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Most people I know around my age or a bit older started their foray into speculative fiction with Tolkien. This isn't universal, but I find it rather common. Many younger folks took the dive with Harry Potter.

For me? I started on Mars. I first encountered Edgar Rice Burroughs' **John Carter** series in a bookstore as a kid. I'd gotten good grades and my grandmother had taken me to the bookstore to get some reading material. She was a teacher and, unlike some teachers and authority figures, her philosophy towards getting me comics or "weird" fiction was "whatever, as long as he's reading." So, when I did well in school or helped around the house to a significant degree, I basically got a line of credit usable for reading material. It wasn't a lot, but it was enough to keep me reading, which was, of course, the goal.

I doubt you're reading this, grandma, but I love you and can't thank you enough for that. It's a big part of the reason I'm here writing this.

Even with as encouraging as grandma was about me reading almost anything that wasn't outright inappropriate for a kid whose age was in the single digits, I was a bit unsure grandma would let me buy a novel with a mostly naked man and woman on it, but it certainly drew my eye. However, even beyond Michael Whelan's wondrous cover, the title got me: *A Princess of Mars*. I remember thinking, why was it "A" Princess of Mars. Were there more than one? What made this one so special? Who was that guy on the cover if the woman was the princess? Who were those scary looking four-armed green creatures around them? Wasn't Mars all red and stuff?

I really wasn't sure of a lot of things about that book, but I knew one thing: I really wanted to find these things out. So, I asked for the book and got it. I really can't recall if I had to beg or cajole my way past that cover or not, but I do remember what happened once I managed to secure a copy. I took the book home and read the whole thing that night.

And I loved it. Carter was a cowboy and a soldier and he was on another planet and in love with a princess! He had an awesome alien dog and four-armed green buddy who was fifteen feet tall! They had flying

ships and fought giant apes! My kid brain could barely contain how amazing it all was.

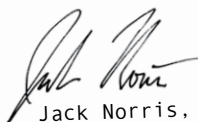
So, as soon as I could, I got the next Carter book I could find. And the next. And the next. I didn't read them all in order, not at first. It was literally whatever I could get and I started them as soon as I got a new one. I was pretty frustrated when I found out there were only eleven books, or that Burroughs wasn't around to write any more. But even so, I fell in love with Barsoom.

Then after Carter came Pellucidar. And Carson of Venus. Those were cool too. Not as cool as Carter, but I loved them too. Tarzan left me a bit less impressed for some reason I can't completely recall, so I finally ended up looking outside Burroughs to other fantastic settings and stories. During this time, I'd also been reading superhero comics and the occasional monster-oriented book, but as far as science-fiction fantasy went? Carter and Burroughs were my first forays.

Of course, a few months later I read *The Hobbit* and then *Lord of the Rings*, found my way from there to Howard's *Conan and Kull*, Zelazny's *Jack of Shadows*, and on to other heroes and their stories. Appreciation for all these works also pushed me to comics outside of superheroes, such as Warlord and Arion, *Lord of Atlantis*. A short time later I discovered roleplaying games as well. Fast forward a few decades and now here I am, writing my own books and working with games that let players transport themselves to amazing places where they can be the heroes of their own tales of daring and adventure, at least for a few hours at a time. I've worked on a lot of books in many settings and genres, including those involving many creations and characters I grew to love as a fan.

But it all started on Mars. On my beloved Barsoom. So, when the fine folks at Modiphius asked me to develop **John Carter of Mars** for them? I eagerly accepted. And so now, like Carter himself, to Mars I return.

Hopefully you'll take this trip with me. I think you'll have fun.



Jack Norris, September 2018



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# CHAPTER 1: WELCOME TO BARSOOM

---

With scarcely a parting glance I turned my eyes again toward Mars,  
lifted my hands toward his lurid rays, and waited . . .

– John Carter *Gods of Mars*

---

Welcome to the **John Carter of Mars Roleplaying Game**. Within the pages of this book you will be introduced to the world of Mars as imagined by Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of the Barsoom novels, as well as a version of Modiphius Entertainment's 2d20 Roleplaying Game System customized for fast-paced pulp-inspired action. Before we dive into either the setting or system full force, let's briefly cover a few things.

While it is possible, even likely, that many reading this book are familiar with John Carter, Barsoom, Edgar Rice Burroughs, planetary romance, roleplaying games, and other concepts featured in this text, we are not going to take any chances. In brief, we are going to cover various topics that will hopefully enrich the enjoyment of this book both as a text and game.

## WHO WAS EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS?

Edgar Rice Burroughs (September 1, 1875 – March 19, 1950) was easily one of the leading pulp writers and fantasists of his day. Son of a US Army major and businessman, Burroughs' own poor health kept him from military service. In an effort to support himself, a young Burroughs turned to writing fiction and soon found he was able to support himself writing pulp adventure tales featuring various heroes. In addition to John Carter and the Barsoom series, Burroughs created various other worlds and heroes, from the Venusian explorer Carson

Napier to David Innes, explorer of the Hollow Earth realm known as Pellucidar. In addition, he wrote various one-off novels and shorter series, most nominally set in the same bizarre and wonderful setting, with heroes and supporting cast from one work occasionally mentioning or even interacting with those in other tales. In addition to his writing, Burroughs worked as a war correspondent during World War II.

Burroughs' most famous creation was that of Lord Greystoke, more commonly known as Tarzan. Burroughs wrote twenty-four novels featuring the jungle-dwelling "lord of the apes" and countless movies and TV shows later featured the character. Tarzan even lent his name to Tarzana, Burroughs' California ranch home that eventually gave rise to a community of the same name.

However, if Burroughs' most famous creation was Tarzan, then his second most famous, and generally more complex and engaging hero, was John Carter. Carter was one of the earliest interplanetary heroes, undertaking adventures beyond the confines of Earth and finding purpose, adventure, and love on the wondrous world of Mars, or Barsoom as Burroughs' Martians called it.

At the time of his death in 1950, Burroughs had written nearly eighty novels featuring numerous memorable characters. His creations have featured in comics, television, and movies. Many modern creators credit



Burroughs and his work as being incredibly influential on their lives and creations. The list of such creators includes author Ray Bradbury and filmmaker James Cameron.

## JOHN CARTER AND THE BARSOOM NOVELS

---

In John Carter and his Barsoom novels, Burroughs explored not just a distant jungle as with Tarzan, but a whole new planet. Beginning with *A Princess of Mars*, first published in serial format in 1912, the series explores the life of one John Carter, Virginian gentleman, soldier, and wanderer. In the eleven books featuring Carter and other heroes of the dying Martian world its denizens called Barsoom, Burroughs tackled a variety of themes and ideas, many far more advanced than the “pulp adventure novel” format of the Barsoom books suggested. In *A Princess of Mars*, we see a brave and competent hero struggle with social customs and romance in ways that counterbalance his otherwise hypercompetent presentation. In *Gods of Mars* and *Warlord of Mars* Burroughs and Carter both confront the issue of fanatical and destructive religious beliefs. Throughout the series, complex politics, cultural clashes, and other problems plague the heroes. In many ways a stranger on his own Earth, Carter finds love, family, and friendship on Mars.

Many elements Burroughs introduced into Carter’s personality made him remarkable compared to other science fiction fantasy heroes of his day. He

misunderstood social cues and customs, he waxed philosophical about the pressure of false belief and fanaticism, championed the use of compassion with man and beast, downplayed his own bravery, recognized skill and talent in his enemies, and otherwise exhibited a deeper personality than many of his contemporaries. Where some heroes of various adventure tales would leave a string of bodies in their wake while wading single-handedly through a sea of foes, Carter made allies. Sure, he killed foes by the dozens, even the hundreds, but the friends he made were far more notable. Across Barsoom and beyond, Carter befriended individuals of varying skin tones, genders, backgrounds, and outlooks. Even though the Barsoom stories are products of their times in many ways, they also showcase Burroughs' ability to craft a hero who looked past cultural and racial differences in ways that shamed many of his contemporaries. His best friend was a four-armed green skinned warrior whose culture laughed at love and friendship. He never wavered in his love or loyalty to his beloved Dejah Thoris, fighting across Barsoom and beyond to be with her. Carter was flawed and in many ways a bit backwards, but that imperfection mixed with sincerity and genuine goodness made him one of the classic science fiction fantasy heroes of the early 20th Century.

The plots of the Barsoom stories are often deceptively simple: a threat steals away John Carter from his loved ones, most often his lovely wife Dejah Thoris. While resolving these conflicts, Carter meets new allies and fights various villains, from false goddesses to corrupt warlords to synthetic monsters. Carter triumphs for a time, sometimes he aids another hero in their own quest, and then things grow calm until a new threat arises. Such is the way of not just the Barsoom stories, but many of Burroughs' works, especially in his long-running series that grew popular with the read-

ers of his day.

What readers may not always immediately notice is how often some deeper argument or idea creeps into these simple plots that Burroughs relied on to keep selling his work to an audience who had come to expect a certain type of story. Repeatedly, Burroughs buried questions about blind obedience to harmful ideologies and how one should repay love and loyalty in these otherwise straightforward stories about a displaced Earthman fighting monsters and marauders on another world. Thus, the stories of John Carter and other tales of Barsoom became not just pulp science fantasy, nor period-flavored science fiction, but something much more.

## RATIONALISM, ROMANTICISM, AND PULP ROLEPLAYING

---

*John Carter of Mars* is a roleplaying game that adapts Edgar Rice Burroughs' rationalist, romantic pulp tales of Barsoom. Heroes fight enemies born of lust, ignorance, and tyranny to save their friends, loved ones, and those cultures and places they call home. False gods, lying priests, deceitful nobles, treacherous assassins, and many other cruel adversaries are the biggest threats. These are the types of stories that will feature in the game sessions and campaigns of *John Carter of Mars*, using a modified version of the 2d20 system also used in such games as *Conan: Adventures in a Land Undreamed Of* and *Mutant Chronicles*.

While the people of Barsoom can be almost heartlessly pragmatic and even a bit emotionally stunted at times, it's generally a temporary and fixable condition. There are no "evil" races on Mars. Some beliefs are shocking to Earthling sensibilities, and cultural differences can certainly lead to comedic or tragic misunderstandings (a common Burroughs theme), but there are no Tolkien-style orcs or similar



cultures. Even the largely villainous groups have individuals who eventually see that oppression and cruelty is a hollow and ultimately poor substitute for love and loyalty.

The animals and nature of Barsoom also echo this idea. There aren't really "evil" animals or beasts on the planet. Just hungry, territorial, or savage ones. Barsoom is dangerous, and survival is often difficult, but it's not an evil or arbitrary place.

Characters can forge new alliances, tame savage beasts, and make some

bumbling outworlder one of the most powerful people on the planet through a combination of action and alliances. Decisive action tempered with sense and compassion is the best way to cut through cultural misunderstandings, defeat false beliefs, and make creatures loyal to you.

These are the sorts of stories Burroughs told with Carter and Barsoom. These are the sorts of themes **John Carter of Mars** seeks to bring to your gaming table.

## GLOSSARY

The world of **John Carter of Mars** is literally its own world! It has its own cultures, language, history, flora, and fauna. Much of this will be detailed extensively in chapters devoted to these various topics. However, there are some commonly used terms.

- \* **Airship.** Flying craft that sail using Barsoomian eighth ray technology.
- \* **Banth.** Lion-like predator of Barsoom. Known for its ferocity.
- \* **Barsoom.** Mars, the name given to the planet by its natives.
- \* **Calot.** Ten-legged lizard-dogs that serve as pets and guards on Barsoom. Commonly kept by green Martians.
- \* **Cluros.** The furthest of Barsoom's two moons. Known as Deimos on Earth.
- \* **Dejah Thoris.** Princess of Helium and the titular character of *A Princess of Mars*, Burroughs' first Barsoom story. Wife and lover of John Carter.
- \* **Earthborn.** The term this book gives to human characters from Earth. Also known as Earthlings or Jasoomians.
- \* **First Born.** Also known as black Martians. They are physically near-perfect and possess secret technol-

ogy and knowledge. The oldest humanoid race on Barsoom.

- \* **Green Martian.** Four armed, green-skinned denizens of Barsoom. Fierce warriors organized into various tribes and hordes.
- \* **Helium.** One of the great kingdoms of Barsoom. Centered around the cities of Greater and Lesser Helium, it is home to Dejah Thoris and her family and eventually John Carter.
- \* **Jasoom.** The name given to Earth by the people of Barsoom.
- \* **Jed.** A leader of a city. Usually serves under a jeddak.
- \* **Jeddak.** A leader of a kingdom. Also used by the green Martians for a head of a horde.
- \* **John Carter.** Earthborn soldier and gentleman. Transported to Barsoom where he becomes a famous hero and warlord. Main character in the Edgar Rice Burroughs Barsoom series.
- \* **Kadabra.** Capital city of the Kingdom of the Okar. Protected by a great device known as the Guardian.
- \* **Okar.** Also known as yellow Martians. They were once a powerful culture on Barsoom, but now dwell in isolated cities in the arctic polar wastes.

- ✧ **Omean Sea.** Lost sea of Barsoom that exists below the planet's surface. Initially known to and accessible only by the First Born.
- ✧ **Red Martians.** The dominant race of modern Barsoom. Copper-skinned and athletically built, they are the most common race on Barsoom.
- ✧ **River Iss.** Sole remaining river on Barsoom. Traveling down the river to its end is believed to begin one's journey into the afterlife.
- ✧ **Tharks.** One of the most well-known of the green Martian hordes.
- ✧ **Thoat.** A riding beast common on Barsoom.
- ✧ **Thuria.** The nearest moon of Mars, known as Phobos on Earth. Erroneously believed to be the home of the First Born by other races.
- ✧ **Valley Dor.** A great valley located at the end of the River Iss. Believed to be the location of the Barsoomian afterlife. In reality, a terrifying place of monsters dominated by white Martian theocrats.
- ✧ **White Apes.** Mostly hairless massive white primates native to Barsoom. Unlike the Earth primates they bear some resemblance to, they are fearsome carnivores and one of Barsoom's deadliest predators.
- ✧ **White Martians.** An ancient race of white-skinned Martians. Now only exists in small hidden groups, such as the Holy Therns or Orovars.
- ✧ **Zodanga.** Another red Martian kingdom and one of Helium's chief rivals in the early Barsoom stories. Eventually conquered and becomes part of the Kingdom of Helium.

# THE MEASURES OF MARS

In an effort to lend atmosphere and style to the text, the majority of measurements in this book will be given in Barsoom standards. Instead of the Earth foot or meter, we record things in the Barsoomian ad or sofad. When months and years, or ords and teeans, are mentioned, they will not be the standard Earth versions but their longer Martian counterparts.

Of course, we realize this is confusing to those not familiar with these systems of time, weight, and distance. And while these measurements will be revisited later in this text, we see no reason to leave readers dwelling in confusion one moment longer and so present:

## BARSOOMIAN DISTANCES

	MEASURE	IMPERIAL	METRIC
Sofad	10 sofs	11.694 in	0.2967 m
Ad	10 sofads	9.7 ft	2.97 m
Haad	200 ads	1,949.05 ft	594.07 m
Karad	100 haads	36.92 mi	59,407 m

## BARSOOMIAN TIME

The Barsoom day is slightly longer than an Earth day at 24 hours and 37 minutes long. Their day starts at the equivalent to our 6:00am, and is divided into 10 equal parts. Each of these is then again divided in 50 shorter parts, and so on as explained below:

	MEASURE	EARTH EQUIVALENT
Tal		.89 seconds
Xat	200 tals	2 minutes, 57.7 seconds
Zode	50 xats	2 hours, 28 minutes, 4.8 seconds
Padan	10 zodes	1 Barsoomian day
Teean	67 padans	1 Barsoomian month
Ord	10 teeans	1 Barsoomian year



# GETTING READY TO PLAY

---

As noted earlier, *John Carter of Mars* is primarily a game, specifically a roleplaying game. In it, most players take the role of a heroic character adventuring in the world of Barsoom. With the help of another player known as the narrator, they undertake various quests, adventures, and play their characters through a number of scenarios across multiple game sessions throughout a whole campaign. Player characters can come from various races and professions on Barsoom. They can even be Earthborn characters transported to the planet much like John Carter himself.

Unlike other players, narrators take the role of not one character, but many. They direct the other characters that the player character heroes encounter, and plot and direct the encounters and adventures which drive sessions and, ultimately, campaigns forward.

During play, player characters will gain experience and become more skilled and effective. They will also gain fame and renown, allowing them to influence the world. Characters may lead nations, command armies or vast airships, and otherwise make major changes to the setting — perhaps changes Burroughs himself never imagined!

## NEW TO ROLEPLAYING?

---

If you have had prior experience with roleplaying games, you can safely skip ahead to the next section. If this is your first experience with tabletop roleplaying games, by all means continue reading. Ultimately, roleplaying games are about stretching the imagination to have fun, while providing a framework within which the participants can imagine they are heroic adventurers in a

bygone age of savage and exotic wonder. The rules present a system to help everyone agree on what happens, encouraging players' imaginations to work together to make sure that the experience is as fair as it is exciting.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

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To get the most out of these rules and begin your adventures in *John Carter*, it's strongly recommended that you assemble the following before beginning:

### PLAYERS

---

You will need at least two players, one to be a narrator and another to play a character. Most gaming groups have multiple players playing their own characters, but even two is enough to get started. Generally, a group of three to six players is standard. More players are possible but with more players, each player gets less time in the spotlight.

### PLAYER CHARACTERS

---

Also called PCs or player heroes. With the exception of the narrator, every player needs their own character. This is the player's icon, avatar, or representative in the game. By playing these characters, players interact with the setting, go on adventures, and otherwise play the game. Creating a character is covered in the next chapter and a number of pre-generated characters are included for players who just want to grab a character and go.

Each character will need to have their various statistics recorded, either on a sheet of blank paper or on a character sheet provided in this book. Character sheets can be downloaded at [modiphius.com](http://modiphius.com) and printed for use.

## DICE

*John Carter* uses two common types of dice: twenty-sided dice (abbreviated as d20) and six-sided dice (abbreviated as d6). These dice can be easily found in most hobby or gaming stores or ordered from various retailers online. In addition, various apps for phones and computers can simulate dice rolls.

Groups should have at least two d20s for the narrator and two d20s for the players and at least a half dozen d6s for the group. As these dice, especially the d20s, will be used frequently for various challenges, tests, and conflicts during play, it is recommended that, if possible, the group should have a few more dice than the minimums on hand.

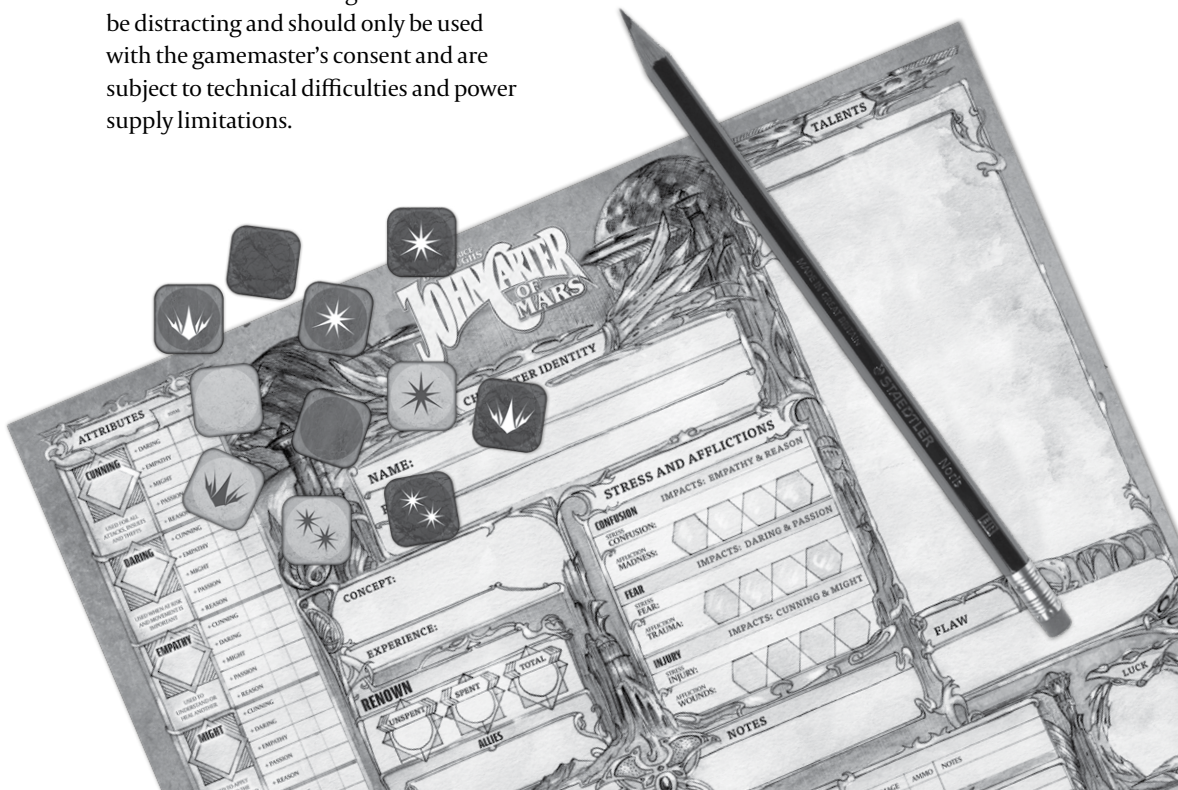
## PAPER AND PENCILS

Paper and pencils are not strictly necessary, but they are useful for drawing maps, making notes, tracking various game effects, and passing secret messages between players and the narrator if necessary. It's possible to keep track of all of this with tablets, smartphones, or laptops, but electronic devices at the game table can be distracting and should only be used with the gamemaster's consent and are subject to technical difficulties and power supply limitations.

## COUNTERS

Players will need something to keep track of various resources during play, particularly each player character's Momentum and Luck, two valuable resources during play. Tracking these can be as simple as making marks on scrap paper, though many groups find it useful to use poker chips, glass beads, extra dice, or similar objects to track various resources.

Narrators will need some similar way to track their own special resource, called Threat. Narrators may find it particularly useful to use physical markers to track Threat. Threat enhances the actions of various dangerous creatures, villains, and other hazards the player characters will face during play and can be increased by players in exchange for resources of their own. Watching the pool of Threat points increase and decrease during play gives a sense of rising and falling tension that many groups appreciate.



# ERAS OF PLAY

---

The races of Barsoom live for centuries and lead lives that require them to focus on the present instead of dwelling on past events or future possibilities. Months or even years may pass between significant events, during which time things do not change much. This is illustrated in Burroughs' work, as Carter and other characters often spend long periods of time between events detailed in the novels. Even during some stories weeks, months, or even a year or more will be done away with in a few lines of text, with time passing in leaps and bounds before returning to some crisis or significant action. In a *John Carter of Mars* campaign, similarly long periods of time may pass and it is of limited utility to adhere to a strict timeline. It will often be important to know the general political landscape and where things lie in relation to certain events, but exact time-keeping and strict timelines are less vital than in some settings.

Despite this, there are significant periods, events, and developments in the Barsoom novels. Most of these revolve around the actions of John Carter and his allies. Depending on exactly when a campaign, adventure, or game session is set, certain kingdoms may be rising or falling. Certain figures may be alive, dead (or believed so), unborn, or even off planet. Certain races, customs, and beliefs are very different based on which general era of Carter's time on Barsoom the action is set.

*John Carter of Mars* addresses these temporal changes not with a strict timeline, but with three distinct eras of play. These eras are named for Carter himself and relate to various events in the Barsoom novels. These eras are:

- \* The Dotar Sojat era
- \* The Prince of Helium era
- \* The Jeddak of Jeddaks era

Whenever history, events, or other elements of the setting are specific to a certain era, they will be marked with an icon corresponding to the era where these things are relevant.

## NOW LET'S GET STARTED

---

With the initial concepts and themes explained, the concept of roleplaying games and the tools of play defined, it's time to enter the world of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom.



## THE DOTAR SOJAT ERA

Named for Carter's name among the Tharks, this era begins around the time John Carter arrives on Barsoom at the beginning of *A Princess of Mars* and covers the majority of the first book, when he lives with the Tharks, meets Dejah Thoris, and has his earliest adventures on Mars.

During this period, many nations of Barsoom are in constant conflict. Helium, Zodanga, and other red Martian kingdoms are regularly at war with each other, as are the green Martians and red Martians. The First Born and Okar are mostly unknown save for the occasional raid or covert action, and those who know of them believe the First Born "Black Pirates" come from the Martian moons. Belief in the Barsoomian afterlife, the Valley Dor, and the River Iss are nigh-universal, with only the First Born and Holy Therns knowing these tales are manufactured to manipulate and misdirect.

During this time John Carter is relatively unknown outside a handful of groups such as the Tharks and their soon-to-be jeddak, Tars Tarkas. The Earthborn hero has had little impact on Barsoomian culture or traditions at this time. Because Carter is a stranger during this time, most of what holds true for this era also applies for some time before Carter's arrival. Thus, while this era begins technically in 1866 with Carter's arrival on Barsoom and lasts only about a year, events and information relevant to this period can be used for games set before this time as well.





## THE PRINCE OF HELIUM ERA

This period covers a large time period in the first three Barsoom novels, *A Princess of Mars*, *Gods of Mars*, and *Warlord of Mars*. During this period Carter marries Dejah Thoris and becomes a prince of Helium. Dejah lays the egg that will eventually become Carthoris, the couple's first child. For about nine Earth years Carter has mostly undocumented adventures and experiences, during which time Helium rises to prominence and the Thark horde and other neighboring nations develop good relations with Carter's adopted nation. At the end of this period of prosperity the atmosphere plant, which supplies much of Barsoom's breathable air, malfunctions and is restarted by Carter in an act that leaves him stranded back on Earth with the world of Barsoom believing him dead.

For ten more Earth years, Carter seeks to return to his beloved wife and adopted world. During this time, his son grows to manhood and then disappears into the Valley Dor. Dejah Thoris grieves for Carter's loss for years until she too disappears. Eventually, the Thark Jeddak Tars Tarkas journeys to the Valley Dor in time to meet Carter, who finally "died" on Earth only to return to Barsoom. During these adventures, chronicled in *Gods of Mars* and *Warlord of Mars*, Carter discovers and defeats both the Holy Therns and the First Born false goddess Issus. They are the main forces behind belief in a Barsoomian

afterlife which, in truth, leads those who follow it to slavery and death. Shortly thereafter, Carter defeats the Okar Jeddak Salensus Oll and creates a great alliance of leaders of various kingdoms and races.

This era is rife for adventure, with Carter either occupied with the affairs of Helium and his family, or lost and believed dead. His son Carthoris is a promising young prince, but he quickly disappears himself. Player heroes during this time can carve out their own legends and even raise their own kingdoms without having to worry about how Carter and his fellows feel about their actions. Campaigns set early in this era may also see characters becoming early allies or followers of Carter, a valuable position as the hero becomes more well known.

During this time Carter is either a relatively well-known living figure in the regions around Helium or a great hero believed to have died saving Barsoom. The green Martians, particularly the Tharks, are beginning to understand the value of kindness and friendship, but tension between various races and kingdoms still run high in most places. This period covers about twenty years Earth time, from 1867 to 1888. The beliefs of the Barsoomian afterlife, the Valley Dor, and the River Iss are still nigh-universal until the very end of this period, when the lies behind them are revealed and the truth begins to spread.



## THE JEDDAK OF JEDDAKS ERA

This period covers the later novels in the Barsoom series, when Carter is well-established as the great unifying warlord of Mars whose allies include various kingdoms and groups of red Martians, green Martians, Okar, and First Born. During this time, new heroes such as Ulysses Paxton appear, and younger heroes such as Carthoris and Thuvia of Ptarth have their own grand adventures.

During this era, much of the conflict and adventure involves remote locales, hidden threats, forbidden science, and other dangers which threaten the general peace and prosperity of Helium and its many allies. Active wars are less common than smaller conflicts, but only constant vigilance and regular heroism keeps the fragile peace. The old beliefs and rivalries that once limited Barsoom are

largely gone or on the decline, leaving a bright future that must be nurtured and protected.

This era is the default “modern day” for *John Carter of Mars*. It begins in the late 1880s by Earth’s calendar, but extends well beyond, covering the days of World War I and later. During this time, Carter is a great hero, famous across Barsoom. His allies, children, and followers are themselves great champions and famous luminaries. This era can be a bit daunting for players seeking to carve out major roles and grand reputations for their own heroes, but this is balanced by the ability to interact with the characters of the Barsoom novels and the possibility of *John Carter* campaigns set in this time ushering in a grand new era, defined by the players and their characters’ adventures.

# CHAPTER 2: CREATING YOUR ADVENTURER

In that little party there was not one who would desert another; yet we were of different countries, different colors, different races, different religions—and one of us was of a different world.

— John Carter, *The Gods of Mars*

This chapter details character generation, walking players through the steps to create their own adventurers in *John Carter of Mars*. There are nine steps to character generation — one for each of the mysterious Martian rays!

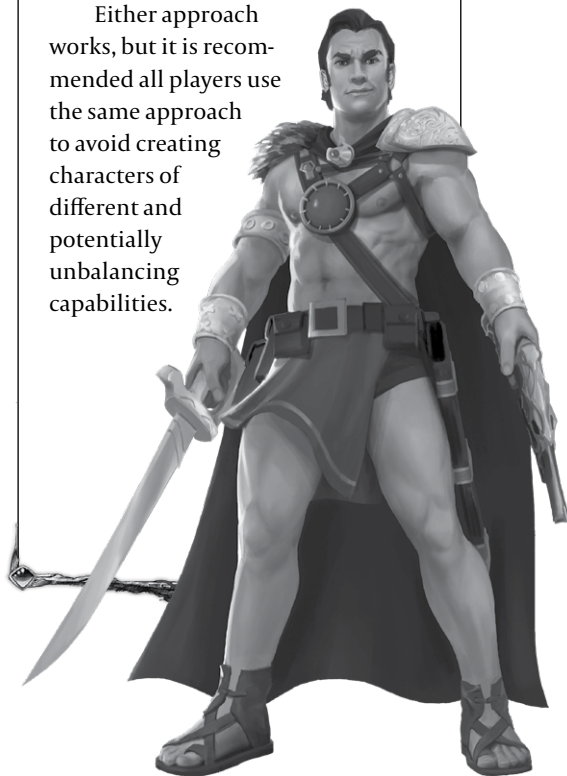
- \* **Step One:**  
General Concept
- \* **Step Two:**  
Starting Attributes
- \* **Step Three:**  
Selecting Your Race
- \* **Step Four:**  
Select Archetype
- \* **Step Five:**  
Select Descriptor
- \* **Step Six:**  
Talents
- \* **Step Seven:**  
Starting Renown and Equipment
- \* **Step Eight:**  
Choose a Flaw
- \* **Step Nine:**  
Name and Finalize Concepts and Attributes

## PLAYING JOHN CARTER AND FRIENDS

In addition to making their own characters, players may play John Carter, Tars Tarkas, Dejah Thoris, and other important characters from Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom novels. There are two ways to do this:

Use this chapter to create your own versions of the heroes of the Barsoom novels or use the statistics provided in the *John Carter of Mars* core rulebook Chapter 15: *Champions of Barsoom*.

