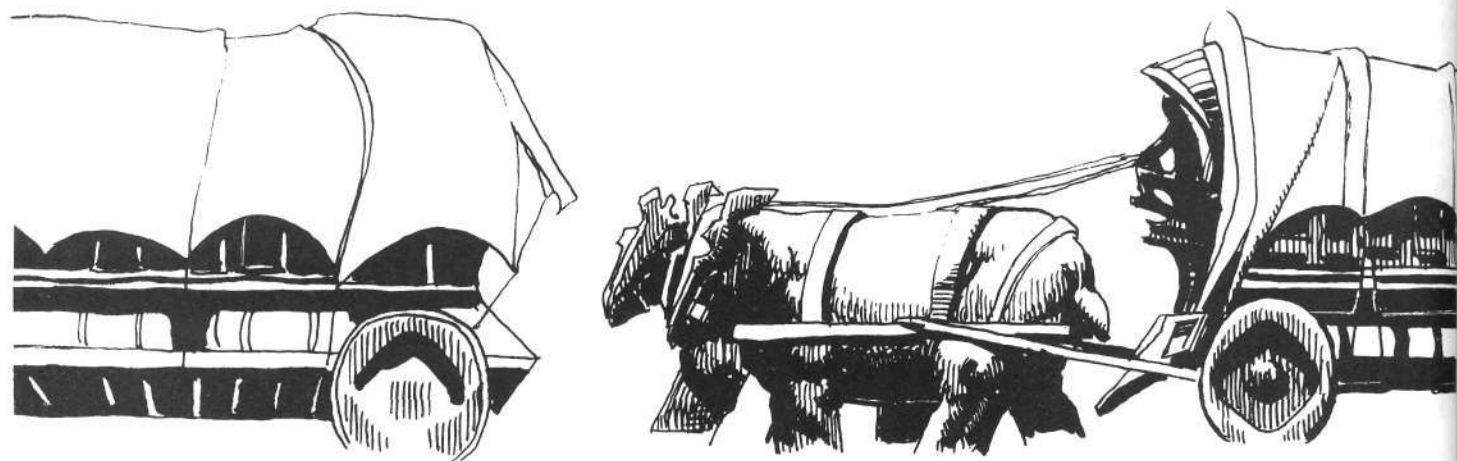
The governor general waves his soggy handkerchief at the wall map, which outlines British territory, and points east. "The bad news is that you're going to have to travel across land—no canals out that way, I'm afraid. I have booked you passage on a caravan out of Alclyon, run by

one," he holds a letter at arm's length and closes one eye, "Samon Khuratta. I want you on your very best behavior; this could be very important."

"There are some things that I want you all to remember. First, you'll be out of British territory, so don't get neck-deep into something thinking that the cavalry is right around the corner.

"Second, you'll be travelling through the deserts. We know very little about this region, except that numerous war clans run around beating bloody blue blazes out of one another and don't take too awfully well to strangers. Try to observe one of them close up, if you get the chance. Find out if they're trading with anyone or if that door is even open to us. Try to get an audience with the king, or whatever their leader calls himself. And don't make fun of any witch doctors you come across. I hear tell those desert beggars are a superstitious lot."

With a heavy sigh, he slumps into his chair. "Now, I can't give you much information on your caravan, either, since the Martians don't see fit to require the caravans to file a roster with city officials. We don't even know if any other humans are



on the docket. This Khuratta fellow comes highly recommended, but watch him, just the same. That's all, men, and remember, you represent the Crown!"

"Caravan to Aubochon" is an adventure which involves several human characters on a mission for the British government. Ideally, British officers will be among those going on the expedition. If not, the referee can either assign an officer NPC or invent circumstances that make officers unnecessary.

The British government is always expanding its influence on Mars, by diplomatic means if possible. The invitation from a distant ruler has opened the governor general's eyes to another opportunity to further British interests, and he will do everything possible to get an expedition there. He is reluctant to send an aerial expedition so far from British protection—most gunboats sent that far out never return. Besides, a ground expedition might be able to open doors with some of the other savages along the route.

Any loyal British subject should be honored to undertake this mission in order to spread the goodwill of the empire on Mars. If the players do not feel the same patriotism, you may

wish to impose some measure of arm-twisting on the characters. One way or another, they are going by caravan to Aubochon.

SYRTIS MAJOR TO ALCLYON

THE PARTY will take a gunboat to Alclyon from Syrtis Major, Britain's territory. From there, the characters must take the caravan along the long-dead Haiuk canal, now a trail through the eastern deserts. Here they will encounter many dangers and exotic things as they travel to Aubochon, where the warrior-prince awaits. The prince is not totally in the favor of the public eye, however, and the player characters may find themselves at odds with an entire city of peasants on the verge of revolt.

Players will also encounter the steppelords and their primitive, yet honorable ways. Some of the more compelling and dangerous events could take place in the realm of these tribes, as they are both fierce and proud. Many have never seen a human, much less contacted one. Friends as well as enemies can be met within the steppes.

As this is a mission of political and administrative matters, it is advisable that the players portray military of-

ficers or diplomats, although scientists, merchants, and perhaps even underworld characters could feasibly add to the flavor of the expedition. Military players will set out from Syrtis Major, while other characters will join the expedition at the Feast of the Onset (a tradition for all caravans) in Alclyon.

"Caravan to Aubochon" deals with what seems to be a routine diplomatic mission, but it is one which could lead to a series of adventures involving some intrigue and a little mysticism. Player characters will have a number of options to explore discoveries along the way, with each adventure somehow dovetailing into the next. Of course these singular events may be used on the judgment of the referee.

Remember that the players, while taking a caravan route that is somewhat established, will be new to this area of Mars. To them, danger appears to threaten from all sides. Though Samon Khuratta and his men know the area of the route they traverse, there may be very few, if any, veterans of the route on this train. The player characters should not be afraid to explore, but diving into a skirmish at the drop of a pith helmet could prove deadly for all concerned.



THE CARAVAN DESCRIBED

IT IS DAWN, and the red haze has already cast its early glare across the landscape. Samon Khuratta is already up and barking orders at the Martians who are getting the beasts of burden in line for the trip. He seems no worse for wear from the party the night before. The beasts, the large and hulking ruumet breehr and the swifter, one-man gashants, complain and moan more than their human and Martian counterparts.

Horses are not allowed on the trek across the steppes, as they are not considered hardy enough for the hard journey, and steppe tigers have developed a taste for them because they are thin-skinned and easy prey. Gashants and the massive ruumet

breehr, native to Mars, are much better suited to the miles they will have to endure.

Wagons are the main source for hauling goods; the Martians' wagons are wide-bodied, with wheels that would appear unusually thick to humans. The wheels aid in easy travel over the loose earth along the caravan route. Most of the wagons are covered to protect against the Sun. All the wagons are drawn by either the massive ruumet breehr or a trained team of gashants. Ruumet breehr will also be used as pack animals, while the guards and the players will ride gashants.

Fifteen wagons, including those for provisions, cooking, and water collection will make the trip. Ten ruumet breehr will be used solely as

pack animals, and others will pull the wagons. Each wagon will have a driver and at least one assistant. Except for the players and the characters listed in the Caravan NPCs section, the rest of the caravan-goers are Canal Martians. They will be somewhat indifferent to the humans, having dealt with them before. Messages are relayed up and down the train either by mounted aides or by a type of semaphore code in which the messengers use their own sign language. Samon Khuratta has a half-dozen trusted assistants who keep him informed of the activity along the caravan. While Khuratta may look like the joyful, careless type, he is very canny and is always informed of the condition of his expedition and the people in it.

Caravan Guards (Merc Soldiers, Experienced NPCs)

KHURATTA HAS hired 31 guards for the trek, including one captain and three squads of guards. All but 10 guards will remain mounted on gashants as long as the caravan travels; the other 10 will be resting on the wagons. All are good riders and fighters.

For game purposes, the guard statistics are as follows.

Att.	Skills
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1, Close Combat 3 (edged weapon)
Agl: 3	Stealth 2, Marksmanship (bow 2, rifle 1)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 2	Observation 1
Chr: 2	Eloquence 1
Soc: 3	Riding 2 (gashant)

Two of the mounted guards will act as scouts, riding back periodically to report to Khuratta. Three guards will ride well behind the caravan to alert Khuratta of anything from the rear. Four other guards will ride, in pairs to either flank. These guards

will keep a constant vigil against anything that might appear suspect. They can send a flagged arrow into the air at the first sign of any kind of danger, allowing the caravan to prepare for the emergency before it occurs.



*m

Toruk the Loyal (Veteran NPC)

THE CAPTAIN of the guard is Toruk. While a majority of the guards are little more than mercenaries who wander from job to job, Toruk and a handful of his men remain on Khuratta's payroll. Khuratta trusts Toruk's judgment and relies on him for muscle. In turn, Toruk is loyal to Khuratta and will be the first one at his side when the need arises.

Toruk, like the other Martians on the caravan, treats the humans indifferently. Toruk appears to be a master fighter, and is adept in both the bow and the sword. The players may discover that Toruk actually spent some years with the steppe tribes, where he learned their ways and warring skills. He can provide some information about the land, but getting anything from him will



not be easy. He is not a very talkative fellow.

Motives: Loyal, Proud.

Appearance: Toruk is lean but well muscled. He has a piercing look which he will apply to any guard who

gets out of line or anyone he doesn't want to talk to. He is rather vain about his hair, which is very light brown (almost blond) and worn long for a Canal Martian. With his greenish-gold eyes, he reminds humans of a bird of prey.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 2, Close Combat 4 (edged weapon)
Agl: 3	Stealth 2, Marksmanship (bow 2, rifle 1)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3, Theatrics 2, Linguistics 2 (Koline, English)
Soc: 2	Riding 2 (gashant), Leadership 3

Zaturo the Champion (Veteran NPC)

ZATURO IS an old favorite of the guards. He is loyal to his job and those who pay him. He is large even for a Martian, but his strength is well tempered by his pleasant attitude and humor. His favorite weapon is a cut-down sledge hammer he traded an Irish miner for.

Zaturo is very superstitious. He wears many "good luck" charms and talismans, and performs many rituals during the day to ward off evil spirits. Though his fellow swordsmen chide him for his beliefs, they would rather have Zaturo fighting alongside them than anyone else.



Motives: Friendly.

Appearance: Zaturo wears several charms braided into a long lock of hair. He has inlaid his sledge hammer with copper.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 4 (bashing weapon)
Agl: 4	Stealth 2, Marksmanship (bow 2, rifle 1)
End: 5	Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3
Soc: 1	Riding 3 (gashant)

THE FOLLOWING is a list of characters who may be used as NPCs for the adventure. Not all the characters have to be used, and the ref-

eree is free to add any himself. These have been chosen because they could be a help to the referee in carrying the story along if it should drag, leak-

ing information that the players will need, and even providing the inevitable sacrificed hero to avoid losing players.

Henri LeFriont (Veteran NPC)



HENRY LEFRIONT is with the Belgian foreign office. He is a spy posing as a photographer. His assignment is to supply the warrior-prince of Aubochon with whatever he requests (in this case, guns) and to poison any British goodwill attempts, as well. LeFriont speaks English well enough to pass for an Englishman, and Koline well enough to pose as a merchant, newsman, etc. He is armed to the teeth with two heavy revolvers, two light multibarrels, and three throwing knives. At times, his arrogance gets the best of him, and he slips and assumes a superior attitude. This is quickly put in check,

but it may clue the players in to the Belgian's real identity.

Motives: Loyal, Sadistic, Arrogant.

Appearance: He is lean and cruelly handsome, which reflects his sadistic side. He will not hesitate to eliminate anyone he fears may expose him. He is loyal, even patriotic to his country, serving it without

question. If cornered, he will swiftly end his own life.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 4 (edged weapon)
Agl: 3	Stealth 2, Crime 2 (lockpick), Marksmanship 2 (pistol)
End: 2	Wilderness Travel 1 (mountaineering)
Int: 4	Observation 4
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3, Theatrics 2, Linguistics 2 (English, Koline)
Soc: 3	Riding 2 (horse), Piloting 2 (steam vessel)

Murry Galway (Experienced NPC)



MURRY GALWAY is a Scottish botanist on a privately funded expedition; he is searching for new desert flora for a collector. Galway is well known throughout Europe for his expertise and has often lectured at colleges (which is where he met his wife). His typically Scottish stubborn streak has placed his life in peril more than once in his search for the new and different. Already he has gained an unfavorable reputation with officers who are assigned to escort his expeditions. He also lacks social graces and has created problems more than once between Martian

royalty and the British consulate.

Something drives him to pursue women, although he already has a beautiful and devoted wife. Ironically, he has a Scotsman's temper when it comes to his wife, and many a young officer has sported a black eye for trying to assist Mrs. Galway.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1
Agl: 1	
End: 2	Wilderness Travel 1 (foraging)
Int: 4	Observation 3, Science 4 (biology)
Chr: 2	Eloquence 1
Soc: 2	Riding 1 (horse)

Motives: Stubborn, Lust.

Appearance: Murry Galway is short, nearsighted, and a shade on the ugly side. The officers joke that any rare flowers Galway finds will probably die of the pipe smoke from his pipe before they get home.

Helena Galway (Green NPC)

HELENA GALWAY is some 20 years younger than her husband. They met when her father, a professor at Cambridge, invited Galway to speak on his travels. Helena, until that time, had only experienced silly college boys. She fell in love with Galway immediately. Galway, who had never really thought much about women until then, found that he liked the power of "male dominance" and began pursuing it with a fervor (but not, of course, until after he had married the young Helena). She is intelligent, though still learning the arts of botany. Helena takes her husband's lack of fidelity stoically,



fearing that she may lose him. She is really stuck on Galway, something that angers young officers when they witness his treatment of her. She is the expedition's bookkeeper, controlling the expenses firmly.

Motives: Adventuresome, Love, Frugal.

Appearance: Helena Galway is a petite but sturdy woman with black

Att.	Skills
Str: 2	Fisticuffs 1
Agl: 3	Stealth 2
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 2 (foraging)
Int: 3	Observation 2, Science 1 (biology)
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3
Soc: 3	Riding 2 (horse)

hair and strong, attractive features. She is quick to smile and laugh, and this usually causes a glare from the ever-suspicious Galway. Her social skills are far superior to her husband's and that and the scarcity of women on Mars make her popular with all the officers.

Bobby MacCraken (Green NPC)

BOBBY JUST started following Galway around years ago, and the botanist never bothered to send him on his way. Galway treats Bobby rudely, but Bobby seems to take it all in stride. He is a bit eccentric, stomping through woods and swamps, making animal sounds as he goes. Because he is aware of his own clumsiness and has been the butt of many cruel pranks in his life, he is very cautious around strangers. He is devoted to both Galway and Helena and has caused more than a few problems when a man tries to speak to Helena. Bobby cannot hold his liquor and will, after only one drink, pretend (at least everyone thinks he is pretending) to be a bull, pawing the ground and bellowing. He loves for some-



one to wave a cape or tablecloth in front of him so he may carry out the act to its fullest. Several pubs and bars have banned the botanist and his party because of mishaps from this little stunt.