Either approach works, but it is recommended all players use the same approach to avoid creating characters of different and potentially unbalancing capabilities.





## STEP ONE: GENERAL CONCEPT

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The first step in creating a player character is to decide what general sort of character to create. Then either select a concept from the list in this section or create your own. In fact, keeping the concept intentionally vague to start is a good way to begin, as it allows the character to change and adapt going forward.

Some sample concepts include:

- \* **Wandering Princess:** A noble of your people in search of adventure or seeking some artifact or resource that will help your people.
- \* **Reformed Assassin:** Member of a dreaded Barsoomian assassins guild, you are an ex-killer for hire seeking peace or redemption thanks to your past deeds.
- \* **Airship Raider:** A privateer or pirate, you fly the Martian skies in search of profit or adventure.
- \* **Adventuring Scientist:** You study Martian science and seek to rediscover lost technologies and make bold new discoveries.
- \* **Panthan Warrior:** A Martian soldier for hire, you seek glory and riches on the battlefields of Barsoom.
- \* **Lost Explorer:** You come from far away, perhaps even another world, to explore the wonders of Barsoom.

This basic concept will refine and change throughout character generation, but it provides a framework to start the process. Once you have a concept you're happy with, move on to the next step.



## STEP TWO: STARTING ATTRIBUTES

Each character in *John Carter of Mars* has a number of attributes. These are used to determine a character's general aptitudes and abilities, forming the core of most mechanical tests and die rolls in the game.

Unlike some games, attributes in *John Carter* are deliberately abstract and result-focussed. They focus more on how a character accomplishes something and less on the exact physical or mental abilities used to accomplish the task. All player characters have a set of attributes rated from 4 to 12. A rating of 4 indicates the minimum that any important character would have, representing the low value for a bystander or unimportant supporting character.

There are six attributes representing a character's capabilities. The attributes are **Cunning**, **Daring**, **Empathy**, **Might**, **Passion**, and **Reason**.

**Cunning:** Used whenever a character wants to weaken another. Cunning is used for all attacks, insults, and thefts. Cunning is used with Might to scuttle a ship or bash down a door and used with Reason to shoot a rifle.

**Daring:** Comes into play whenever a character is at risk and movement is important. Daring covers movement, piloting, and defense actions of all sorts. Daring is often used with Cunning to strike with a sword or with Empathy to avoid a blow.

**Empathy:** Used whenever a character seeks to understand or heal another. Empathy is used to heal all types of impairments and to understand what your senses might be telling you about a person. Empathy is used with Reason to spot a character up to no good.

**Might:** Used to apply force to inanimate objects. It is used outside of combat to lift, bend, and break items. Might is used with Daring to pick up an unconscious character and carry them to safety.

**Passion:** Governs any attempt to lead, love, or entertain. It is used whenever another character needs to be convinced to attempt an action. Passion is used with Empathy to lead troops into battle or to woo a lover, and with Cunning to seduce or insult.

**Reason:** Supports any action that applies the mind or senses to work out a problem. It is used with Cunning to sabotage an enemy flier or device, and with Empathy to understand a foe's battle plans.

A starting player character starts with 4 for each of their attributes. This will be modified by the character's race, descriptor, and archetype in coming steps. Furthermore, each player gets 2 extra attribute points to distribute along their character's abilities. Attributes cannot be raised higher than 12. Also, if the campaign is focused on more experienced heroes, see *Advanced Characters* on page 41.

RATING	EQUIVALENT
1-2	<b>Well Below Average</b> , suggesting permanent illness or infirmity.
3	<b>Average.</b>
4	<b>Average.</b> The starting default for all player character abilities.
5-6	<b>Above Average</b> , suggesting considerable skill and natural aptitude.
7-8	<b>Exceptional</b> , suggesting great skill and natural aptitude.
9-10	<b>Fantastic</b> , matching those of the greatest heroes of Barsoom.
11-12	<b>Legendary</b> , noteworthy even among the great heroes of Barsoom.

### STEP THREE: **SELECTING YOUR RACE**

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The next step in character generation is to select the race to which your character belongs. A character's race in *John Carter of Mars* informs much of how they play, including attributes. By default, most Martian cultures are racially homogenous and there are many common traits in different cultures dominated by the same race. Races available for player characters are:

- ✧ Green Martians
- ✧ Red Martians
- ✧ Earthborn (Jasoomian)
- ✧ First Born (black Martians)
- ✧ Okar (yellow Martians)

Red Martians are the most common race, followed by the green. Earthborn are the rarest, canonically only including a handful of individuals. Mixed heritage characters are also possible in some cases and will be discussed later in the chapter.

In some campaigns, narrators and other players may agree to limit the races available, usually due to the time period and general concept for the campaign. In such cases, agree before selecting which races are available for new characters.

The following pages describe the various races in more detail, including their general knowledge of Barsoom, common abilities, and other considerations. These are not designed to be all-inclusive descriptions, but to provide basic information to get you prepped and ready to play quickly. Generally, tests associated with a race's general knowledge are automatic or easier than those outside what they commonly know and understand.

A character's personal knowledge and experience always trumps their general level of racial knowledge. If a green Martian is taught to fly an airship, they can do so even if his fellow horde members cannot. If a red Martian visits a lost city, he knows of his experiences there, even if his fellow red Martians remain ignorant of its existence.

**Example:** *Toras Ral is a red Martian player character from the Kingdom of Ptarth. Looking at the entry for red Martians, he knows of the customs of his home nation, their rulers, and has a general knowledge of his people's allies and rivals. However, he knows little of the remote areas of Barsoom. If he is trying to recognize Thuvan Dihn, Jeddak of Ptarth, he likely doesn't even need to roll any dice. If he is trying to act appropriately in audience with his jeddak, the difficulty of such a test would be reduced due to his general knowledge. However, if he finds himself trying to decipher the customs of a faraway Okar diplomat, he will find this test more difficult, at least until he gains personal knowledge through play to add to his race's common knowledge.*



## RED MARTIANS

The most common race on Barsoom, red Martians populate most of the kingdoms and cities on the surface of Barsoom. The race came about through interbreeding between the First Born, Okar, and the white-skinned Orovar. This makes them the youngest of the human-seeming races, though they have expanded to cover most of the planet. Red Martian societies all follow the same general customs and traditions, though they can vary widely in belief and outlook based on their personal histories and their individual rulers.

Red Martians are masters of the air. They are not the only race to use airships, but their navies rule the skies and their airships are not an uncommon sight even over the wastelands. It is a rare red Martian who cannot at least operate a personal flier, and many have experience with larger craft as well.

The typical red Martian is copper-skinned and athletic of build. They are generally the same height as Earthborn humans. They have little or no body hair and few grow facial hair. They rarely wear much in the way of clothing, favoring harnesses, jewelry, and cloaks to other coverings. Like all the Barsoomian races, the red Martians are oviparous, laying eggs that over several years gestate until a partially grown youth emerges. Like most races on Barsoom, red Martians are extremely long-lived. Barring death by injury or accident, they will live for centuries.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

Add +2 to one of the following attributes: Daring, Empathy, Passion, or Reason. Add +1 to any two others.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* You speak and read common Barsoomian.
- \* You know of your nation and its neighbors.
- \* You have likely heard of the great cities of Helium and Zodanga, even if you don't hail from there.
- \* You know of the threats, politics, and customs of your home kingdom.
- \* You know the basics of airship operation and red Martian science.

### WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

- \* The customs of people in hidden places and remote locales.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* You know the basics of self-defense, including the use of blades and firearms.
- \* You can operate basic machinery and use medicines and machines common to red Martian culture.
- \* You can fly most vehicles under normal conditions and ride trained mounts.





## GREEN MARTIANS

Hailing from the Tharks, Warhoons, or one of the other hordes that dwell in the wastelands and wilds of Barsoom, the green Martians are definitely the most visually distinct of the races. Tall and six-limbed, the tusked and antennae green Martians live in great hordes ruled by their strongest warriors. Many warriors do not even earn their full names and identity within the horde until they have killed another in duel or open combat. Green culture is notoriously grim, finding dark humor in the death and misfortune of others and valuing only individual achievement and the good of the horde. However, this changes over time as alliances and friendships with those outside their horde teaches some green Martians to value these concepts.

The typical green Martian is between one to one-and-a-half ads (10 to 15 feet) tall and has green skin of varying hues. Their bodies are powerful and long-limbed, with large eyes and tusks that jut up from their lower jaw. Their exact garb and armaments vary somewhat by the warband or horde to which they belong, but it is rarely more than a harness, loincloth, jewelry, ornaments and perhaps a furred or feather trimmed cloak.

Like all the Barsoomian races, the green Martians are oviparous, laying eggs in great creches that gestate for years until they are harvested and taken to the horde camps where the hatchlings are given to adults who raise them. Also like most races on Barsoom, green Martians are extremely long-lived. However, their violent lifestyle means few live long before dying at the hands of an enemy or wild beast.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

Subtract -1 from Empathy or Reason. Add +2 to Might. Add +1 each to two of the following: Cunning, Daring, or Passion.

### RACIAL TALENT

#### FOUR-ARMED FOR WAR

##### (GRADE 1)

*Your warlike, combative culture and four arms give you an edge in combat, allowing you to attack with multiple weapons or steady your rifle with ease.*

✧ **Circumstance:** When attacking with melee weapons or using a rifle.

✧ **Effect:** When you generate Momentum while attacking with a melee weapon or rifle, gain an extra Momentum.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

✧ You speak and read common Barsoomian.

✧ Your horde, its leaders, and customs.

✧ The wastelands and wilds your people wander, including the location of various birthing creches where the eggs of the young are kept.

✧ General knowledge of your enemies, including their leaders and their major settlements.

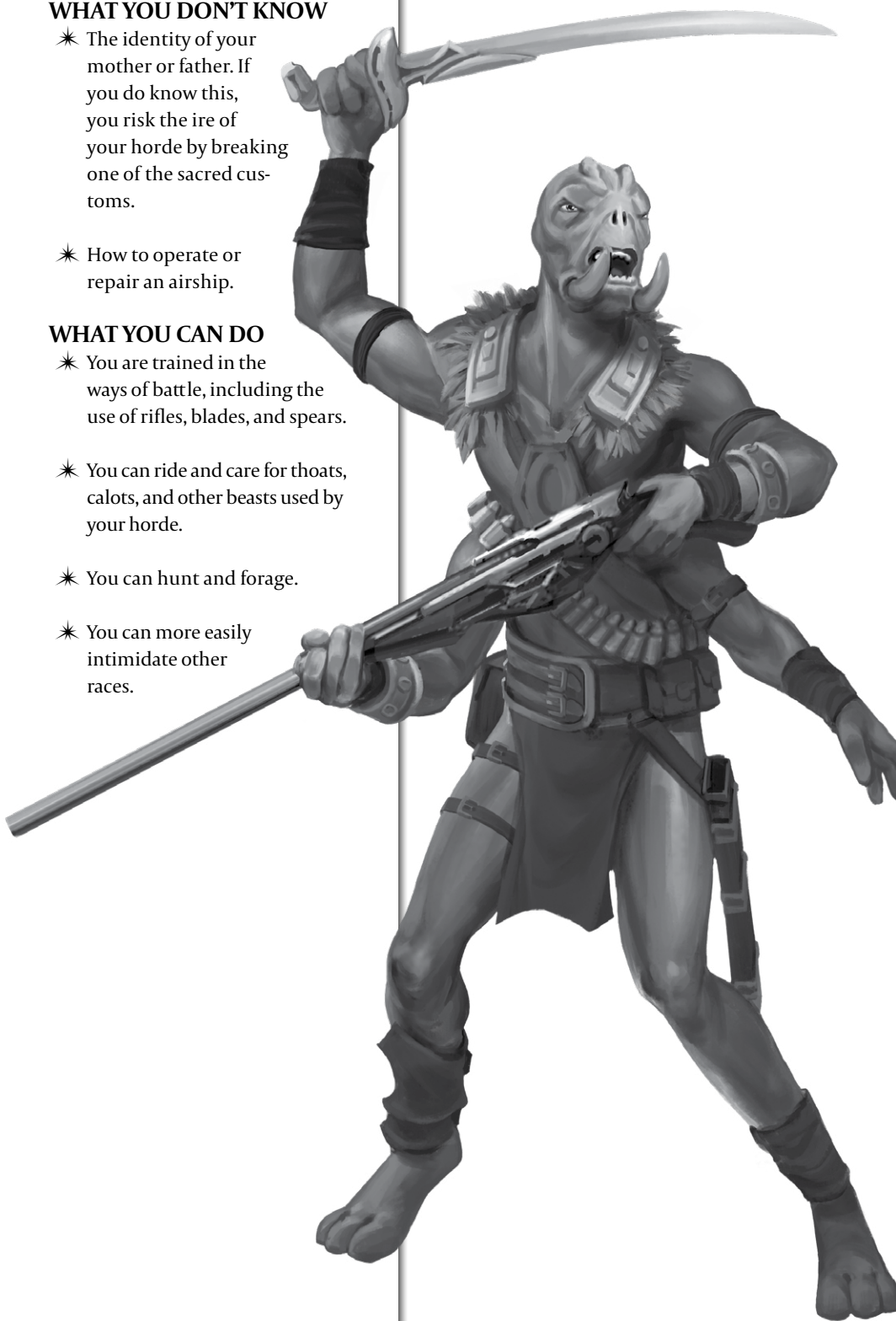
✧ You know the basics of green Martian medicinal salves and treatment.

## WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

- \* The identity of your mother or father. If you do know this, you risk the ire of your horde by breaking one of the sacred customs.
- \* How to operate or repair an airship.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* You are trained in the ways of battle, including the use of rifles, blades, and spears.
- \* You can ride and care for thoats, calots, and other beasts used by your horde.
- \* You can hunt and forage.
- \* You can more easily intimidate other races.



## OKAR

The ancestors of the yellow-skinned Okar once ruled a much larger area of Barsoom than their descendants do today. Where once great Okar kingdoms dwelled in cities across the surface, now the Okar live in the far north in domed cities protected from the frozen climate. The existence of the Okar is not exactly a secret, but many of their fortresses and kingdoms are unwelcoming to visitors and details about them are scarce outside their lands. Travelers are often turned away, enslaved, or imprisoned by the Okar to maintain their security and as a show of superiority and force.

Okar resemble the red Martians closely except in two important details; their yellow skin and the dark beards of their men. Okar dress much as red Martians do inside their cities with little clothing, favoring harnesses and jewelry. However, in the arctic areas outside their cities they don practical and protective thick furs, cloaks, and other garb. Only a foolish Okar would venture outside their city unarmed, and within the city many carry sword, dagger, and various other weapons as well. While skill at arms varies among individuals, one of the greatest swordsmen on Barsoom was found in the Okar capital of Kadabra until his death at the hands of the Earthman, John Carter.

Like other Martians, Okar lay eggs. They can interbreed with red Martians and First Born and presumably other non-green humanoid races as well. In fact, it was such interbreeding with the First Born that gave rise to the red Martian race millennia ago.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

Add +1 each to Cunning and Daring. Then add +1 each to two of the following: Empathy, Might or Reason.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* You speak and read common Barsoomian.
- \* You know of your nation and its neighbors, including the ancient history of the Okar who once ruled much of Barsoom.
- \* You know how to survive in the frozen lands near your home.
- \* You know the creatures and perils of the frozen wastes, particularly the deadly apes.
- \* You know the basics of Okar science, including the magnetic science used by Kadabra's Guardian.

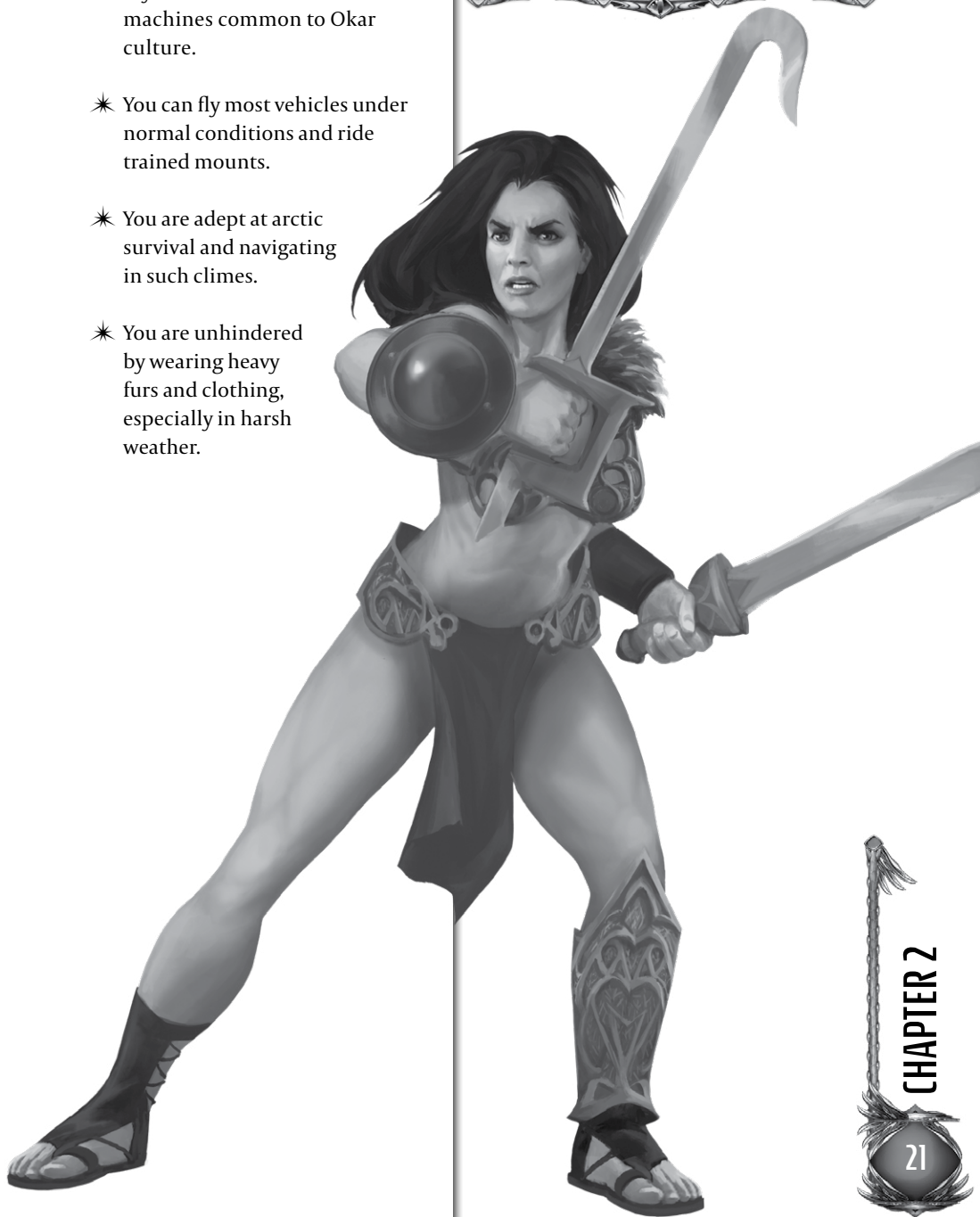
### WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

- \* You don't know much of the lands far from your arctic home.
- \* You aren't skilled in surviving in extreme heat or other foreign climates.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* You know the basics of self-defense, including the use of blades and firearms.
- \* You can operate basic machinery and use medicines and machines common to Okar culture.
- \* You can fly most vehicles under normal conditions and ride trained mounts.
- \* You are adept at arctic survival and navigating in such climes.
- \* You are unhindered by wearing heavy furs and clothing, especially in harsh weather.

With the death of Okar Jeddak Salensus Oll, a new age of communication and friendship begins between the Okar nations, Helium, and other allies under the Warlord, John Carter. Since then, Okarians have become a friendlier and more common sight in other parts of Barsoom.



# FIRST BORN

Your people are believed to be the first race of Barsoom. You spawned from the Tree of Life and your people ruled Barsoom before the other races arose and many First Born still consider themselves the secret masters of the world. Most First Born are allied with Issus, the living goddess-tyrant, who rules her kingdom from her secret stronghold. Interacting with other races mostly as raiders and spies, First Born are known for their arrogance and devotion to perfection: weakness is the worst sin an individual can commit. Travelers and adventurers encountering the First Born are often at risk of death or enslavement, especially if they encounter Issus herself. Some races, therefore, view the First Born as mythic monsters who serve a death goddess, rather than living beings, and many First Born find this useful when dealing with and manipulating other races.

First Born are onyx-skinned and most are physically “perfect” in their proportions and physique. They are generally the same height as Earthborn humans, though many are somewhat taller than average to match their perfect physiques. They have dark hair and eyes to match their skin. They tend towards the harnesses and cloaks favored by other races, but most First Born favor more jewels and ornaments than the average red or Okar. In battle they prefer swords, pistols, and other armaments similar to those used by red Martian and Okar warriors. Like other Barsoomians, they are oviparous, and can interbreed with most other races of Barsoom, much like the Okar with whom they birthed the first red Martians.

All First Born are trained in combat and intrigue as a matter of survival, though proficiency in these crafts varies greatly between individuals. They know the basics of both airship and submersible operations, the latter being a rarity on Barsoom. The Holy Therns will respond more positively to the First Born than they do other races, presuming they are allies, co-conspirators, or even agents of a superior power.

Like all Martians, the First Born lay eggs. They also live for centuries, with a lifespan of a thousand years being far from uncommon. Like red Martians, they have little to no hair besides the black hair that adorns their heads.

## ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

Subtract -1 from Empathy. Add +2 to Cunning and +1 to Daring. Add 1 to two of the following: Might, Passion, or Reason.

## WHAT YOU KNOW

- ✧ You speak and read common Barsoomian.
- ✧ You know the secret strongholds of your people and their neighbors.
- ✧ You know the history of the First Born, and that yours is the first race of Barsoom.
- ✧ You know the basics of First Born science, including airship and submersible operation.
- ✧ You know the truth of the myths of Issus, including knowledge that Holy Therns are mere pawns of Issus.

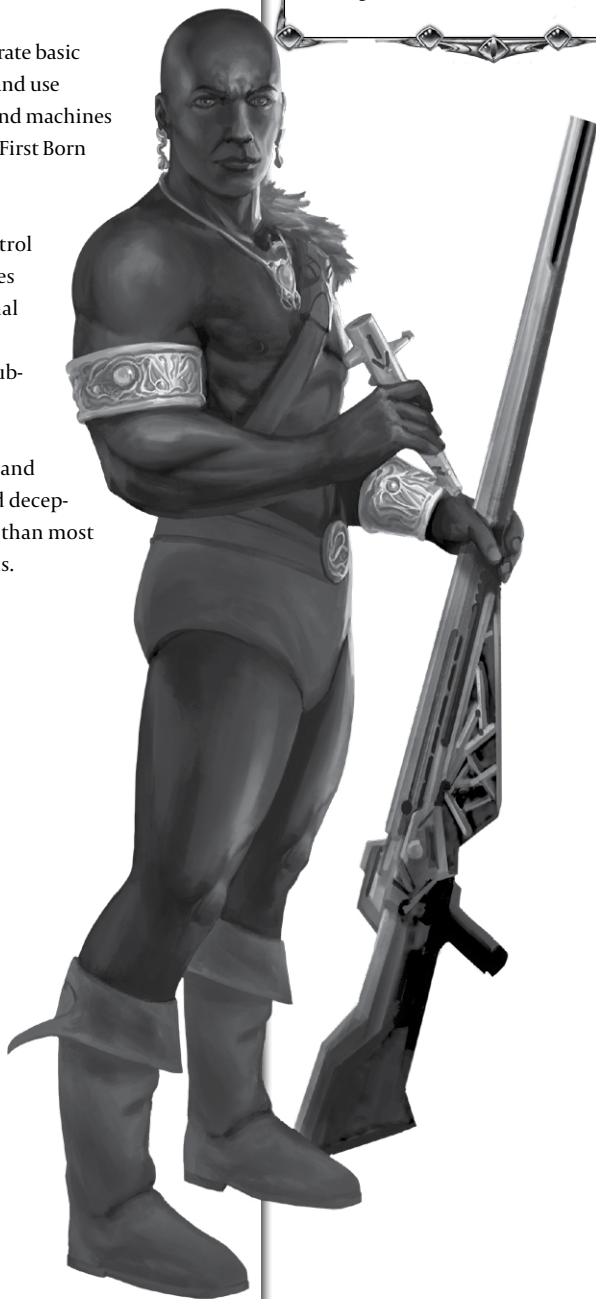


## WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

- \* You are not aware of sciences and customs of the “lesser” races. Your ways are clearly superior!

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* You know the basics of self-defense, including the use of blades and fire-arms.
- \* You can operate basic machinery and use medicines and machines common to First Born culture.
- \* You can control most vehicles under normal conditions, including submersibles.
- \* You understand intrigue and deceptions better than most Barsoomians.



Upon the death of Issus and the revelations that the religion based around her was a lie, most on Barsoom realize the First Born are simply another race of Martians, albeit an ancient one. Some First Born, such as those ruled by Xodar, have allied themselves with other races and nations. Others live as raiders and warlords, seeking profit and power across Barsoom.

## EARTHBOURN

You hail not from Barsoom, but Jasoom, the blue planet seen on clear Martian nights. Your spirit and consciousness have somehow been transplanted here to Barsoom, the planet your people know as Mars. You arrive naked and unknown to this harsh planet. A lifetime in the higher gravity of Earth gives you surprising strength and agility compared to others of your size and build. Earthborn characters are noteworthy on Barsoom both for their power and ignorance, though if they are lucky, they will survive long enough to overcome the latter.

Earthborn characters can be from any culture or ethnicity native to Earth, from Virginia of the United States to the Australian Outback. They will look somewhat strange and alien regardless of their Earthborn background—an African American is not “black” like a First Born, nor is a Native American “red” like a red Martian. Only rare white Martians somewhat resemble the Caucasians of Earth, but even then, there are often notable differences, such as the hairlessness of the Holy Therns. These differences can be disguised with effort, just as John Carter at times poses as a red Martian, Okar, or Thern, but it takes effort and success is not guaranteed.

Unlike all the races of Barsoom, humans give birth to live young. They are also capable of mating with the red Martians, and presumably the races that can interbreed with them.

Note that it is presumed that any human who comes to Barsoom will somehow gain the longevity that John Carter attributes to himself, through some natural

ability, Martian science, or some other phenomenon. Likewise, it is presumed that any Earthborn character knows the basics of personal combat and that their Barsoomian-based body is free of any disability that would make survival unlikely.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

Add +3 to Might. Add +1 each to any two other attributes and subtract -1 from any one remaining attribute.

### RACIAL TALENTS

#### LEAPS AND BOUNDS (GRADE 2)

Your Earthborn muscles allow you leap great distances and perform great feats of strength while on Barsoom.

✱ **Circumstance:** When moving on Barsoom and planets with similar gravity.

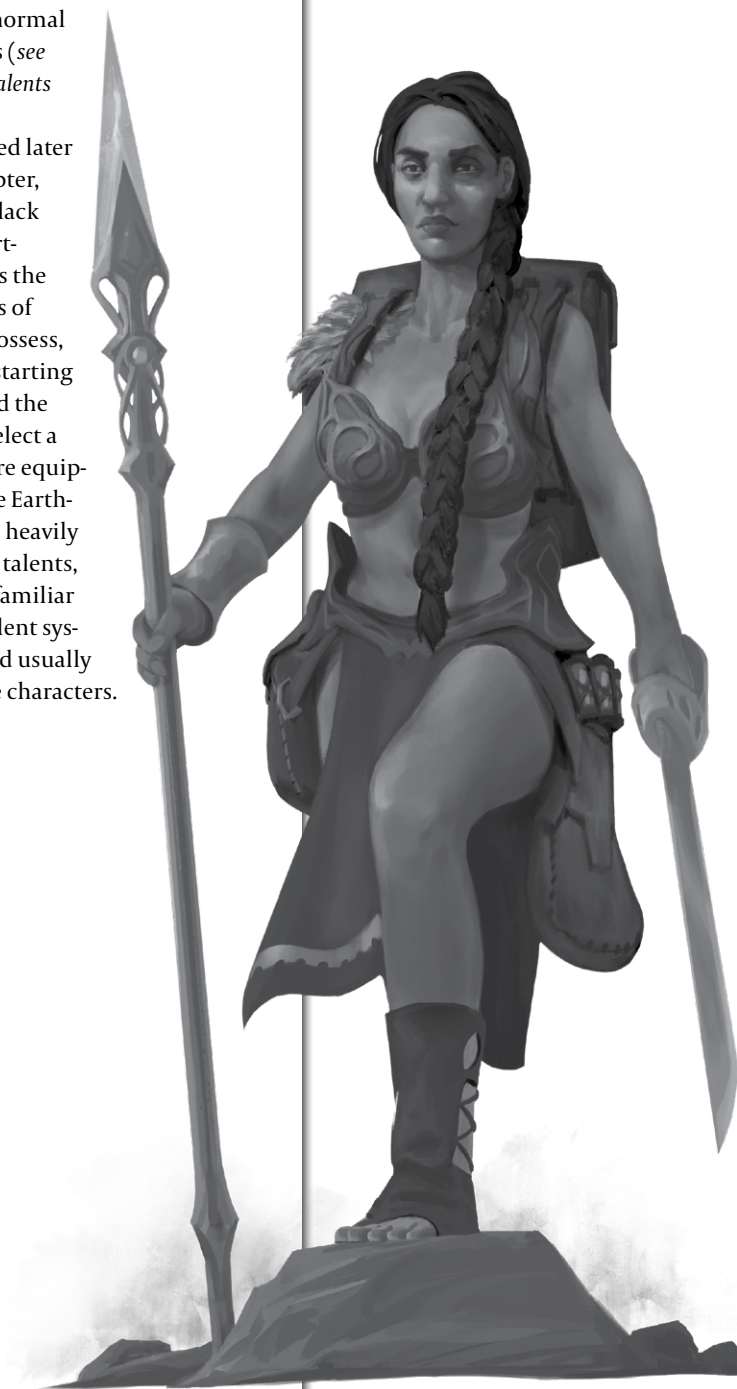
✱ **Effect:** You may close one range category automatically, ignoring any obstacles or intervening terrain as long as you have clearance and space to leap between your starting point and destination. You may spend 1 Momentum to move an additional range category.

In addition, all Earthborn characters also gain seven grades worth of talents instead of the usual five (*see Step Six*). At least two of these seven grades must involve your character’s Might attribute in some way. These talents vary based on exactly how the character learns to best channel and use their Earthborn strength and muscle power. For example, many Earthborn characters with combat train-



ing gain talents that allow them to do additional damage or use Might more effectively while attacking. An Earthborn character can choose to have 1 talent include the abilities of the other talent as per the normal talent rules (see *Designing Talents on page 61*).