Motives: Loyal.

Appearance: Bobby MacCraken is a big ox of a man in his twenties. He is somewhat cloddish, but incredibly gentle in handling Galway's plants. Bobby is the packhorse for Galway, carrying as much as possible on his back and shoulders. The players would do well to stay on Bobby's good side, as his bulk could be a real asset in emergencies.

Att.	Skills
Str: 5	Fisticuffs 4, Throwing 2
Agl: 2	Stealth 1
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging)
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 1	
Soc: 1	

SAMON KHURATTA is the host of the caravan. He genuinely likes the humans, especially since he can see that they will bring him money for little work. Khuratta has been running caravans for about the past 10 years. He is considered one of the best, and hopeful merchants never hesitate to sign on as much as a year in advance of a journey. His sense of diplomacy often protects him in the tighter spots, and his business sense seems to always turn a profit, even in the worst situations.

Before the caravans, he ran a cooperative trade booth for those who could not afford a stall. He learned to shave profits so that he would come out ahead, no matter what the outcome of a day of sales. Of course, he never really saw this as being dishonest, as he was do-

Samon Khuratta (Veteran NPC)



ing the traders a favor by getting them exposure that they would normally never have received.

Khuratta enjoys the caravans but still has a dream of owning his own merchant ship, something which he has been saving for. But, for the time being, he is quite happy with his profitable caravan and a wife in every major trade city (something few know about).

Motives: Mercantile, Steady.

Appearance: If a Martian can be fat, then Samon Khuratta is heading toward it. He is the example of what a perfect Martian merchant should be—fun-loving, shrewd, with an eye for the dollar. All these things, and a glowing personality, make for an excellent merchant.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 4 (edged weapon)
Agl: 2	Stealth 1, Marksmanship (bow 1, pistol 1)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging)
Int: 5	Observation 4
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3, Bargaining 3, Linguistics (Koline, Umbran, English)
Soc: 3	Riding 3 (ruumet breehr)

Murlark (the Traitor) (Experienced NPC)



BECAUSE MURLARK complains endlessly about his situation, most of the sergeants ignore him. Unknown to these superiors is the fact that Murlark is trying to sabotage the caravan. The witch doctor Kur, fearing that the British might ally with the warrior-prince of Aubochon, has hired him to instill fear and betrayal into the caravan. Murlark will use any means he can to stir up trouble within the camp. He will pit merchants against guards, humans against Martians—anything. Murlark's motivation is not entirely greed, as he is of the old beliefs and

would like to see the unclean humans swept from Mars.

Motives: Hatred, Greedy.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1, Close Combat 3 (edged weapon)
Agl: 4	Stealth 3, Crime 3, Marksmanship (bow 2, rifle 1)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 5	Observation 2
Chr: 3	Eloquence 2, Theatrics 2
Soc: 4	Riding 3 (gashant)

Altin Hirsiz, Prince of Aubochon (Trained NPC)

FROM THE time he was a youngster, Altin Hirsiz knew that he was destined to be a prince. This was somewhat awkward, as he was born to lowly servants. Still, this dream burned in his heart, and he trained in riding and war skills. A series of childhood diseases left him weak, with one leg twisted and ill-formed. Because of this, he was never able to master the warring arts, and resentment burned within him. As the boy grew, so grew the hatred that he nurtured within, and he became a cruel child. He began spending hours outside the city of Aubochon, away from prying eyes.

Rumor has it that Altin learned the ways of the wild from the ancient Martians who lived in the steppes. Whatever the source, the young Martian did, indeed, learn how to survive; he used his mind as his strongest weapon. In his teen years, Altin discovered how to harness the hatred that he held for everyone within his sight. He learned how to bend people to his will through subtle suggestions and lightly dropped petals of advice. Still burning in his heart was the desire to be prince, and he knew that the dream could become a reality—not by using muscles and sweat, but by brains and cunning.

Slowly, he wove his plan. His parents both died from a mysterious ailment, and the king admired the boy's intelligence and sense of business/politics. The king's two sons despised Altin Hirsiz, as they had in their youth, and they warned their father against taking Altin



in. The king scolded them, threatening to disown them if they did not learn the art of caring and charity. Two days later, the king was dead from, it was proclaimed, food poisoning. The oldest son claimed the throne and ruled well for nearly a year until he and Altin Hirsiz argued over a diplomatic issue. That king died the next week in a riding accident (his saddle came apart, and he was trampled). The youngest prince then assumed the throne and, believing Altin Hirsiz was responsible for the two previous kings' deaths, cast Altin Hirsiz from the palace.

But by now Hirsiz had gained a following among the people of the city. Believing that Hirsiz had really been the ruling force in the city for so long, they rallied around the outcast and stormed the castle. Caught off guard, the royal house was easily overthrown. Hirsiz quickly initiated some consolidating policies, declaring martial law and executing any opposition.

Motives: Mad, Rage, Ruthless.

Appearance: Altin Hirsiz walks with a cane to help his crippled right leg. The cane—made of the leg bone of a steppe tiger, polished and en-

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1, Close Combat 2 (bashing weapon)
Agl: 5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 2 (bow)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 4	Observation 3
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3
Soc: 4	Riding (gashant 5, ruu-met breehr 3) Leadership 2

crusted with jewels—has become something of a symbol to those who despise the new prince. It is said that the new ruler of Aubochon will be the one who shatters the cane by hurling it from the steps of the palace.

Hirsiz is frail-looking, although the years of playing in the steppes as a youngster have permanently tanned his skin. His eyes possess the evil madness that all have learned to fear. He can be quite eloquent and entertaining as long as things are going his way, but he will throw a screaming fit if he is crossed. His guards obey his orders out of fear for their lives.

He has sent an invitation of goodwill to all the human colonies, but only the Belgians and the British have responded. His true hope is to ally with a colony which will supply him with weapons and troops to keep the city "peasants" under control. The prince is a danger to anyone who stands in his way—not just the people, but the British as well.

A PAIR OF WARNINGS

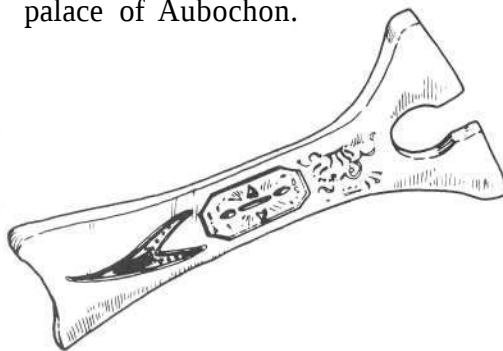
JUST OUTSIDE Alclyon is a lean-to sitting in the middle of nowhere. As the caravan approaches, the adventurers can see an old female Martian tending a small fire. She waves to them as they pull up and inquires as to their destination. When they tell her Aubochon, she purses her lips and warns them that their way is a treacherous one. Khuratta laughs this off (just as he dismissed the ugly doll at the feast), and his courage gives strength to the merchants of the caravan. The old Martian grows angry with Khuratta and shakes a feeble fist at him, telling him that an elder's warning is not to be taken lightly. She claims to be Talour, a witch, and states that she is to be respected. She then directs her attention to the players.

She produces a talisman and bids them to take it for protection, as she knows the ways of the prince of Aubochon and the talisman could be the very thing that saves their lives. She hands it to the closest of the party, begging him to keep it close to his heart and not to let anyone else see it. She tries again to talk the party out of going and, since that is not successful, wishes them well and returns to her seat by the fire, turning her back to the party. She will answer no more questions.

THE TALISMAN OF MANGLI DESH

THE TALISMAN that the old Martian woman gives the players, the talisman of Mangli Desh, is illustrated to the right. Attached to a leather thong, it is made of a hard metal and is about eight inches long. Both ends are smooth, as if from

wear. It is an odd piece, with an elegant etching on one side only. It actually looks like it belongs to something and is not a whole piece on its own. The talisman is actually a key, and the possessor of the piece would do well to guard it. Its use will be evident once the party is inside the palace of Aubochon.



AN EXPECTED WARNING

JUST AS THE caravan is well into the desert, problems arise. The scouts return with reports of a blockade. Khuratta orders the caravan to continue, since there is really no way around any obstacle with a train this size. The referee must decide if this encounter is to be simply a warning and an introduction to the players of what lies ahead, or if it is to be a more detailed event.

The caravan comes upon a group of nomad warriors who have indeed set up a makeshift blockade of what looks to be planking from a cloudship. As a true blockade, the structure is almost laughable. It is apparent that the planking structure is not intended to stop anything, but only to give notice. More to the players' concern should be the warriors who stand before the blockade. The caravan guards deploy carefully, so as to avoid arousing suspicion. All the nomad warriors are armed. There are only 20 warriors, but each is armed with a bow and sword. They

appear to be casually deployed and not in any noticeable formation. In spite of this, their attitude is menacing, but not aggressively hostile. Standing at the front of the group is the warlord, Karkem Kubla. He is impressive, standing ramrod straight with his arms folded across his chest and his *bajuy* cradled in between. He wears his scars like badges of honor, and an air of pride surrounds the lord.

He barks out an order, and Khuratta dismounts and approaches him. Khuratta is a veteran in the ways of diplomacy, so he gestures, bows appropriately, and speaks in all the right places. After a moment, the two turn back toward the players. Kubla marches toward them, Khuratta on his heels and three warriors right behind. Kubla halts before the humans and begins his speech, translated by Khuratta.

"These are our lands, and humans are not welcome. We are not soft and spineless like the city dwellers; we do not accept the lies you bring with you or your pretty trinkets. If you think that you can come into our land and shackle our people, you will learn what it is to confront the people of the deserts."

Khuratta explains that the humans have no wish to "tarnish" the great land of the desert people and that they are trying to reach Aubochon. Kubla then accuses the humans of trading weapons with the warrior-prince of Aubochon and bringing death to the deserts. Khuratta and the humans assure him that they carry no weapons, and invite him to search the caravan. Kubla eyes the humans, then leaves them with a final warning—humans are not welcome in the desert. He turns and orders his war-

riors to allow the caravan to ride on.

If the players try to argue or take aggressive action, the warriors will fight to the death. One of the warriors will ride for reinforcements. Roll one six-sided die to determine how many days it will take him to be back with about 100 warriors. A battle with this many desert Martians will be nasty, and a number of the caravan animals and wagons will be no doubt be wiped out before the battle is finished.

Khuratta will do his utmost to keep the humans quiet in Kubla's presence. If necessary, he will have one of the guards use force to quell any vocal human. Khuratta will explain later that this was all necessary to keep Kubla's warriors at bay. This might be the best time to explain to the players that the desert Martians' feelings toward the humans are varied, and it would undoubtedly be wise to tread softly if they want to keep their heads.

CAMP STORIES

MANY OF the guards and other Martians on the caravan occupy themselves by telling stories around the fires after a long day of travel. The deserts hold a thousand stories, so they will tell the humans, many of them fantastic, many others quite believable. It will be up to the humans to decipher what truth they can from these stories. In them there are clues to the nature of the desert and some aspects of this particular adventure. The stories can be doled out by you to the players as you see fit—they are presented as a flavorful way of getting some ideas across without simply telling them.

Story One: *"The She-Devil! I saw her with my own eyes once," ex-*

plains an old merchant man, blind in one eye. "I was but a lad, a guard on another caravan, like many of you, many hundreds of miles from here near Aeolia. I had fallen victim to a terrible consuming disease, as had many on the ill-fated journey. To save the caravan many of us were simply given up for dead and left in the baking Sun. I thought I was dead for certain. But just as the cool predawn gave way to what I was certain would be my last blistering day in the unforgiving desert, an image came up before me. I could barely see through sand-caked eyes, but I knew it was her. She stood proud and tall, at once beautiful and terrible. She looked at me and touched me on the forehead. Then she left a skin of water and, having never said a word, was gone! My sickness vanished almost instantly, and I managed to make it to Aeolia. I was the only one from the entire caravan to survive—the rest were never heard from again. I swear it's true!"

Story Two: This is a traditional story, memorized and passed along for hundreds of years by word of mouth from person to person among the desert peoples.

"The great shaman Rhutep worked simply enough among the people of

Elysium. He served as sage to many rulers of tribes and cities until the day when Dhon of Hyblaeus was unjustly murdered outside his palace by his horrible brother, Miun.

The policies of Dhon, the champion of cooperation with the nearby desert tribes, were soon replaced. Soldiers under the leadership of Miun were soon on maneuvers through the desert, slaughtering villages of nomads and forcing them further out on the scorched sands.

Their leaders killed or imprisoned, the desert nomads rallied under the banner of the shaman Rhutep. He organized their counterattacks and eventually brought the battle to the gates of Hyblaeus itself. Standing in the front of his desert host, Rhutep raised his bow and cast out a single arrow, high into the air, and, guided by divine powers, it sought out the heart of the evil Miun, killing him outright. The army revolted, and Rhutep victoriously entered the city at the head of his people.

Rhutep reinstated the original ruling dynasty, selecting Dhon's infant daughter to become queen, and the shaman served her as regent. Once she came of age, Rhutep returned to the deserts, rarely to be heard from again."