As noted later in this chapter, Earthborn lack certain starting abilities the native races of Barsoom possess, including starting renown and the ability to select a piece of core equipment. Since Earthborn are so heavily focused on talents, players unfamiliar with the talent systems should usually avoid these characters.



## EARTHBORN (CONT'D)

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* You speak at least one Earth language, possibly more.
- \* You are familiar with your native culture and others you've interacted with.
- \* You know the skills and knowledge of your Earth profession and education.

### WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

- \* The Barsoomian language.
- \* Any details of Barsoomian culture, customs, and history.
- \* The beasts and other dangers of Barsoom.
- \* How to fly an airship.
- \* Anything much about Barsoom, especially if it causes you problems until you know better!

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Defend yourself, even if only using your Earth-born strength.
- \* Perform tasks that have some clear Earth analog, such as riding or shooting a firearm.
- \* Quickly learn the ways of this strange new world after being shown or taught.
- \* You can resist telepathy.

## CHARACTERS AND DISABILITY

The default presumption in *John Carter* is that player character heroes are relatively healthy and able-bodied because that's how they are presented in the novels and because Martian science seems capable of curing nearly any manner of severe injury or illness given time. Even Earthborn characters who were disabled on Earth, such as Ulysses Paxton of the later *John Carter* novels, have physical disabilities removed through Martian science.

If a player wishes to play a character with a disability they may, but this disability only limits them as much as strict logic demands and they desire. This is pulp planetary romance and there is more than enough room for blind swordswomen who navigate the landscape as well as a sighted person or five-limbed green Martians who have learned to compensate for severe injury. Extreme disabilities may provide the basis of a character's flaw (*see Step Seven*), but this is optional and up to the player.

Mental illnesses are dealt with in much the same way, with the "madness" some villains display being in fact megalomaniacal narcissistic tendencies and a desire to harm others for their own amusement rather than any real-world mental illness. A player character with a mental illness can take this as a flaw if the player desires, but there is no requirement to do so.

As always, be mindful of your fellow players. If playing a character with a particular problem, flaw, or ailment is going to upset another player, do not do it. When in doubt, ask. You might think it is cool to play a terminal cancer patient given a new lease on life on Barsoom, but it is possible a fellow player who just lost a loved one to that disease may feel differently.

## MIXED HERITAGE

It is possible to play a character whose parents hail from different races. In fact, Carthoris of Helium, son of John Carter and Dejah Thoris, is just such a character. To play such a character, decide which culture he follows predominantly. Use that to determine what a character knows and can do generally.

For characters of mixed Martian heritage, use the attribute bonuses for red Martians — they were the original hybrid race on Barsoom and many with mixed ethnicity tend to develop along similar lines. Then take the talent, if any, from the parent race they most favor. They also gain the What You Know and What Can You Do knowledge of whatever culture they were raised in. In fact, Okar and First Born hybrids are red Martians by all appearances. Note that the green Martians don't seem to be able to breed with the other races of Barsoom.

For Earthborn-Martian hybrids, the result is somewhat more dramatic. These mixed heritage characters get the attributes of their Martian parent, except that if *Might* isn't one of the attributes with a bonus, they *must* substitute one of their existing racial attribute bonuses for an equivalent *Might* bonus. They also gain the Leaps and Bounds talent of their Earthborn parent. They gain the What You Know and What You Can Do knowledge likely to be that of their Martian parent. They gain the core equipment and starting renown of a Barsoomian native character. However, they only receive four grades of additional starting talents instead of the usual five (*see Step Five*) and must purchase at least 1 grade of talents that are based on the character's *Might* attribute.

Narrators may veto the playing of mixed Earthborn-Martian characters. By the canon of the Burroughs' novels, none were active during the Dotar Sojat era, and only Carthoris is seen in the other novels. Such characters, if they appear, are likely more suitable for generational campaigns, where an existing Earthborn player character falls in love with a Martian character and has a child who eventually becomes a player character in their own right.

### MARTIAN TELEPATHY

Communication among individuals on Barsoom is partially telepathic and all the Barsoomian sentient races have some degree of telepathic ability. This psychic communication melds with spoken language, creating a form of communication that is largely vocal, but incorporates direct and even unobvious mental communications. This makes lying and hiding emotions on Barsoom difficult, encouraging the already direct and forthright manner common to most cultures.

The telepathic elements of communication can be developed and learned by non-Barsoomians, but they will always be somewhat resistant and removed from telepathic contact compared to natives of the Red Planet. This means that Earthborn, and possibly other races, are more able to lie and deceive. Holy Therns and some other races and individuals who have developed their mental capabilities find an easier time lying, cheating, and deceiving others.

## THE AFTERLIFE AND THE TRUTH OF ISSUS

One commonly shared belief of nearly all Martians is that, upon reaching the end of their lives, everyone takes a journey down the River Iss to the Valley Dor, where the Martian afterlife is located. In truth, the myth of Iss is a lie perpetuated by the living “goddess” Issus and spread by the Holy Therns. The true Valley Dor is a hellish place of plant men and other threats that devour those who venture there seeking peace. During the early days of John Carter’s time on Barsoom, all red and green Martians and Okar believe the following:

You are aware of the Barsoomian afterlife and will one day take your trip down the River Iss to the Valley Dor. All other views are heresy and those who return from the Valley still living are cursed. However, it is rare that your people live long enough to make this journey, so it generally matters less to you than those of other races.

After John Carter and his allies destroy Issus and reveal the truth of this myth, the knowledge of the red and green Martians and the Okar changes to:

After the death of Issus and the truths revealed by John Carter, you have heard the legends of Iss and Dor are lies spread by the First Born and their puppets the Holy Therns. Whether you believe this or not is up to you, but again it matters less to the green hordes in the wastes than some other cultures.

Earthborn characters know of this myth whatever they are told by natives of Barsoom, and what they believe is up to them. First Born characters know that most of these stories are lies spread by their own people. Before her death, most worship and obey Issus herself as a living goddess. However, it is ultimately also the First Born who destroy Issus after Carter and his allies reveal her flaws and extreme cruelty.

## STEP FOUR: SELECT ARCHETYPE

Next, select a general archetype for the character. These archetypes are designed to be relatively broad and cover a wide range of concepts from various races and cultures. Each provides certain attribute bonuses and a suggested free grade 1 talent. Advanced players can substitute another talent that makes sense for a character of that archetype, but you can also just take the selected talent, finish character generation, and jump right into playing your character.

Also included with each archetype is a common list of What You Know and What You Can Do as a member of that archetype. Note that Earthborn characters have the Earth-bound equivalent of Barsoom-based knowledge and skills at character generation, and quickly pick up the Martian equivalents of their Earthborn skills and abilities.

**Example:** *Lily Porter is an aviator and explorer who finds herself on Barsoom after her plane crashes in a remote corner of Earth. Looking at what an explorer knows and can do, she and the narrator both note that, when she first arrives, Lily is unfamiliar with Barsoomian beasts, terrain, and various hazards, but that she can often squeak by with her extensive knowledge of traveling in hazardous Earth terrain and dealing with dangerous animals such as tigers and venomous snakes. After a short time on Barsoom, Lily begins to pick up the general knowledge and aptitudes of a Barsoomian explorer, and far faster than she would learn things like Martian science or medicine.*

## AIRSHIP OFFICER

*You are most at home on the deck of a Martian airship. From piloting to navigation, you know how to crew and even command ships of various sizes, from personal fliers to the huge flagships of the great navies of Helium, Zodanga, and other nations.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Daring and Reason

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### AIRSHIP PILOT (GRADE 1)

*You can crew and command airships, flying them with skill beyond most pilots.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When crewing or commanding an airship.
- \* **Effect:** When crewing or commanding an airship, you may roll 1 bonus d20.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The basic engineering and scientific principles behind Martian airships.
- \* Tactics and strategies of airship combat.
- \* Barsoom's most famous navies and their most prominent ships and commanders.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Fly anything that floats on Martian rays.
- \* Command, navigate, and repair most types of airship.
- \* Fight close quarters and with ship-based weapons.

## ASSASSIN

*Also known as a "gorthan", you are a hired killer, taking the lives of others for pay. You are likely a member of an assassins' guild, though freelance killers-for-hire also exist on Barsoom. Many assassins cling to their own code of honor, but some are merely heartless killers.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Cunning and Might

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### EASY TARGET (GRADE 1)

*Lesser targets are no challenge to your deadly skills as an assassin.*

- \* **Circumstance:** Targeting a minion.
- \* **Effect:** You can automatically kill a target minion with typical assassination methods (melee, strangulation, poison, etc.)

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* Familiarity with various methods of assassination, including poison, sniping, and close-quarters killing.
- \* How to analyze a target or assassination location for weaknesses.
- \* Barsoom's most famous assassins and their guilds.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Come and go unseen.
- \* Kill quickly and efficiently, especially the unprepared or weakened.
- \* Disguise yourself — useful to get close to your targets!

## BEASTMASTER

*While many on Barsoom use fliers and airships for long-range transport, everyone makes use of trained or domesticated animals. From thoats and calots to tamed apts and banths, you are a master of beasts. You know their ways, their behavior, and their temperament. More often than not, they heed your wishes and, when they do not, you know how best to bring them down.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Might and Empathy

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### CALL OF THE WILD (GRADE 1)

*Lesser beasts heed your call. They bend to your will and follow your commands.*

- \* **Circumstance:** Commanding or controlling an animal.
- \* **Effect:** You may automatically control the actions of 1 minion beast for the rest of the scene. You may control additional minion-class beasts for 1 Momentum per additional beast. If attempting to use this talent on an exceptionally loyal beast bonded to another, you may only control the beast for one turn.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The habits, habitats, strengths, and weakness of the beasts of Barsoom.
- \* Various training methods and uses for various types of domesticated and tamed beasts.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Fight savagely for your survival against beast and Martian alike, often with your beast companions by your side.
- \* Train beasts of all sorts, though you likely have your favorites or a special rapport with some types of beast.
- \* Track and set traps for beasts.
- \* Treat the wounds and common ailments of beasts.



## DUELIST

*You are extraordinarily skilled with the sword, able to defeat several lesser foes at once. Your superior reflexes and ability with blades can be transferred to other weapons and even unarmed combat. While many archetypes are skilled in practical combat, your mastery of theory and artistry of martial combat are usually beyond them.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Cunning and Daring

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### FEARSOME FENCER (GRADE 1)

*Your reputation and talent with a blade unnerves and even terrifies many opponents, making it easier for you to disarm and dispatch them.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When holding a sword or other melee weapon.
- \* **Effect:** When fighting in accordance with Martian honor, you can disarm a character for 1 Momentum less than normal.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The art of the blade, including common defenses, attacks, and theories of swordplay.
- \* How to size up a fellow sword-fighter to get a rough idea of their skill.
- \* Barsoom's most famous duelists and duels.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Defend against and disarm lesser foes with ease.
- \* Attack an equal or superior opponent skillfully and with a high chance of success.
- \* Judge a sword or other dueling weapon's quality, testing balance, edge, and durability quickly and accurately.

## ENVOY

*Politics is the life blood of the nations and cultures of Barsoom. While many jeddaks rule by force of arms or personality, their retinues and families are filled with individuals skilled at politics and negotiation. It is common for princes, princesses, or majordomos to negotiate treaties, alliances, and even political marriages for the great nations and city-states of Barsoom.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Empathy and Passion

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### PASSIONATE ORATOR (GRADE 1)

*Your unwavering loyalty and love for your people moves others to aid you. Even when dealing with the sworn enemies of your nation, culture, or group, you can often gain concessions or create opportunities with your words.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When speaking to convince an audience.
- \* **Effect:** You may reroll the result of any failed die roll in a Passion-based attempt to convince or charm others.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The history, customs, and politics of your own people.
- \* The basic customs and major figures of your nation's chief allies and enemies.
- \* The history of the great nations, guilds, and organizations of Barsoom, especially those with political significance.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Negotiate, lead, and charm others.
- \* Spot political plots and ploys and craft effective counters to them.
- \* Inspire others to aid you and your people, forming temporary and permanent alliances.

## EXPLORER

*You are driven to explore the lost and remote corners of Barsoom, and possibly beyond. Regardless of where you began, or from what land you hail, you long ago realized your destiny lay among the secret places, ruins, and forgotten locations. You make a valuable scout and may even serve as a first contact negotiator in a pinch, though you're usually more concerned with survival and discovery than diplomacy. Explorers tend to be hardy, quick-witted, and adaptable — or quite dead.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Daring and Empathy

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### FIND THE WAY (GRADE 1)

*You can find safe paths and hidden places with ease. You are also more likely to bypass and survive hazards like dangerous terrain, ancient traps, and other deadly obstacles.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When traveling in wastes, ruins, and wilderness areas.
- \* **Effect:** When facing an environmental danger (falls, traps, etc.), you roll 1 less combat dice than normal.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The flora and fauna of Barsoom.
- \* How to evade predators in the wild.
- \* The locations of ruins, oddities, and occasionally even wonders.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Navigate the wastes with or without equipment.
- \* Travel the wilderness finding shelter, food, and water as you go.
- \* Use both fliers and mounts in rough terrain to travel and explore.

## FUGITIVE

*You escaped from captivity and you are not going back. Maybe you were a slave, a hostage, or a prisoner, but you have spent too long locked up, beaten down, or forced to toil against your will. You may need to hide your true identity to avoid capture, or perhaps you only need to discover a place where you can live free. As a fugitive, you may come from nearly any background, but it is your status as a renegade, prisoner, or outsider that defines much of you.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Cunning and Passion

### SUGGESTED TALENT:

#### NO CHAINS CAN HOLD ME

##### (GRADE 1)

*Able foes may capture you, but holding you is another matter. You are adept at escaping from all manner of prisons, bonds, and confinement.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When attempting to escape from captivity.
- \* **Effect:** Roll 1 bonus d20 with any action based on escaping from imprisonment or restraints.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* How to scrounge simple weapons, tools, disguises, and sustenance.
- \* General background, culture, and tactics of your former captors.
- \* At least a few valuable secrets learned from a fellow prisoner, careless guard, etc.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Evade pursuit and elude capture.
- \* Fight like a cornered banth when required.
- \* Plan and execute escapes and infiltrations.



## GLADIATOR

*Arena games and arms-based competitions are common across Barsoom. Many warlords, especially the more tyrannical ones, love to pit captives, slaves, and their favorite gladiators against beasts and each other for the amusement of their subjects. You are one of the elite gladiators of these contests, tempered by rigorous training and regular battle. Regardless of what you were before, you were reborn in the arena and there you found your true destiny.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Might and Passion

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### ARE YOU NOT ENTERTAINED (GRADE 1)

*You can read the crowd, making them love you with well-placed taunts or sword strokes alike.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When fighting in front of a crowd or audience.
- ✱ **Effect:** You may spend 1 Momentum during a fight to sway a crowd or audience of onlookers to your side. The exact effects of this vary with each situation, but they should cheer you on, attempt to aid you, briefly distract your opponent, or otherwise act favorably.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- ✱ The arenas and battle-based games of Barsoom.
- ✱ The strengths and weaknesses of all manner of melee weapons and environments.
- ✱ The beasts and dangers of Barsoom, especially those pitted against fighters in area combat.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✱ Fight like a savage banth for freedom, glory, and your life.
- ✱ Read a crowd's emotional state and act to exploit it.
- ✱ Spot and exploit weaknesses in others during personal combat.

## GUIDE

*You are adept at moving and guiding others across the harsh Martian landscape. You are a keen hunter and forager who may serve your nation as a scout or may work for those in need. You are a capable fighter, though you prefer skirmishing and small unit actions to large battles.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Might and Reason

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### LIVE OFF THE LAND (GRADE 1)

*The wilderness opens up to you like an old friend, revealing bounties and secrets.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When surviving in the wild.
- ✱ **Effect:** You may automatically forage or scrounge enough to eat and drink and can locate or construct basic shelter. For each Momentum spent you may also locate enough sustenance and shelter for a number of extra people equal to your Reason.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- ✱ The wild areas of Barsoom, especially those near your home or areas where you have spent considerable time.
- ✱ How to hunt, forage, and identify harmful plants and natural hazards.
- ✱ The basics of animal behavior, especially as it pertains to tracking, hunting, or avoiding them in the wild.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✱ Fight alone or as part of a small group, especially against wild creatures or in natural environments.
- ✱ Track, scrounge, and forage in even the most inhospitable regions.
- ✱ Map and navigate various territories, quickly and accurately marking important landmarks, ruins, and settlements.

## HEALER

*While Martian medicine is potent and accessible, it is not perfect and does not come from nothingness. As a dedicated and trained expert in the healing arts, you can mend wounds, create healing salves and compounds, and perform acts of precise and life-saving surgery. Your exact methods and training may vary based on your culture, but they are effective and welcomed by the sick and injured.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Passion and Reason.

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### SHOW ME WHERE IT HURTS (GRADE 1)

*Your healing arts are wondrous, capable of quickly and efficiently healing wounds using Martian science.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When healing a character with Wound afflictions.
- \* **Effect:** Your treatment tests for Wounds afflictions are Average (D1) instead of the normal Challenging (D2). Also, any Momentum costs to remove additional afflictions are reduced by 1 Momentum.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* Extensive knowledge of Martian medicine and the healing arts of your culture, including the manufacture and use of healing salves and other medicines.
- \* Chemicals and extracts with both medicinal and toxic properties.
- \* The weaknesses and capabilities of the Martian body and any other beings you have studied or examined.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Diagnose and heal injury and illness.
- \* Comfort a patient and analyze his symptoms and behavior for possible causes.
- \* Operate and even create medical technology, including medicines.

## PANTHAN

*A mercenary, you sell your sword across Barsoom. Working alone or with various mercenary companies, you share the skill at arms of the soldiers in various standing armies, but have learned to often make do with fewer resources and a looser command structure. This archetype can include Earthborn soldiers of fortune who found their way to Barsoom.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Daring and Might

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### WHO DARES WINS (GRADE 1)

*Striking swiftly and fiercely will often compensate for small numbers or other tactical disadvantages. You learned long ago to hit hard, fast, and put foes down without hesitation.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When using a particular type of weapon.
- \* **Effect:** Pick a category of weapon (sword, pistol, spear, etc.), you inflict an additional 1 of damage and add 1 to the total damage rolled on successful attacks with that weapon.

**Note:** You can use additional grades of this talent to apply this effect to other weapons (one per grade).

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The most popular mercenary companies and those nations and organizations that frequently hire them.
- \* Tactics and strategy, especially small-unit and guerilla tactics.
- \* History of military conflicts on Barsoom, especially those making extensive use of mercenaries.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Fight with common military weapons, such as the sword, firearms, and dagger.
- \* Negotiate basic contracts and agreements, especially for mercenary work.
- \* Plan small scale assaults and military operations, even with minimal resources.

## ROGUE

*You are a rake and a troublemaker. You may be a raider or a brigand, or just someone who prefers to take the easy way out whenever possible. Your heart might be in the right place, or maybe not, but your tactics and methods are often of questionable integrity and honor.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Cunning and Empathy

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### RAKE AT THE MOUTH OF ISS (GRADE 1)

*You are able to con or charm the jewels off a princess and slip the sword from a guardsman's sheath before he realizes what is happening. Your approach may be subtle or direct but, either way, it tends to be effective.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When stealing from others.
- \* **Effect:** When attempting to steal or acquire an object by subterfuge or stealth, you may reroll one failed die.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* Methods of subterfuge, thievery, and various criminal or underhanded enterprises.
- \* The rich, powerful, and influential individuals in your nation or home culture, especially those you can convince or con into making your life easier.
- \* The shady and hidden corners in various places you have lived or worked, and where to find such locales in new lands.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Deceive, seduce, and mislead. Outright lying is difficult and rare on Barsoom, but you are adept at pushing the truth as far as it will go.
- \* Fight like a mad calot when cornered, caught, or when you have no other choice.
- \* Sneak, hide, steal, and escape from even improbable fates with a combination of skill and luck.

## SCIENTIST

*You are a scientist or scholar, studying Barsoomian science both ancient and modern. Many scientists seem somewhat eccentric by normal social standards, but this is not a requirement for heeding this calling.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Empathy and Reason

### SUGGESTED TALENT

#### WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE (GRADE 1)

*You possess a wealth of scientific knowledge, both theoretical and practical.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When researching a scientific phenomenon or device.
- \* **Effect:** You may reroll any single failed die in a science-related Reason test.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* Fundamentals of Barsoomian science and technology, including the nine rays and other common principles.
- \* Intimate familiarity with the science and discoveries of your own culture, as well as a passing familiarity with the science of all other cultures known to you.
- \* Legends of lost technology and scientific discoveries from ages past.
- \* Barsoom's most famous scientists and researchers, their reputations, history, and well-known discoveries.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Skillfully analyze and research scientific phenomena.
- \* Determine a scientific device or artificial creature's basic purpose and at least the theoretical basis of its creation. Thorough examination of a subject may tell you much more.

## SOLDIER

*You are a member of one of Barsoom's national armies, a veteran of many battles. You are skilled with arms, tactics, and accustomed to military life. Depending on your rank, you may lead entire armies into battle, but even as a foot soldier you are familiar with the basics of leadership.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 to Daring and Passion

### SUGGESTED TALENT BATTLE VALOR (GRADE 1)

*You are a true warrior and steadfast soldier, at home in the chaos and carnage of war and always willing to meet your fate with sword and pistol in hand.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When suffering Fear damage in combat.
- \* **Effect:** You may ignore the first 2 points of stress inflicted to your Fear stress track taken during combat. You suffer Fear damage normally after this during a combat scene or from other situations.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The command structure, traditions, and capabilities of your army.
- \* The basic structure and capabilities of your nation's usual military rivals.
- \* Combat strategy and tactics, especially those you have drilled or used effectively in battle alongside your fellow soldiers.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Fight skillfully with the arms of your military, usually sword, firearms, and dagger.
- \* Lead troops into battle and effectively follow battle plans and orders.
- \* Train others in battle formations, the use of weapons, and basic tactics.

## SPY

*The politics of Barsoom are often deadly and direct, but that doesn't mean there is no place for espionage. Spies, scouts, and other covert operatives are invaluable in protecting state secrets, uncovering and foiling the plans of rival nations, and rooting out threats to important leaders, locations, and operations. By necessity, spies are experts in close combat, disguise, and infiltration.*

### ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

+2 each to Cunning and Reason

### SUGGESTED TALENT MASTER OF DISGUISE (GRADE 1)

*You are a master of disguise, transforming yourself completely and effectively. Even your closest friends may have never seen your real face.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When disguising yourself.
- \* **Effect:** Spend 1 Momentum to leave a scene. Then spend 1 Momentum to replace any minion-class character in a scene, revealing you were actually in disguise all along.

### WHAT YOU KNOW

- \* The major threats to your nation or organization, including enough knowledge of their culture and customs to infiltrate them.
- \* Various methods of disguise and surveillance.
- \* Ciphers, codes, and technology used to protect and discover information.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- \* Fight in close quarters effectively, especially with swords, daggers, pistols, and even your bare hands.
- \* Disguise yourself effectively, including masking your race, if possible. Green Martians are nigh impossible for other races to duplicate, nor can they effectively duplicate other races.
- \* Infiltrate guarded and secret locations.

## CREATING UNIQUE ARCHETYPES

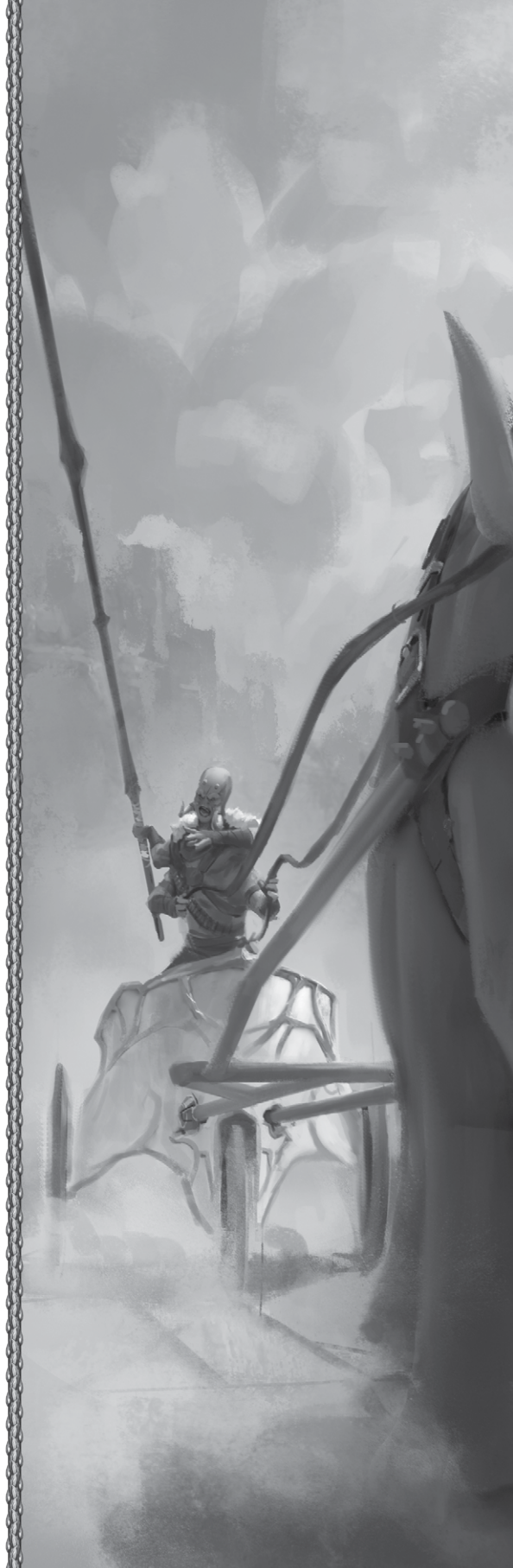
Each archetype provides 4 total ranks of attribute bonuses and a grade 1 talent. The bonuses are usually +2 bonuses to two different attributes. Using these guidelines, narrators and players can create their own archetypes. They can also modify existing ones slightly. For example, perhaps your scientist favors Passion and Reason over Empathy and Reason.

### WHY NOT SKILLS?

Competency is presumed in *John Carter*. A character is presumed to have the skills and abilities that it makes sense for them to possess. Exceptional skills are covered under talents, but basic skills are a function of character concept, background, and common sense.

If a character would not have the skill for a particular task, it will either be deemed impossible (they cannot attempt it) or more difficult (the test becomes harder).

Narrators and players wishing more guidance on what skills a character has can have each player write down or highlight four or five parts of the character's concept that suggest or describe certain skills. Those skills can be attempted without increased difficulty. For example, John Carter displays skills with swordsmanship, riding, shooting, and athletics. He can attempt those actions without penalty or increased difficulty. He might also be able to attempt other actions without penalty as well, but he can always pick up a sword or gun and attack, ride, or perform some athletic feat without increased difficulty.





## STEP FIVE: SELECT DESCRIPTOR

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Characters in *John Carter* are larger than life, dramatic, and tend to be boldly presented. There is usually one adjective or description that sums up their character, how they deal with conflicts and problems, and what many characters seem to think of them. In character generation, this term is called a character's descriptor and it affects what attributes a character favors.

Each character should select a descriptor from the list below that best describes their character and emphasizes the attributes they favor. There are fifteen descriptors, one for each possible combination of two favored attributes.

If a player wishes, they can rename their descriptor if they want another word to describe their character, such as changing Romantic to Lovable or Brash to Reckless. However, make a careful note the attribute bonuses granted to avoid confusion during the next step in character generation.

\* **Bold:** +1 each to **Cunning** and **Daring**

\* **Courageous:** +1 each to **Daring** and **Empathy**

\* **Fierce:** +1 each to **Daring** and **Might**

\* **Brash:** +1 each to **Daring** and **Passion**

\* **Canny:** +1 each to **Daring** and **Reason**

\* **Charming:** +1 each to **Cunning** and **Empathy**

\* **Driven:** +1 each to **Cunning** and **Might**

\* **Dashing:** +1 each to **Cunning** and **Passion**

\* **Brilliant:** +1 each to **Cunning** and **Reason**

\* **Stalwart:** +1 to each to **Empathy** and **Might**

\* **Romantic:** +1 each to **Empathy** and **Passion**

\* **Thoughtful:** +1 each to **Empathy** and **Reason**

\* **Savage:** +1 each to **Might** and **Passion**

\* **Disciplined:** +1 each to **Might** and **Reason**

\* **Devoted:** +1 each to **Passion** and **Reason**



## STEP SIX: TALENTS

Characters, especially player characters, have talents. Talents represent those unique or developed abilities that make a character special. Talents may represent a skill, natural aptitude, or even an arcane power or psychic talent.

At their core, talents are ways for characters to accomplish special actions normally requiring Momentum. In some cases, they can also allow a character to use Momentum in ways not normally allowed. The following section discusses building talents as well as providing example talents to take for your player characters.

Player characters start with five grades of talents, in addition to the talents already provided by your race and archetype; these can be designed by the player to fit some specific need or selected from *Chapter 3: Talents*.

Each talent must also be justified by your character concept and race. If your green Martian warrior has never been on an airship, he can't take a talent that makes him an expert pilot, at least not at character generation.

Several example talents and rules for designing your own talents are found in the next chapter.

### OPTIONAL RULE: NO CORE EQUIPMENT

If the narrator approves and it fits a character's concept, they may refuse any core equipment at character generation. If they do so, they will either receive an extra starting renown or an extra grade 1 talent of their choosing. This option allows for increased character customization, but it creates another choice during character generation, potentially slowing down the process.

## STEP SEVEN: STARTING RENOWN AND EQUIPMENT

Once you have talents selected, it is time to assign your starting renown and equipment. Renown is part of character advancement, representing your character's fame and notoriety. All characters except Earthborn receive some starting renown to purchase titles, allies, contacts, or other advantages at the beginning of play. Player characters tend to be important figures in their respective homelands and cultures, and their starting renown reflects that. Starting renown is the same as renown earned during play. The rules and effects of renown are found in *Chapter 6: Growing Your Legend*.

Aside from Earthborn, all starting player characters get 10 renown. Being strangers to Barsoom, Earthborn PCs start with zero renown.

Starting characters also have access to some equipment based on their culture and concept. This includes weapons, and also other devices and gear commonly used by the people of Barsoom. Again, Earthborn don't fare so well.

## CORE EQUIPMENT

While most characters carry various pieces of equipment, many player characters have some core equipment. Core equipment represents an item or type of item that a character always has available and can always easily replace if stolen or lost. For example, a swordsman may never go anywhere without his sword and, should he somehow lose it, he always seems to secure a replacement. Likewise, a scout is rarely without his field glasses or a strong rope.

Core equipment is essentially a specialized talent. For each grade of it, with each grade costing 5xp, the characters get one piece of equipment designated as core equipment. Possession of some specialized or very useful

items may require more than 1 grade.

During play, if a narrator takes away a piece of core equipment, they must pay the character 2 Momentum. If the player wants to prevent this, or reacquire the item in the same scene, they must pay 3 Momentum. However, if they wait until the end of the scene, or later, they may regain the item for 1 Momentum. This can happen even in the most unlikely circumstances: a dead enemy may have a similar item on them, or the original may be found discarded nearby. The narrator does not need to disarm the player in combat to remove the item; the Momentum payment is enough and assumes that fate intervenes to deprive the character of his gear.

Note that the item needn't always be the exact same item as before, but it is functionally the same. Thus, a character with a cavalry sabre may find a Zodangan sword to replace the blade they lost, and it functions the same way.

With one exception, all starting player characters may start with 1 grade worth of core equipment, representing a common weapon, item, or object they are rarely without. Earthborn characters begin with no core equipment, coming unknown and unarmed to the savage world of Barsoom.

Additional pieces of core equipment can be purchased during character generation or play. All core equipment has a rank which indicates the cost in talent grades to possess the item. For most items, this is 1, but larger goods such as fliers, ancient artifacts, and some mounts or animal companions may cost more.

## STEP EIGHT: CHOOSE A FLAW

---

Each player character hero, no matter how strong, beautiful, brilliant, reliable, or charming, has a flaw. This flaw informs not just how a player character hero acts, but also the challenges they regularly face. Flaws may represent psychological flaws, social constraints, or just plain bad luck that tends to manifest in a particular way around a character.

Mechanically, flaws are essentially “anti-talents”. Usually these are an event or class of events that cost the character some Momentum or damage unless they engage in the stated activity. Usually this is 3 Momentum, though flaws that come up in play more often cost less Momentum and those which are less frequently relevant cost more Momentum when they do surface.

If a character cannot afford to spend Momentum when their flaw surfaces, they take damage instead. This is usually Confusion damage but, if the player and narrator agree, it may be taken as other types, though it is rare that a flaw causes Injury damage.

The following flaws can be used, or serve as a basis for player-created flaws.

### HEROIC FURY

Your courage is complemented by hot-blooded righteousness. When faced with an act of wrongdoing or oppression, every turn you spend not acting to stop it causes you to lose 2 Momentum.

### OVERPROTECTIVE

When someone in your charge becomes injured as a result of your action (or lack thereof), lose 5 Momentum from your pool. If you cannot lose 5 Momentum, take the excess in fear damage.

### SELF-SACRIFICING

Strong and loyal, you value the lives of friends over your own. During a scene where an ally, other player character, or an innocent's life is in mortal peril, the narrator can ask you to take the place of that character, or lose 3 Momentum. This danger doesn't need to be immediate: you could offer to take the place of another as a hostage or prisoner. If your attempt is rebuked or refused, you don't lose Momentum, provided you attempt to take their place to the best of your ability.

### SOFT-HEARTED

If you leave another character to suffer or cause undue suffering, you lose 3 Momentum. This flaw is viewed as particularly egregious among the green Martians and similarly hard-hearted cultures.

### TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY

When encountering an enemy or rival in conflict or otherwise, the narrator can declare that you must spend 3 Momentum or be separated from your fellow party members. This can be through being kidnapped, a sudden change in scenery, the rival insisting they continue a conversation in private quarters, etc.

## ADVANCED PLAYER CHARACTERS

Sometimes a campaign will require a player character or characters who are more powerful than a usual starting character. This may be because the character is being added to an existing campaign where the other characters are already quite advanced, or simply because the narrator wants to begin with more powerful characters. In such cases, the narrator can grant the player characters an amount of experience and renown (see *Chapter 6: Growing Your Legend*) to spend during creation to buy new talents, increase attributes, and buy various accolades. To add characters to an existing campaign that match existing characters, simply provide them with between 90 and 100 percent of those characters' experience and renown. To create generally more powerful player characters, consult the following table:

### ONE OF THE MASSES

- \* Increase one attribute by: +1

### A HERO OF SOME RENOWN

- \* Increase two attributes by: +1

### A HERO TO YOUR PEOPLE

- \* Increase one attribute by: +2
- \* Increase one attribute by: +1

### A HERO ACROSS THE LAND

- \* Increase one attribute by: +2
- \* Increase two attributes by: +1

### A HERO OF MARS

- \* Increase two attributes by: +2
- \* Increase two attributes by: +1

### A HERO OF MANY WORLDS

- \* Increase one attribute by: +3
- \* Increase two attributes by: +2
- \* Increase one attribute by: +1

## STEP NINE: NAME AND FINALIZE CONCEPT AND ATTRIBUTES

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You might already have a name for your character, but if you don't now is the time to select one. Pay attention to the naming conventions of certain cultures. For example, Tharks adopt full names recalling warriors they kill in battle, while red Martians often take names that invoke their parents or grandparents in some way. Here are guidelines for naming characters of various races:

### RED MARTIANS

---

Red Martian names tend towards a first and last name consisting of one or two syllables. Alliteration is common, such as with Kantos Kan, but names also often share common traits with a parent or ancestor, such as Kantos' son, Djor Kantos. Sample red Martian names include Mors Kajak, Kulan Tith, and Saran Tal. Nobility and adventurous travelers sometimes use only their first name and their homeland, such as with Thuvia of Ptarth.

### GREEN MARTIANS

---

Green Martians often gain names given to them by superiors in their clan or horde and can be granted an additional or new name by killing another warrior in personal combat. Thus, a green Martian given the name of Molat would use this name, but after he killed a rival warrior named Garok could go by the name Molat Garok. In some cases, killing two esteemed warriors might result in a new name consisting of those of both slain rivals. Sample green Martian names include Tars Tarkas, Sola, and Thar Ban.

### OKAR

---

Okar names are similar to red Martian names, though they seem to use singular names a bit more frequently, in the case of Okar officers and officials such as Solan and Sorav. Generally, only Okarian names use double "L" in a name, such as Salensus Oll. "Ll" is also used in place names occasionally and such places may appear in place of a last name, such as Solak of Illall. Sample Okarian names include: Solan, Sorav, and Talu.

### FIRST BORN

---

Some First Born have surnames and others do not. Often, high-ranking First Born such as dators, raiders and pirates, don't bother with surnames. They use their title and first name instead, such as Dator Xodar, or they simply use their first name. The First Born sometimes use double "S" in their names, such as with the goddess Issus. This is hardly done outside of First Born culture. Sample First Born names include Xodar, Thurid, Ban-Tor, and Yersted.

### EARTHBORN

---

Earthborn characters either use the name given to them on Earth or adopt names given to them by their allies and comrades on Barsoom. In many cases, Earthborn characters will have both such names, such as John Carter, also known as Dotar Sojat among the green Martian Tharks.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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If you are stuck for a name, check out various examples throughout this book and in the Barsoom novels. There are literally dozens of names in Burroughs' novels and many of them can be altered or adapted to create appropriate sounding names for new characters.

This is also the time to refine and



## CHARACTER GENERATION WALKTHROUGH

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finalize your character's concept. This includes discussing with other players how your character relates to the world and other player characters. This may result in subtle or significant changes to your concept, or may answer outstanding questions about your character. For example, you might decide that, given multiple player characters are red Martians from Helium and, given their alliance with Helium, you will be a Thark warrior instead of hailing from a different green Martian horde.

Finally, you need to assign any remaining bonuses from earlier steps. Once those are assigned, record the character's stress tracks, to represent how durable they are to certain types of damage. There are three stress tracks based on pairings of attributes: Fear (Daring and Passion), Injury (Cunning and Might), and Confusion (Empathy and Reason). Each stress track is equal to the highest of the two relevant attributes.

**Example:** *Peter's Okar Swordsmaster has the following attributes: Cunning 7, Daring 7, Empathy 6, Might 5, Passion 4, and Reason 7. Taking the highest attributes for Fear (Daring and Passion), Injury (Cunning and Might), and Confusion (Empathy and Reason) he records that, at start, his character has Fear 7, Injury 7, and Confusion 7, creating an equally durable, courageous, and strong-minded character. He also names his character at this point, electing to call him Dolan Ath, modeling the name in Martian style after both his character's master, Solan, and his favorite Musketeer, Athos.*

Once your character is named and concept is finalized, you're ready to begin a life of adventure and dramatic peril in the world of Barsoom!

The following example walks through the process of character generation, detailing the creation of Kantos Than, a dwar of Lesser Helium.

**Example:** *Mark is making his character for Jen's upcoming **John Carter of Mars** game. He knows the campaign will begin in Helium during the Prince of Helium era, specifically, the time when John Carter is believed dead. He opens his rulebook to the section on character generation and starts going through the steps.*

### STEP ONE: GENERAL CONCEPT

First comes concept. This is easy, as he's already sure he wants to play a dashing officer in the vein of Kantos Kan, perhaps even a distant relation of the famed airship commander and ally of the great John Carter.

### STEP TWO: STARTING ATTRIBUTES

The second step is also easy. He records 4 in each of his starting attributes, Cunning, Daring, Empathy, Might, Passion, and Reason. He also notes he has 2 bonus attribute points to spend as well, but he elects to save those for after he's selected his race and other aspects of his character.

### STEP THREE: SELECTING YOUR RACE

The third step, selecting his character's race is also simple. As he plans to be inspired by and possibly related to Kantos Kan, he elects to be a red Martian, the same race as his role model. Being a red Martian gives him +2 to one of the following attributes: Daring, Empathy, Passion, or Reason and +1 to the others. Seeing his character as a dashing romantic type, he takes +2 in Passion, and +1 in Empathy and Reason. He notes these increases in attributes and moves on to the next step, selecting his archetype.

**STEP FOUR: ARCHETYPE**

Mark gives some thought to simply mimicking Kantos Kan and taking Airship Officer as his archetype. However, he wants to do something a bit different. Instead he decides his character is a guardsman in Lesser Helium, commonly assigned to ground-based patrols and assignments. Looking over the archetypes he thinks Soldier makes the most sense for his character. This archetype provides him with a +2 bonus to both Daring and Passion making Mark's character very focused in those areas so far. For his archetype's free grade 1 talent, he elects to take the suggested one, Battle Valor — Mark sees his character as very brave and virtually fearless in battle.

**STEP FIVE: DESCRIPTOR**

After archetype, it's time to pick a descriptor. This one word helps present a snapshot of the character's personality and provides two attribute bonuses as well. Looking over the various descriptors, he decides that Dashing best describes how he sees his character: young, courageous, and with a bit of flair. Dashing grants him +1 to Cunning and Passion. With race, archetype, and descriptor in place his attributes are: Cunning 5, Daring 6, Empathy 5, Might 4, Passion 9, Reason 5. His Passion is very high, as is Daring. Everything else is at or near average for most characters. Considering this, he elects to assign his 2 bonus attribute points now, increasing Might to 5 and Daring even further to 7. Mark's Dashing Red Martian Soldier might not be very balanced in his attributes, but he will have notable strengths and weaknesses to keep things interesting.

**STEP SIX: TALENTS**

Next come talents, and Mark gets 5 grades' worth of talents to give his character. Looking over the examples he selects 2 grade 1 ready-made talents: Daring Rider and Cut Them Down. He also creates his own grade 2 talent, Passionate Swordsmaster, which allows him to substitute Passion for one of his attributes when attacking with a sword and lets him do 1 additional die of damage and 1 bonus point of damage with a sword attack — effectively combining two grade 1 talents into a single talent. With such a high Daring already, an attribute commonly used with attacks, Mark's soldier is sure to be deadly with a blade! For his final talent grade, he decides to shore up one of his character's weaknesses and creates a grade 1 talent, Surprisingly Strong, which lets him reroll any one failed die in a Might-based test.

**STEP SEVEN: RENOWN AND CORE EQUIPMENT**

Next comes starting renown and core equipment. Core equipment is easy: Mark figures his character is rarely without his sword. While this could be any blade, he decides it's an ornate Helium-style saber that was given to him by his cousin, Kantos Kan. Since he knows Jen won't be worrying too much about non-core equipment in the campaign, he makes a note to check that out later and moves on.

Given his choice of core equipment, Mark finds spending most of his starting renown quite easy: he definitely wants Kantos Kan as an ally. Looking at the renown rules in *Chapter 6*, he decides Kantos is a 6 renown ally, being both exceptional and politically connected by this era in the game, with several airships and many Helium Navy personnel that he can call on to help in assisting his "favorite cousin." Deciding he could use a friend with knowledge of strange places and bizarre scientific phenomena that he is sure the campaign will feature,

Mark then purchases another 2 renown ally in the form of a young scientist of Helium he befriended when guarding a scientific expedition a few years ago. The scientist, a charming young woman named Adara, isn't particularly well connected politically, but she is brilliant and no slouch with a pistol. For his remaining 2 renown, Mark purchases the title of padwar, defining it as his character's rank in the Army of Helium.

#### **STEP EIGHT: FLAW**

Next comes the character's flaw. Mark decides that his soldier's fearless and somewhat reckless nature also makes him somewhat impatient and quick to jump into danger. He creates a flaw called Hot-Blooded and, working with the narrator, it is defined as costing him 3 Momentum if he waits too long or is overcautious in a dangerous situation or potential battle. This flaw will encourage Mark to play his character as impulsive and quick to jump into the fray, and cost him valuable Momentum when he denies this important part of his nature.

#### **STEP NINE: NAME, FINALISE CONCEPT AND ATTRIBUTES**

With everything done but his character name, Mark decides that he wants a family name similar to Kantos Kan. He decides on the name Kantos Than, suggesting his relation to the famed Helium officer. After a brief discussion with the narrator about the beginnings of the campaign, he decides Kantos Than is assigned to Lesser Helium as a leader in a company of advance scouts and skirmishers. His chief duty recently is escorting important dignitaries and scientists through hostile territories.

With that done, Mark is ready to adventure on Barsoom, as Kantos Than, Dashing Red Martian Soldier who is fearless, skilled with a blade, and filled with youthful daring and passion!

With all this done, Mark only needs to record Kantos Than's stress tracks. Mark's high Daring and Passion give his

character a Fear of 9 — he's very hard to scare. His Confusion and Injury are more moderate, both at 5. That's not bad, it just means he's far more likely to fall to distraction, mental assault, or physical injury than Fear. He considers changing one of his talents to something that will let him move some Confusion or Injury damage to his potent fear tracker, but decides he would rather play for a while and decide if that's something he would like to alter with experience later.

## **SAMPLE PLAYER CHARACTERS**

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The ready-made characters beginning on the following page were created using the process detailed in this chapter.

They can be used by players who wish to grab a character and jump right into the game, or as inspiration for creating characters. If desired, these characters can be easily modified by changing their race or substituting new talents with others from this chapter or new ones created by the players.

# COURAGEOUS EARTHBORED EXPLORER

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*"I was on a solo flight across the Atlantic when the engine failed. As the ocean rushed to fill my vision I saw the Red Planet in the sky, and it grew in my consciousness. I blacked out shortly after and, when I awoke, I was here. Sometimes I wonder if I am here at all, or if my dead body lies in the deep oceans of my homeworld. But I suppose it doesn't matter if Barsoom is real or some strange purgatory or afterlife. It is a new world to explore."*

You were always restless. While your family and friends were content to stay home, you sought strange new locales, lost cities, and new challenges. Your luck finally ran out on Earth, but a strange twist of fate sent you to Barsoom. Now you must survive on the wonderful, but deadly, Red Planet.

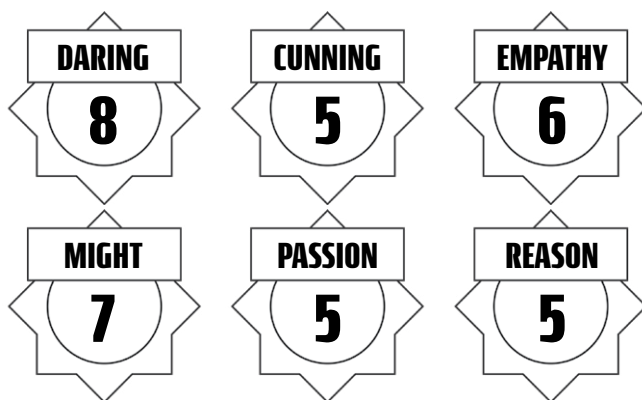
## RENOWN AND ACCOLADES

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RENOWN: 0

## ATTRIBUTES

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## STRESS TRACKERS

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## TALENTS

### BARTITSU (GRADE 1)

*You know a few tricks in personal combat, mostly due to training back home in various forms of unarmed self-defense.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When fighting unarmed.
- ✱ **Effect:** You gain 1 extra Momentum whenever you spend Momentum while engaged in unarmed combat.

### FIND THE WAY (GRADE 1)

*You can find safe paths and hidden places with ease. You are also more likely to bypass and survive hazards like dangerous terrain, ancient traps, and other deadly obstacles.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When travelling in wastes, ruins, and wilderness areas.
- ✱ **Effect:** When facing an environmental danger (falls, traps, etc.), you roll 1 less ☛ than normal.

### STEADY NOW (GRADE 1)

*You are a skilled markswoman, especially when you take a moment to aim.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When using a move action before making an attack with a firearm.
- ✱ **Effect:** Use a move action before you make an attack with a firearm, you don't move but your attack gains an extra d20 for the attack test.

### IF IT HAS WINGS (GRADE 2)

*You're a skilled pilot, capable of flying any manner of aircraft in even the most hazardous conditions.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When piloting aircraft, airships, and other flying craft.
- ✱ **Effect:** You gain a bonus of 1d20 to any piloting-related tests and can reduce environmental-based difficulties while piloting by 1.

### LEAPS AND BOUNDS (GRADE 2)

*Your Earthborn muscles allow you to leap great distances and perform great feats of strength while on Barsoom.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When moving on Barsoom and planets with similar gravity.
- ✱ **Effect:** You may close one range category automatically, ignoring obstacles and terrain if you have clearance and space to leap to your destination. You may spend 1 Momentum to move an additional range category.

### MIGHTY ATHLETE (GRADE 2)

*You've quickly learned to use your enhanced strength to more easily traverse obstacles.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When performing athletic tasks.
- ✱ **Effect:** You may use Might in any test based on athletic skills (jumping, running, catching, etc...) and may reduce the difficulty of such test by 1.

## FLAW

### CURIOSITY KILLED THE BANTH

Lose 3 Momentum when you fail to take an opportunity to explore a new mystery, unknown location, or strange new culture.

# BOLD EARTHBORN SOLDIER

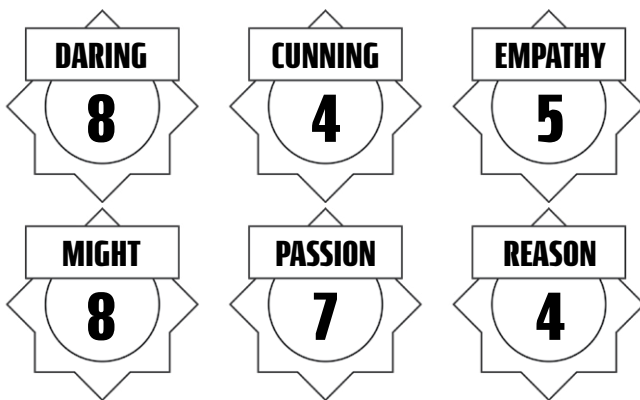
*"I served with Her Majesty's Army as one of her 'Black Lions'. While I wouldn't claim it was a wholly pleasant experience free of prejudice, I found camaraderie and purpose during those days. It was during the end of the Great War to End All Wars that I was wounded, I believed, mortally so. In a bloody haze, I stumbled into an ancient circle of stones. As I lay there, I looked up at distant Mars and wondered what sort of beings could be watching me. I soon found out..."*

As a Sikh soldier in the Indian Army, you were no stranger to battle or being an outsider. Here on Barsoom, you find your training and the newfound strength granted by Mars' lesser gravity and atmosphere gives you all the tools you need to survive and protect those in need.

## RENOWN AND ACCOLADES

RENOWN: 0

## ATTRIBUTES



## STRESS TRACKERS





## TALENTS

### BLACK LION OF JASOOM (GRADE 1)

*Your training, experience, and courage are sure to make you a legend on this strange new world.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When performing a **Daring** + action.

✱ **Effect:** When you gain more than 2 Momentum on a test, gain an additional Momentum.

### CUT THEM ALL DOWN (GRADE 3)

*Your skill with a sword is such that no lesser foe can hope to stand against you.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When wielding a sword or other bladed weapon.

✱ **Effect:** You automatically defeat 2 minions as part of your action. You may spend additional Momentum to defeat more at the cost of 1 Momentum per additional minion. You also gain a bonus d20 to attack tests with a sword.

### LEAPS AND BOUNDS (GRADE 2)

*Your Earthborn muscles allow you to leap great distances and perform great feats of strength while on Barsoom.*


✱ **Circumstance:** When moving on Barsoom and planets with similar gravity.

✱ **Effect:** You may close one range category automatically, ignoring any obstacles or intervening terrain as long as you have clearance and space to leap between your starting point and destination. You may spend 1 Momentum to move an additional range category.

### MIGHTY THEWS (GRADE 2)

*Your muscles give strength to your blows that few can match.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When wielding a muscle-powered weapon such as a sword, spear, or your fists.

✱ **Effect:** Spend 1 Momentum to reroll any  that inflict no damage on an attack. You may only do this once per attack.

### UNCOMMON KINDNESS (GRADE 1)

*You understand that mercy keeps ferocity from becoming tyranny.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When a minion is defeated.

✱ **Effect:** After combat one defeated minion can be "set free". This can be used to have the minion accomplish limited goals, such as delivering a message to a nearby ally or having them find food, and will be executed to the best of the minion's ability. The kindness of the character will be well remembered by the minion.

## FLAW

### CODE OF HONOR

You lose 3 Momentum if you break your word, refuse to defend the innocent from harm, or otherwise act dishonorably.

# CANNY RED MARTIAN ENVOY

*"I serve my nation with my words, seeking allies against our many enemies. My family's position helps lend power and authority to my negotiations. However, when words fail, I have my pistol and sword."*

A noble of Barsoom, you serve your family and nation as a diplomat and stateswoman. Unfortunately, your position makes you a regular target for kidnapping and assassination, requiring you to be skilled at self-defense. Despite trying to be a woman of peace, you are always ready for war: such is life on Barsoom.

## CORE EQUIPMENT

**Symbol of your Royal House:** This weapon deals 2  base damage with the **Psychic** quality.

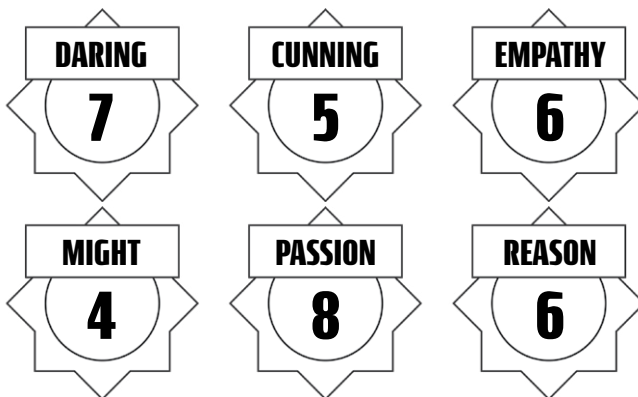
## RENOWN AND ACCOLADES

**RENOWN: 10**

\* **Title:** Chieftain (8 renown)

\* **Ally:** Loyal Servant and Bodyguard (2 renown)

## ATTRIBUTES



## STRESS TRACKERS



## TALENTS

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### PASSIONATE ORATOR (GRADE 1)

*Your unwavering loyalty and love for your people moves others to aid you. Even when dealing with the sworn enemies of your nation, culture, or group, you can often gain concessions or create opportunities with your words.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When speaking to convince an audience.
- \* **Effect:** You may reroll the result of any failed die roll in a Passion-based attempt to convince or charm others.


### EN GARDE (GRADE 2)

*You are adept at using and defending against blades, the common weapon of duelists, soldiers, and assassins.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When defending with a sword or blade.
- \* **Effect:** You may reroll the result of any failed die roll in a defense test when defending against swords or blades. You may also ignore the first point of damage from swords or blades in a scene.

### SPEAK FROM THE HEART (GRADE 2)

*Your words can soften hearts, win over allies, and confuse your foes.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When speaking or negotiating.
- \* **Effect:** You may use Passion in all spoken-action tests or social-based contests. When inflicting damage in social-based attacks, you roll an extra 1  of damage and may always opt to do 2 Confusion damage when an effect is rolled (5-6) on such tests.

### ONE DIPLOMAT TO ANOTHER (GRADE 1)

You are skilled at understanding the agendas and motivations of people like yourself.

- \* **Circumstance:** When attempting to learn a diplomat's agenda
- \* **Effect:** When you attempt to discover the agenda of another character, on a successful test, you gain 1 Momentum to ask a clarifying question of the narrator as per the Obtain Information Momentum spend.

## FLAW

---

### SEEK A BETTER PATH

You lose 3 Momentum if you attack or ambush another without first attempting to negotiate or otherwise win them over to your side.

# STALWART RED MARTIAN DUELIST

*"This isn't just a sword, it's an extension of myself. It reflects what I truly am. And what I am right now is severely irritated you would dare attempt to harm those under my protection. So arm yourself and let us be about it..."*

## CORE EQUIPMENT

Few can match your skill with a blade. Though technically a member of your nation's military, your special talent for personal combat means you spend most of your time serving as bodyguard, escort, or champion for important dignitaries.

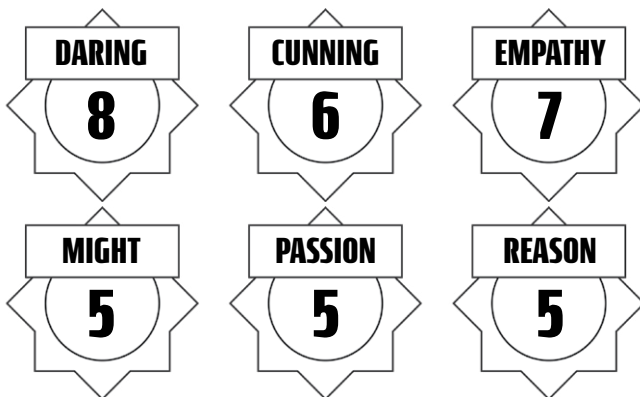
Sword

## RENOWN AND ACCOLADES

RENOWN: 10

- \* **Title:** Teedwar (8 renown)
- \* **Ally:** Your old swordmaster (2 renown)

## ATTRIBUTES



## STRESS TRACKERS



## TALENTS

---

### BODYGUARD (GRADE 1)

*You are skilled at protecting a subject in your charge from harm.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When protecting another.
- \* **Effect:** At the beginning of a combat name a character you intend to protect. If they are adjacent, you may choose to defend them from any physical attacks. If they are within Near range, you may spend 1 Momentum to move adjacent to them and defend them, provided there is an unobstructed path between you and your charge.

### PEERLESS SWORDMASTER (GRADE 3)

*You are one of the greatest sword-fighters in your nation, if not all of Barsoom.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When using a sword or similar melee weapon (daggers, sabers, etc.) in accordance with Martian honor.
- \* **Effect:** You gain a bonus d20 to attack tests while sword fighting and whenever you generate at least 2 Momentum with a test involving a sword or similar weapon, you gain an additional Momentum. In addition, your blade gains the Fearsome quality.

### SENSITIVE DEFENDER (GRADE 1)

*Your keen perception and ability to read the moods and expressions of others serves you well in battle.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When defending against any opponent you can clearly observe.
- \* **Effect:** You may always use Empathy to defend against an attack by an opponent you can clearly observe.

### A MATTER OF HONOR (GRADE 1)

*You are bound by honor and consider it of great importance when challenging another.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When you spend a Spoken action to issue a formal challenge to any narrator character that is not a minion.
- \* **Effect:** One minion attending the challenged narrator character is automatically considered defeated, so long as you maintain the correct standards of Martian Honor. Should you break the standards of Martian Honor (narrator has the final say) the minion is no longer considered defeated and may act as normal.

## FLAW

---

### LOYAL TO THE SWORD

You lose 3 Momentum if you opt to use a firearm, spear, or other non-sword like weapon unless honor demands it.

# CHARMING OKAR SPY

*“There are many ways of keeping one’s people safe. The soldier does so with pistol and sword. The scientist with his texts and tests. I protect my people with lies, deceptions, and the occasional blade in the dark. Some may think me underhand or cowardly, but I ask you... how many brave warriors would walk into enemy territory lightly armed and alone?”*

You are a loyal Okar trained in espionage and covert operations. Using various dyes and other props, you can color your skin and shave your beard to pose as red Martian, First Born, or even Holy Thern. Your missions often carry you far from home, but you may also be called on to root out dissidents, traitors, and malcontents among your own people as well.

## CORE EQUIPMENT

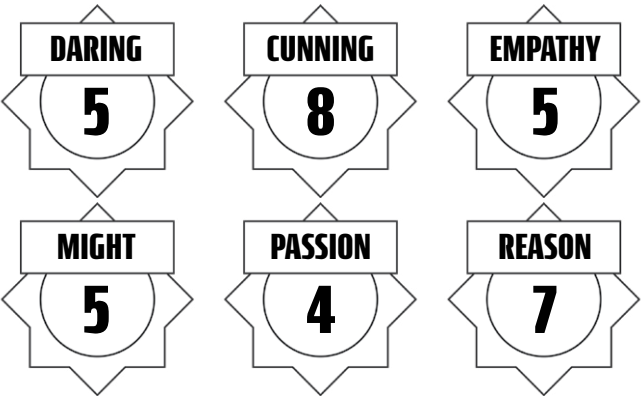
Dagger

## RENOWN AND ACCOLADES

RENOWN: 10

- \* **Title:** Dwar (5 renown)
- \* **Ally:** Gain allies equal to 5 renown (see page 135), representing fellow agents or others who may know your true identity.

## ATTRIBUTES



## STRESS TRACKERS





## TALENTS

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### CUNNING BLADE (GRADE 1)

*You are adept at using your wits and cunning in battle, finding the perfect opening or opportunity.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When using a sword or dagger.

✱ **Effect:** When you gain at least 2 Momentum with a Cunning-based action involving a sword or dagger, you gain 1 additional Momentum.

### FITTING IN (GRADE 2)

*You are adept at convincing others to consider you one of their own. With proper skin paints and disguises you walk the cities and hallways of Barsoom without drawing attention or seeming out of place.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When convincing others you belong.

✱ **Effect:** Add a bonus d20 with tests to convince others you belong in a place or group. You may pose as a member of any race or culture with the same basic language and physical form without fear of casual discovery.

### MASTER OF DISGUISE (GRADE 1)

*You are a master of disguise, transforming yourself completely and effectively. It is possible even your closest friends have never seen your real face.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When disguising yourself.

✱ **Effect:** Spend 1 Momentum to leave a scene. Then in the next scene, spend 1 Momentum to replace any minion-type character in the scene, revealing you were disguised as them all along.

### STATE SECRETS (GRADE 2)

*Few secrets, ciphers, or enemy battle plans escape your scrutiny and understanding.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When discovering important secrets or plans.

✱ **Effect:** When using Reason to understand, search for, uncover, or decipher coded messages, secret plans, or similar intelligence, gain 2 bonus d20.

## FLAW

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### SECRETS AND LIES

When operating covertly in foreign territory, the narrator may tell you to spend 3 Momentum or face a challenge to your cover identity or mission. This does not automatically result in your capture or discovery, but can make things more difficult for a time.