WEEK TWO: SACRED BURIAL MOUND

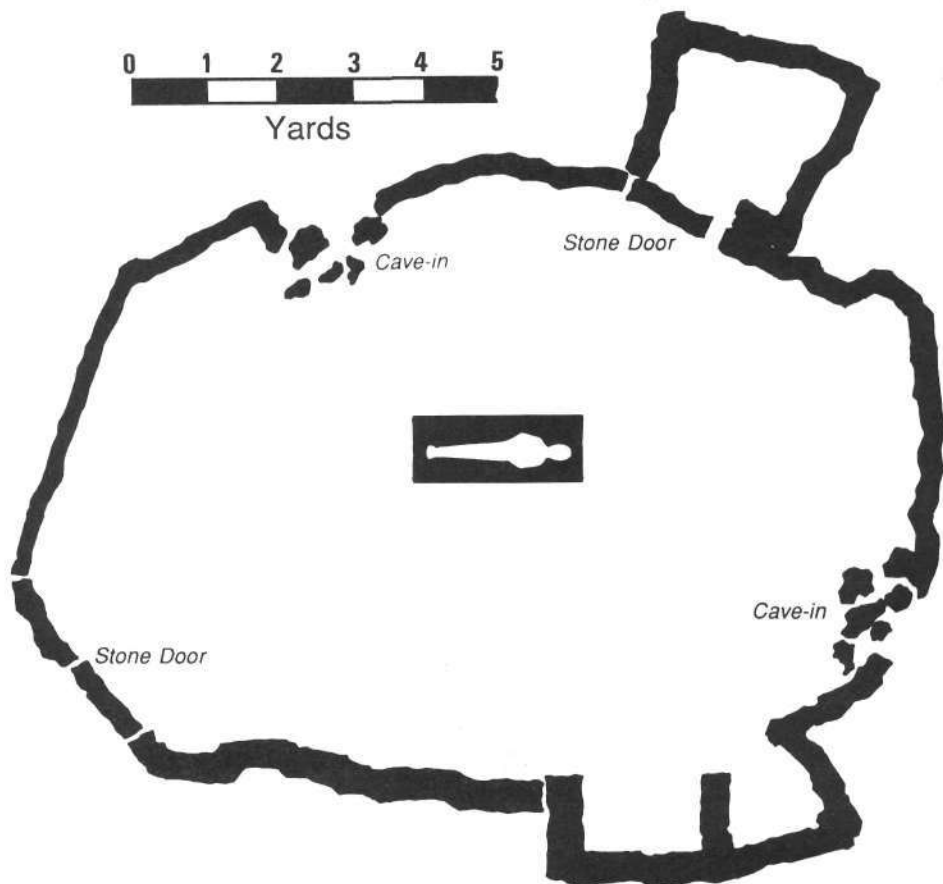
THE GUARDS from the right flank signal to Khuratta that they have found something of interest. Khuratta gathers six guards and two aides, and sets out on gashantback to investigate. He asks if the players would like to accompany them. The players should take provisions and equipment as if they were going on a short expedition. About 20 minutes from the caravan route, the party will find what appears to be a burial mound. They may explore it (if they know nothing of Martian culture), or they may ignore it and play it safe. If they do wish to explore the mound, they will receive at least vocal opposition from the Martians. They will not like the idea of breaking into what could be a sacred artifact. If the party stops and observes the mound, its members will find several things.

At first glance, this appears to be just a huge mound of dirt. Upon further study, the adventurers will see that the dirt and sand are actually covering a stone structure, and on that stone is a series of carvings. Khuratta or one of his men will recognize the crude script of the nomads. After struggling for a few moments, the party concludes that the inscription must read:

*Here Lies The Holy One
Resting Until His Return*

Accompanying the inscription is a symbol some of the players will recognize as the talisman from the witch-woman Talour. If the adventurers decide to force the stone door open and investigate, they must have

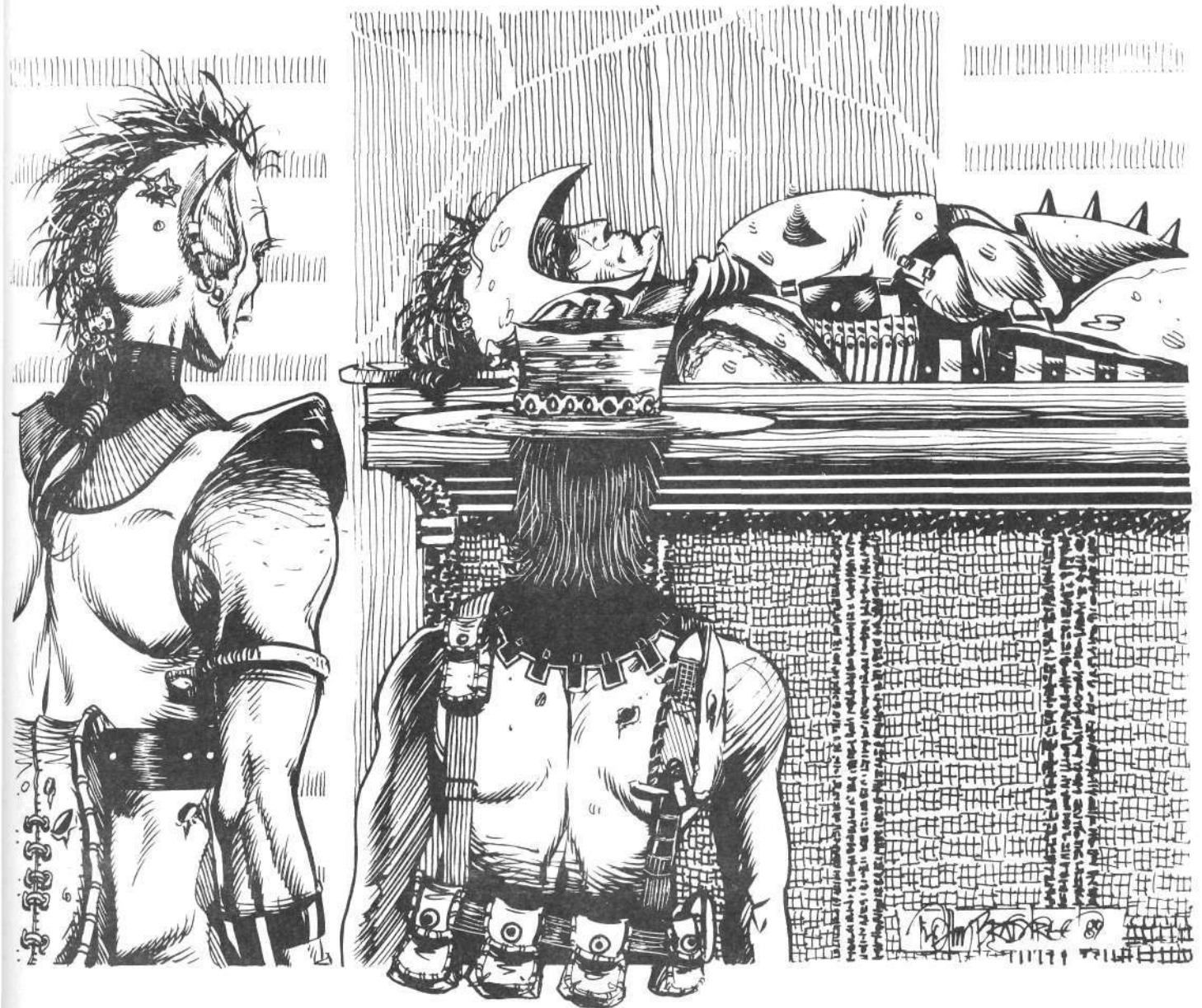
BURIAL MOUND of URIAH TU



the appropriate tools—ropes and levers. Once the mound is uncovered, the party will see a narrow corridor. While the floor is nothing more than hard-packed earth, the walls are covered with paintings depicting a story—many battles, a royal birth, a coronation, a Martian speaking to the masses, and other scenes that seem to indicate a great leader's life. Upon the referee's decision, one of the members of the caravan could relate the story of the legendary warlord, Uriah Tu. Uriah Tu fills the same shoes as the British

King Arthur, though on a considerably smaller scale. It is believed that one day the warrior will rise to hand down his magic sword to a blessed child. The caravan master shrugs this off as an old tale, but his aide warns him about mocking legends.

The party may continue into the mound, which is nothing more than a large tomb. In the center of the room is a Martian corpse lying on an ornate table. If this is Uriah Tu, he has seen better days. The body, completely preserved by the dryness of Mars, is dressed in elegant gold ar-



mor. The armor consists of a gold helmet and an ornate, octagon-shaped chestplate with greaves and braces. The armor is obviously more for show than service, but at the head of the table is a sword. As a burial item, it is something of an oddity. It is not encrusted with jewels or worked in gold. It is a functional weapon, about three feet in length, with a single edge that runs the length of the blade. The hilt is typical of Martian weapons, and the weapon is in excellent condition.

Members of the caravan will de-

bate about the desecration of a tomb and whether or not they should take anything from it. Some will be overwhelmed by fear, and the majority of the people will decide against any desecration. What the players decide is up to them, but they shouldn't expect any friendly discourse from the Martians in the party if they take anything.

THE LEGEND OF URIAH TU

URIAH TU is a hero to the desert folk just as King Arthur is to the British. It is believed that, one day,

the ancient warlord will rise again to unite the Martian people into one family and overthrow all "pretenders" and infidels. Uriah Tu will return as a child who will be able to be identified by his low "widow's peak," a point of hair that will come down almost all the way to his eyebrows. He will possess the sword of ancient days which he will grow to wield with uncanny ability. Of course, this legend is so old that few take it seriously. The legend still exists, though, for those who want or need to believe.

WEEK THREE: A WARLORD'S TOLL

THE ROAD along the now-ruined Haiuk Canal leads straight through the Aetheria/Elysium Desert. This area is occupied by one of the minor warlords, Kai Urukta, described with the other desert NPCs. He has a number of posts set up in the area to exact a toll from anyone crossing his land. Caravan master Khuratta explains this to the party as he points out two scouts on gashants in the distance. The images vanish.

A short time later, the caravan comes upon 30 armed warriors waiting on the road. They are all mounted on powerful gashants and wait patiently for the caravan to close. Their clothing is a crude but intriguing combination of native leather and trade cloth. Unlike the city-dwelling Canal Martian, these desert raiders have a cruel nobility etched into their faces. They are darker and somewhat shorter than their cousins. Each Martian rider is armed to the teeth with a bow, a throwing axe, and an occasional firearm or sword. Anyone suggesting that the players "take them on" will be directed with a nod of Khuratta's head toward the number of weapons, and Khuratta will mention to them that more warriors are probably nearby for just such an incident. It is obvious that Kai Urukta expects his tolls to be paid.

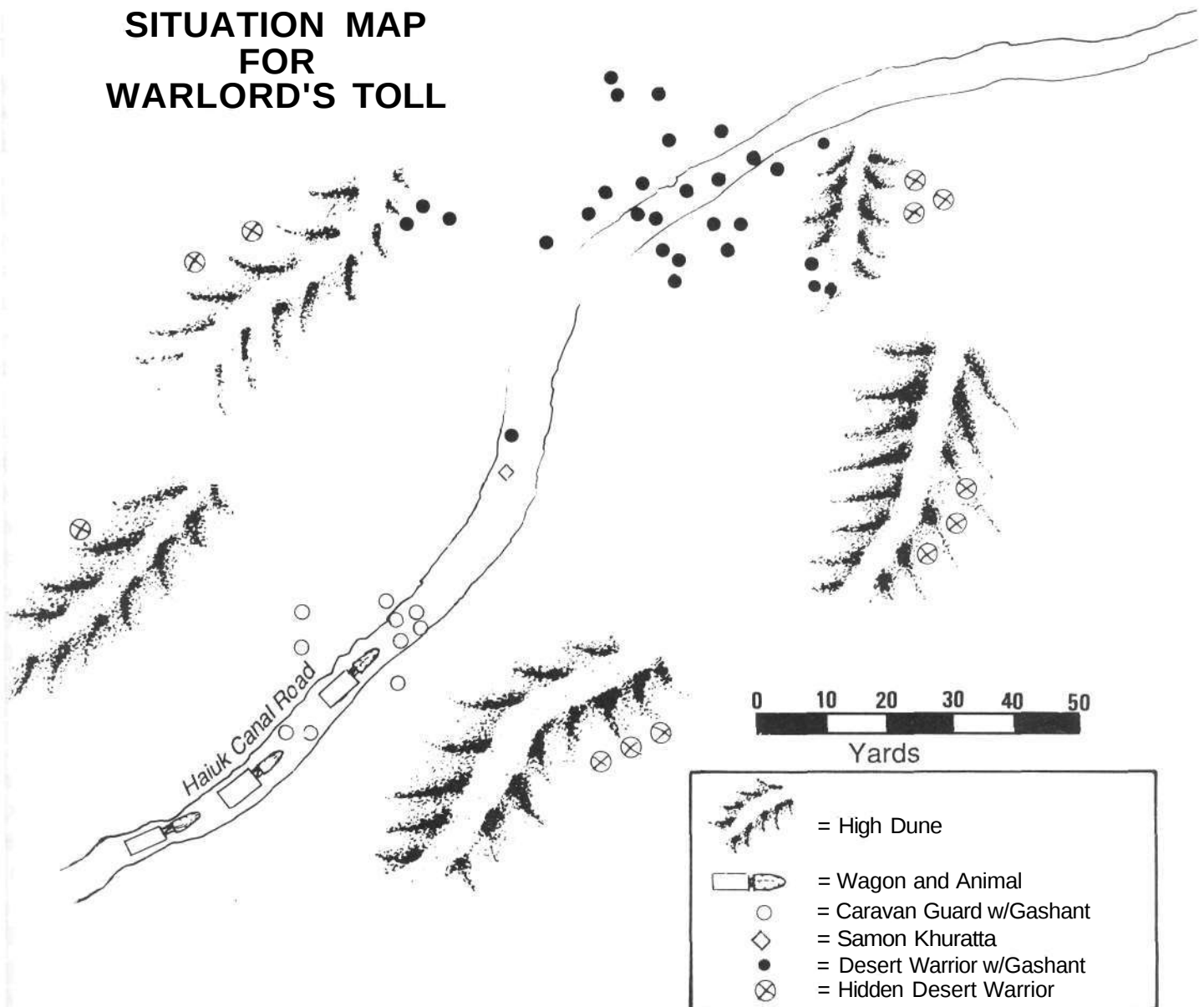
Samon Khuratta excuses himself from the party and walks toward the group of warriors, his arms spread wide as he shouts a salutation in the trade tongue of Mars. One or two of the warriors will ride up and down the length of the train, eyeing everything with a sinister kind of interest. Upon spying the humans, one



of the riders will halt and yell out excitedly to the riders Khuratta is talking to. One of them breaks away from Khuratta and joins the warrior. He looks at the humans with what appears to be a sneer on his face, but the players will notice that it is really a scar that reaches from the corner of his mouth to his ear, pulling one side of his face cruelly back. He looks at the humans, then grunts and goes back to Khuratta. The discussion quickly heats up until the Mar-

tian cuts off the conversation with an abrupt motion of his hand and a final barking command. Khuratta bows and walks backward, keeping his eyes on the apparent leader. When Khuratta reaches the players and turns, the players will see that he is visibly flushed and agitated. He tells them that the warlord Kai Urukta has sent word out that he wishes to meet humans and that his men are to invite them to his camp. But Khuratta is quick to tell the players that Urukta

SITUATION MAP FOR WARLORD'S TOLL



is considered to be one of the crudest lords of the desert. The players may decide to accept or refuse this invitation. If they accept, go to the description of the typical warlord's camp on page 16 for subsequent events.

If the players refuse, then the riders will kidnap the botanist (Galway) and his wife (Helena) and take them to the desert lord. This leaves the players with the unenviable duty of rescuing them. Members of the party may opt to barter with the warlord

(trading goods for humans), or they may try to mount an armed attack on the camp, which is not well defended since it is so far in from other boundaries. They will receive no support from any of the caravan if they decide to attack, and even Khuratta will try to convince the players that an attack would be futile. He assures them that if they do fight and—he adds—survive, then they had better be ready to run for their lives to the nearest border.