# DRIVEN FIRST BORN AIRSHIP OFFICER

*"I am captain and dator to my crew; they would fly into certain death if I ordered it, though there's no reason or profit in such suicidal endeavors. Instead, we seek profit and power by sword and gun, sailing on the ninth ray across Barsoom..."*

A raider and pirate at heart, you are not closely connected to the politics or ideology of your people, preferring the freedom of the open sky and regular raiding. You were recently lost or separated from your crew and ship due to calamity and are seeking to reclaim it or a suitable replacement. With luck and skill, you will soon be commanding from the deck of an airship once more.

## CORE EQUIPMENT

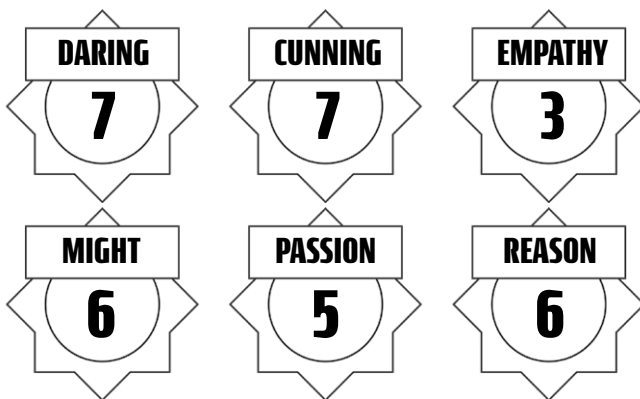
Pistol (usually hidden)

## RENOWN AND ACCOLADES

RENOWN: 10

\* Title: Dator (10 renown)

## ATTRIBUTES



## STRESS TRACKERS



## TALENTS

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### AIRSHIP PILOT (GRADE 1)

*You can crew and command airships, flying them with skill beyond most pilots.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When crewing or commanding an airship.
- \* **Effect:** When crewing or commanding an airship, you may roll an extra d20.

### NO QUARTER (GRADE 2)

*You are merciless in battle, striking suddenly and without pause or restraint.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When attacking in combat.
- \* **Effect:** You may reroll the result of any 1 .

### CRUEL BEAUTY (GRADE 2)

*Your deadly nature and natural charms cause many to underestimate or favor you when they should not.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When deceiving or charming another person.
- \* **Effect:** You may reroll any failed die on an attempt to deceive, charm, or seduce another. In tests against those you have previously charmed or seduced, gain an additional d20.

### I'VE HEARD OF YOU, I'M NOT IMPRESSED (GRADE 1)

You have met many people on your travels and have the ability to learn about them from first impressions.

- \* **Circumstance:** When being introduced to any new narrator character that is not a minion.
- \* **Effect:** When you are introduced to a new narrator character, you gain a bonus d20 on the first test you make to interact with them. You must spend the first 1-2 Momentum gained on the test to learn information about the narrator character, as per the Obtain Information Momentum spend.

## FLAW

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### A PIRATE'S LIFE

You bristle under authoritarian abuses and allow no challenges to your leadership. If harassed or bullied by those in power or if someone challenges your leadership you lose 3 Momentum unless you challenge or confront them.

# THOUGHTFUL GREEN MARTIAN GUIDE

*"These cities and settlements are not like it is in the deep wilds, in the heart of the dead sea bottoms and other such places. The wilderness is a thriving, angry thing with a spirit of its own. That spirit wishes to harm you if you are foolish or do not respect its dangers. Even most of my horde cannot walk the ways safely. So, pay attention and follow me..."*

While you cannot claim to be the greatest warrior of your people, you are undoubtedly among their best hunters and trackers. Your skills serve you well as a scout and guide for warbands and hordes navigating the wildest areas, and years of hunting and survival have made you a skilled fighter. Your skills have saved the lives of many, including the chieftain of a local band and a red scout from nearby Helium whose comradery you have earned despite the differences of your respective people.

## CORE EQUIPMENT

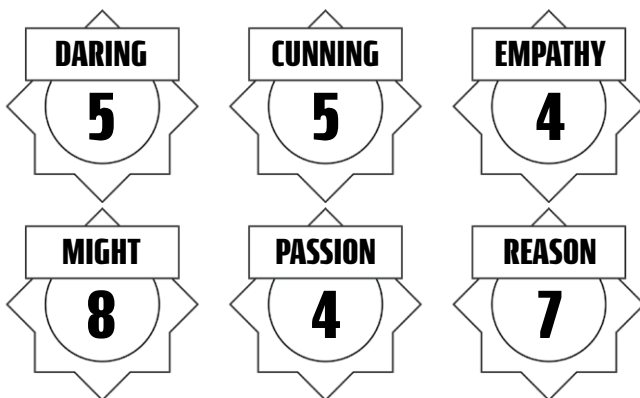
Green Martian Rifle

## RENOWN AND ACCOLADES

**RENOWN: 10**

- \* **Title:** Padwar of the Thark Horde (2 renown)
- \* **Ally:** Green Martian war chieftain and his band of warriors (6 renown)
- \* **Ally:** Red Martian scout from Helium (2 renown)

## ATTRIBUTES



## STRESS TRACKERS



## TALENTS

### FOUR-ARMED FOR WAR (GRADE 1)

*Your warlike, combative culture and four arms give you an edge in combat, allowing you to attack with multiple weapons or steady your rifle with ease.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When attacking with melee weapons or using a rifle.
- \* **Effect:** When you generate Momentum when attacking with a melee weapon or rifle, gain an extra Momentum.

### CALCULATED SHOT (GRADE 2)

*You are a skilled shot, able to naturally calculate wind, distance, and other factors to help you find the target.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When attacking with a firearm.
- \* **Effect:** You may always use Reason to attack with a firearm in ranged combat and inflict an additional 1 of damage in successful ranged attacks.

### SKILLED INFILTRATOR (GRADE 1)

*You are quiet and patient when you stalk your prey, crouching mere meters from those who would seek you out.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When infiltrating a location.
- \* **Effect:** You automatically avoid all minion-type enemies when infiltrating or sneaking into an area. Only non-minion characters have any hope of discovering you.

### WILD HUNTER (GRADE 2)

*Though you are a formidable force in any battle, you are particularly skilled at stalking and bringing down banths, wild thoats, and other dangerous beasts of Barsoom.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When tracking, stalking, or fighting wild beasts.
- \* **Effect:** You gain a bonus d20 when tracking, stalking, or fighting wild beasts.

## FLAW

### OUT OF MY ELEMENT

When in a city or other civilized environment, the narrator may declare you have become disoriented, lost, or have stumbled into somewhere you shouldn't be unless you pay 3 Momentum. These situations are never immediately deadly, but they can be dangerous.

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# CHAPTER 3: TALENTS

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...under Sola's tutelage, I developed my telepathic powers so that I shortly could sense practically everything that went on around me.

– John Carter, *A Princess of Mars*

Talents are an important part of **John Carter of Mars** characters. They represent exceptional abilities that allow characters to perform great feats at a high level of competence.

## WHAT ARE TALENTS?

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In other role-playing games characters have skills, perks, and advantages. **John Carter** presumes a level of hyper-competency in characters that avoids the need for such mechanics. If your character would logically know how to fly an airship, they can. If they don't know and someone takes the time to teach them? Now they can.

Talents are more than skills or learned abilities. They are a core element that makes a character who they are. They allow characters to regularly bend the rules in their favor or boost their chances of success with certain actions. They represent mastery of skills, natural abilities, and other elements that take a character from “I can do that” to “I can do that with style, and far better than others.”

## USING TALENTS

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For ease of play and to avoid confusion, you can only use one talent at a time. If you have two talents that affect your character's ability to swing a sword, you can only use one at a time. You combine similar effects into a single talent (see *Multiple Effect Talents* later in this chapter).

Note that using a talent to change an attribute used before an action begins and talents that augment die rolls and tests are still allowed. Some talents don't engage directly with a

single contest, but allow characters to bend the rules by always using particular attributes for certain actions or similar effects.

**Example:** *The Thark marksman Haldus Hark has three talents relating to shooting firearms, particularly his trusty rifle. He has one talent, Keen Marksman, which allows him to always use Reason when using a rifle, even when the attribute would not seem appropriate. He has a second talent, Suppressing Fire, that makes him harder to hit with ranged weapons when he too is armed with a firearm. When he wants to use both these talents in rapid succession in a gun battle, he's allowed because they don't engage with a single action. The first alters the attribute used before any actions occur and the second deals with defense actions.*

*However, if Hark has a third talent, that also boosts his defense or made him harder to hit? He could not use that and Suppressing Fire on the same attack action.*

Multiple talents cannot be used if both of their effects would impact a single test or the same action.

**Example:** *Okar spy Vunn Horek has two talents that relate to his skill with a pistol, Deadly Pistoleer and Expert Aim. Deadly Pistoleer allows him to roll 2 additional combat dice when he makes a successful attack with a pistol. Expert Aim lets him add 2d20 to a test involving shooting on a turn where he doesn't also move. As both these talents directly relate to the same action, shooting, he can only use one of these each time he makes a test involving shooting his weapon.*

Note that you can merge such effects into a single talent if desired, especially if it's easier for you to keep track of or allows creation of a talent



with a particularly narrow scope (see *Designing Talents*), but it's not required.


**Example:** *Verna Mal, a First Born assassin, is particularly adept with using a dagger in close combat. She has a talent, Mistress of the Knife, that gives her a bonus d20 on both attacking and defending when wielding a dagger. While attack and defense are two separate actions, she can use her talent on both attack and defense when using her signature knives and daggers. However, if she also has a talent, A Knife in the Dark, giving her a bonus to attack and damage on an unsuspecting foe, she must decide which of the two talents to use when attacking—though she could use A Knife in the Dark for an attack action and Mistress of the Knife for defense if she is attacked immediately after.*

## DESIGNING TALENTS

Talents are designed based around two things: Momentum value and scope. A grade 1 talent is roughly equivalent to spending 1 Momentum on a roll and generally covers an action or type of action that is fairly narrow (attacking with a sword, scientific research, riding a thoot, etc...). The same holds true of grade 2 and above talents, except that they represent a higher Momentum spend. If a talent covers a very wide area, it will be treated as being higher grade. If its use is exceptionally narrow, it may be treated as lower grade. Ultimately the narrator must approve the cost of any designed talents.

The following list of talent abilities based on grade covers their most common uses.

### Each grade of talent can let you...

- \* Add a d20 to a particular type of action.
- \* Always use a particular attribute for a type of action, regardless of the details of the situation.
- \* Move an extra range if not blocked or hindered from moving.
- \* Roll an extra  to the damage dealt.
- \* Dispatch an additional minion on a successful attack.
- \* Avoid dangers and bad situations while traveling through an area.
- \* Get a “yes or no” answer to a single question about a particular scene or situation.

### For grade 2 of a talent you can...

- \* Send a weapon or device flying as part of an attack or defense.
- \* Gain an additional specified movement or Spoken action.
- \* Automatically remove another's affliction.
- \* Ignore the effects of an affliction for a scene. It doesn't go away, you just ignore its effects.

### For grade 3 of a talent you can...

- \* Move up to two additional ranges between you and the target, if not blocked or hindered from moving.
- \* Automatically repair or recover a device or piece of equipment.

### For grade 4 of a talent you can...

- \* Gain an additional specified Conflict action.
- \* Automatically remove 2 afflictions from another.
- \* Automatically remove an affliction from yourself.

In addition, a talent can do anything Momentum can do on a 1 grade = 1 Momentum basis. Note that the circumstance a particular talent covers is by default a fairly narrow, relatively specific action, but usually one that comes up fairly often in play. Thus, it can't just be

“an attack” but needs to be “attacking with a sword” or “shooting a firearm.” Likewise, it shouldn’t be too narrow like “lunging forward with a cavalry saber.” It won’t be “when commanding the crew of this one ship” or “when commanding anyone” but circumstances like “when commanding airships” or “when commanding the Armies of Helium.”

If desired, narrators may allow broader talents, charging extra grades for them. They may also allow more potent talents to be purchased at a lower grade by limiting their circumstance. To a limited degree this is even encouraged as it helps create some fun variations of talents among characters. However, if a talent is always or never coming up, it runs the risk of unbalancing play. Thus, narrators can veto a particular talent if necessary and help players come up with a more suitable one.

**Example:** Peter wants to make an Okar duelist who studied under the great Solan of Kadabra, Switchmaster of the Guardian of the North and swordmaster extraordinaire. He first wants to take a talent that gives him a bonus d20 to use “when attacking and defending with a weapon” for grade 1. The narrator, Jack, informs him that’s too broad a circumstance and too potent an effect for a grade 1 talent. After a bit of discussion, Jack and Peter come up with the Okar Swordmaster talent, which grants a bonus d20 when attacking or defending with a sword. The talent is grade 2 (1 grade each for the bonus die on attack and defense).

**Example:** Jennifer wants her red Martian noble to possess a particular affinity with banths, much like Thuvia of Ptarth. She wishes to take a grade 2 talent giving her a bonus d20 when attempting to command or calm banths and being able to always use Cunning as one of her attributes in all such tests. The narrator, Jack, knows that while banths will be present in the campaign, they won’t show up all that often. He informs Jennifer that she can have that talent as grade 1 instead of grade 2 — 2 grades worth of abilities, but reduced by 1 for how rarely it will come up in play.

The following talents are ready to be selected by player characters during character generation. They can also serve as examples for player-designed talents. Some talents are similar to others, but with minor changes in when they apply or how they are used. These talents may be easily changed as needed. For example, Expert Rifleman (grade 1) and Deadly Pistoleer (grade 2) are both talents that do extra damage with a particular weapon. If desired, a player might make a grade 2 talent that uses the Deadly Pistoleer effect but for a rifle instead, calling it something like Deadly Rifleman. Conversely, another player might take the Expert Rifleman effect and wish to use it for pistols or other weapon, renaming it Expert Pistoleer or some other appropriate title.



## GRADE 1 TALENTS

### ACROBATIC DODGE

*You're always moving and have a knack for recognizing opportunities to escape an aggressive enemy.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When successful in defending against a physical attack.

✱ **Effect:** After dodging any physical attack you can move anywhere within Near range.

### CUT THEM DOWN

*Your skill with a sword is such that no lesser foe can hope to stand against you.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When wielding a sword.

✱ **Effect:** You automatically defeat 1 minion as part of your action. You may spend additional Momentum to defeat more at the cost of 1 Momentum per additional minion.

### PASSIONATE RIDER

*You ride with your heart as much as your hands on the reins. You treat your beast as a loyal and valued companion and it always performs its best for you.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When riding a thoot or other beast.

✱ **Effect:** You may substitute your Passion for any roll to ride, guide, or control a thoot or other riding beast.

Many talents allow a character to stipulate the attribute used on specific actions. By trading Passion for Daring or Might a character could easily be a Daring Rider or Mighty Rider instead. Rather than create six versions of each talent we leave it to players and narrators to decide whether any particular attribute is appropriate for any particular activity.

### EXPERT RIFLEMAN

*With a long gun in your hand, there are few who can match your ability to place a shot where it will do the most damage.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When you hit with a rifle.

✱ **Effect:** Roll an extra 1 of damage on a successful attack.

### EYE FOR DANGER

*You are skilled at seeing if a foe — or even an ally — is carrying any concealed armaments.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When looking at another character.

✱ **Effect:** You may ask the narrator if a particular character is armed, even if they don't appear to be. They must answer you truthfully. This talent cannot detect poisons, only weapons.

### KEEN MARKSMAN

*You are a careful and discerning shooter whose ability to think clearly and calculate a target's distance and speed improves your shooting.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When using firearms.

✱ **Effect:** You may always use Reason when shooting a firearm.

### SKILLED INFILTRATOR

*You are quiet and patient when you stalk your prey. You are capable of crouching mere meters from those who would seek you out.*

✱ **Circumstance:** When infiltrating a location.

✱ **Effect:** You automatically avoid all minion-class enemies when infiltrating or sneaking into an area. Only non-minion characters have any hope of spotting you.

## GRADE 2 TALENTS

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### EXPERT AIM

*When you take a moment to aim, you rarely miss even the most challenging targets.*

- ✧ **Circumstance:** When shooting but not moving.
- ✧ **Effect:** You gain a bonus 2d20 when attacking with a firearm provided you don't move during this turn.

### JUST A SCRATCH

*Either due to high pain tolerance or years of experience with injury, you can shrug off the effects of most minor flesh wounds and shallow cuts.*

- ✧ **Circumstance:** When suffering a Wounds affliction.
- ✧ **Effect:** You can ignore the effects of 1 Wounds affliction for the scene. It doesn't go away, but you suffer no negative effects. This affliction does not count against a character's total afflictions for blacking out.

### WITTY REPARTEE

*Your tongue is as quick and lithe as your blade! You are always able to slip in a comment or call out important information to your allies even during the tensest situations.*

- ✧ **Circumstance:** When performing an action.
- ✧ **Effect:** You may always take an additional Spoken action as part of an attack, defense, or other action.

### SKILLED PHYSICIAN

*You are a skilled healer and physician, able to tend minor wounds and comfort patients quickly and efficiently. Your treatments always provide some benefit, no matter how challenging the injury.*

- ✧ **Circumstance:** When healing another's afflictions.
- ✧ **Effect:** You may use a Conflict action to automatically remove 1 affliction from any character you treat, no test is required. You may perform a test to heal additional afflictions if you desire as part of the action.

### DEADLY PISTOLEER

*Your skill with a pistol is well-known and justly feared. Your shots always strike for maximum force and damage, often killing a lesser foe instantly.*

- ✧ **Circumstance:** When you successfully attack someone with a pistol.
- ✧ **Effect:** Roll an extra 2 🎲 of damage on a successful attack.

### SUPPRESSING FIRE

*You are adept at keeping enemy marksmen ducking and firing off only wild shots.*

- ✧ **Circumstance:** When both you and your opponents are armed with firearms or ranged weapons.
- ✧ **Effect:** The difficulty to attack you with firearms and ranged weapons while you are similarly armed is increased by 2. You must be able to shoot back at your attackers to gain this benefit.



## GRADE 3 TALENTS

### FIXED

*You can fix even the most damaged of equipment, often with minimal tools and in record time. Unlike simple jury rigs and patches, your repairs are permanent — at least until you break it again.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When repairing a device.
- ✱ **Effect:** Take a Conflict action and automatically repair one device or piece of equipment. This repair is permanent, lasting until the device is damaged again.

### DISARMING PARRY

*You can disarm an opponent's blade even as he closes to attack. With a twist and a flick of your wrist you can turn a deadly armed attacker into an unarmed target.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When defending at Immediate range against a physical attack.
- ✱ **Effect:** Roll 1 bonus d20 for a defend action against an Immediate range physical attack. If successful, you automatically disarm your opponent unless he pays 2 Momentum.

### FROM EVERY CHANDELIER

*You're used to grabbing onto the smallest of rails or ledges. When traversing perilous landscapes, you seldom come to harm.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When traversing a danger.
- ✱ **Effect:** When taking damage from a danger, you can reduce the damage by 3. This can reduce damage to 0.

## CAN'T I JUST USE TALENTS TO ATTACK WITH MY BEST ATTRIBUTES?

A common question among players is, "Can't I just pick a talent that lets me use a generally non-offensive attribute like Empathy or Reason to attack, take that attribute at a really high rank, and have a powerful fighter with strong abilities to do other things as well?"

The answer to this is "Yes, yes you can." It's not even "cheating". It's definitely intended as an option for character generation and advancement. You can absolutely take an Empathic Swordplay talent for your character and use Empathy when skewering enemies with a sword.

However, you should realize two things first. One: you still need a reason for the talent and why it works. This can be as simple as saying "I am adept at sensing my opponent's emotions, particularly their anxiety, anger, and fear. This means I can more easily sense when and how they will act in combat." In fact, that's a great reason, and it tells everyone something more about your character.

Two: you need to realize that in taking such a talent, you're surrendering a talent selection to optimizing your character in this way. You may be limiting your character somewhat. This isn't wrong, far from it. Many characters will have similar talents to excel at certain tests. Just remember that a character who doesn't do this probably has a more versatile range of talents, and possibly attributes. They may be inferior to you in some ways, but they can often act more effectively if injured or otherwise hindered in ways that affect their few strong attributes.

## GRADE 4 TALENTS

### FLURRY OF BLOWS

*Your whole body is a weapon and when you are armed the effect is even deadlier. You land two blows for every one your foes manage, quickly cutting them down to size.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When making a physical attack based Conflict action in Immediate range.
- ✱ **Effect:** Take an extra physical attack based Conflict action at any target in Immediate range.

### PAIN DOES NOT HURT

*You are remarkably resistant to injury and possess superior focus and force of will. You can ignore injuries that would disable lesser individuals.*

- ✱ **Circumstance:** When taking an affliction.
- ✱ **Effect:** Use a Conflict action to remove any one affliction. You cannot remove more than three afflictions in a single scene and must take a Conflict action to remove each one.

## MULTIPLE EFFECT TALENTS

Some talents allow for multiple effects, usually those relating to two or more lower-graded talents combining as a single higher-graded talent. There is mechanically little difference between these talents and a single higher-graded talent. The grade of such a talent is equal to the combined grades of the included effects. Thus, a talent that provides a 1 Momentum effect and a 2 Momentum effect would be a grade 3 talent.

**Example:** Korr Magis, a red Martian panthan and skilled close combatant, wishes to create a multiple effect talent that lets him deal deadly and accurate blows when wielding his sword. His player decides these effects translate into bonus dice for sword-based attacks and bonus combat dice for successful attacks. He wants 2d20 bonus dice for his sword attacks and wishes to roll an additional combat die on such attacks. Bought separately the 2d20 bonus would be a grade 2 talent, equal to spending 2 Momentum and costing 10xp to create. The extra damage would be a grade 1 talent, equal to spending 1 Momentum and costing 5xp to create. Combined into a single talent the ability to take a 2d20 bonus and roll an additional combat die when attacking with a sword is a grade 3 talent equivalent to spending 3 Momentum.

*It costs 15xp (10xp + 5xp) for Korr Magis to acquire this talent. He names this talent **Deadly Bladework**.*

The significance of multiple effect talents comes with how talents work within the rules. For ease and speed of play, a character can only bring one talent into play on a single die roll, conflict, or other test. Thus, if you have a talent that adds to your damage in combat and another that increases your chances to hit, you can only use one at a time. This rule keeps combat scenes and other times when the rules are actively used in play from becoming bogged down with lots of “Wait, but then I bring this talent into play!” or “Wait, I forgot I can also use these two talents here.”

Characters can create multiple effect talents during character generation or buy them during play. If you want to merge two talents into a new talent, you repurchase them with experience as you advance and the combination is considered a new talent. By default, you receive no discount and pay no extra cost for “merging” lower grade talents into higher grade one, though narrators can, of course, decide to offer “buy back” discounts if they want.



**Example:** In addition to his grade 3 **Deadly Bladework** talent, Korr Magis also possesses a grade 4 talent (costing 20xp) called **Flurry of Blows**, that lets him make an additional Conflict action at any target in Immediate range. He cannot combine **Deadly Bladework** and **Flurry of Blows** when fighting with a sword, he must use one or the other. He wishes to combine these talents into a new talent, **Flurry of Deadly Steel** that allows for both two Conflict actions with a sword from one talent, and for each action to have the additional die bonuses and damage from the other talent. This new combined talent costs the total of the two talents or 35xp (15xp + 20xp, respectively) and is considered a grade 7 talent (grades 3 + 4). **Flurry of Deadly Steel** is costly and Korr's player gets no discount for it despite having talents that individually duplicate its overall effect. However, this is a formidable ability! Should Korr later wish to add additional effects to this talent each effect will need to be purchased again.

Combining talent effects can be costly in terms of experience, but it can result in very powerful talents that make characters incredibly formidable and effective in their chosen areas of expertise. Generally, the advantage of being able to combine talents offsets the cost of having to purchase them again. If a narrator believes this is not the case with a particular talent, they can offer a discounts on a case by case basis.

The following multiple-effect talents are ready to be selected by player characters during character generation. They can also serve as examples for player-designed talents.

## WHY NOT JUST ONE MEGA-TALENT?

Experienced gamers are likely looking at the rules on using only one talent at a time and thinking “Why don’t I just make one talent for everything?” The reason for this is a bit complex.

Yes, you should consider creating logical multiple effect talents for your characters, either during creation or later during play. Such talents help define characters and can often form the basis of their reputation with others. A swordsman with a potent multiple effect Swordmaster of Helium talent that involves many aspects of swordplay may become widely known for their skills.

However, as talents need to work together organically on a single type of action or situation, it’s often not sensible to lump everything into a single talent. For example, attack and defense are separate tests in a contest. A talent that rolls several attack and defense abilities into a single talent is both unwieldy and unnecessary.

Likewise, talents are focused on a single type or category of action as part of their scope. If your talents involve different scopes, they work poorly together and can become confusing and hard to manage.

Narrators can always veto talents they find are excessive or which bog down play.

## MULTIPLE EFFECT TALENTS

### EMPATHIC RIDER (GRADE 2)

*You understand your mounts and treat them with a kindness rare on Barsoom. As a result, your beasts perform amazingly well.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When riding a beast.
- \* **Effect:** You may always use your Empathy when riding or controlling a living mount. You also may reroll any one failed d20 for riding tests.

### PERCEPTIVE SCIENTIST (GRADE 2)

*Your scientific analysis is so keen you even glean insight from failure and your successes are even more impressive.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When analyzing a scientific device or theory.
- \* **Effect:** Roll a bonus d20 when analyzing scientific devices and theories. The narrator must answer one “yes or no” question about the device or theory regardless of the result of this roll.

### DILIGENT SWORDMASTER (GRADE 3)

*Your training and discipline when studying the sword makes you a terror to your enemies. You may also give on the spot guidance or instruction to your pupils, allies, and any who heed your advice.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When using a sword in combat.
- \* **Effect:** You may re-roll any single d20 with attack or defense actions when using a sword in battle. You can spend 1 Momentum to grant this effect to any nearby ally you can clearly see and communicate with.

### FEARSOME MIGHT (GRADE 3)

*Even among the stalwart men and women of Barsoom you inspire fear. Lesser foes flee from you and even respected opponents are reluctant to let you get too close.*

- \* **Circumstance:** Might-based actions.
- \* **Effect:** You gain a 2d20 bonus in any Might-based action. In addition, any 1 minion retreats or flees from your presence. You may spend additional Momentum to intimidate more lesser foes at the cost of 1 Momentum per additional minion.

### YOU WILL REGRET THAT (GRADE 4)

*Injury often doesn't slow or discourage you, it only spurs your desire for retribution. If a foe injures you, you push past the pain and unleash your vengeance upon them.*

- \* **Circumstance:** After being wounded by another.
- \* **Effect:** Ignore the effects of an affliction for the rest of the scene. Also, for the rest of the scene gain a bonus d20 to attack and roll an extra die of damage against the person or creature who caused this affliction. You can only use this for one affliction and one target at a time.

### CUNNING LOTHARIO (GRADE 4)

*You are a master of seduction not out of any romantic inclination but simply as a means to an end.*

- \* **Circumstance:** When using seduction to gain access to riches or equipment.
- \* **Effect:** You can always use Cunning to make seduction tests for the purposes of gaining property. After a successful test, the Cunning Lothario automatically gains 2 Momentum and can use 2 Momentum (repeatable) to gain any 1 piece of equipment that could normally be purchased as core equipment.





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# CHAPTER 4: ADVENTURING IN BARSOOM

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For what, pray, is the pleasure of doing an easy thing?  
– John Carter, *The Gods of Mars*

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This chapter covers the basic rules of *John Carter*.

The participants in a game of *John Carter* take on certain roles. The majority are **players**, the actual people sitting around the table in a living room, or even playing online together. Each player controls a single character — normally referred to as a player character, to distinguish those characters from the many narrator-controlled characters that populate the game world. Players make the decisions that influence and direct their characters, deciding what a character does in a given situation, how the character reacts to a threat, etc.

The **narrator** is responsible for everything else. The narrator controls every other character, making decisions for them and determining their actions and responses. He is also responsible for setting scenes, establishing environments, and determining unfolding events. The narrator must interpret how the rules apply to a given situation. This includes ruling on the difficulty of tests, and ruling on outcomes when unusual situations or disagreements arise.

**The narrator is not an adversary to the players.** Playing this game is a much greater experience for everyone if the narrator is an enthusiastic supporter of the player characters and their exploits, seeking to make those characters' lives as dramatic, exciting, and challenging as possible.





# DICE AND DICE ROLLS

Two types of dice are used to resolve the actions any character (player or narrator) may attempt and the situations they may face.

## TWENTY-SIDED DIE (D20)

The first, and most commonly used dice type is a twenty-sided die, abbreviated throughout as a d20. These d20s are used for resolving attribute tests and for rolling on certain large tables. More often than not, multiple d20s are required, noted as Xd20, where X is the number of dice to be rolled. The most common roll is the 2d20 roll.

## COMBAT DIE 🎲

The combat die, or 🎲, is a six-sided die (d6) rolled to determine damage and other special effects. When rolling a 🎲, ignore any results of 3 or 4. Results of 1 and 2 have their normal values. Results of 5 or 6 are referred to as effects. Specially-made *John Carter* combat dice replace the 1 and 2 sides with success icons, and the effect icon (the Barsoom symbol) for the 5 and 6 faces, with the 3 and 4 faces left blank. An effect adds 1 to the total, and triggers certain abilities, such as weapon qualities and other special conditions.













Most of the time, more than one 🎲 is rolled together and the results totaled.

Multiple combat dice are noted as X🎲, where X is the number of combat dice rolled.

In most circumstances, multiple dice of any given type are rolled at once. Collectively these dice are referred to as the dice pool (or the pool).

## ROUNDING NUMBERS

Whenever you need to divide the result of a die roll, a value in the game, or some other number, the players and narrator alike should always round up.

		1 Damage
		2 Damage
		No result
		No result
		1 Damage + Effect
		1 Damage + Effect

## RE-ROLLING DICE

Many circumstances allow a player or narrator to re-roll one or more dice. When a talent, ability, item, or circumstance grants a re-roll, the player or narrator chooses which die to re-roll, and rolls it (or another die of the same kind). This re-rolled result replaces the original result entirely. The new results always stand, even if they're the same as, or worse than, the original results.

Some situations allow for a specific number of dice to be re-rolled, while others allow all dice in a pool to be re-rolled. In this latter instance, the player or narrator chooses how many dice to re-roll from those rolled, up to the number of dice listed (if any). Note that, in most cases, re-rolling is optional. The player or narrator does not have to re-roll any die if the original result is acceptable.

# ATTRIBUTES

A collection of six attributes defines each character: **Cunning, Daring, Empathy, Might, Passion and Reason.** These attributes indicate a character's inherent abilities and their physical and mental limitations. Most attributes for player characters have values from 4 to 12, with 4 to 5 representing an average person, and 6 or higher showing heroic prowess. The higher the attribute, the greater the ability (these are described in detail on page 14 of Chapter 2 Creating Your Adventurer).