Another alternative is to challenge the warlord or his personal champion to a combat of honor with the *bajuy*, the desert war staff. The winner gets to keep the botanist and his wife. What the humans do not know, and Khuratta may fail to tell them, is that the loser of an honor match becomes the victor's slave. This alternative, while thrilling from an adventure standpoint, could lead to an assortment of severe problems for the players.

WEEK FOUR: ROAD OF OMENS

THE CARAVAN becomes more and more restless as it comes upon a stretch of road that is bordered with tall poles. From each of these poles hang the remains of animals rotting in the Martian heat. Khuratta explains that these are manifestations of superstition, but a bad omen, nonetheless. The carcasses are a warning that death lies ahead for those who dare to journey onward, a warning to turn back.

The unrest mounts, and the caravan grinds to a halt. Khuratta goes from wagon to wagon trying to defuse the tension and calm the caravan. The discussion becomes heated, with some Martians of the train becoming very loud and violent. After minutes of arguing, about one-fourth of the caravan turns back toward Alclyon, with Khuratta cursing, demanding his payment, and kicking at the wagons until they are well away. Even though the others choose to stay, a definite feeling of danger is in the air.

The caravan will make camp for the night. The meals have already been prepared, and the guards are at their posts.

A ghostly apparition appears about seven feet above the ground; it is a head with wispy trails flowing downward. The exact distance from the camp is hard to determine. The head glows brightly, and a voice booms out from the night, warning the party back and to abandon all hope of ever reaching Aubochon alive. Then it vanishes. Shortly afterward, a guard reports that two gashants have been slaughtered. Upon investigating, the group will find that two

gashants have indeed been killed and that someone has carved a number of cryptic symbols in their hide. Khuratta translates to the humans as one of the guards explains that the symbols are a curse and that they say the party is doomed to die the slow and hideous death of the deserts.

The next morning, another one-fourth of the caravan has left. The remainder stays either out of greed or because of Khuratta's firm hand and gift for diplomacy. The caravan moves on, but everyone is quiet and somber. Even Khuratta's belly laughs and humorous stories do little to lift spirits. Phantom enemies seem to appear and vanish again in the wavering heat. It is probably the longest day of the trek, as distance is measured by the number of impaled animals which are passed. The warnings remain obvious.

That night, as everyone rests around the campfires, the ghost appears again. This time, however, one of the humans thinks he hears something in the desert darkness.

The Martians will be mesmerized by the image before them, but the more skeptical humans can ignore it (quite certain that if there were magic in the world, the Crown certainly would have heard of it by now). Humans will be able to navigate only poorly in the darkness, but several of them will probably try to investigate the noise in the desert.

There is a good chance someone will get hurt by stumbling over a bush monkey, a roogie, or some obstacle. All the adventurers find is a mask and strips of silk cast aside in the grass. The mask is mounted to a stick about three feet long. The mask and silk have been treated with a phosphorescent material, which ex-

plains the flying and glowing ghost. One of the players notices more of the chemical trailing along the long dunes. If followed, it will lead out from the camp, almost to the guard post, and then back toward the camp. The trail is sporadic, with only sparse remnants left on the sides of wagons and through the camp. If the players follow the trail, they will come upon a guard behind a tent (Murlark), wiping the chemical from his hands. He will attack with his sword immediately upon being discovered (see page 38). If he is subdued, the players will discover a bloody dagger in the folds of his clothes. The guards report that two more gashants have been killed in the same manner as the ones the night before. Khuratta will argue with the humans as to who should question the prisoner, but in the end he will give in to the players. There will be three levels of questioning, depending on how severely the players wish to interrogate the guard. Roll a die at the appropriate level to determine the information gathered.

Level 1 (Questioning and Threats)

1. No response.
2. No response.
3. The guard spits at the players and says he will be rewarded for his acts.
4. The guard claims he worked on his own because he hates humans.
5. No response.
6. No response.

Level 2 (Minor Arm-Twisting)

1. No response.
2. No response.
3. The guard claims that a greater force than mere humans guides his judgment.
4. The guard claims his hand is

guided by divine prophesy.

5. The guard curses the unclean humans and swears that their blood will spill by holy hands.

6. No response.

Level 3 (Bodily Violence)

1. No response.

2. The guard claims that many would like to see the humans dead.

3. The guard says that his orders come from Aubochon.

4. The guard strains against his bonds and swears he will never talk, then dies.

5. The guard claims he was paid by the "red men" to halt the caravan.

6. The guard claims that the warrior-prince himself is mad, and that the guard was trying to scare the humans away to save them.

The players can weigh this information, and Khuratta will send two messengers out after the members of the caravan who turned back. He will suggest that some of the humans accompany the messengers, since they have displayed quite a bit of initiative—more than he ever expected from humans.

Upon investigating the captured guard's belongings, the player characters will find a rag soaked in blood—the rag he used to clean his weapons after mutilating the gashants. Other than that they will only find a small pendant that resembles the talisman of Mangli Desh. Murlark is just as silent about this, unless the PCs show him the talisman itself (equivalent to level three for purposes of interrogation), then he will launch into a wild frenzy, screaming and trying to escape from his captors.

Fed up with the commotion, Khuratta will order the prisoner beheaded. This really stirs up the guards, as to lose one's head will, according to the Martians, damn your soul to wander without reward forever. When someone finally obeys the order, however, Khuratta has the false guard's head mounted to a pole and lashed to the lead wagon for all to see. Khuratta claps his hands together, saying that this will stop the mischief.

BACKTRACKING

IN ONLY A FEW hours, a swift gashant will be able to catch up to the wagons which left during the

night. The wagon handlers and others, though spooked, have come to reason in the daylight, and will listen to the messengers. Obviously, none of them are totally convinced that all the omens have been a ruse, but their greed has overcome their fear. Once the wagons are reached, the humans should roll a die; the result is the number of wagons that will return to the caravan. Turning back here, they should easily make it to where Khuratta is waiting for them (where they camped the night before). Any other wagons will continue back toward Alclyon, unshaken by the messengers and their story.

If the messengers press on, they will come upon the first wagons which departed later in the afternoon. Or, more accurately, what is left of the wagons. The animals and Martians have all been taken down by bow and sword, and left to rot in the oppressive heat of the Sun. The wagons have been looted by bandits who have all fled—no, not all of them! Six bandits are still going through a couple of wagons, unaware that the messengers have arrived. The bandits have only swords (they are out of arrows) and one gashant apiece. They are simple criminals, without loyalty to any city or warlord.



WEEK FIVE: HALF WAY

THE HALFWAY point on the journey is Yulta, a small village. It is quiet and is something of a trading post for both Canal and desert Martians, and humans. Here the caravan will rest for a few days and replenish its goods.

Yulta was a major city centuries ago when the canal was alive. It is now reduced to this—its history lost and its once-great buildings in ruins. The few remaining buildings in use today are the simple, serviceable ones built among the rubble. The city exists on the road side of the dead canal. The opposite side has fallen into ruin, and though stories abound about ghosts and treasures, little is left there that has not been picked over by scavengers, weather, and time.

As the caravan rolls in, the villagers will all notice the head of the traitorous guard still mounted to the lead wagon. Many of them will be repulsed by the sight, and they will all fear for their lives (after all, it is a Martian curse to lose your head). The sight has stirred the village, which is exactly what Khuratta wanted. The caravan master points to a pair of riders heading out of the city at a breakneck pace. He sends two of his own men after them.

Humans are something of a rarity in Yulta, and the players will be met with curiosity—especially those with beards, blond hair, glasses, or anything that really sets them apart from the average man. A rumor came into town from somewhere that all humans are rich, so the price of food and drinks will go up if the players don't let Khuratta do the buying.

That evening, sitting outside a lit-

tle cantina, the party sees a gashant-drawn, beat-up old wagon with one wobbly wheel. Riding in the wagon, sitting atop a pile of skins, cloths and a few barrels, is an old human wearing an odd combination of Martian and human clothing. He wears a Parhooni jacket and leather steppe pants with English riding boots. His skin is weathered and tan from many years in the Martian heat and dryness. He introduces himself as Red Sam, "trader extraordinaire," and inquires about the players' journey. When they tell him they are headed to Aubochon, he waves a finger at them, warning them to stay away from that city as the prince there is anything but cordial. When they tell him they are on a mission from the Crown, Red Sam launches into a rage, yelling about the meddling of the English and how they haven't learned from their own history yet. He slaps the reins down on his gashant's rump and continues on his way, still complaining loudly as he goes.

After exploring (giving Khuratta time to hire more guards from the village), the adventurers head out again. They will be only a little way out of town before they find the two guards Khuratta sent out after the riders. They are both dead, and the bodies have been carved with patterns identical to those on the gashants earlier. This will be even more unsettling to those merchants who had returned on Khuratta's promise that all was well, and many will return to Yulta. By now, the caravan is a ragged bundle of nerves, and even the steely Khuratta is lost concerning the reasoning behind all the espionage that has followed the train.

YULTA

THE HUMANS should take the time to explore the city and its ruins. They will learn about the desert people here, including what they think of humans. The map notes the following areas.

Ruins: Across the canal lie the dead ruins of the once great-city of Yulta. Practically nothing is left of the buildings and structures. The current town is built next to the road that all caravans use. The town is bare, relying solely on the trade that comes in from the caravans and the desert people.

1. Trading Post: This large store/warehouse is where most of the town business occurs. Dried goods, provisions, tools, equipment, and anything else that the adventurer might need are stored along the walls.

2. Cantina: Dark inside, with some dusty tables and chairs outside, the cantina serves a sparse selection of drinks—some of them brewed right behind the cantina. The cantina is small, but except for a small storeroom out back, the entire place is open to customers. Small tables and chairs fill the room. The bartender is a lazy Martian who would just as soon you wait on yourself, if it weren't for his watchful wife. Freelances and mercenaries hang out here waiting to pick up work.

3. Leather/Tanner: If ever anyone needs a hide treated or needs something made from a hide, he comes to the tanner's. A brutish Martian named Jaabul, he is also a master craftsman and can make anything anyone wishes, provided the individual is willing to pay and to wait. The tannery is set back from the other buildings, so the fumes from

the tanning process won't offend. Jaabul is known for his work with ruumet breehr and steppe tiger skins, and is something of the town celebrity.

4. Inn: The sign over the door merely says "Inn." It is a functional inn with 22 rooms, a large dining room, and a kitchen. The owner, a mean Martian female called Hannak, keeps a spotless inn. She does not tolerate lateness. She serves two meals a day, breakfast and dinner, and locks her doors promptly at 11. She won't converse with the humans at all and will be reluctant to even give any of them a room.

5. Stable: The stable is used to corral, break, and sell gashants. Twelve are for sale, but they all look

to be in pretty bad shape. The players may have their animals looked after here but it would be cheaper to leave them with Khuratta's boys. The stable will hold 20 gashants.

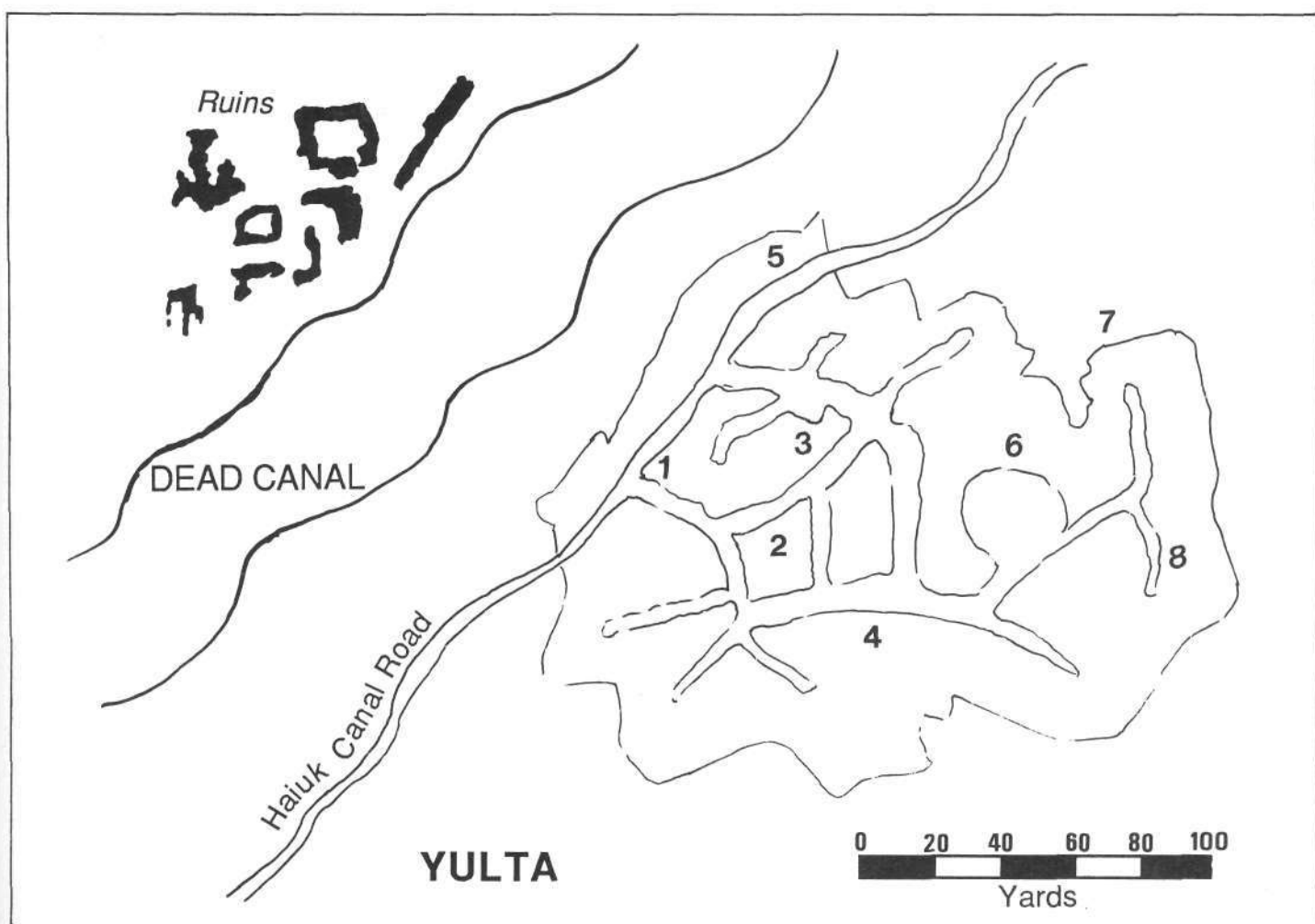
6. Medical: The doctor in town is a nearsighted Martian who has been chased out of almost every town he's ever practiced in. The facilities are simple but suitable, with only one bed for patients. The doctor's room is to the side. Players will find just about anything they need for minor first aid.

7. Water Tower: This stores the town's water supply and is closely watched by two guards. Several permanent structures, similar to the caravan's water wagons, are placed outside the town—their yield gathered

daily and brought to this central tower. Tampering with the town's water brings an immediate death sentence.

8. Herbs: If the doctor cannot help whatever may ail, the old herbalist surely has something. His establishment is more a shed than a building, and it is full of drying grasses and herbs. The herbalist, a fossil of a Martian, will talk continually and try to sell the humans a skin balm to protect them from the Sun. The balm works, but it also stinks. Most animals will be frightened by the smell.

Following provisioning in Yulta, the next two weeks of travel will be without significant event. Use the desert encounters and special caravan events to fill in this gap, if necessary.



WEEK EIGHT: ANOINTMENT CEREMONY

LATE AT NIGHT, one of the players hears a distant chanting. He rouses the others, and they sneak out of camp to investigate. The players come upon a strange ceremony. About half a mile from the camp, a slight plateau appears to have been artificially shaped from the terrain. Sixteen torches are stuck into the ground on it, forming a circle. Surrounding the circle are about 20 Martians dressed in dark robes. They are all chanting, except for a solitary drummer who pounds out a slow and steady beat.



Inside the circle of torches is a tripod holding a baby Martian wrapped in a blanket. This tripod looks like a simple structure, but closer inspection will reveal that it is etched with hundreds of symbols.

Beside the tripod stand two Martians, both dressed in similar dark robes with collars made of banded gold. One holds a bowl of a smok-

ing substance, its pungent odor wafting its way toward the players. The other Martian holds a curved dagger and a scepter. Both are made of gold and shine, even in the torchlight. The Martian holds these crossed over his chest.

The first Martian raises his hands to the sky and begins his incantation. The surrounding Martians continue their chant, which is building in intensity. The Martian holding the knife and the scepter unfolds his arms, raising both items over his head, then he begins echoing the first Martian's incantation.

The PCs may watch this through to its end, and they will learn that the baby is being anointed as a holy child by the two priests. If they stay and do nothing, they will be discovered by the priests. Though the priests are not very happy about being spied upon, they will invite the players to their monastery, which is not far from the holy site.

The players may be under the misconception that the baby is a sacrifice and try to rescue it, in which case the priests will defend the baby as best they can (they have no weapons other than the ceremonial gold dagger, and that is worthless as a weapon). If the baby is taken, the Martian priests will pursue the players until they make it to the caravan. There Khuratta will try to bring peace to the incident by buying off the priests with goods. Khuratta will be very stern with the humans if they try to explain their side of the story. The players will notice that he shows the priests more respect than he has shown anyone in ages. He speaks to them as if they were superior.

After all is calm, Khuratta will reprimand the players severely for wandering away from the camp, and, most of all, for involving themselves in things they know absolutely nothing about. He will tell them that the priests of the Ninth monastery are not to be bothered and that the humans will find themselves abandoned



if they try something like that again—British orders or no. He will storm off, not willing to answer any of the players' questions or arguments. It will be awhile before Khuratta warms back up to them. The players will also notice that an armed guard is always present whenever the players are on their own.

However, if the players are invited to the monastery, they will find that it is only a short trek from the plateau. The monastery looks more like an old fortress. Its structure is so ancient that any Martians accompanying the players will not recognize the design period. The walls are weather-worn and Sun-bleached, and any murals or painted designs on the walls have long since vanished.

The priests will explain that they are of the order called the Ninth, and they are the last of their order. They came to the desert because it was the last place on Mars unsoiled by the decadence of civilization. The priests are considered great magicians by the people of the desert, so they have never feared for their lives from any of the warrior clans living nearby. Once a year, they travel from tribe to tribe in search of the "holy child," the one child born that year who will carry on the ways of the Ninth. As a result of this, only a half-dozen of the priests are Canal Martians; the younger priests are all Hill Martians from the deserts and steppes. The ritual the PCs witnessed was the ceremonial cleansing of their newest follower.

The interior of the monastery is simple and clean. The rooms are dark, lit by solitary candles and oil lamps. Occasionally one of the players will see a small glowing globe resting on a table. These will be quickly but casually hidden away by the priests, who will appear not to understand the player's language if they are questioned about the globes.

1. Entry: This is a large, barren area. The players will be asked to wait here.

2 and 3. Quarters: These are quarters with numerous bunks and a small table or two. If the players stay any length of time, they will be allowed to rest here.

4. Dining and Food Preparation: Three long tables and benches are used for eating. A single stove is in the corner, and a tall cupboard contains all the eating and cooking implements.

5. Master's Room: This is where the master of the order dwells with his young assistant. The master is old, probably the oldest Martian that the humans have seen. He will be polite, and his assistant will translate any dialogue between him and the players.

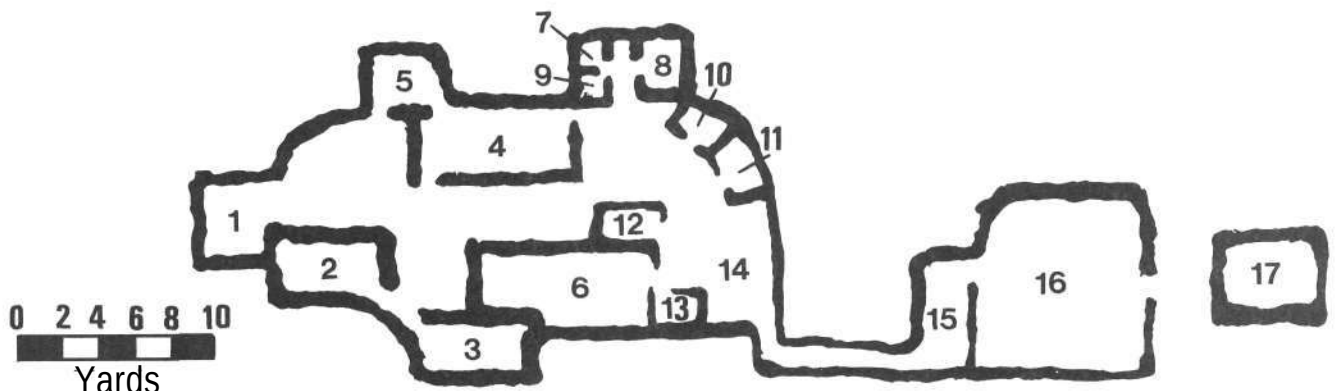
6. Classroom: This appears to be the classroom/meeting place for the priests. Dozens of woven mats are piled in a corner, and these are spread on the floor whenever the room is used.

7-13. Rooms: These are the living quarters for all the priests. Each room has two beds and chairs, and one table.

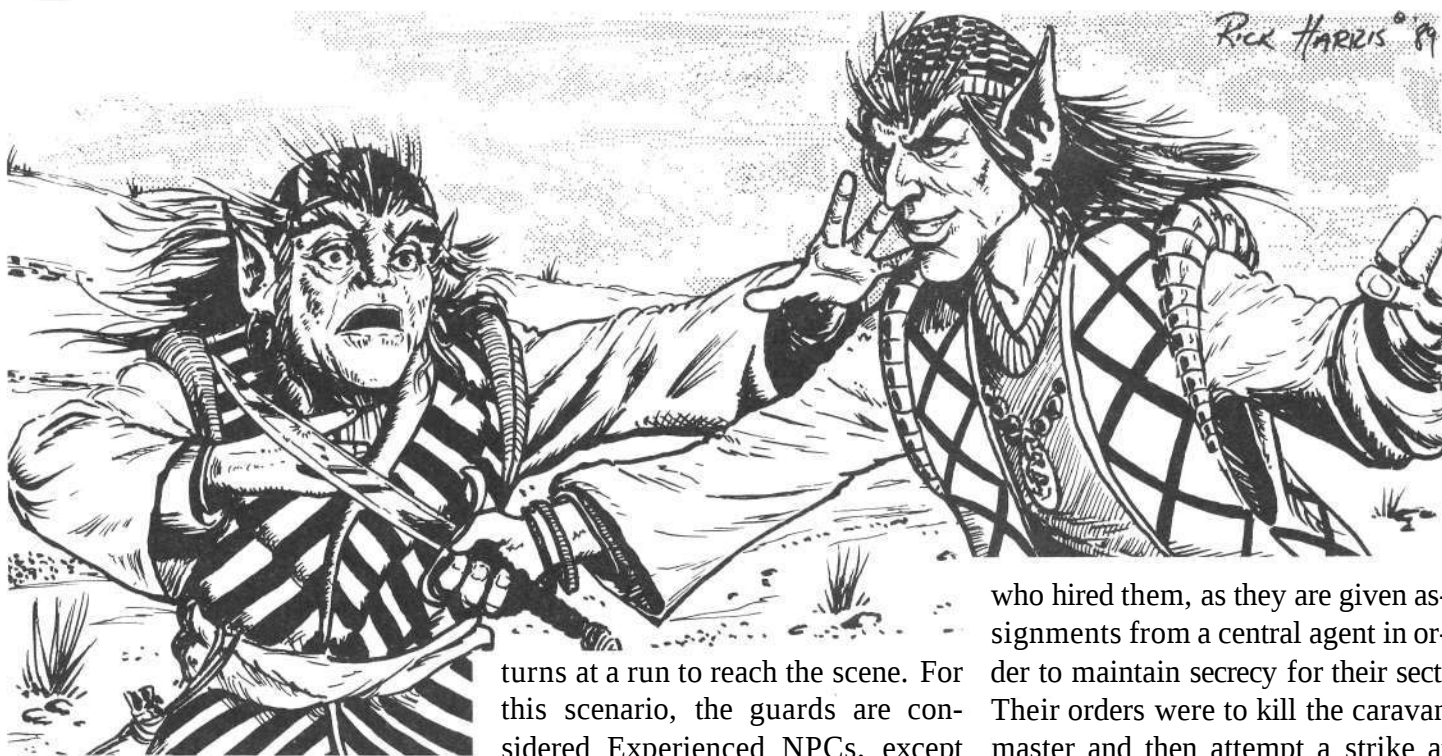
14 and 15. Libraries: These two rooms are filled with shelved books. Two small desks are in each room. A priest is always on duty to help select the appropriate book for study. The writing is ancient, and even a learned Martian would have trouble deciphering the script. If asked, the priests will only say that these are the holy words of Mars.

16. Temple: The temple is as bare of ornamentation as the rest of the monastery. Benches file along the center. The tall ceiling is supported by six plain columns. A simple raised dais stands at the end of the room. At a glance, there does not seem to be much here, and the PCs are forbidden from searching the structure.

17. Tomb: This will be pointed out simply as a tomb. Any interest shown in the tomb will be met with distaste by the priests.



MONASTERY



WEEK NINE: ASSASSIN

USING THE typical caravan camp layout on page 24, randomly place the guards, and then ask the player characters to choose their positions. Finally, administer the assassination attempt.

The caravan is preparing the morning meal before setting out. Khuratta is doing his best to keep up the spirits of what is left of the group. He is sitting under the shade of his comfort wagon's umbrella, enjoying his breakfast. Suddenly, five men dressed as merchants break from a group and charge Khuratta. They are all carrying daggers. Khuratta lets out a bellow and unsheathes his sword. For having such a large bulk, he is quite good with the weapon. Guards are scattered about and will have two fewer actions than normal this combat round because of surprise. They will try first to reach Khuratta and his assailants and then to keep others at bay. The players and most NPCs will be at the other end of the camp and will take two

turns at a run to reach the scene. For this scenario, the guards are considered Experienced NPCs, except for the champion and captain; the assassins are considered Veteran.

If the players become involved, you may run the combat as usual. If not, then the battle will be fast and furious. The assassins will fall quickly but not before inflicting damage on both Khuratta and several guards. The assassins are obviously a trained group and fight well together.

If the players are not in the battle, roll one die. A roll of 1 kills Khuratta. If Khuratta's life is ended, the guards will kill the assassins before the players can question them, and no information will be divulged. Without the caravan master, the train will really begin to unravel. Some outward hostility will be shown toward the humans, as they will be blamed for the problems that have befallen the caravan.

If Khuratta lives, then at least one of the assassins will be captured. The adventurers will learn that the assassins are a team of professionals who have been hired by "someone in the city of Alclyon." They do not know

who hired them, as they are given assignments from a central agent in order to maintain secrecy for their sect. Their orders were to kill the caravan master and then attempt a strike at the humans. The entire episode was to be done in plain sight of all in order to stir fearful emotions amongst the caravan travellers.

The assassins will be executed. Khuratta, always aware of the importance of his presence, knows he must make a show of this. The caravan master, shirt sliced to rags and body bleeding from a dozen wounds, bellows aloud, grabs one of the would-be assassins by the throat, and lifts him completely off the ground. The Martian's feet kick violently as Khuratta chokes the life from him. With a gurgle and a gasp, the assassin grows limp. Khuratta lifts the body over his head and hurls it against a nearby wagon. The body crashes heavily against a wheel, snapping the thick spokes. The weakened wheel buckles under the strain of the wagon's weight and collapses. Crates slide from the back of the wrecked wagon and fall to the ground, splintering and spilling on the ground. The unmistakable glint of a steel gun barrel smiles at the PCs

in the morning light. The crate is marked "photographic equipment."