<b>DARING</b> <b>5</b>	<b>CUNNING</b> <b>4</b>	<b>EMPATHY</b> <b>3</b>
<b>MIGHT</b> <b>6</b>	<b>PASSION</b> <b>3</b>	<b>REASON</b> <b>3</b>

## ATTRIBUTE TESTS

In situations where a character attempts a task and the outcome is unknown or uncertain, the character attempts an **attribute test**, sometimes just called a test.

As noted, an attribute test is required when a character attempts a task and the outcome is in doubt, where there are consequences for failure, or when the character is distracted or threatened. Outside of these circumstances, it's easier to assume that the character simply succeeds: player characters are heroic individuals, unlikely to fail at routine tasks.

The **target number** (TN) of a test is equal to the total of the two attributes that govern the activity (see *attribute definitions* on page 14). When asked to perform an attribute test, the player usually rolls 2d20. Each die roll equal to or less than that test's target number scores a single success. The greater the number of successes scored, across the entire

dice pool, the better the test's result.

Additionally, the weaker of the character's attributes used in the test creates the possibility to score extra successes: each d20 result equal to or less than the character's weaker attribute scores two successes instead of one.

**Example:** Zala Zors has a **Daring** of 7 and a **Might** of 4. She attempts to endure the dangerous heat of a forced march through the southern deserts. The narrator calls for her player to attempt a **Daring + Might** test. Zala's **Daring** 7 + **Might** 4 = 11 meaning her target number for this attempt is 11. A roll of 2d20 results in a 2 and a 9. Both succeed, as they are under Zala's target number of 11. The 2 is also under her **Might** of 4, so she gains an additional success on this test, for a total of 3 successes.

Attribute tests are assigned a **difficulty rating**, a value ranging from Simple (difficulty 0, or Do) to Epic (D5) and beyond. The difficulty rating determines the minimum number of successes required to succeed at the test. Most of the time, tests are Average (D1). The different difficulty ratings are shown on the test difficulty table on page 74.

Difficulty ratings are often modified by steps. A test can become harder, such as an Average (D1) test becoming a Challenging (D2) test, or it can become easier, such as Daunting (D3) being reduced to Challenging (D2). Many factors can cause difficulties to increase or decrease by steps, such as environmental or situational conditions, character abilities (talents), and other modifiers.

The more d20s rolled during a test the higher the chances of success. There are a variety of ways by which players and the narrator may obtain additional d20s to roll during an attribute test, and these are described later in this section. **However, a character is never allowed more than three bonus d20s on an attribute test (5d20 in total).**

Successes in excess of the diffi-



culty become Momentum, which can be spent to gain additional benefits and bonuses.

**Example:** From the prior example, the narrator determined that Zala needed two successes on her test, thus making it a Challenging (D2) test. Since Zala scored a total of three successes, she has one success above the needed minimum. Zala Zors therefore gains 1 Momentum (added to the Momentum pool) which she (or another player) may spend later.

### THREAT AS COMPLICATION

If a suitable complication is not easy to determine, the narrator can choose to add 2 points of Threat to the Threat pool instead. Threat is a narrator resource, discussed in more detail on page 87 of this chapter and in *Chapter 9: Narrating Barsoom* of the **John Carter of Mars** core rulebook. If a narrator character suffers a complication, the players may choose to have the narrator remove 2 points of Threat from the pool. If multiple complications are generated, then those effects are resolved individually at the narrator's discretion, so some could be turned into Threat while others have an immediate effect. The players and narrator should agree together to determine what works best for them and the adventure.

Players may request that the narrator take the Threat instead of applying a complication (and similarly, the narrator can make the same request of their players for narrator characters), essentially buying off a complication.

## COMPLICATIONS

Even when a plan succeeds, everything doesn't always go smoothly. Characters are likely to face new problems and unexpected complications, despite everything going according to plan.

Whenever a result of 20 is rolled on any d20 in an attribute test, the narrator immediately creates an impediment or problem — called a **complication** — that is applied to the situation or the specific character that made the roll. One complication is created for each 20 rolled.

Complications are an inconvenient change of circumstances. A complication can present an obstacle to further progress, requiring a new approach (like a route of escape being blocked), a loss of personal resources (such as using up ammunition or medical supplies), or something that hinders the character temporarily (a dropped weapon, a social *faux pas*, or a stuck door). It does not represent an injury to the character, and is merely a temporary setback.

The important thing to remember is that a complication is an inconvenience, not a benefit nor a catastrophe. They make things more difficult, more interesting, but they do not seriously harm important characters or eliminate important opportunities. Complications are independent of success or failure, and it is entirely possible to succeed at an attribute test while simultaneously generating a complication. The complication should only take effect immediately after the attribute test's results have been applied. A character may become vulnerable when fighting but, if the attribute test succeeded, the attack still connects before the character suffers the complication.

When rolling multiple 20s, the character may suffer multiple complications. These can be resolved separately, or the narrator may choose to group them together into a bigger problem. If the target number for a test is 20 or greater, any roll of 20 is considered both

a success and a complication.

**Example:** Zala Zors' companion, Haran Phel, is crossing the desert with her. Haran's player rolls for a similar test, getting two successes, but one of the dice results is a 20. Haran still succeeds in his test, but the narrator determines that he will also suffer a complication. The narrator decides that Haran hurts his ankle trying to cross a rocky area in the desert. It doesn't do any damage, but it is awkward and causes him to walk more tenderly. The forced march does not harm Haran (because he succeeded the test), but he has a nagging ache and a bit of a limp (the 20 caused a complication). The narrator announces to Haran's player that any physical actions he attempts while suffering from the limp will have an additional level of difficulty.

## TEST DIFFICULTY

As already noted, the difficulty of an attribute test is a value from Simple (D0) to Epic (D5). This value is the minimum number of successes necessary to succeed at the test attempted. A Simple (D0) test requires no successes, and is the default difficulty for any test that a character can simply succeed at without any particular effort. A test with a difficulty of Epic (D5) is a virtually impossible task that only the most skilled and driven character can overcome.

The levels of difficulty, and examples of tasks for each level, are described in the sidebar.

## TEST DIFFICULTY EXAMPLES

### SIMPLE (D0) 0 Successes

- \* Opening a slightly stuck door.
- \* Researching a widely known subject.
- \* Hitting a stationary ranged target during rifle practice.

### AVERAGE (D1) 1 Success

- \* Overcoming a simple lock.
- \* Researching a specialist subject.
- \* Shooting an enemy within a weapon's range.

### CHALLENGING (D2) 2 Successes

- \* Overcoming a complex lock.
- \* Researching basic historical information.
- \* Shooting an enemy within a weapon's range in bad light.

### DAUNTING (D3) 3 Successes

- \* Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry.
- \* Researching obscure information.
- \* Shooting an enemy at Far range in poor light.

### DIRE (D4) 4 Successes

- \* Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry, without the proper tools.
- \* Researching historical information in a deserted ruin.
- \* Shooting an enemy at Far range, in poor light and heavy rain.

### EPIC (D5) 5 Successes

- \* Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry, without the proper tools, and in the middle of a battle.
- \* Researching historical information from the Time of Seas.
- \* Shooting an enemy at Too Far range in poor light and heavy rain.

## DIFFICULTY ZERO TESTS

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Some circumstances — as well as particular talents, items, and abilities — can reduce the difficulty of an attribute test, thus reducing the test's difficulty to Simple (D0). At other times, a test may be so easy and basic that it is not required in the first place. These are also Simple (D0) tests. If a test is Simple (D0), it is automatically successful with 0 successes, requires no effort whatsoever, and carries no risk of complications (see above). However, if a test is made, it can generate no Momentum — even bonus Momentum from talents, gear, or particularly advantageous situations.

In circumstances where something significant is at stake, or during a dramatic sequence of events, the narrator may require an attribute test even for a Simple (D0) task, representing a potentially unexpected outcome, even when all seems predictable and safe. This test takes the normal amount of time and generates Momentum as normal (since 0 successes are required to pass the test, every success generated is Momentum). Such a test also comes with the risk of complications.

## SETTING THE DIFFICULTY

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The narrator determines the difficulty level of a given test. Attribute tests in combat often have specific difficulty ratings, but these are baselines, and the narrator should feel free to alter any difficulties based on the situation at hand.

The narrator may often assume an attribute test starts at a difficulty of Average (D1). This represents fairly typical conditions for a task that isn't a guaranteed success, but is still quite straightforward to accomplish. If there are no other factors influencing a particular test, the narrator should leave the test at Average (D1).

However, a number of factors can

make an attribute test more or less difficult. The narrator should consider whether a given factor influences a particular attribute test.

**Example:** *Trying to patch up a severe wound might be a Challenging (D2) test normally, but trying to do it in the back of a wagon driven at full speed might increase the difficulty to Daunting (D3).*

The differences between the difficulty levels can be quite significant, and the highest difficulties can be extremely challenging, or even impossible. The narrator should keep this in mind when determining the difficulty of tests.

The following page gives a summary of a number of common sources of difficulty modifiers. Note that not all of these are likely to influence a given attribute test: some are more applicable than others depending on circumstances around the test.

## OPPOSED TESTS

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At times, rather than overcoming the challenges and difficulties posed by circumstances, a character may instead be forced to best an opponent directly (e.g. striking a defensive foe) or indirectly (multiple characters attempting to reach an object all at once). These situations are called **opposed tests**.

When two characters are in direct opposition to one another, each character involved in the task performs an attribute test related to that action. The character who gains the greatest quantity of Momentum succeeds, in achieving the goal or preventing the opponent from doing so. The Momentum gained by the victor is reduced by 1 point for each point of Momentum gained by the loser. In the case of a tie, the player character wins, unless the narrator spends 1 point of Threat. If two player characters or two narrator characters are tied, the narrator should randomly determine what breaks the tie, perhaps by comparing

the related attributes or simply rolling a die.

There are two roles in an opposed test, the **acting character** and the **defender**. An acting character is any character who is taking an action on their turn which is being impacted by the defending character. Defenders are limited in how they can spend Momentum after succeeding on a test. See *Counterstrike* on page 85. The acting character is not limited and can spend Momentum as they see fit.

**Example:** Volan Von is in hot pursuit, through the night time back alleys of Zodanga, of a rival spy who has stolen important artifacts from him. This sort of sustained pursuit is an opposed test. Volan's **Daring + Empathy** gives him a TN 10. The narrator determines that the spy's **Daring + Might** also gives him a TN of 10. Due to the chaotic nature of the alleys, darkness, and Volan's relative unfamiliarity with the area, it is a Challenging (D2) chase (the narrator combines the smaller complications into one step). Normally, the spy would have an easier time of it but, since he's constantly looking backwards to see where Volan is at, as well as lugging Volan's heavy satchel, the difficulty is the same Challenging (D2).

Each of them rolls. Through a combination of spent Momentum and other talents, Volan rolls 5d20, and gets results of 17, 1, 10, 10, and 12. The narrator throws the spy 2 points of Threat to add 2d20 to his roll (to make it a bit suspenseful), so the Zodangan spy rolls 4d20, with results of 10, 20, 8, and 6.

Volan gets a total of four successes (10, 10, and two from the 1). The spy is less fortunate, with only three successes (10, 8 and 6) and a complication. Both of them achieve their goal and do not trip, get lost, etc. But Volan is the clear winner of the opposed test. After the difficulty is met, Volan has 2 Momentum and the spy 1 Momentum from their individual tests. The spy's one Momentum is subtracted from Volan's two Momentum, giving Volan a total of one Momentum. Volan is now free to use the remaining Momentum

The narrator determines that the complication results in the spy inadvertently running down an alley and finding that the end has been bricked up recently... putting him in a dead-end, with the very person he stole from blocking the only way out.

The narrator asks Volan what he is going to do. Volan pulls a long knife from his belt and closes in on the trapped spy...

If there are no other factors involved, the difficulty of the opposed test is Simple (D0), or Average (D1) if making an attack or defending. However, some situations may mean that it is possible for one or both sides to simply fail without offering any opposition. These situations apply a difficulty to the tests attempted by the characters involved. If a character fails the test, the opposed test is automatically lost. If both characters fail, then neither achieves anything.

If either side has some circumstance which would make its test more challenging for them than for its opponent, then that side's difficulty increases as usual. As noted above, if one side fails the test outright and the other does not, then the failing character loses the opposed test.

Characters may spend Momentum or Luck points (see *Luck* on page 106), pay into the Threat pool (see *Threat* on page 87), or use any other means of gaining successes or extra Momentum to boost their chances on an opposed test.

Characters may also spend Momentum to perform a Counterstrike or seize the initiative (see page 85 and page 90 for details).

## DIFFICULTY MODIFIERS

### COMBINATIONS:

If there are multiple elements that individually are not enough to warrant a penalty, the combination of conditions can increase difficulty by one step.

### LIGHTING:

Dark conditions impose higher difficulties to observation tests and other tests reliant on sight. A bright, moonlit night may increase difficulty by one step, a cloudy night by two steps, and complete darkness by three steps. Extremely bright light, or moving from an area of darkness into bright light (or vice versa) can increase difficulty. Bright light can impose similar difficulty increases to stealth tests.

### DIFFICULT TERRAIN:

Slippery floors, sheer surfaces, deep snow, dense foliage, heaps of refuse, or even dense crowds all make movement-related tests more difficult. At the narrator's discretion, awkward terrain conditions can increase the difficulty of movement-related tests, or even require a test where none would normally be required.

### DISRUPTION OR DISTRACTION:

The interference of hostile creatures or characters may increase difficulty, depending on the severity of the interference.

### DISTANCE:

If an attribute test is applicable at a distance, every range category beyond Near increases difficulty by one step.

### EQUIPMENT:

A character performing a task without the proper tools increases the difficulty by one step. In some cases, performing an attribute test outside of a proper environment (a workshop, laboratory, archive, etc.) may increase the difficulty by one step. If failed, the test can be redone later in that environment.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE:

Any social test when a character does not speak the language fluently has the difficulty increased by one step.

### NOISE:

Loud noises can hinder a character's attempts to be heard or to hear other noises. Moderate noise (such as a crowd) increases difficulty by one step. Loud noise (an angry mob, a battle) increases difficulty by two steps.

### POOR WEATHER:

A character exposed to severe weather (wind, rain, snow, fog, etc.) may face an increase in difficulty by one step.

### RANDOM MOTION:

Strong winds, turbulence, and the like are often enough to hinder a test. Attribute tests relying on concentration or a controlled environment increase difficulty by one step when used in an unstable environment, such as a ship in turbulent air.

### SOCIAL FACTORS:

Social tests when interacting with a character who does not trust you, who is of a rival faction, or who thinks you have committed a slight or social *faux pas*, increase in difficulty by one or more steps, at the narrator's discretion.

### UNFAMILIARITY OR COMPLEXITY:

Performing complex or specialized tasks, or tasks in which the character has little experience, increases the difficulty. This is subject to narrator's discretion and varies by situation and conditions. For example, a village healer may have little experience with Zodangan poisons, while a Heliumite scientist may struggle when confronted with a text dealing with advanced fluid mechanics.

## VOLUNTARY FAILURE

There are situations where a player may feel it will be better or more dramatic to fail, rather than to get bonus dice by using Momentum or Luck, or adding to the Threat pool. This might be when an attribute test contradicts what a character might know, or where the difficulty level makes success unlikely. In such cases, the character may risk gaining complications when there is little-to-no chance of success.

A player may choose to have their character fail an attribute test, so long as there are meaningful consequences for failure (if being pursued, attempting to perform a complex task under pressure, avoiding an attack, etc.) and the narrator agrees to it. To voluntarily fail an attribute test, the player "pays" the narrator one point of Threat, as opposed to the 2+ Threat points potentially added by complications. In exchange, the character immediately gains one point of Luck (up to the normal maximum allowed). A character may *never* choose voluntary failure for a Simple (D0) attribute test.

*Luck points are discussed on page 106 of this chapter.*

## SUCCESS AT COST

There will be times when a failed attribute test may cause an interesting scene to grind to a halt, or the consequences of failure may not be particularly noteworthy. In such situations, the narrator may permit a character to succeed despite a failed attribute test, but at some additional cost.

In these cases, the character succeeds at the attempted task, but fails to prevent some additional problem from arising as well. The character immediately suffers 1 to 3 complications. It is up to the narrator to adjudicate the cost, but the guideline is one complication for most tests, and two complications for tests above Daunting (D3). These

complications are in addition to any generated by the test itself.

**Example:** If the character rolls a 20 on a failed Average (D1) test, and the narrator permits the character to succeed despite the failure, then the roll counts as generating two complications, one for the roll of 20 and one for being allowed to succeed at cost.

As normal with complications, the narrator determines the specific effect, including adding to Threat if appropriate.

Any success at cost is gained without Momentum, from any source, even bonus Momentum. The character only achieves the most basic level of success.

## ATTRIBUTE CHALLENGES

Attribute challenges are protracted tests that can be performed with multiple Conflict actions over multiple rounds. They represent detailed or complex actions that can't be confined to a simple roll, such as repairing a device or solving a complex puzzle. Each attribute challenge has both a difficulty and a threshold. Difficulty is the target difficulty that must be reached each round the test is attempted. Threshold is the total Momentum that must be accumulated to succeed in the complete test. For example, a difficulty 2, threshold 6 challenge requires a character to succeed on a number of difficulty 2 tests until they have accumulated a total of 6 Momentum. Failing a roll for an attribute challenge twice before the threshold is reached fails the test and brings whatever consequences of failure the action involves.

**Example:** *Captured by raiders and having just managed to escape his cell, Kale Singh seeks to sneak out of the villains' camp. The narrator runs this as an attribute challenge, informing Kale's player he will need to make a difficulty 2, threshold 8 chal-*



lenge using **Cunning + Empathy** to sneak through the camp while avoiding patrols and not alerting any guard beasts. The first turn Kale succeeds on his test, generating 3 Momentum. He fails the next test. On the third test he succeeds and generates another 2 Momentum, but sadly fails the fourth test. The narrator says that, with 5 Momentum out of a necessary 8, he is more than half way through the raider's camp before a guard spots him and raises the alarm, summoning more raiders to prevent his escape. Kale must now decide to run, fight, or surrender, but sneaking out is no longer an option.

## IMPROVING THE ODDS

While succeeding at most common tasks is a straightforward matter, even the most skilled character cannot succeed at difficult tasks without effort, opportunity, or assistance. To truly triumph, a character needs to find some other way of improving the odds.

There are a number of ways to succeed at difficulties beyond those granted by the default 2d20 roll and most provide additional d20s for an attribute test. Extra dice allow a character to score more successes and succeed at higher difficulties, or simply generate more Momentum. However, these extra dice always come at some sort of cost. The "payment option" a character chooses depends entirely upon what the player is willing and able to pay.

There are five different ways to improve the odds of success. These are described below and can be combined as desired. Regardless of the methods used, a character can never roll more than three additional d20s on any attribute test, limiting the total number of dice rolled to 5d20.

## CREATE OPPORTUNITY

The Momentum spend, *Create Opportunity* (see page 84), is a straightforward and effective way of obtaining additional dice. Each point of Momentum spent adds a single bonus d20 to an attribute test. This is simple and easy, but it requires that the player characters have Momentum to spend.

## ADDING THREAT

If there is insufficient Momentum available to spend on *Create Opportunity*, then a player has the option of adding to Threat. The end result is the same: each point of Threat the narrator gains is a single bonus d20 to an attribute test. This can be done at any time, but gives the narrator greater resources to empower narrator characters, or otherwise complicate the player characters' adventures.

In the narrator's case, when buying bonus d20s for narrator characters, these latter two options are identical. The narrator spends points of Threat to add bonus dice to a narrator character's attribute test.

## USING LUCK

From time to time, characters can turn to **Luck** to aid them. Each player character has a limited supply of Luck points that can be spent in a variety of advantageous ways. One of those ways is the addition of bonus dice. A single Luck point adds one bonus d20 to an attribute test. However, this bonus d20 is unlike other bonus d20s because it is "pre-rolled." Bonus d20s bought using Luck points are automatically assumed to have rolled a result of 1: when Luck is spent the player should place a d20 with a result of 1 displayed. For Challenging (D2) or Average (D1) tests this is usually enough to succeed: remember results under the character's weakest attribute count as two successes

If the character scores enough successes with d20s bought with Luck, the player may choose not to roll any other dice, and thus not risk potential complications. **Players can spend multiple Luck points on a single test, but these must be spent before any dice are rolled.** Dice bought with Luck count as part of the d20 pool, so if one or more Luck points are spent, the maximum number of dice is still limited to 5d20.

## TEAMWORK AND ASSISTANCE

**Assistance** differs from the other ways of improving the odds, because it does not add bonus dice directly, but allows other characters to contribute their efforts and skill to a test.

A number of tasks can benefit from the assistance of others. If the situation, time, and narrator allow, several characters can work together as a team when attempting to perform a task. When more than one character is involved in a task, a character is designated as the leader and the other characters are designated assistants. The narrator may decide that only a certain number of characters can assist — confined space may limit the number of people able to work together, for example — or can apply other limitations.

In order to assist with an attribute test, you must describe how your character is assisting the test's leader. If the narrator approves, each participating assistant rolls one d20 using the character's own attributes to determine if any successes are scored, with additional successes from Luck or other talents applied. The leader makes his attribute test as normal. Assistants may not use any means to roll additional dice, though the leader may use Momentum, Threat, Luck, or other methods of gaining extra d20s. Because assistant characters roll their own dice, they do not count towards the limit of three bonus d20s applied to a single test. However, any character providing assistance cannot do anything else while helping, because it takes time, concentration, and effort.

If the leader scores at least one success on the roll, any successes generated by the assistants are added to the leader's successes. If the leader does not generate any successes, then any successes from the assistants are lost and the effort fails utterly due to poor leadership and coordination.

Characters providing assistance do not have to use the same attributes as the leader: sometimes assistance is best provided with the contribution of outside knowledge and different training. Ultimately, the narrator decides whether a particular approach can be used to assist, and may require a player to explain how any assistance would work.

# MOMENTUM

When the number of successes scored on an attribute test is greater than the difficulty rating, the excess becomes Momentum. Momentum can be spent immediately to perform the given task more effectively, or it can be saved and applied to actions taken later.

Beyond serving as a reward for characters that succeed spectacularly well, Momentum represents the raw heroism or villainy of a character. Players are encouraged to be creative in their uses of Momentum, allowing them to build new successes upon the foundation of past victories. The narrator may require that players describe how they take advantage of Momentum that they have saved up but this shouldn't be a bludgeon to force a style of play. The purpose of any description is to add to the gaming experience, not penalize the shy.

## GENERATING MOMENTUM

As already noted, successes scored beyond the difficulty rating of an attribute test become Momentum. Each success scored above that minimum threshold becomes a single point of

Momentum. Characters can spend Momentum to achieve greater effects, obtain useful bonuses, or make future actions easier for themselves or their teammates. Momentum is never generated with a failed test, only when there are excess successes beyond those required by the difficulty.

**Example:** Haran Phel is trying to scale a cliff quickly in pursuit of an assassin. The test is Challenging (D2) and Phel generates four successes with his roll, two more successes than he needed for the test. These extra successes translate into 2 Momentum, one for each extra success.

Upon succeeding at an attribute test, the player should take note of the amount of Momentum generated. Those points can then be used while the character resolves the current test, or saved for future use as described later. Importantly, the player does not have to determine what the Momentum will be used for at this point. A player determines what Momentum is used for only when it is spent.

Some talents, items, and circumstances grant bonus Momentum, which is added to the total Momentum generated by a successful attribute test. The bonus Momentum doesn't come into existence until after the test is successful.

## SPENDING MOMENTUM

Often, a character will spend some or all of the Momentum generated to benefit the test currently being attempted.

**Example:** A character attacking an opponent may spend Momentum to increase the amount of damage inflicted.

As noted before, the player does not have to declare what Momentum is being used for until it is spent, and does not need to spend Momentum in advance to obtain effects later.

*Continuing from the prior example, an*

### MOMENTUM AND NARRATIVE

Momentum evokes the heroic, scientific romance of Barsoom and John Carter. Carter often finds that one success leads to another, allowing him to achieve incredible, sometimes next-to-impossible feats. However, Carter also finds himself trapped by circumstance, an indicator that Threat is ever-present, a force challenging him to his utmost as he strives to succeed.

*attacking character doesn't need to spend Momentum to increase the amount of damage inflicted until after the damage roll.*

Momentum spends can be made as soon as the need for them becomes apparent. Momentum is *always* useful; there is no chance of wasting Momentum by spending it on a benefit that isn't needed.

Most Momentum spends can only be used once on any given attribute test or effect. In action scenes (*described later in the Action Scenes section*), a character can only use Momentum once in any round. However, some Momentum spends are described as **repeatable**. This means they can be used as frequently as the character has the desire and Momentum to spend.

Once the character's test is resolved (or in an action scene, at the end of the turn), any unspent Momentum is lost. However, characters have the option to save Momentum for later use if they wish.

## SAVING MOMENTUM

As noted above, players have the option of saving Momentum rather than letting unspent Momentum go to waste. This saved Momentum goes into a personal pool. This pool represents the benefits of success, new opportunities created by their daring actions, good fortune favoring the bold and heroic, and even good old fashioned dramatic license.

**The maximum amount of Momentum that can be saved in a pool is equal to the owning character's lowest attribute.** Any points of excess Momentum are discarded. With the narrator's permission, players can contribute Momentum to a fellow player's pool, but the total still cannot exceed the character's lowest attribute.

During any successful attribute test, the owner may draw as many points from their Momentum pool as desired, adding those points to any points generated on the attribute test. The player may subsequently spend that Momentum as desired, just if it had been generated from the attribute test. As normal, Momentum is only spent as needed; a character does not have to use Momentum from the pool until it is actually needed, and it does not need to be all used at once, though all points of Momentum spent on a specific roll must be spent when it is made.

At the end of each scene, or full round in an action scene, each character loses 1 Momentum from their pool, representing the cooling of tempers, the waning of enthusiasm, and loss of energy.

## MOMENTUM OUTSIDE OF TESTS

Some Momentum spends are not tied to a specific test and can be used freely as they are required.

Players can spend points from their Momentum pools at any time, as long as the narrator deems that its use is justified and reasonable for the circumstance. Some Momentum spends have restrictions on how or when they can be used, but those are specific to those individual spends.

Momentum spends that are used in this way can also be paid for with Threat, which will be described later. A single point of Threat paid to the narrator provides the same benefits as a single point of Momentum being spent. When paying for a Momentum spend, you can pay partly in Threat and partly in Momentum if you desire.

## NARRATOR CHARACTERS AND MOMENTUM

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Unlike player characters, narrator characters do not have the option of saving Momentum into a pool. Instead, any narrator character that concludes a test with Momentum left over can add a certain amount of Momentum to the Threat pool depending on their narrator character classification. Each point of Momentum becomes one point of Threat. Villain class characters can add to the Threat pool up to their lowest attribute. Monsters can add Threat to the pool based on their menace rating. Minions can only ever add 1 Threat.

Narrator characters can spend from the Threat pool just as player characters draw from their Momentum pools. The Threat pool is described on *page 87* and in

*Chapter 12: Narrating Barsoom* in the **John Carter of Mars** core rulebook.





## COMMON USES FOR MOMENTUM

The most common uses for Momentum are listed on these pages with a summary table on page 86. Players are also encouraged to be creative in their use of Momentum. An exceptional success should spur a player to think outside of the box in terms of how that superb performance can be reflected, in the result of the immediate test, or in how the outcome of that test impacts what happens next.

Regardless of how it is used, the benefits of Momentum spends must make sense from the perspective of the characters, and the narrator can veto Momentum spends that do not support events during in the course of play. Players should not use Momentum spends to take advantage of information their characters would not know, and they should not use Momentum to create events or circumstances that are distracting (or annoying) to other players.

**Repeatable** spends can be made as many times as desired, so long as the Momentum is available. **Often repeatable** spends are based on the circumstances and are subject to the narrator's discretion, meaning that in some situations they are repeatable and others they might not be. Most uses of Momentum are also immediate, and any Momentum earned can be spent as soon as it is earned to generate an effect. Momentum cannot be used to alter the dice result of a test that generated it.

*Example: Kale Singh is scaling the side of a tower to reach a kidnapped companion. His test to climb the sheer wall generates 4 Momentum. Kale can use his Momentum immediately, either to make it harder to scale the tower for the Okar warriors climbing up after him, climb quicker himself or some other similar great effect, or to notice important details about the tower and its surroundings. However, he cannot spend this Momentum to retroactively add more dice to the test he just made: that opportunity has gone.*

The use of Momentum in combat (and other dramatic conflicts) are explored in detail under *Actions and Attacks* page 98.

### CREATE OPPORTUNITY (REPEATABLE)

The most straightforward use of Momentum is to add an additional d20 to an attribute test, with each point of Momentum spent granting a single bonus d20. The decision to purchase these bonus dice *must* be made *before* any dice are rolled on that test. As noted, no more than three bonus d20s may be added to a single attribute test.

### CREATE OBSTACLE (REPEATABLE)

A character can choose to make things more difficult for a rival, adversary, or opponent by creating problems, distractions, or more direct opposition. This increases the difficulty of a single attribute test for that rival by one step per 2 points of Momentum spent. It costs two points of Momentum to increase the difficulty of a test by one step, four points of Momentum for a second step, and six points of Momentum for the third step. No individual test can have its difficulty increased by more than three steps in this way. The increase is only for a single test, regardless of whether that test is passed or failed. The decision to increase a test's difficulty must be made before any dice are rolled.



## COUNTERSTRIKE

A character can spend 3 Momentum after they have defended during an opposed test. This grants the defender an immediate Conflict action. The character can perform any action as if it were their turn, but cannot save or donate any Momentum gained during this action. The character taking the Counterstrike can only use a Conflict action against the character who initiated the original opposed test but can use the Counterstrike to move, speak, or make regular tests that are not opposed.

Characters defend against a Counterstrike as normal but cannot Counterstrike against a Counterstrike. Once the Counterstrike has been defended against and resolved, initiative passes to the next character.

## OBTAIN INFORMATION (REPEATABLE)

Momentum allows a character to learn more about a situation. Each point of Momentum spent can be used to ask the narrator a single question about the current situation, item, object, structure, creature, or character present in (or relevant to) the scene at hand. The narrator must answer this question truthfully, but the narrator does not have to give complete information. A partial or brief answer that leaves room for further questions is a common response. The information provided must be relevant to the attribute test being attempted, and it must be the kind of information that a character might uncover while performing the attribute test. A character shooting a rifle might discern general details about a scene, a swordsman might rip away part of a disguise in a fight, a character in mid jump might leap over a discovery, etc. The more Momentum spent, the more in-depth the information uncovered.

## IMPROVE QUALITY OF SUCCESS (OFTEN REPEATABLE)

Momentum allows a character to succeed stylishly and to immediately capitalize upon or follow up on a success. The effects and cost of this are broadly left to the narrator's discretion, but examples are described later. Some uses of this type of Momentum spend may be repeatable, such as inflicting more damage or helping a patient recover from serious injuries.

## INCREASE SCOPE OF SUCCESS (OFTEN REPEATABLE)

With Momentum, a character can affect additional targets, increase the area affected by a successful test, or otherwise improve an accomplishment. The precise effects and cost are left to the narrator. Under some circumstances, this spend may be repeatable, such as a swordsman cutting down multiple weak foes.