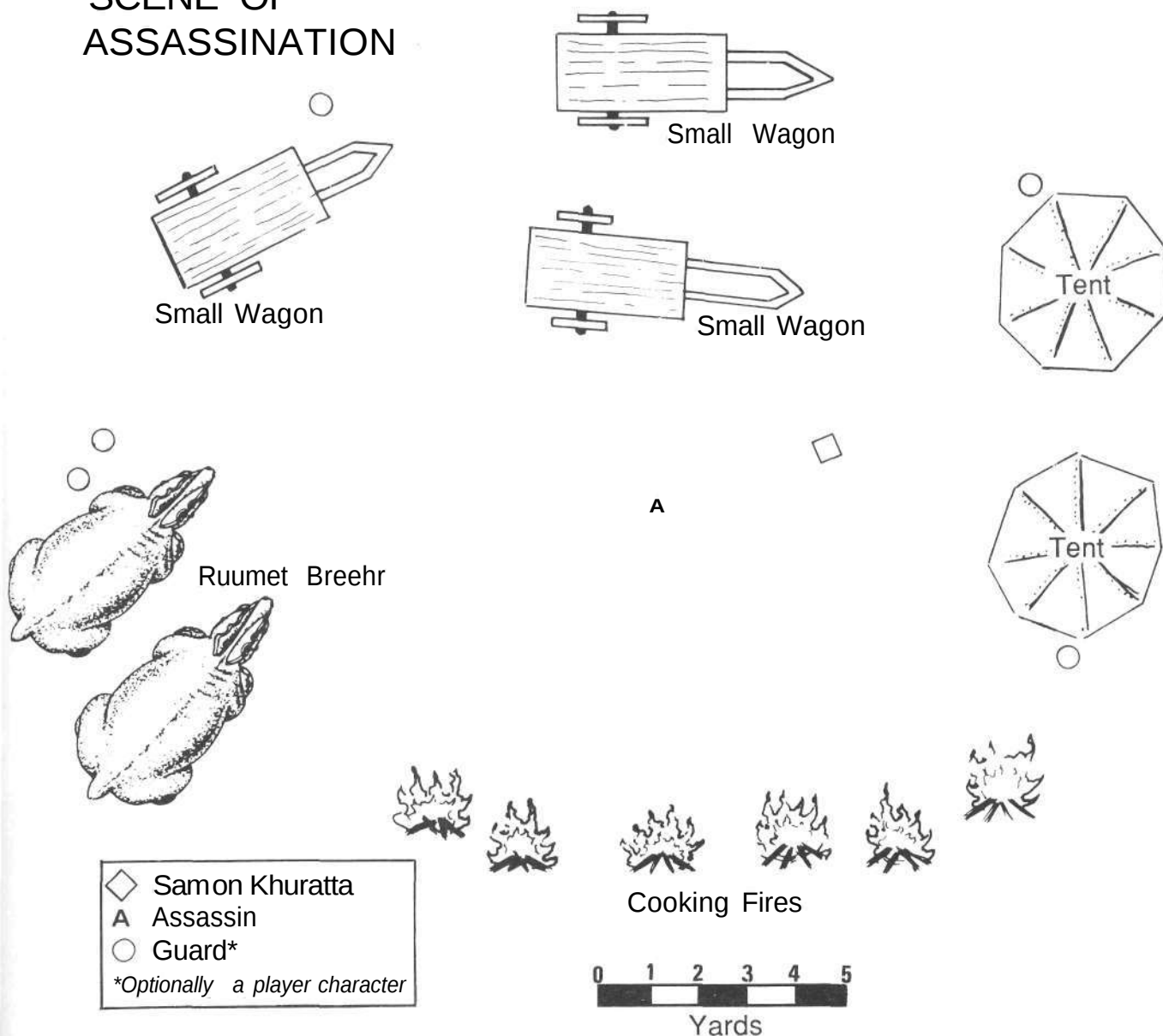
Naturally, the players will want to question the one photographer in the caravan. If the Belgian has not already died along the way, Khuratta will have the guards find him. At first, he will maintain his innocence and try to blame the British for smuggling the guns onto his wagon. But further investigation will reveal that he has very little in the way of cameras and equipment with him. He

will have six cases of rifles on the wagon, all mislabeled.

Once caught, LeFriont will laugh and tell the players that the Belgians will do anything they can to stop the British from expanding, even at the cost of supplying the primitive Martians with arms. He is an agent and was assigned to deliver the guns to the prince as a goodwill measure. Khuratta will want him executed, but it is up to the players to decide whether or not he will be.

If the Belgian has already died, then a search of his wagon will produce documents proclaiming him to be a Belgian agent. The search will also produce two complete separate sets of papers providing LeFriont with two other false identities. His orders, according to the documents, are to seek someone in Aubochon named Remarh, but there is no indication in his orders or in his effects as to whether the character is human or Martian.

SCENE OF ASSASSINATION





WEEK TEN: THE WARRIOR PRINCE'S CITY

WEEK 10 ENDS the long journey across the scorched sands. But the approach to Aubochon will make clear that things at the PCs' destination are not well. Read the following passage to the players.

As the ragged remainder of the caravan approaches the city of Aubochon, you are met by two dozen soldiers mounted on gashants. They are armed with spears and small shields. One introduces himself as the sergeant. In English, he explains that you are to be escorted to the palace. You are also asked to arm yourselves. You pass the city gates and are immediately aware that problems abound. The entrance to Aubochon is deathly quiet, which is disturbing since the market is just to the left of the gates. The city remains quiet as you progress down the main street. In the distance, voices can be heard—particularly one booming voice which carries over the buildings and through the streets.

Aubochon is that odd mixture of a city that combines ancient elegance and modern erosion. As the caravan passes what looks to be the houses and apartments of the city, you note

that the once-beautiful wall mosaics are chipped and missing tiles; their colors are dull and faded. Ornate, impressive columns have been allowed to shift and lean, causing the roofs they once supported to buckle and crumble. In many places only a rotting frame is left. The streets are made of bricks worn smooth by the passage of thousands of feet. A few bricks have been kicked out of place, while others are obviously loose.

When you do see citizens, you are met with cold stares and turned backs. Your escort is very wary, and their spears are tucked under their arms at the ready. Someone asks the sergeant about the silence in the streets and the angry expressions you receive from the populace. The sergeant only shrugs and says that strangers are rare to Aubochon any more. If pressed, he will tell you there is unrest in the city due to some fanatics.

KUR'S RABBLE

THE STREET opens into a large semicircular courtyard. Facing the curve of the circle is a raised platform used for public speaking. On the platform is the shaman, Kur. He has a large crowd of Martians gathered about him. They are intently listening to his words, and, as the

party draws closer, its members can also hear him. From his appearance, Kur is obviously used to speaking before people. His gestures are practiced and well timed. He has these people under his power. Let the players hear what he has to say.

"My people," he says, "heed once again my words, for they are words of truth. I know not which gods smile upon Hirsiz, the prince, but I know they are evil. He plays—up in the palace—plays with our very lives as if we were pawns. Both you of Aubochon and your brothers in the desert are hurt by this mad prince. He strangles our trade, our freedom, and our rights." Kur's eyes fall on the caravan. He points an accusing finger at the players. "Even now, there... a trade caravan that should be in route to the warehouses proceeds under armed guard to the palace. The prince takes the very food from our mouths to hoard for himself. And he brings humans into the city. The red men with their guns and pretty coats will fight his battles for him in exchange for a handful of gems. Can we allow this to continue?"

The last words are a shout skyward, and accompanying shouts follow from the streets. The peasants press their way toward the caravan. The guards set their spears in defense, but fear is in their eyes. Kur has whipped the crowd into an angry mob.

The sergeant orders those in the crowd to disperse, but they refuse to do so. Kur still stands on the stage, as if directing the whole episode. The mob is going to charge the caravan, so present several options to the players. They could take off running, as the sergeant of the guard suggests. However, they might wish to stand,

to hold off the mob for a while so more wagons can escape their angry clutches.

If one of the players shoots at Kur, the crowd will fall back briefly, then continue to pursue the caravan. If one of the players kills Kur, the crowd will immediately go into a frenzy and attack the group. The players may attempt to talk to the peasants and explain their assignment and reasons for travelling to the city. These characters should have a Theatrics skill of at least 2, or Kur will be able to simply shout them down. The players may also chose to disperse and hide in the warehouse area. This is dangerous, though; once separated from the rest of the caravan, they will be totally lost, as well as pursued.

Using the maps on page 57, give the characters a rough idea where they are going in their eventual flight. Remember; they have never been to Aubochon before, but they are in flight with guards who know the city well. Eventually, they should come upon the bridge.

The sergeant's goal is to escort the caravan over the bridge not far from the public stage, and he is steadily realizing that he might not make it.

He orders the soldiers to hold the crowd while the caravan continues on toward the bridge. The humans are ordered to lead (following him). Sensing that the caravan is going to try to make a break for it, the mob closes in, grabbing and clawing at the riders. The pack animals are frightened, and in their fear they inadvertently trample a few Martian peasants. The confusion turns to an all-out frenzy, and merchants and beast drivers are pulled from their animals. Crates and bundles of goods are mauled and ripped asunder. The soldiers who originally were supposed to protect the caravan are forced to defend themselves. The sergeant yells for two men, then orders the humans to follow him.

Most likely, the characters charge over the bridge, leaving the remains of the caravan and the mob behind. The sergeant checks back once to see if his two men are protecting the rear, then bends over his saddle and charges ahead. Once over the bridge, the party enters a carnival or fairground. Just like the rest of the city, the fairground looks to be in need of repair. The players will notice that none of the rest of the human caravan NPCs made it. If the players choose

to disobey the order and try to help the caravan across, they will be thrown into total chaos. Crowding on the bridge, attacks by an angry mob, the merchants' pell-mell attempt to escape, and the guards are all factors contributing to the players' problems. They will probably be separated and try to regroup to make their way to the palace, all the while being hunted by the outraged mob.

The players might also dash through what seems to be a temple area. One of the temples has been burned to the ground, and an old priest sits on the steps. He seems oblivious to the PCs—a ruined man in a ruined domain.

More soldiers are at the gate to the palace. The sergeant dismounts, and the PCs follow his action, entering the palace. The huge courtyard is filled with blooming flowers and brightly plumaged birds. A small fountain shoots a jet of water into a pond full of silver and golden fish. This is a surprising change from the city atmosphere. The wall to the right is broken, and sandbags have been built up outside the wall where a cannon has been mounted. The wall seems to have been blown away by the use of explosives.



AUBOCHON

AUBOCHON IS A totally sandlocked city, forever cut off from the rest of Mars by the sheer distances across the sand. When travel by air was less hazardous, Aubochon did maintain some contact with the other canal cities, and in so doing adopted some of their customs. But those days have long since passed. In fact, the rulers of Aubochon should be given credit, since they alone have protected the city from destruction by hundreds of desert nomad attacks. Centuries of battle damage have worn down the walls of this once-mighty city, but the invaders have failed to take it even once from the hands of its hereditary rulers.

Below is the map key for the city of Aubochon.

1. The Guards: Two dozen armed guards wait outside the city gates for the caravan. The sergeant, an older Martian, speaks English.

2. The Merchant District: Trade business commences here during the day. At night the buildings are kept locked, and city guards patrol the streets. Lately there have been several thefts as control of the civil population has waned.

3. The Dwellings: The bulk of the population lives here and across the canal. Most of the dwellings are one- and two-room apartments, with two and three stories.

4. The Warehouses: Trade goods are unloaded and stored here until they are picked up by merchants. Recently, the prince has decreed that all incoming goods must be documented and that merchants must receive permission from the palace before claiming their merchandise. Rumors are that goods have disappeared from

the warehouse with no paperwork to account for their disappearance.

5. The Open Theater/Speaker's Stand: This raised platform is open to all who want to voice an opinion and can find someone who will listen. The prince originally wanted to shut it down, but instead he hired an acting troupe to perform and take the citizens' minds off their problems.

6. The Bridge: This large and sturdy bridge is wide enough to allow passage of two wagons. It is a stone structure with ornate carvings.

7. The Fairgrounds: Now in ruins, the fair once ran all year long, with rides, magic tricks, and musicians. The prince closed it down because he feared having the peasants so close to the palace. Some of the rides, all powered by animals, still function.

8. The Temple Grounds: The temples are also all closed. One of them has been burned down because the priests refused to shut its doors. The others are still tended by priests, but they no longer hold any services. The priests remain out of loyalty to their temples.

9. The Palace: The palace is the only building in the city that is not in shambles. It is majestic, made of polished white stone, and has a lush garden all around it. (The palace is further detailed in the Palace section.

10. The Militia: The small army of city guards lives in basically its own sector. Guards have adequate living quarters and live-in cooks and attendants. The city guard has dwindled in number, but the ones who are left are a rough and opportunistic bunch. They bully the people and openly steal from the merchants. They have caused as much unrest as the prince himself has.

11. The Open Market: Short-term dealers and hawkers may purchase space here to sell their wares. The market has been sparsely attended since the prince took over, and sales are heavily taxed, which has chased away most of the merchants.

12. The Sacred Well: Here young lovers once made their vows, wishes, and prayers. It is believed that if you wish into the well once each morning for eight days, then your wish will come true. A passing guard heard an old woman wishing death upon the prince. He executed her on the spot and tossed her head down the well. Since then, few people have bothered to express any wishes or prayers.

13. Tavern Row: This stretch of buildings is one of the few areas doing well in Aubochon. Merchants suffering from hard luck, canal runners in for a stop, and the few peasants who have money come into the dark and smoky taverns for cheap wine and bitter drink. At night, the city militia will take over the street, usually with one smashed-up tavern on the agenda.

14. Nobles' Quarter: This area supports the upper-class Martians. They can afford their own guards and do not bother with the city militia. They can also afford the prince's outrageous taxation and eccentric ways. They would just as soon pay him off and be left alone as worry about the prince and his city. They pay absolutely no attention to the lower classes or what is going on in Aubochon.

15. The Jail: The city has a jail, but the prince does not want to spend the money to keep prisoners, so all arrested are either quickly let go or executed.

16. The Guild Halls: The guilds once met and openly voiced their anger at the prince. After a few of their number disappeared, the grumblings grew quieter. The guild halls are still open and still function, but they follow the laws laid down by the new prince.

17. The Shipyard: The shipyard can do minor repairs, but it would be hard-pressed to handle anything

major. The shipyard owner died almost a year ago, and the prince—knowing that shipyards attract merchants—pays a sum to keep the yard open, but he has not purchased any new supplies.

18. The Halls of Education: Once Aubochon was an important center for advanced education, and the individual colleges flourished. The laws the prince imposed on teaching

and his stealing from the school hoppers have all but destroyed the schools. Again, the prince knows that education brings in trade, so he supports the handful of teachers who are left, even though they only teach to empty rooms.

19. The Sewers: The underground processing plant still works, although a rumor holds that the sewer workers are there as prisoners.



REFUGE IN THE PALACE

ONCE INSIDE the palace, the characters will meet the warrior-prince for the first time. Read the following encounter to the players.

You enter the palace throne room and come face to face with Prince Altin Hirsiz. He is a sickly Martian, and his leg is twisted in such a way that he must continually lean on a cane. His face twitches, and the light of madness shines in his eyes. He bows cordially, then quickly asks where the rest of the soldiers are. You come to realize that Hirsiz thought an entire army would be coming.

You explain that you are all that the Crown sent, and Hirsiz flies into a rage, stamping his good foot. Abruptly, he regains his composure and apologizes, saying he did so want to see a whole uniformed army.

The sergeant informs the prince that all or some of the caravan goods were lost to the peasants. Hirsiz strikes him across the face with his cane and screams that the man will be executed for such incompetence. Turning abruptly, again the prince apologizes, saying that good help is hard to find.

Hirsiz invites you into the banquet hall to relax and refresh yourselves. A long table is laden with food and drink. Servants bring food out to the table, staying well away from the prince and you (although occasionally one will peek around a corner or from behind a door to sneak a look). You are probably the only humans they have ever seen.