## REDUCE TIME REQUIRED

The narrator reduces the amount of in-game time that a task requires to complete. A task that should take a whole day or several zodes may now only take a single zode, for example. The precise effects and cost are left to the narrator's discretion. In some cases, multiple uses of Momentum may be allowed to reduce further the time of a lengthy action.

## COMMON USES FOR MOMENTUM

MOMENTUM SPEND	EFFECT
<b>Create Opportunity</b>	For each Momentum spend, roll an additional d20 for test. You must spend Momentum before you roll.
<b>Create Obstacle</b>	For each 2 Momentum spent, increase difficulty of another character's action by 1. Cannot increase difficulty more than 3 steps.
<b>Counterstrike</b>	Spend 3 Momentum after defending in an opposed test to immediately take a Conflict action against the other character in an opposed test. You cannot Counterstrike a Counterstrike.
<b>Obtain Information</b>	Spend 1 Momentum to ask 1 simple question about a character, situation, or scene. Narrator must answer truthfully.
<b>Increase Quality of Success</b>	Make effect of success more dramatic or useful. Cost often varies with type and amount increase.
<b>Increase Scope of Success</b>	Make effect of success affect more characters or a wider area. Cost often varies depending on how much the scope increases.
<b>Reduce Time Required</b>	Reduce normal time needed to accomplish a task. Cost varies based on circumstances and length of time reduced.



# THREAT

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## USING THREAT

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In most cases, Threat is used in a similar way to Momentum, both by narrator characters and player characters. When a character uses Momentum on a test, they can spend Threat instead.

**Example:** Jack is running a game of *John Carter* and wishes to give his main antagonist, a villainous jeddak, a boost to an attack. He spends 2 Threat to give the villain a bonus of 2d20 on their next attack as the evil jeddak takes aim at one of the player characters and presses the trigger of his pistol...

Threat is also used identically to Momentum if a particular talent requires a Momentum spend. The major difference in Threat is not how it's used, but where it comes from and how it is generated.

## THE THREAT POOL

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Threat comes from the Threat pool and all narrator characters draw from Threat instead of a personal Momentum pool. Threat is generally spent the same as Momentum from the pool, it is simply shared by all narrator characters. When Threat is spent, the pool is reduced by the amount spent until more Threat is generated and added to the Threat pool.

**Example:** Jack needs 2 Momentum to fuel a talent of a villainous henchman in his campaign. The henchman, being a narrator character, does not have their own Momentum pool and instead uses Threat as Momentum. As the Threat pool currently has six Threat in it, Jack removes two and uses them as Momentum for the henchman's talent. The current Threat pool is now four (6 minus the 2 used as Momentum).

Threat is also spent to win ties on tests. Normally a player character wins ties in a contest but a narrator may spend 1 Threat to have a narrator character win instead. Advice on how to best use the Threat pool is found in *Chapter 12: Narrators of Mars* in the **John Carter of Mars** core rulebook, including some special uses for Threat only narrators may use, such as using it to create additional characters or dangers for the player characters to face.

## GENERATING THREAT

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There are many ways to generate Threat. The narrator begins each session with a Threat pool equal to the total number of Luck points (see *Luck on page 106*) of all the player characters. If a player uses Threat as Momentum for their characters, this amount is also added to the narrator's Threat pool. The narrator may also add 2 points of Threat to the Threat pool instead of creating a complication.

## LOSING THREAT

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Threat is used as it is spent from the Threat pool. It is also lost when a narrator character suffers a complication and the player whose character caused the complication decides to remove 2 Threat from the pool instead.

## OPTIONAL RULE: GIVING ALLIES MOMENTUM

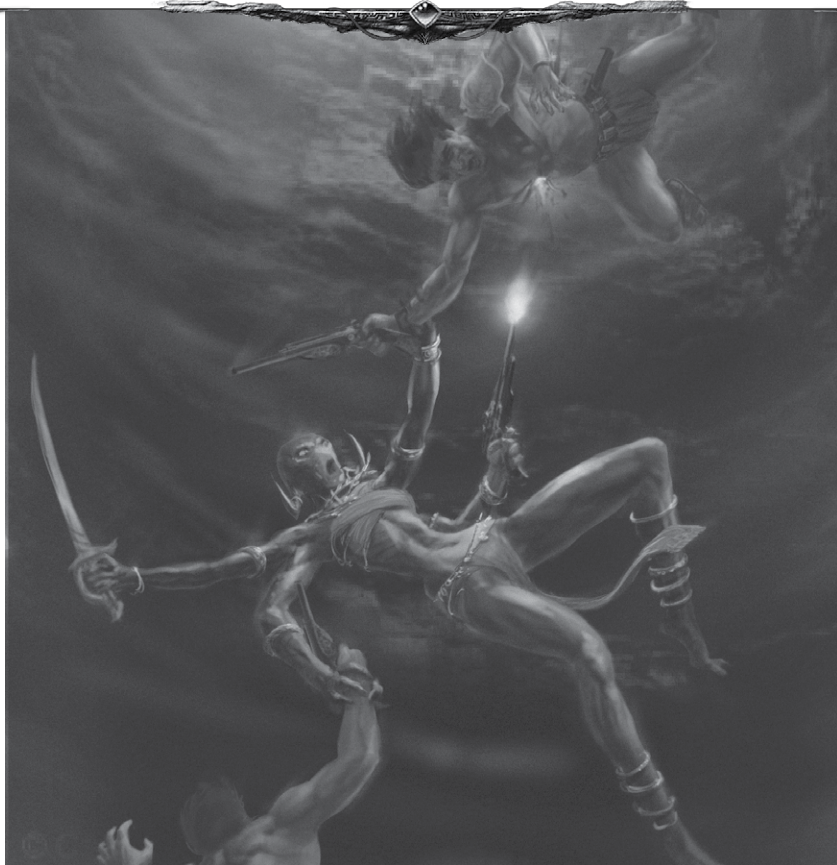
While all narrator characters draw from the Threat pool, in some cases player characters might wish to give some narrator character allies a boost when the narrator is disinclined to do so because Threat is needed to help the actions of antagonists. If this happens, narrators may consider using this optional rule: player characters may gift Momentum to narrator characters by paying 1 extra Momentum over the amount given to the target character. This Momentum does not increase the Threat pool and cannot be used by other narrator characters. Narrator characters cannot receive more Momentum than the value of their lowest attribute.

This rule is optional because, while a useful way to simulate player characters inspiring and leading allied narrator characters to victory and glory, it also increases bookkeeping. It should only be used by groups ready to track individual Momentum for characters. This option

also eliminates any possibility that narrator allies performing exceptionally well in a scene will increase the Threat pool as a side effect. Whether this is a "bug" or "feature" depends on how individual narrators view scenes where narrator characters temporarily move into the spotlight through their actions.

A narrator might also link this ability to talents, only allowing characters who possess a Momentum-sharing talent to gift Momentum. Such a talent would typically allow 1 Momentum to be gifted to an ally per grade of the talent, though limitations on usage might reduce the overall grade cost.

This option is much easier to control, though narrators who use it should take care to make sure player characters receive ample opportunities to use such a talent. Otherwise, it's a waste of grades that could be used elsewhere.



# ACTION SCENES

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Armed combat and violent encounters are the most dangerous and engaging part of adventuring in Barsoom. Amidst the din and chaos of combat, it is vitally important for players and narrator alike to clearly understand what is happening, so they can make important decisions about what characters will attempt. These dramatic encounters are called **action scenes**, and this section addresses the way they are handled, introducing the use of zones for movement and range purposes, the structure of turns and actions, the actions characters can undertake, and the ways characters are harmed or recover from harm.

## TURN SEQUENCE

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In an action scene, the passage of time is compressed and structured into individual rounds and turns. Every round, any character present in the scene has an opportunity to act. This opportunity is known as the character's turn. Each round encompasses several characters' turns and, once all characters have taken a turn, that round concludes and a new round begins.

Rounds have no specific or fixed duration. They do not represent a specific, consistent length of time but rather a snapshot of the intense activity occurring over a period of time. In a furious clash between small groups of warriors, a round may represent a few seconds. A battle across a massive castle may require rounds comprising a minute or more, as the combatants jockey for position within the environment. A battle between ships in the skies of Barsoom may track several minutes of time between rounds as vessels maneuver for position.

Regardless of how much time a round may represent, each character takes a single turn during each round. During a character's turn, the character has a number of options in the form of different actions to perform. During a round, a character can perform each of the following: a single Conflict action, a Movement action, and any number of Spoken actions. The character may exchange a Conflict action for a Movement action and/or a Movement action for a Spoken action. Outside of the character's turn, a character can defend in an opposed test and make a Counterstrike if they can pay the Momentum but no other actions are allowed.

## TURN ORDER

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During a round, the order in which characters act is important, as actions may change based on what transpires with each turn, creating new opportunities for action and forcing re-evaluation of plans based on the outcome of prior actions. Normally, a player character acts first each round. This character begins the turn and must resolve all the actions they wish to make before another character can act. Play then passes to a new player character, who performs all their actions for the turn. Once all the player characters have taken their turns, all the narrator characters take their turns.

After all player and narrator characters have taken their actions in a round, that round is over. One point of Momentum is removed from each player's Momentum pool and a new round begins.



## DETERMINING TURN ORDER

There are four methods of determining turn order. None are better than any others; they simply appeal to different groups and play styles.

1. **Narrator determines order:** The narrator determines who goes first, second, etc. in the turn based on what makes the most sense in the current situation. If the scene continues after this turn, the player character who went last in the turn goes first next turn.
2. **Players determine order:** The players vote or otherwise choose who goes first among them and then the active player chooses who goes next. If the scene continues after this turn, the player who went last has the option of going first next turn.
3. **Attribute determines order:** The narrator picks an attribute that is important to the current scene and characters take turn in descending order based on attribute values. For added flair, narrators can announce this by labeling the scene with the attribute (“This is a time for Daring action” or “In this encounter Might makes right!”) but this isn’t required.
4. **Randomly determined order:** Each player rolls a d20 for their character and they take their turns in descending order based on the die result, starting with the player who rolled the highest. Narrators may allow characters to spend Momentum to roll extra d20s, but this may be of limited utility as typically all the player characters go before the narrator.

Once a method of determining turn order is chosen the narrator and players should stick with it. If their chosen method isn’t working out, it is recommended they change it at the start of a new adventure or arc in the campaign when all current players are present to avoid confusion.

## SEIZING INITIATIVE

At the start of the round before anyone has acted, or at any time immediately after a player character has finished acting (and before another player character has begun to act this turn), the narrator can spend 1 point of Threat to interrupt the player characters’ turns. This allows a narrator character to immediately take a turn.

The narrator character’s actions are resolved normally, and once finished, the turn order passes back to the player characters, unless additional points of Threat are spent to allow other narrator characters to take their actions before the player characters. Any narrator characters acting out of order like this do not get to act again that round.

## INDECISION

If the players spend too much time deliberating and discussing their choices during an action scene rather than taking action, the narrator can add 1 point of Threat to the Threat pool as a warning that the player characters are wasting time and giving the initiative to their opponents.

If the players’ deliberation continues, the narrator can add additional Threat points, warning the players this is happening, until the narrator chooses to spend the Threat, allowing any narrator characters to act first.



## SURPRISE AND AMBUSHES

Sometimes, one group of combatants may try to surprise or ambush another group. If one group has sufficient time to hide, set up an ambush, or otherwise prepare themselves to attack an unwitting foe, then they may attempt an opposed test (*see page 75*) to gain an advantage. Each side nominates a leader to attempt an attribute test (*see below*). Other members of the group may assist this test as normal, as they either contribute to preparations or simply provide extra eyes and ears.

Under most circumstances, the ambushing side attempts a **Cunning + Empathy** test which the ambushed side opposes by attempting an **Empathy + Reason** test. However, the players and narrator are free to suggest alternative ways to secure surprise. Perhaps a sudden attack during a negotiation could be handled by **Cunning + Passion**, opposed by **Empathy + Reason**. The feasibility of these is up to the narrator.

If the group attempting to gain surprise succeeds at the opposed test, every character on that side gains 1 Momentum and acts immediately at the start of combat. Narrator characters do not need to spend Threat to gain this, nor should the narrator spend Threat to override this.

If the player characters attempting to gain surprise fail at the opposed test, they may choose to add two points to Threat or spend one Luck point (for the whole group) to gain surprise instead.

## MOVEMENT, RANGE, AND ABSTRACT ZONES

In battle, knowing where everyone is, is of vital importance and determining both absolute position (where you are on the battlefield) and relative position (how far you are from a given friend or foe) is important. Rather than track everything in precise distances, this matter is handled using abstract **zones**.

An environment represents the battlefield as a whole. This may be a building, a city street, an area of wilderness, or the deck of an airship. An environment is divided into a number of zones based on the terrain features present in the area. A building may treat individual rooms as distinct zones, using the internal walls as natural divisions for range and movement. A city street may focus zones around features like shop stalls, the fronts of buildings, alleyways, and so forth.

Zones can be defined in three dimensions, so the narrator may choose to map multiple floors of a building connected by stairs, ramps, or ladders. A relatively simple battlefield may consist of three to five significant zones, while complex environments may have many. More zones are typically better than fewer, as they provide greater movement options and tactical opportunities, but this takes more planning on the part of the narrator.

Because zones are of no fixed size, they can vary to accommodate the narrator's needs for a given scene, and to represent other factors. For example, a battle in a twisting canyon may be divided into many small zones amongst the rocks, and a couple of larger zones representing long stretches of clear ground. The larger size of the zone helps convey quick movement and easy target acquisition in open areas. However, zones should not be too complex to describe quickly: in most situations, a few seconds should be all that's needed to describe zones and their relative

positions, or to sketch out a rough map on paper. This does not prevent the narrator coming up with elaborate environments. Locations that will be used frequently, or those that are especially important to key moments in an adventure or a campaign, might require additional time to map.

Individual zones can have terrain effects defined when the narrator creates them. This may be as simple as declaring them to be difficult terrain, but the narrator is welcome to devise other terrain items such as interactive objects, dangers to overcome, or even terrain that changes under particular circumstances. Some zones may be defined more by the absence of terrain than its presence, and a few empty zones between obstacles enhances some environments.

Narrators that desire concrete values rather than abstract ranges are encouraged to set specific sizes and shapes for individual zones, effectively turning them into a large grid.

## MINIATURES

*John Carter* doesn't require the use of miniatures, but miniatures can add to everyone's enjoyment and understanding of the action. The narrator may often employ sketch maps or even pre-made map tiles in order to depict an area and denote different zones. In these cases, counters or markers representing each character can be a useful reminder of where everyone is. Miniatures are, of course, a more elaborate form of counters or markers for this purpose. Modiphilus manufactures a range of high quality *John Carter* miniatures for the game.

## CHARACTERS AND ZONES

To help players visualize their characters' positions in an encounter, and to manage action scenes effectively, it is important to keep track of where characters are at any given moment. This should be relatively easy in most cases. As zones are defined by the terrain and surroundings, tracking a character can be a matter of simple description. An enemy might be "behind the bar" or "standing in front of the high altar." This has the advantage of relying on natural language and intuitive concepts, rather than game terms. It likewise avoids the need to track distances without miniatures when there are a lot of characters present.

Larger or particularly complex scenes can be tricky to track purely by memory, so the narrator may wish to use something extra to show everyone's position in a scene. If you're already using a sketched map, then marking character positions in pencil is one approach, as is using tokens or miniatures, and then moving them around as required.

## DISTANCES

Movement and ranged attacks need some sense of distance to make them meaningful. In combat, the relative proximity of zones determines this distance. To keep things simple and fluid, range is measured with four categories and one state. Most conflicts take place at **Near** and **Immediate** ranges. It is both noteworthy and significant when characters are **Far** or **Too Far** as many interactions with them require other actions to set up.

- ✱ The state of **Immediate** is when an object or character is within arm's length of the acting character. Characters enter Immediate range to interact with objects manually, to attack in close combat, and to

## DISTANCE AND COMMUNICATION

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perform any other actions where they may need to touch the target or subject of their action. Immediate isn't a specific range, but rather is something that the player can declare when the character is moving. That is, when a character moves into or within a zone, the player may freely declare that the character is moving into Immediate contact with an object or another character.

- ✱ **Near:** Not immediately adjacent to but close enough to reach a target fairly easily. Characters can shoot at, speak with, and generally interact with anyone Near. Some creatures are big and fast enough to be able to treat Near as Immediate for making melee attacks. Generally, characters who are not being hindered, blocked, or obstructed can move into Immediate state to attack a target in melee while they are already Near.
- ✱ **Away:** Away distances place a target apart from others. This includes both long distance and closer places that can only be reached by dramatic actions such as leaping and climbing. Thus, the other side of a small valley might be Away, but so would a high cliff or a nearby airship with fifty sofads of Martian sky between it and a character.
- ✱ **Far:** Reachable only by the most long-distance attacks or methods of interaction. Most firearms have a range of Far, and this generally covers the furthest a character can see.
- ✱ **Too Far:** Targets that are Too Far may be visible or otherwise detectable, but they are beyond the ability to interact with physically. Communication requires special technology.

Characters often want to communicate during an action scene. Calls for help, battle-cries, derisive slurs, and other dialogue abound in action scenes adding tactics and flavor. In most cases, characters can converse normally with anyone Near to them. They're considered close enough to one another to be heard and to make themselves understood without raising their voices.

A character can communicate with someone at Far range but only by shouting, rather than talking. At greater distances, a character can shout to draw attention, but conveying any depth of meaning, or understanding anything beyond basic instructions or information, is unlikely.

## DISTANCE AND PERCEPTION

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The further away something is, the harder it is to notice. In game terms, this means that characters and objects in distant zones are harder to observe or identify than those nearby. A character increases the difficulty of tests by one step when trying to notice creatures and objects at Away range, by two steps when dealing with creatures and objects at Far range, and by three steps when trying to discern things at Too Far. A creature that isn't trying to avoid notice requires a Simple (D0) test under normal circumstances. A creature attempting to hide makes the test more challenging by making the test an opposed test. Creatures or objects that are particularly noticeable — a flier, roaring beasts, or a fast-moving or brightly-colored object — may reduce the difficulty.

## OTHER SENSES

Broadly speaking, sight and hearing define the majority of character perception and are the senses dealt with most frequently here. However, at times, other senses come into play. Naturally, a character's sense of touch is limited to the Immediate state. The sense of smell is most effective for character within the Immediate state, and tests made to smell something at a greater distance increase in difficulty by one step,

plus one step for each range category beyond Near.

Non-human characters and creatures may have different limits and capabilities when using their senses.

**Example:** *A white ape is able to discern details by scent that a human cannot, but its eyesight may be somewhat less acute by comparison.*

Such creatures often have talents to reduce the difficulty of all tests related to their best sense.

## EXAMPLE TERRAIN AND DANGERS

Generally, when a character takes a move action while in, or crossing, particular terrain, this penalty is taken to all actions during their turn that would be hindered. The exception to this is defensive actions.

It is assumed that, where possible, characters are taking cover and so, while there is no additional mechanism for cover, there are also no penalties applied to defenses.

TERRAIN	DIFFICULTY / DIFFICULTY INCREASE
City street or Martian Sands	0
The rocky wastes	1
Spires and Mountainside	2
Sandstorm	3

DANGER	DAMAGE
1 Floor fall	1
2 Floor fall	2
3 Floor fall	3
Hard Martian sand / Beach of small rocks	n/a
Needle like spines	+1
Cooling Lava	+2
Next to Bubbling lava	+4
Into the Caldera of an active volcano	+10

# MOVEMENT AND TERRAIN

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Under normal circumstances, moving around does not need an attribute test. Moving to anywhere within Near range is only a Free action. Moving to anywhere within Away range takes a Movement action. Moving to anywhere within Far range takes a Conflict action, which adds +1 to the difficulty of all tests until the start of the character's next turn, including tests to traverse difficult terrain.

However, movement in some circumstances may require a test to be made. This is an attribute test, typically using **Daring** for characters and creatures, though unusual terrain may require **Might** or **Reason**. A situation may allow multiple variations depending on how the character attempts to traverse the terrain. If movement requires an attribute test with a difficulty of Average (D1) or higher, then it cannot be performed as a Free action even if the movement is only within Near range. **Under no circumstances can an attribute test be attempted as a Free action.**

Circumstances that require a test are one of three types: obstacles, hindrances, and dangers.

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## OBSTACLES

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Obstacles exist at the places where two zones meet, impairing efforts to move between those zones. Not every zone intersection must include an obstacle, however. Climbable walls and fences, ladders, and similar barriers can all be obstacles. Attempting to bypass an obstacle requires an attribute test, normally with an Average (D1) difficulty. Particularly large obstacles may increase this, while straightforward and simple obstructions might reduce this to Simple (D0), or no challenge whatsoever to move across. Failing this test prevents the character from moving across the obstacle. Some obstacles may only require a test in a single direction, or may require different difficulties in different directions.

**Example:** *A slope that is more difficult to ascend than to descend would have differing difficulties based on the character's direction of travel.*

Some obstacles are impassable, preventing any movement between zones the obstacle borders. The internal walls of a building are a good example, as they cannot be climbed over. There should normally be a way around an obstacle, such as a doorway, or a weak point where sufficient force could break through.

## HINDRANCES

Hindrances affect entire zones, slowing movement within them. A character moving within or through a hindered zone must either give up a portion of that movement (moving one fewer zone than normal with an action) or attempt a test, with failure meaning that the character stops moving within the hindering terrain. The test is normally Average (D1), but some terrain may require a more difficult test. Less-troublesome hindrances may only require a Simple (D0) test. Areas of quicksand or broken ground can be considered hindrances.

## DANGERS

Dangers function in the same way as obstacles or hindrances, but with one significant difference: they cause damage after a failed test. In addition to being difficult, each danger has a rating equal to the number of combat dice the danger rolls if a character fails to cross it safely.

**Example:** *Jack has created a danger for an upcoming adventure in the form of an area of loose sand where vibrations can set off explosive gas pockets hidden below the surface. He decides that walking carefully (or running so quickly you outrace the explosions) is a Challenging (D2) test with a danger rating of 3. If a character fails to overcome the danger, they will take 3 of damage — equal to the rating of the danger.*

## FALLING

A rather common form of danger is falling. The distance a character falls determines how much damage is inflicted. Falling inflicts damage to the Injury stress tracker. Falling a Near distance inflicts 1. Falling an Away distance inflicts 2. Falling a Far distance inflicts 4. Falling a Too Far distance inflicts 8 in Injury. A falling character may suffer different damage should they fall on something other than the usual hard sand of Barsoom.

## WHAT ABOUT COVER?

**John Carter** specifically avoids the idea of cover. Cover is factored into the damage system. While characters are expected to take cover when under attack, there is no special benefit for this universal activity, nor is there any penalty.

Characters who reasonably have some way to lessen their fall can attempt an Average (D1) **Might + Daring** test (plus 1 for every category of range beyond Near). Success avoids 1 of damage. Momentum can be spent to reduce the damage further at the cost of 2 Momentum per combat die not rolled.

## OTHER FORMS OF MOVEMENT

In general, different forms of movement are treated the same. Each is a means of crossing particular types of terrain or obstacles.

## CLIMBING

Climbing is any movement where a character traverses a steep slope or sheer vertical surface. These are normally obstacles such as walls, cliffs, and similar barriers, but some situations may have whole zones where climbing is the only way to move around. Climbing movement requires a test using **Daring + Might**. The more challenging the climb, the higher the difficulty. A rough cliff face with plentiful handholds has a difficulty of Challenging (D2), as does a moderately steep slope that requires some effort to climb. Attempting to climb a vertical surface without tools like rope, hooks, and so forth increases the difficulty by one step. Attempting to climb upside down across a horizontal surface, such as a ceiling, increases the difficulty by two steps.



## JUMPING

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Jumping is any movement across a gap or space, a controlled drop down to a space below, or movement in an attempt to reach something above. Jumping also uses **Daring + Might**, and it can be used in a variety of ways. Jumping across a small gap or over a small barrier counting as an obstacle is an Average (D1) **Daring + Might** test. Jumping down from a height uses the same rules as falling but reduces the difficulty of the attribute test by one step to Simple (D0). Jumping up to grasp something within the character's **Immediate** range is an Average (D1) **Daring + Might** test, increasing in difficulty to reflect the height jumped.

## SWIMMING

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Swimming is movement through a body of water and is defined in game terms as one or more zones of hindering terrain (creating the hindered condition on the character, described on *page 97*). Swimming is the only way to traverse zones filled with water, using **Daring + Might** for tests. The rougher the water being crossed, the greater the difficulty, with calm water requiring an Average (D1) **Daring + Might** test to cross quickly. Treading water requires a Simple (D0) **Daring + Might** test.

## FLIGHT

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Flight is movement through the air. Only creatures specifically noted as capable of flight are able to fly. A creature capable of flight can move freely through any zone (above the ground), including through zones that are normally inaccessible. Flying creatures don't suffer the effects of difficult terrain, though tall structures (such as the tops of buildings) can serve as obstacles, and strong winds can be hindrances. Particularly stormy weather might well count as a danger, as strong winds and lightning are risks for high-flying creatures.

## OTHER ZONE ITEMS

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Other than terrain, there are other things that might be present in a zone. A zone can contain a variety of objects that the characters can interact with. These are described below.

## INTERACTIVE OBJECTS

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Interactive objects are any object or terrain feature that a character could conceivably alter or use. Doors and windows are a common example, as are light sources, traps, and the like. Interacting with these objects may take time and effort depending on the circumstances. A Free action can be used to interact with an object, as long as it does not require an attribute test to do so.



# ACTIONS AND ATTACKS

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There are four forms of actions in use during an action scene: Spoken actions, Movement actions, Conflict actions and Free actions. As part of a normal turn, a character can preform a single Conflict action, a Movement action, a Spoken action, and a number of Free actions (if the narrator considers them relevant and appropriate). The character may exchange a Conflict action for a Movement action and/or a Movement action for any number of Spoken actions.

Outside of the turn sequence, a character can attempt Counterstrikes after an opposed test. Actions can be taken in any order, but all actions must be declared before each is resolved, and the narrator has the final decision as to whether a particular combination of actions is possible.

## SPOKEN ACTION

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A Spoken action is any use of simple speech requiring little or no effort to accomplish. A Spoken action never includes an attribute test where dice are rolled. If speech of any kind requires an attribute test, it is a Conflict action. In a character's turn, they can say a short comment to one character or a single sentence to multiple characters. The narrator has full discretion as to when a Spoken action becomes a Conflict action even if no test is needed. It's a Spoken action that allows a character to make a memorable quip as they strike an opponent.

## MOVEMENT ACTIONS

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A character can move to any point within Away range as a Movement action. **John Carter** is a world of derring-do and acrobatic motion. As such, characters are rarely in a position where they cannot move. Movement actions include everything from climbing to

piloting a flier. Movement actions do not require attribute tests unless there is a danger to avoid and they often add a swashbuckling element to a Conflict action. It is the Movement action that allows a character to swing on a chandelier as they attack an opponent.

## CONFLICT ACTIONS

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Conflict actions are the focus of action scenes and take up most of a character's attention and effort. Most Conflict actions require an attribute test. A character can normally perform one Conflict action per turn, but there are ways a character can perform a second Conflict action. Regardless of the method used, however, a character cannot take more than two Conflict actions each turn.

The following list describes the various ways characters can gain an extra Conflict action per turn.

- ✧ **Luck Points.** A player may spend a Luck point to allow the character to perform an additional Conflict action.
- ✧ **Swift Action Momentum Spend.** By spending 2 points of Momentum from a prior attribute test the character immediately gains an additional Conflict action. The difficulty of any test connected to the extra Conflict action increases by one step.
- ✧ **Talent.** A grade 4 talent (see *Chapter 3: Talents*) will allow a character to perform an additional Conflict action of one specific type without spending Momentum or paying Luck points.

## FREE ACTIONS

A Free action is used to accomplish a minor activity within a turn that does not warrant the use of a Conflict, Spoken or Movement action. These are things such as moving anywhere within Near range as long as there is no obstruction to your movement, pushing open an unlocked door or picking up an object.

**The use of a Free action should never involve an attribute test**, if an attribute test would be called for a Conflict or Movement action must be used.

## MAKING AN ATTACK

There are multiple ways a character can attack a target. Weapons merely scratch the surface of the variety of ways a creative character could harm another. A character might engage in ferocious arguing, make barbed jests, or wield weapons of extravagant super science. Regardless of the method used, the process for attacking remains the same.

- ✱ The attacker declares their Conflict action, nominating a single target within range.
- ✱ The attacker attempts an opposed test determined by the type of attack. This is an Average (D1) attribute test using **Cunning** plus another attribute which varies based on the exact circumstances. For most melee-based combat, **Cunning + Daring** is the default, while **Cunning + Reason** is more common in shooting-based attacks. Insults often use **Cunning** and **Passion**, or **Might** in the case of threats and intimidation.
- ✱ If the attack is made beyond its usual range then the difficulty increases by 1 for every range outside the weapon's normal use. For melee weapons this is Immediate, for pistols this is Near, and for rifles, Away. Melee weapons

used at ranges outside Immediate are thrown at their target.

- ✱ The defending character commonly resists with **Daring** and another attribute appropriate to the defensive action, such as **Passion** for bravely meeting a sword thrust or **Empathy** to sense where an attack is directed so it can be avoided. Insults and social conflicts typically use **Passion** or **Empathy** to defend. This may vary depending on the situation or a character's talents.
- ✱ Attack combinations are determined by the narrator, and the narrator may change any of these combinations as the situation warrants.
- ✱ If the attack hits, then the attack inflicts damage (*as described in Damage and Recovery, see page 101*). If the attack misses, nothing happens.
- ✱ Remember to treat each attack and defend test separately before successes are compared. In many cases, the attacker and defender may not have the same difficulty for their respective tests.

**Example:** Jane Porter is shooting with a rifle at a Warhoon raider who is charging her companions with weapons drawn. Her target is in range and the narrator informs Jane's player she will need to use **Reason** and **Cunning** for this attack. The target is at Away range, so there's no increased difficulty for distance, however there is a large amount of smoke and dust in the air from a recent airship crash. The narrator rules this increases the difficulty of Jane's attack by 1. The Warhoon is defending with **Daring** and **Reason** as it attempts to see the path of Jane's shot, but has nothing to increase the difficulty of his action. Jane generates 4 successes on her (D2) test while the Warhoon generates only 2 on his (D1) test. Despite the tough shot, Jane hits the Warhoon!

## ACTION SCENE MOMENTUM SPENDS

Momentum is a key tactical resource during action scenes. When a character generates Momentum in an action scene, it can help in many ways to overcome enemies, empower allies, and bolster the effectiveness of actions.

The following provides a number of

### SELECTING THE PROPER ATTRIBUTES

The rules for actions and conflicts often suggest particular attribute combinations for use in attack and defense when engaged in melee, ranged, or social conflicts. The default suggestions (**Cunning** + **Daring** for melee attacks, etc.) are there to keep things moving and balanced. However, they are not set in stone.