The prince launches into a prepared speech about welcoming the British officials and how the prosperous city of Aubochon will surely

do whatever it can to help the humans. Just then a rock crashes through a window in another room. When your attention returns to the banquet hall, the prince is crouching under the table. As he straightens himself, he explains that the city has a few problems. He is sure the British will help supply him with a few armed men.

Before anyone can answer, gunshots ring out, and return fire is heard. A soldier enters and informs the prince that the peasants have rifles and are firing on the palace. The prince throws yet another fit, and yells at the soldier to kill all the peasants—not just the ones with guns, all of them.

Turning to you, he begs you to help him escape from the palace. He promises to reward you handsomely.

While you are trying to figure out what is going on, a young Martian servant with a dagger charges into the room and runs after Hirsiz. The youngster screams, "Usurper! Murderer!" as he runs for the prince.

At this point, the characters may either intercept the young servant, shoot him, or let him attack the prince. The servant is a Green NPC with virtually no weapons skill, and so will be easy to subdue. His lack of skill is obvious to anyone with Close Combat (edged weapon). If he is allowed to attack Hirsiz, Hirsiz will cower, and the boy will stab him awkwardly, causing a wound, but not a fatal one. A soldier will enter and shoot the boy. If the boy is shot, resolve the wound normally. If several characters fire at him and hit him, he will probably be killed.

If the servant survives the attack, either wounded or merely restrained by the characters, Hirsiz will demand

that he be put to death immediately.

Hirsiz is coming apart. He stands there, clawing at his face nervously. Again he begs you to rescue him, and the gunfire increases outside. Another soldier reports that the peasants are storming the breached wall, and they are already crawling over the sandbags. Hirsiz grabs a rifle from one of the guards and runs up the stairs.

Now the players have several options. They may follow Hirsiz, explore the rest of the palace, or, if he is still alive and conscious, question the boy.

If they follow Hirsiz, they will discover that the stairs lead to the royal suite, and bedrooms, including the servants' quarters. The next set of stairs leads to the meditation room. Hirsiz is sitting on the floor with his rifle pointed at the stairway—the first one up has to make a saving roll against being shot if Altin hits him. If the players do not kill Hirsiz by return fire, then he will again beg them to help him escape, though no escape route is apparent.

If the players do a little exploring around the meditation room, they will see a niche in the wall. The talisman of Mangli Desh fits snugly into that niche, turning like a handle, and opens a door to a small closet that contains a ladder, which leads upward to a hatch. The talisman/key will be needed to open the hatch, too.

Once opened, the hatch allows passage into a hangar. There, hidden from all, is an 80-ton screw galley, moored and fully operational. The talisman/key is once again needed to set the gears in motion to open the skyroof, using a receptacle set in the wall similar in appearance to the hatch. Once the skyroof opens, the

ship's mooring turns toward the opening. The players can make good their escape, but whether or not they want to take demented Prince Altin Hirsiz along is their choice. If not, the players will be able to watch his demise from above as the peasants overtake the palace.

If the characters investigate the rest of the palace and go into the kitchen, a young Martian will be there hiding under a counter. If the players ask, the boy will tell them the story of how Hirsiz became prince and that the peasants are not happy with him. The boy will also tell them of the cloudship in the roof hangar, and how no one has used it since the king because the key was lost. He will point to the player with the talisman of Mangli Desh and ask how he found the key. If the characters continue their investigation, they will eventually come upon the locked room containing Prince Uturaam (see below).

If they interrogate the young boy who attacked Hirsiz, he will tell them that he is responsible for taking meals to a prisoner held in a locked room in the palace. Although he slides the meals through a small door and no communication is allowed, the prisoner has passed him several messages which have convinced the boy that the prisoner is Prince Uturaam, long thought to be dead. Uturaam is the rightful heir to the throne of Aubochon, and the only survivor of the royal family.

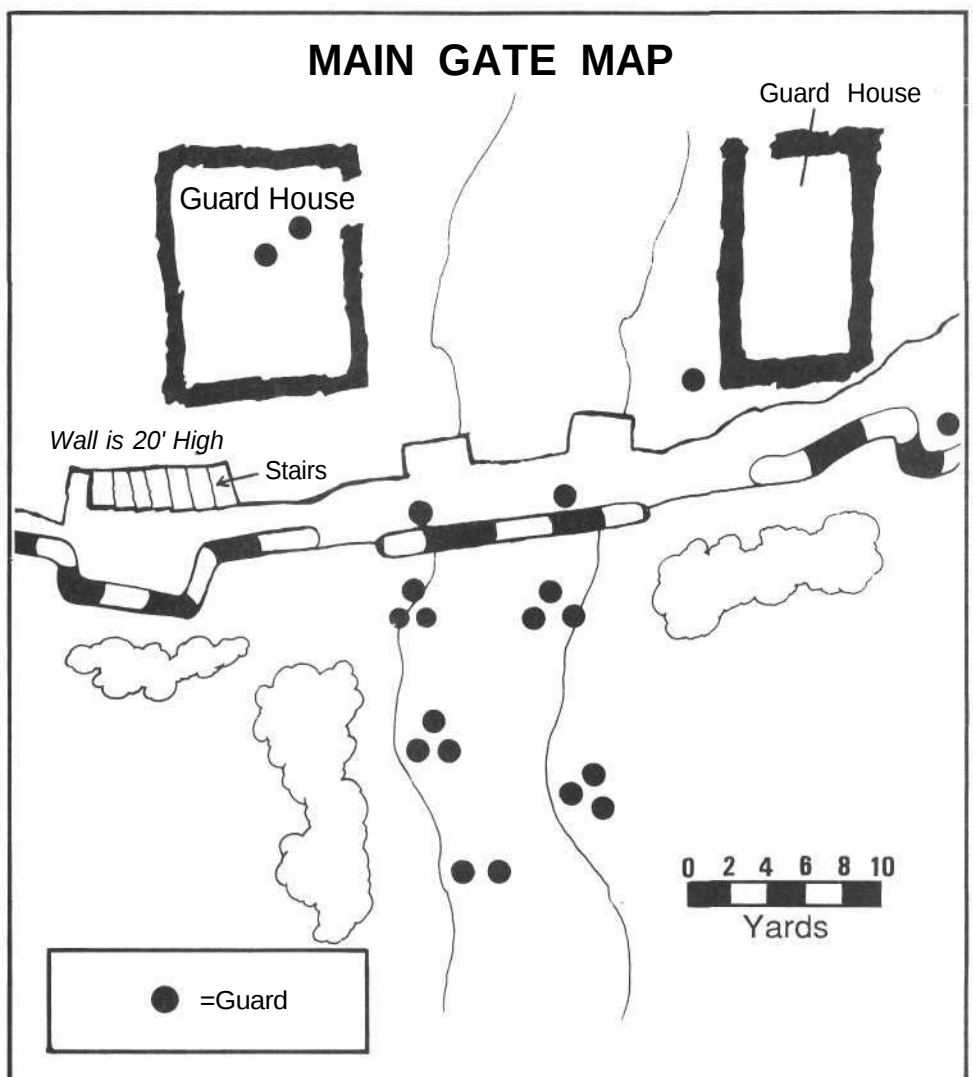
If the players wish to follow this course of action, the boy will take the players to the locked room. The guard has left his post and joined the small band of soldiers fighting to keep the mob out of the palace. The players can hear Uturaam pounding

on the inside of the door and demanding to be released. The door is locked, and no key is in evidence, but the door can be forced in one of two ways. Any two characters can attempt to force the door with their shoulders. This is an Impossible (target level 20) Strength task. Alternatively, someone may think to tell the prince to stand back and then put a bullet through the lock.

Once Uturaam is released, the servant boy will explain the situation to him (that he is the servant who received the notes, that he attempted to kill Hirsiz, and that the characters prevented Hirsiz from executing him, then helped him rescue the

prince). Uturaam will thank the characters and will then ask for their help in ending the violence. Once Uturaam can get to a balcony overlooking the grounds in front of the palace, the mob will recognize him and begin cheering. The guards, who were not aware that he was still alive, will join the cheering, and the violence, as well as Kur's sway over the mob, will be ended.

All that remains will be for the guard and the citizens to hunt down Hirsiz and deal with him. Uturaam, however, will instruct his soldiers to take him alive and hold him for trial. "Hirsiz ruled with bloody hands; I shall not," Uturaam declares.



THE PALACE

BELOW IS A key to the palace maps. The palace itself is a thing of splendor. Polished white Martian marble was used to fashion the building and the outer walls. The outer walls are low, no taller than six feet, with a front gate of iron. The windows are all stained glass and fill the interior with a rainbow of colors.

GROUND FLOOR

THE GROUND FLOOR has a low wall built around it. As a defensive measure, sandbags have been placed around the gate, and two guards watch the area. A large courtyard is filled with fragrant blossoms and a fountain. Exotic birds roam freely through the grounds. One wall

supports a stable and storage area, as well as the palace guards' quarters and mess. The officer has his own room. The quarters are simply furnished with bunk beds and two tables. A number of stools are located around the room.

The opposing wall has been bombed, leaving a torn section. Sandbags have been placed some feet out from the wall as a redoubt, and a small cannon has been placed here.

Two large steps lead to the main door, which opens into the throne room. Here diplomats were once received. Three noticeable spots on one wall reveal where portraits once hung. Two elaborate Martian chandeliers hang from the ceiling.

Beyond this room, the banquet hall features a massive table and high-

backed chairs. Food is always on the table, and the servants are continually bringing fresh dishes out and retrieving others. A long, colorful tapestry covers one wall.

To the left is a stairway leading downward into the kitchen, and to the right is a study chamber filled with richly bound books and a desk. This chamber leads out to a small patio, with stairs going down into a private garden. Like the courtyard, the garden is filled with exotic plants and fountains. This inner courtyard is another royal extravagance, mirroring the garden and outer courtyard.

SECOND LEVEL

STAIRS LEAD upward to the royal suites and servants' quarters. Vacant children's quarters are across from the suites. The royal suites sport lavish circular beds with silk sheets. A wardrobe is full of expensive uniforms and shoes.

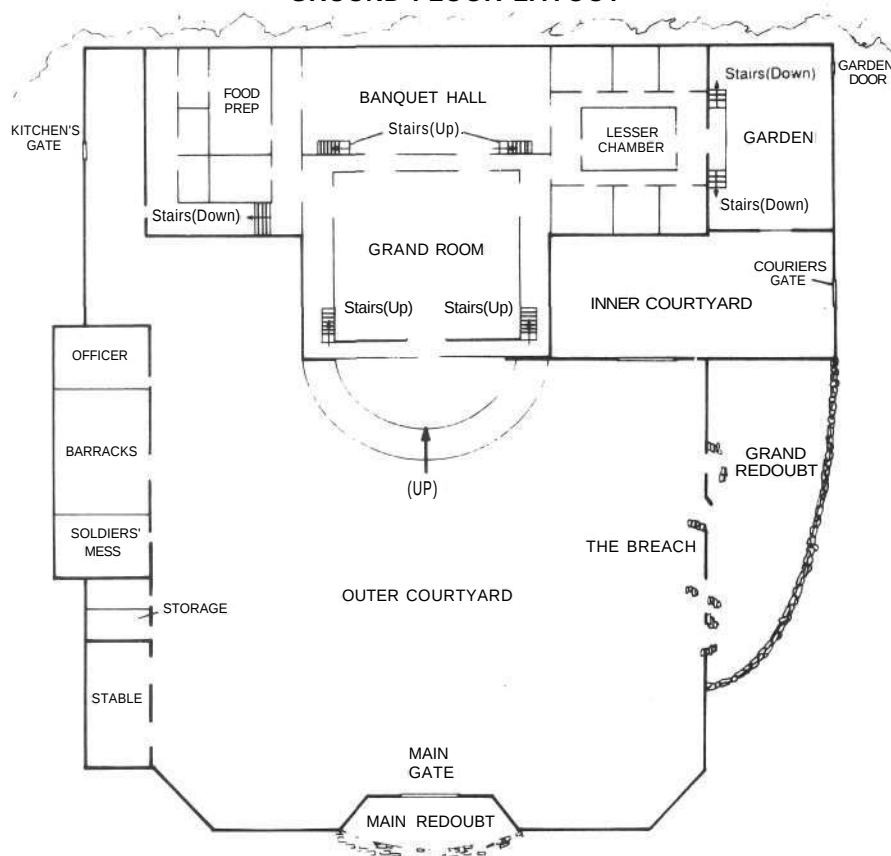
THE MEDITATION ROOM

THIS LARGE, unpartitioned room is enclosed by stained glass windows. Incense burners and large pillows are scattered about. A secret cubbyhole contains a ladder leading up to a sealed hanger.

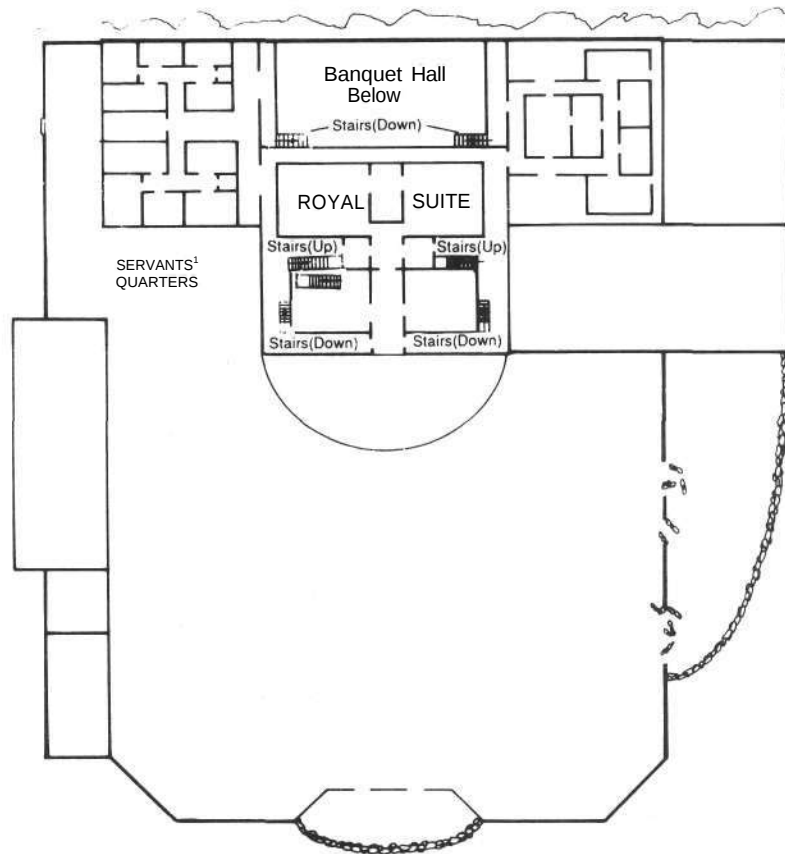
THE HANGAR

IN THE HANGER is an 80-ton screw galley, in working order and ready to sail. Mechanisms in the roof rotate the ceiling to create a skyroof. The hangar and the roof operations are controlled by a key—the talisman of Mangli Desh.

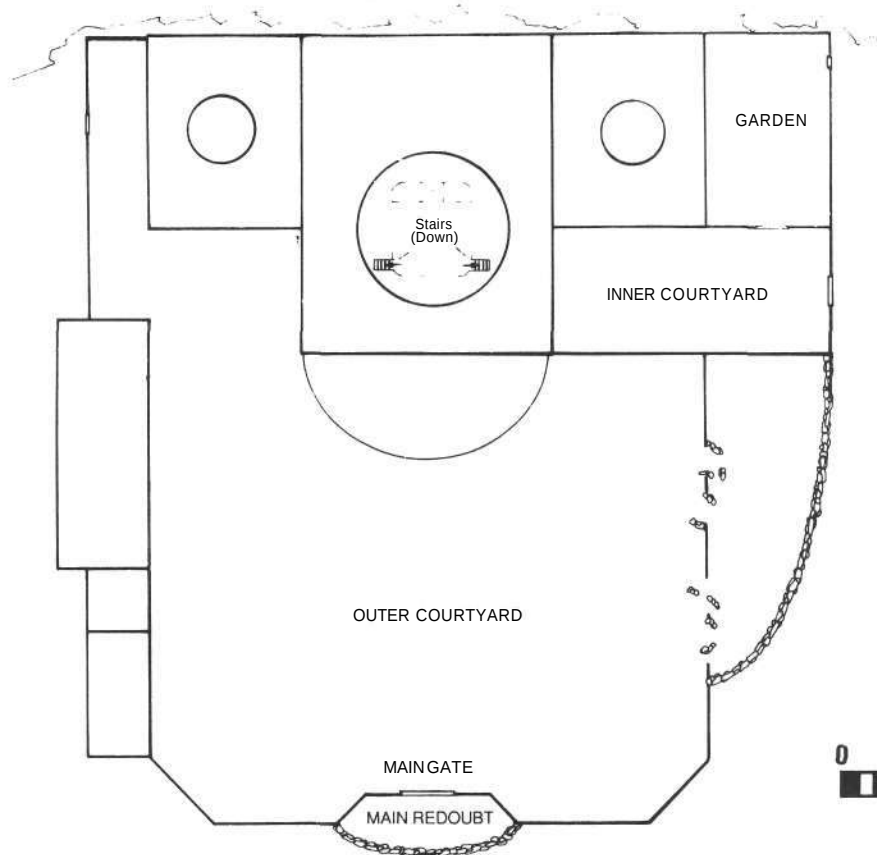
GROUND FLOOR LAYOUT



SECOND FLOOR LAYOUT



THIRD FLOOR LAYOUT



0 10 20 30
Yards

THE FINISH

THE FINISH may involve variations on two different situations.

Escaping: If the players opt to escape, they should have no trouble navigating their way home. A pirate raid or storm may occur, but this trip will be nothing like the caravan from Alclyon to Aubochon. If none of the players have any Trimsman skills, the ride may be somewhat disastrous, and without Piloting skills, the ship will most likely crash. If this is the case, allow the ship to make a soft landing in the sands—no injuries, but the ship is rendered nothing but junk.

The characters may land in the territory of Kai Urukta, the warlord. Hunters will find the players, and they will be taken to the camp. From there, Urukta will send word ahead that they are to be given safe passage through the desert to Yulta. He will also send a messenger to the warlord Karkem Kubla, asking that the humans be allowed through his territory to reach Aubochon. Urukta will say that he hopes the British will remember this act of kindness, should the need arise for Urukta to ask a favor. He will give them gashants, provisions, and a young scout to show them the way.

If they land in Karkem Kubla's land instead, he will transport them to Aubochon, but he will not be as gracious a host as Urukta. He will use this opportunity to lambast the humans, proclaiming that this incident was a warning from the gods and that humans have no place in the desert.

Rescuing the True Prince: If the characters rescue Prince Uturaam, they will be treated royally by him, and the inhabitants of Aubochon will

consider them to have been heroes in disguise. Rumors will circulate that the PCs were on a secret rescue mission all along, and the reputation of the British Empire for honorable dealings with the Martians will increase (at least in the locale of Aubochon). The shaman Kur will even speak favorably of the honor of the PCs and the British, opening the door to friendship and trade with Aubochon, the desert Martians, and other cities in the region.

THE GRATEFUL CROWN

ALTHOUGH THE mission has been at least partially successful on the part of the characters, the Crown may or may not have gained anything from the experience.

If the characters were forced to run, the city the British hoped to deal with is now in anarchy, and the desert people are no closer to human friendship than they were before. No matter, though, the characters gave it their best shot, and the governor general will recommend everyone involved in military or government service for a citation. Civilian PCs will be given a small reward for their time and effort (about £20), and the incident will be written up in the papers, gaining everyone involved one renown point for Heroism.

If the characters rescued Uturaam, they will be given small medals of state by the prince (bearing the symbol of the city-state of Aubochon) and a standing invitation to return and visit. The governor general will recommend everyone in military or government service for a citation and a promotion. Civilian PCs will receive a gratuity of £50 and may be contacted to sell their story to a newspaper. Everyone involved will

receive one renown point for Patriotic Service, and anyone who performed a truly heroic act will receive a point for Heroism.

Finally, no matter what the outcome, all players should be given five experience points, with the referee rewarding good play and good role playing with an extra point and subtracting an appropriate amount of points for poor play.

OTHER ADVENTURE IDEAS

"CARAVAN TO Aubochon" is merely one possible adventure using the background information on caravans and the desert Martians. Exotic adventures await any who brave to travel where the canals no longer reach, into lands hidden away from the rest of Mars, as inaccessible as darkest Africa.

Using the Caravan Routes: The map of caravan routes given on page 23 shows those avenues where the canals have long ago dried up, but where the potential is great enough to support at least irregular caravan-borne merchants. Obviously, when the distances across the red deserts are measured in hundreds of miles, only rich and coveted prizes could lure merchants away from the safety of the canals.

THE ZEPHYRIAN SPICE TRADE

TWICE ANNUALLY the *pekaay* roots are ripe for the picking, alternating with the blossoming of the plants' fragrant flowers. Among the natives of the *pekaay*'s native lands, Zephyria, the incredible spices made from the dried flowers and roots are commonplace. But to the rest of Mars, the delicious spices from distant Zephyria are a rare and expen-

sive pleasure—the princes of a hundred cities pay handsomely for just a touch of spice for their most special meals. And why is *pekaay* spice so rare and expensive? Because the ancient canals which passed through Zephyria no longer swell with water, and the strong sandstorms of the harvest seasons keep aerial ships at a distance. The only way into or out of Zephyria during the *pekaay* harvest is by caravan.

One caravan which regularly journeys into Zephyria is operated by Nostos Pygmaia, a spice merchant who has made his personal fortune organizing a caravan for every harvest. Now very old and fat, Pygmaia entrusts the leadership of each caravan to Mytus Quintin, an experienced warrior formerly in the service of the great House of Hutt in Ostoor. Pygmaia and Quintin control all aspects of the caravan, from its personnel and equipment to its route and business transactions. Pygmaia uses his vast wealth to secure good markets and sources of spice; for his risks and great efforts in the deserts, Quintin is paid handsomely.

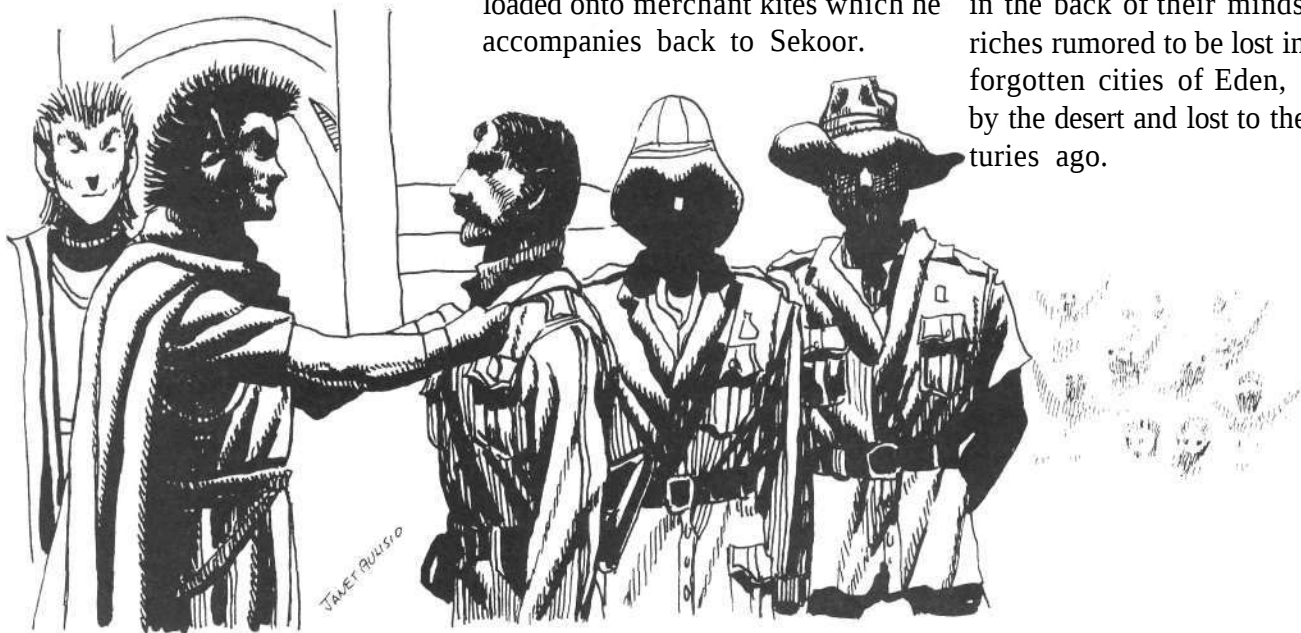
Quintin guides his caravan by an arduous route along the dead canal beginning in Sekoor and heading for Ostoor. Since the individual *pekaay* plants are difficult to cultivate, most spices are harvested by desert nomad peoples from wild plants strewn across many square miles of the dried and rocky soil. The route and schedule of the caravan are well known to the desert gatherers, who come to meet it as it arrives. For the gatherers, this is their only contact with the rest of Mars, a time of festival and trading for the luxuries originally purchased by Pygmaia and brought in by Quintin. The universal money of the Zephyrian deserts is spice.

The hardships of the desert are many, and seldom does a caravan make the journey from Sekoor through Zephyria to distant Ostoor without loss of wagons, animals, and personnel. The vicious winds sweep up storms which show no mercy, and the violent bandits know well the riches hidden away in the wagons. But once the caravan does arrive, Quintin sees to it that the *pekaay* is loaded onto merchant kites which he accompanies back to Sekoor.

CARAVANS IN EDEN

THE WIDELY dispersed peoples of Eden are nomadic wanderers steeped in tradition and the hardships of their migratory lives. However, several merchants have found that native plants and crafts from Eden have a market in the canal cities and have taken to the use of aerial boats to visit the nomads and trade with them. However, aerial piracy is expensive, and many merchants who have lost their ships, plus those who could not afford such to begin with, have taken to the ground, organizing small caravans to travel alongside the natives in order to trade with them.

Most of Eden's small caravans have only a few wagons and animals, and rarely more than one or two dozen Martians. They travel by night to avoid the terrific heat and the possibility of pirate attack from the air. Generally, they base their operations out of Thymiamata or Dinsoor, trading common wares with the nomads for a meager profit back in the canal cities. But most merchants also have in the back of their minds the great riches rumored to be lost in the many forgotten cities of Eden, consumed by the desert and lost to the ages centuries ago.



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GDW: 1892. ISBN 1-55878-027-0. Boxed. (Nov.).....\$24.



CHALLENGE 34

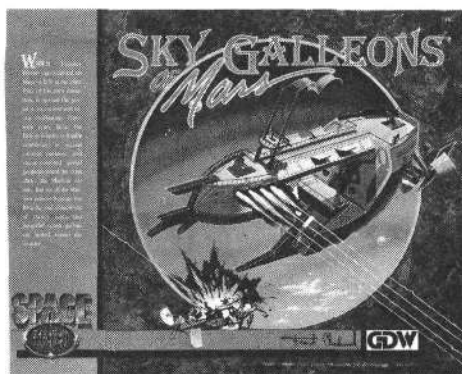
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pieces depicting the gunboats and cloudships involved. Their battles are fought out on two gorgeous, hand-colored maps, one of a typical Martian canal city, another of Kraag Barrovaar. Stalk the skies of Mars with **Sky Galleons of Mars**!

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CARAVANS OF MARS



Caravans of Mars is a sourcebook of the eastern desert and the caravans which traverse it, and an adventure module dealing with a delicate diplomatic mission to a remote desert city-state.

Desert Sourcebook

THE FIRST PART of the book deals with the vast desert to the east of the British holdings on Mars, the Aetheria-Elysium Wastes. **Caravans of Mars** describes this bone-dry expanse of red sand and near-sterile soil, detailing its terrain, flora, and fauna. Everything is represented, from the ferocious steppe tiger, to the comical (but still dangerous) bush monkey, to the tribes of Hill Martian nomads and their weapons, government, society, and customs.

Also discussed are the organizations and problems of the trade convoys, lengthy wagon trains full of trade goods, that are the lifeblood of the desert city-states.

Caravans of Mars answers many questions: What dangers await the inattentive adventurer? What are conditions outside the influence of the British colony? What treasures lie waiting for the alert traveller to pick up? Who (or what) is the mysterious She-Devil of the desert?

Caravan to Aubochon

THE SECOND PART of this book draws upon the first part, the sourcebook, to provide a thrilling adventure set against the backdrop of a caravan journey.

An invitation from the distant prince of Aubochon has presented the governor-general with an opportunity to further British interests, and he will do everything possible to get an expedition there. He is reluctant to send an aerial expedition so far from British protection—most gunboats sent that far out never return, and gunboats are all needed closer to home to deal with the rising Oenotrian menace. Besides, a ground expedition might open doors with some of the other savages along the route.

Therefore, the player characters must travel with a caravan along the long-dead Haiuk Canal, now a trail through the eastern deserts, its subsurface waters carrying only enough moisture to create an occasional oasis.

The situation in Aubochon requires careful handling, and the player characters' actions and decisions on the way out will determine the ease with which they can make the return trip (or even whether they *make* the return trip).

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