Depending on the exact situation, it might be more appropriate to defend against a sword thrust with **Daring** and **Passion** or engage in a social action with **Might** and **Cunning**. Narrators should be open to interesting combinations of attributes for various actions and players should feel free to suggest them. A character who wishes to “take it on the chin” might even defend against an attack with **Might**, describing it as striking him but with no effect. Or a brilliant character might be able to use **Reason** to strike an opponent they have been watching closely for weaknesses. Narrators are encouraged to allow such variations as long as they don’t slow down play or result in characters only using the same one or two attributes for every test.

Players who wish to regularly use an atypical attribute for a type of action should consider acquiring a talent which allows them to regularly substitute one attribute for another in certain types of actions.

options for a character generating 1 or more points of Momentum in combat. These are in addition to the normal uses of Momentum and any others that players or narrator create. Momentum lists are never exhaustive and both players and narrators should be creative in making new spends as needed.

Many of these options are primarily focused upon boosting attribute tests made when attacking. However, many can be used creatively for all manner of combat attribute tests.

### MOMENTUM SPENDS

When fighting a foe:

- ✱ **Roll extra damage.** After succeeding on an attack, but before you roll for damage, you can spend Momentum to roll extra combat dice. Each point of Momentum spent provides 1 bonus 🎲. (E.g. spend 3 Momentum to roll 4 🎲 damage rather than the usual 1 🎲)
- ✱ **Send their weapon flying.** Three points of Momentum can send an enemy’s weapon flying to where an ally might get it. Two points might knock it to your enemy’s feet.
- ✱ **Dispatch a minion narrator character.** Every extra point of Momentum spent when fighting minions will dispatch an additional minion.

When moving during an action scene:

- ✱ Spend 1 Momentum to move an additional range between the character and a target if not hindered or blocked by another character or obstacle.
- ✱ Spend 3 Momentum to move an additional range between you and a target, ignoring any obstacles (characters in your way can still attempt to stop you).

# DAMAGE AND RECOVERY

The following section describes the three types of damage that characters can inflict and suffer: Confusion, Fear and Injury.

When a character is successfully hit by an attack during combat, the attack inflicts an amount of damage. Some environmental effects can also inflict damage, such as falling from a great height, being set on fire, or encountering something terrifying.

Damage is always resolved in the same way, regardless of the type of damage inflicted. Each weapon and event determines damage based on several factors:

## OPTIONAL RULE: SIMPLIFIED ACTIONS

While each action in *John Carter of Mars* serves a purpose, the terminology and rules can be a bit daunting for new players. Instead of breaking actions into Conflict, Movement, and Spoken actions, if desired the following simplified actions can be used:

- \* All characters can move (up to Away range), and take one action (like attacking or using a device, or moving further than Away).
- \* Characters may speak and perform other short actions for free, provided this makes sense and the narrator doesn't think it would take too much effort.
- \* Characters may spend 5 Momentum for a bonus action, once per turn.

Simplified actions speed play, but at the cost of some tactical finesse and dramatic movement during conflicts. Narrators should consult their players to see if the trade-off is acceptable to everyone.

\* **Basic Damage:** Each source of damage inflicts a minimum of 1 of damage. Some sources will have a higher basic damage; this is usually noted in the text.

\* **Momentum:** A player can spend Momentum when making an attack to add more damage. Each Momentum spent adds 1 to the damage. In addition to this, minion-class creatures can be killed instantly for 1 Momentum. Both of these Momentum spends are repeatable.

\* **Qualities:** Weapons often have qualities that inflict damage in specific ways when an effect is rolled on the combat dice. (See page 112.)

Once these factors have all been accounted for, the player making the attack should roll the pool of combat dice. This is called the **damage roll**, and the final total is the amount of damage inflicted.

## STRESS AND AFFLICTIONS

A character can only withstand so much damage of any one type before being unable to fight further.

Each damage type has a stress track. Each stress track is related to two of a character's attributes. The higher of these two attributes is the maximum stress that can be lost from that stress track.

Stress is the representation of the effect damage has on a character. For each point of damage scored on the damage roll, a point of stress is added to one of the three stress tracks. This represents the character suffering minor injuries, or becoming weary and fatigued.

Stress can be recovered quickly, under normal circumstances only



requiring a little rest. However, if a large amount of stress is gained at once or a stress track is filled, then the character suffers afflictions.

Afflictions represent long-term effects and can be extremely problematic. Each stress track has a related affliction, and imposes a penalty on certain attribute tests. The two attributes affected are the two related to that particular affliction's stress track. Each affliction suffered increases the difficulty of a test using either of these attributes by 1. This penalty is cumulative, increasing with each affliction suffered.

Afflictions are suffered when:

- ✱ 5 or more damage is inflicted at once.
- ✱ The target's stress track is filled.
- ✱ The target takes damage with a stress track that is already full.

If more than of these circumstances happens at once, an affliction is suffered for each case.

**Example:** Kale Singh takes 5 damage and applies it to his Injury stress track, which fills his stress track. Kale suffers 2 Wound afflictions, one for the 5 damage applied at once and the second for the stress track being filled.

At the narrator's choice, stress inflicted in multiples of 5 can also cause additional afflictions, with 10 stress added causing 2 afflictions etc.

A character suffering from four afflictions of the same type is incapacitated. They are unable to take any actions or defend against an attack without spending a point of Luck. A character suffering with five or more afflictions of the same type is blacked out. They are unable to take any actions at all, even by spending Luck (for Wounds this is death; for Trauma it might be an irreparable loss of confidence; for Madness it might be insanity). Afflictions are more difficult to recover from than stress.

Narrator characters are less able to withstand afflictions. Minion-class

characters are dispatched as soon as they suffer any damage, and Monster-class characters have a menace rating, indicating how many afflictions of any type they can withstand before being dispatched.

## INFLECTING DAMAGE

The damage roll determines the amount of damage inflicted by a successful attack. The attribute combination used when defending against an attack determines the type of damage inflicted.

When damage is inflicted and a character gains stress, they consult the damage types table to decide which stress track is affected, based on the attributes they used to defend against the attack. If more than one stress track is applicable, the player chooses which stress track to apply the damage to.

**Example:** Kale Singh is struck by a sword. He defended against the attack with Cunning + Might. Cunning and Might are both related to the Injury stress track. Since he failed to defend against the attack, the stress he suffers is added to the Injury stress track.

ATTRIBUTE USED TO DEFEND	DAMAGE TYPE / STRESS TRACK
Empathy or Reason	Confusion
Daring or Passion	Fear
Cunning or Might	Injury

## DAMAGE TYPES

The three types of damage are described on the following pages. Under each damage type, several useful details are listed; 'Relevant attributes' are the attributes used to calculate maximum stress and those affected by that damage types affliction. 'Affliction' names the affliction suffered when that damage types stress track is full, and 'recover with' gives the attribute test used to remove stress from that stress track.



## CONFUSION

### RELEVANT ATTRIBUTES:

**EMPATHY OR REASON**

### AFFLICTIONS:

**MADNESS**

### RECOVER WITH:

**EMPATHY + REASON**

Damage inflicted upon the mind is Confusion. It might be caused by complex tasks, impossible timelines, psychic attacks or even the fog of war. Confusion represents a character's determination, and their ability to handle pressure, control emotions, and resist the hardships of life. Characters whose current Confusion is high are weary, less certain, and less able to cope with challenging situations. A character's maximum stress for Confusion is equal to the highest value of a character's Empathy or Reason.

### AFFLICTIONS

If a sufficient amount of Confusion is inflicted, the afflictions are called Madness. Madness increases the difficulty of attribute tests using Empathy or Reason. A character suffering 4 Madness is barely coherent, overwhelmed by fears and doubts. A character suffering 5 Madness counts as **blacked out** and is either catatonic or fleeing as best they can.

### RECOVERING CONFUSION

When attempting to recover their Confusion during battle or treat their Madness naturally, characters should use an **Empathy + Reason** attribute test. The same test is used to assist an ally in recovering from Confusion or Madness.

## FEAR

### RELEVANT ATTRIBUTES:

**DARING OR PASSION**

### AFFLICTIONS:

**TRAUMA**

### RECOVER WITH:

**DARING + REASON**

Damage inflicted upon the will is Fear. It might be caused by fear, doubt, panic, despair, and sudden shocks, such as a near miss with a blade. Fear represents a character's bravery, willingness to take risks, and their ability to work through the risks inherent in a life of adventure. Characters whose current Fear is high are scared, easily frightened and less able to cope with challenging situations. A character's maximum stress for Fear is equal to the highest attribute between Daring and Passion.

### AFFLICTIONS

If a sufficient amount of Fear is inflicted, the affliction is called Trauma. Traumas increase the difficulty of attribute tests using Daring or Passion. A character suffering 4 Traumas is barely coherent, overwhelmed by fears and doubts. A character suffering 5 Traumas counts as **blacked out** and is either catatonic or fleeing as best they can.

### RECOVERING FEAR

When attempting to recover their Fear during battle or treat their Traumas naturally, characters should use a **Daring + Reason** attribute test. Characters attempting to assist with the Traumas or Fear of an ally should generally use **Daring + Reason**.

## INJURY

### RELEVANT ATTRIBUTES:

**CUNNING OR MIGHT**

### AFFLICTIONS:

**WOUNDS**

### RECOVER WITH\*:

**MIGHT + REASON**

*\* Treating another character always uses **Empathy + Reason** unless you have a talent which says otherwise.*

Damage inflicted upon the body is Injury. Blades, radium bullets, or exposure to dangerous substances (such as acids) might cause damage. Injury represents a character's endurance, stamina, and ability to ignore minor injuries such as cuts, scratches, bruises, and abrasions. It also represents the ability to avoid serious injuries. A character with high Injury is tired and unable to avoid serious harm. A character's maximum stress for Injury is equal to the highest attribute between Cunning and Might.

### AFFLICTIONS

If a sufficient amount of Injury is inflicted, the afflictions are called Wounds. Wounds increase the difficulty of attribute tests using Cunning or Might. Characters suffering 4 Wounds are so badly injured that they are barely capable of moving. A character that has taken 5 Wounds counts as **blacked out** and is unconscious or writhing in agony.

### RECOVERING INJURY

When attempting to recover their Injuries during battle or treat their Wounds naturally, characters should use a **Might + Reason** attribute test. Characters attempting to assist in the recovery of an ally should use **Empathy + Reason**.

**Example:** Kale Singh has been seriously hurt in battle. He is suffering from two Wound afflictions. Until his afflictions are healed, the difficulty of any actions involving Cunning or Might increase

## RECOVERING FROM STRESS AND AFFLICTIONS

Recovering from stress is as important as being able to inflict it.

A character recovers from all stress at the end of an action scene, and so all stress tracks are cleared. This is automatic, requiring only a brief rest. The only time this does not happen is if the next scene is set immediately after the first, where characters would have no time to catch their breath.

Stress is recovered from at a slower rate within an action scene. By spending 1 point of Momentum (repeatable) a character can remove 1 point of stress from any stress track. Alternately, characters can spend a conflict action to recover their own stress using the attribute test listed beside 'recover with' in the damage type heading. To assist an ally in recovering an affliction, see the damage type description for the relevant attribute test.

Recovering from afflictions is a trickier proposition. Removing afflictions cannot be done during an action scene.

To help an ally in recovering from an affliction you must attempt a Challenging (D2) attribute test using the 'relevant attributes' for the afflictions damage type. If successful, this test removes 1 affliction. You can recover additional afflictions of the same type by spending 2 Momentum for each additional affliction removed. A character may also remove an affliction of a different type for 4 Momentum.

Recovering from your own afflictions follows the same steps but the difficulty is increased by 1. Situational factors apply to these tests as normal.

**Example:** Jane Porter is trying to recover Kale Singh's Wound afflictions so he can get up and help her fend off an approaching horde of angry Warhoons. She must make an **Empathy + Reason (D2)** test. She succeeds

and generates 2 Momentum. Her success removes one of Kale's afflictions and she spends 2 Momentum to remove the second.

## NARRATOR CHARACTERS AND DAMAGE

Narrator characters are split into three categories. **Villains**, **monsters**, and **minions**. Villains are full characters just like a PC. They have all the stress trackers that a PC has and work in exactly the same fashion. Villains include any important lieutenants who might recur throughout a campaign as well as particularly powerful beasts and any nemesis characters that might be defeated at the end of a campaign.

Monsters are weaker than villains but represent greater adversaries than standard

creatures. They are usually formidable beasts and other non-human adversaries, but this need not always be the case. Monsters have only a single stress tracker which consists of the sum of their lowest and highest attributes. They also have a menace rating that reflects how many afflictions they can tolerate. A monster that fills its stress track or suffers more afflictions than its menace is dispatched but not necessarily dead. Usually the character taking out the monster chooses what happens, although some narrator characters may have a talent that dictates their final moments.

Minions are weaker and usually only show up in packs. Minion packs vary in size from two to five and any attack that deals damage will dispatch a minion. Extra Momentum can be used to dispatch additional minions with a single attack.

### OPTIONAL RULE: BLACKING OUT

Blacking out occurs in one of three ways. First, a character can suffer 5 of any one affliction. Second, a character can be blacked out by the narrator for narrative reasons. Third, a character can voluntarily black out.

If the narrator wishes to knock a character out for any reason they must pay the character a Luck point. This allows the narrator to capture the characters when normally it would require overwhelming opposition to knock them down. This ensures the narrative cliché of characters being captured is possible without the narrator causing multiple afflictions which might make escape impossible for the characters later on. The narrator is cautioned not to over-use this plot device, but when capture is desired it's better that the characters are out and out captured than subject to long drawn out conflicts they cannot win.

A character might look at the various threats in a scene and choose to voluntarily black out. Blacking out in this manner puts the character temporarily beyond

harm's reach, but costs the character all their remaining Luck points and removes them from the scene — making it an excellent option when things look dire and a character is out of Luck. Whether the character is knocked out, swoons, has a panic attack, etc. is up to the player but the choice is made either when the scene begins or when they suffer an affliction. Characters who voluntarily black out awaken in the next scene with a sore head and 1 less affliction in each tracker but otherwise in any state that the narrator considers appropriate.

***Example:** After Kale Singh goes down during their battle with the Warhoons, Jane Porter realizes she is surrounded, has taken both a Wounds and Trauma affliction, and is out of Luck. She decides to voluntarily black out rather than take additional damage. The narrator describes a Warhoon warrior blindsiding Jane as she readies her rifle to shoot another of the attacking horde. Jane will wake up later with no afflictions but she'll be stuck in whatever situation her capture by the Warhoons has put her in.*

## OPTIONAL RULE : SIMPLIFIED STRESS

The *John Carter* stress and damage system is designed to emulate the stories of Burroughs and the pulp era of romantic adventure. Heroes were often hindered not only by physical damage but also guilt, doubt, and even madness. However, this system is a complex part of the 2d20 system and some groups may favor a simpler alternative.

This system makes the characters a bit more vulnerable in terms of raw stress they can take. However, it balances this by removing the vulnerability a character has from multiple stress tracks that can be targeted and exploited individually.

Heroes and villains and other major characters have a single stress track, like monsters. This track is equal to their lowest and highest attributes plus 10.

- \* Each time a player character or other major fills half their stress track they suffer an affliction. This affliction affects all tests and rolls.
- \* Afflictions are also suffered when a character takes 5 or more stress from a single attack.
- \* Stress and affliction recovery are much the same as the standard rules, with one key difference: All recovery tests for afflictions use the character's highest and lowest attributes for the test (though a character could have a talent that changes this rule).
- \* All combat dice effects that do additional damage of a particular type instead inflict additional stress.

## LUCK

Player characters have access to a special type of resource called **Luck** points. These points reflect the fact that the game's heroes have ambition and determination above and beyond most people — such individuals shape their own Luck by will alone. In play, Luck points are used to enable player characters to do incredible things, to the amazement of onlookers.

Luck points can be used to pull off exciting stunts, provide an edge during dramatic situations, or otherwise help to advance the story. In order to best take advantage of this system, however, there needs to be a steady stream of Luck points made available to the players. Narrators are encouraged to award Luck points to the players regularly, because it is a tangible way of supporting a swashbuckling style of play and increasing the involvement of the players. The more each player participates

in making the game thrilling, keeps the plot twisting, and makes their characters memorable, the more chances they will get to do more of the same.

**Each player character usually begins each session with Luck points equal to their weakest attribute (though some characters may begin each session with fewer), and cannot accumulate more Luck than this at any time.**

Here are just a few of the ways Luck points can be spent during play:

- \* **Add a Bonus d20 to an Attribute Test.** A player can add a bonus d20 to any attribute test for one Luck point. The extra die always rolls a result of 1, and automatically generates successes as if it were rolled normally as part of the attribute test. Bonus d20s gained by spending Luck still count towards the

normal limit of three bonus d20s. If the use of Luck generates enough successes to pass an attribute test, the player need not roll any other dice, avoiding the possibility of complications.

✱ **Perform an Additional Conflict Action.**

During combat, a player character can usually only perform one Conflict action in a turn. By spending a Luck point, the player character can perform a second Conflict action, with no penalty. The player character may only gain one extra Conflict action in total.

✱ **Second Wind.** A player character can catch their breath and remove all the stress from one stress track by spending a Luck point.

✱ **Overcome a Weakness.** A player character may spend a Luck point to ignore the effects of all afflictions for a single Conflict action.

✱ **Influence the Story.** A player may spend a Luck point to introduce a fact or add a detail to the current scene. Such story declarations can have both narrative and mechanical effects. Story declarations should be plausible, and the narrator has the final say over whether a suggested fact or detail is valid. The narrator may also declare that particularly important additions to the story may cost more than one point of Luck.

Narrators are encouraged to come up with new ways Luck can be used in a campaign.





## RENOWN, ACCOLADES, AND LUCK

Often a character's renown or accolades (see *Chapter 6: Growing Your Legend*) can create new opportunities or methods for fortune to intervene. A character who is a skilled dwarf in Helium's navy might discover a fellow officer in an unlikely place who can render assistance, or a character's staunch First Born ally might end up captured by the same foes who hold the player characters, thus giving them extra help when they try to escape. These discoveries are paid for with Luck.

Using Luck in this fashion is nearly identical to Luck used in other ways. However, the presence of a relevant title or ally essentially "powers up" the Luck point, making it more effective. The exact bonus provided by this connection varies with each situation, but narrators will provide additional support, information, or opportunities when a character's Luck is directly related to the character's titles, allies, and general reputation and renown.

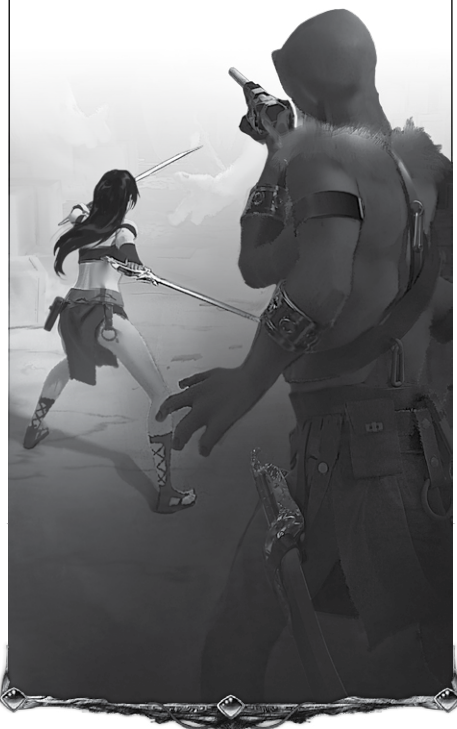
## REGAINING LUCK POINTS

The narrator may sometimes award a Luck point to a single player in the group for a particularly noteworthy action — perhaps one player came up with the perfect plan to thwart the enemy, made a bold sacrifice for the benefit of the group, gave a memorable in-character speech, or perhaps uttered a funny quip that defused the tension and made everyone at the table laugh.

Other times, the narrator may choose to award Luck points to all the players based on their progress in a campaign, or during the transition between key scenes. Luck points make excellent rewards when characters reach narrative milestones, defeat an important villain, solve a mystery, or survive a tense encounter. They can also be spent immediately, and thus provide instant gratification.

**As a general guideline, the narrator should award players with one to three Luck points per hour of gameplay, depending on the course of play and the rate they are being spent.**

Beyond refreshing Luck points at the start of each session, there are a number of ways for player characters can gain Luck points during the course of play.





## AWARDING LUCK

First and foremost, Luck points are given by the narrator during gameplay to reward players for good roleplaying, clever plans, successfully overcoming difficult challenges, using teamwork, or otherwise making the game more fun for all. Players may have other opportunities to gain Luck points by achieving certain goals within an encounter, reaching a milestone in the story, or choosing to be the one to suffer the complications of some dire event. As a general guideline, there should be two or three opportunities for players to gain Luck points per hour of play. In each case, the narrator should determine whether the point is warranted, and award a single point per instance.

**Example:** Richard's green Martian player character, Zem Zurros, tackles a pair of assassins intent on killing the royal family of Kadabra. His action sends both Zem and the assassins hurtling out of a window to the ground far below. As Zem's action was heroic, dramatic, and saved multiple important narrator characters, the narrator grants Zem a Luck point. He will likely need it...

It's generally useful for the narrator to ask the players to keep their Luck points visible, through the use of some tokens. This allows the narrator to judge how plentiful they are amongst the characters. If Luck points are being handed out too often and the players are all at the maximum, then the narrator can either hand them out less often, or can increase the challenges the player characters face. If the players are frequently low or out of Luck points, then it's a good time to evaluate if the encounters are too challenging, or if the players are not accomplishing meaningful goals within the course of play, or even having a good time.

## VOLUNTARY FAILURE

As described on page 78, characters may voluntarily fail attribute tests, at the narrator's discretion. This should only be invoked when a player character has something to gain or to lose when the attribute test is being made — generally, it's not that useful to have players roll when nothing is at stake. Voluntarily failing an attribute test provides the narrator with one point of Threat to be added to the Threat pool, and the player character immediately gains one point of Luck in return.

**Example:** In a later adventure, Zem Zurros is accused of conspiring against Kadabra's royal family, the same people he saved from assassins! The accusations are preposterous and the narrator gives Zem a chance to appeal to reason and remind his accusers of his valor. However, Zem's player believes this accusation is part of a larger plot and hopes to uncover more information while playing the part of the fallen hero and wanted fugitive. Zem intentionally fails his **Passion + Reason** test to convince others of his innocence, adding a Threat to the narrator's Threat pool and gaining a Luck point he intends to use in unmasking the true culprits.

# CHAPTER 5: WEAPONS, TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

I have ever been prone to seek adventure and to investigate and experiment where wiser men would have left well enough alone.

– John Carter, *A Princess of Mars*

Historically, Martian industry has concentrated on the requirements of warfare, survival, transport, and communication. Throughout the Dotar Sojat era, there are few advances in any of these areas. The products of Barsoomian science are considered perfect and technological development stagnates. Technical innovation only returns to Mars in the Jeddak of Jeddaks era with Carthoris of Helium's invention of the destination control compass. A new age of invention follows, particularly in airship design and navigation. It is an exciting period when research, discovery, prototyping, and espionage begin to redefine cultural, political, and martial relations on Barsoom.

Beyond developments made in the city-states or amongst the nomadic tribes of Mars, solitary masterminds and egotists experiment tirelessly. Driven by ambition, or jealousy, or an obsession with pure science, these eccentric geniuses transgress the borders of the sensible and the sane. Their creations rise unpredictably to threaten Barsoom's complex, antagonistic status quo and plunge the dying world into oblivion.

For heroes adventuring on Mars, the weapons, items, and technology of Barsoom form an integral part of their exploits. A finely balanced longsword might hold back a rising tide of savage Warhoons; a well-aimed shot from a radium rifle could bring down the scout-flyer of a fleeing spy; or the miraculous healing salves of the green Martian women might sustain a life long enough to learn some terrible secret from a mortally wounded warrior. Unspeakable vat-grown horrors can rise to threaten Barsoom itself, or an interplanetary ship can call down the attention of malevolent aliens.

New weapons, unforeseen technological advances, and experiments gone awry can invigorate any adventure, leading to unexpected twists with far-reaching implications for Barsoom and its peoples. Such encounters should quicken the blood, raise the stakes, and challenge the mettle of even the most intrepid heroes.

Accordingly, this section details the weapons, equipment, and technology found normally on Barsoom, and describes the unique items and devices conceived by the Red Planet's more eccentric inhabitants.



# WEAPONS

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For millennia, Barsoom's intelligent races have existed in a near-perpetual state of war. Countless weapons have been invented, employed, and rejected throughout this period until only the most effective remain in use. Although ancient, forgotten weapons may be discovered in Mars' ruined cities and dead sea bottoms, Barsoom's traditional armory is limited to straightforwardly produced, easily maintained melee weapons, firearms, and explosives.

## MELEE WEAPONS

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The sword is the most widely used weapon on Barsoom. There are various forms, but the most common is the straight, one-handed, needle-like longsword carried by the red and green Martians. These are single-edged, razor-sharp steel blades forged to retain keenness and flexibility during prolonged combat. In Earthly terms, they appear to be a hybrid of the European backsword and rapier.

Longswords are both mass-produced for military units and handcrafted for individuals. As a consequence, their designs can vary considerably, with many produced to individual specifications. They differ mainly in the pattern of the guard — which may be basket-, cup-, or ring-like. Their pommels are often ornate, bearing intricately jeweled designs indicating the bearer's rank and family.

Red Martian blades tend to be four sofads, or forty-seven inches, long. Green Martian longswords are slightly longer but given the green Martians' greater stature and their tendency to fence using their upper arms, any advantage gained against smaller opponents by this increased length is mitigated by height difference. Nevertheless, any hero from a race smaller than the green Martians must always fight with

an awareness of when a mistimed lunge could leave shoulders and back exposed to a downward thrust.

Fencing with a longsword takes great skill, since the back of the blade is used to parry an opponent's blows and preserve the weapon's edge. This requires considerable dexterity and practice gained through harsh training and perfected in the field.

Most red and green Martian warriors complement their long blade with a single-handed, general-purpose short-sword. Double-edged, these are secondary weapons, usually drawn if the longsword is lost or damaged, or when fighting occurs on either crowded battlefields or in the confined spaces of Barsoom's cities, ruins, or pits. Most short-swords are two sofads long with simple, unadorned hilts and a broad, thick blade for slashing and cutting. Amongst the red Martians, the short-sword lacks the cultural and hereditary importance of the longsword with its rank and familial embellishments.

The curved single-edged swords favored by the First Born are similarly plain, serviceable weapons. They are usually three sofads long with a heavy guard and a large pommel, which acts as a counterweight to the broad blade. Their shorter length places the wielder at a slight disadvantage in terms of reach when facing an opponent armed with a longsword, but the heavier blade enables the swordsman to swipe lighter weapons aside, leaving enemies exposed to attack.

More unusual are the hooked swords of the Okar. Single-edged, with a vicious hook at the tip, these blades are held in the left hand and used in conjunction with the yellow Martians' double-edged straight swords. Both are approximately three sofads long and form a formidable web of impenetrable steel in the hands of a skilled



## WEAPON AND EQUIPMENT QUALITIES

### DISHONORABLE

Dishonorable weapons impact the renown of the character. Using such a weapon can lead to serious consequences such as censure from allies, loss of rank, and sometimes imprisonment or death. Weapons that break the standard of Martian Honor usually have this quality.

### EXPLOSIVE

For each effect rolled the weapon inflicts an additional 1 damage to the Fear and Injury stress trackers. If the target does not have these stress trackers, each icon rolled deals 2 damage.

The narrator can spend 1 Threat to force any character at Near range to the target to roll a (D2) test to evade the blast, or take 1 damage.

Players using weapons with the Explosive quality can spend 1 Momentum to force a narrator character at a Near range to the blast to roll the same test.

### FEARSOME

For each effect rolled the weapon inflicts an additional 1 damage to the Fear stress tracker. If the target does not have this stress tracker, it simply deals damage.

### PSYCHIC

For each effect rolled the weapon inflicts an additional 1 damage to the Confusion stress tracker. If the target does not have this stress tracker, it simply deals damage.

### QUIET

When you use a weapon with the Quiet quality, you gain 1 bonus Momentum to use on a test to keep your position hidden, providing you haven't already been spotted.

### SHARP

For each effect rolled the weapon inflicts an additional 1 damage to the Injury stress tracker. If the target does not have this stress tracker, it simply deals damage.

### POISON

If a weapon is coated in poison, such as the venom of a sith, it gains the Fearsome and Dishonorable qualities.

If poison is slipped into food or drink it does 2 damage with the Fearsome quality. If a character is discovered to have used or is caught using poison, they suffer the consequences of using a Dishonorable weapon.

swordsman. The hooked sword is used to deflect, disarm, or snag the opponent, rendering him off-balance and vulnerable to a slash or thrust from the straight sword. To protect their left arm for this maneuver, Okarian warriors wear a buckler strapped to their wrist. In this, they are unique since they are the only troops on Barsoom to carry shields for anything other than ceremonial purposes. If an Okarian loses his hooked sword in combat, he usually reverts to a short-hafted axe, which has a sharply curved pick behind the main blade. The Okarians are the only race to use a military axe as the green Martians' hatchets serve more flexibly as both

tool and combat weapon.

Daggers are carried in most Barsoomian cultures, though they differ greatly in size and design, ranging from the great knives of the green Martians to the long slender blades of the red nations. They are all designed as thrusting weapons, sharpened along the full length of both edges of the blade. Most often used for close combat, eliminating sentries, and extracting information from reticent prisoners, they are usually fitted with a broad cross-guard to protect the knifeman's hand and prevent the blade from snagging in the victim. Assassins tend to favor the red Martian design since it is an easily concealed

and highly effective means of execution. By contrast, some panthans carry green Martian daggers in place of short-swords, preferring the shorter, heavier blade for close combat, or using them in combination with their longswords to slip inside their opponent's guard.

Equally varied is the Martian spear. The green Martian weapon is a forty sofad length of metal-shod wood terminating in a gleaming, elongated tip of steel two sofads long. They are carried into battle like lances by green Martian throat-riders and are most effective when the opposing sides clash for the first time. Lacking a cross-guard, they can snag quickly and are usually abandoned in favor of longswords wielded from the backs of thots or on foot. By contrast, red Martian cavalry and infantry both carry spears. The cavalry spear is ten to twelve sofads long with a cross-guard behind the tip to prevent it from catching in the bodies of the slain. Its infantry counterpart is rarely longer than ten sofads and is primarily a thrusting weapon used to break enemy cavalry charges or to engage similarly armed opponents. Both are hardwood shod with rings of metal and tipped with steel.

The Okar Nation's javelins are of similar construction, though they tend to be used by city guardsmen rather than by warriors deployed in the field. Seven sofads long, the Okar javelin is also used in hunting the apt and the orluk. The Kaolian sith spear is different again, being constructed entirely from a steel-aluminum alloy and measuring fifteen sofads from butt to tip. These are rarely used outside of Kaol, however, where they are employed exclusively for killing sith, the giant, venomous flying insects that plague the country's forests. The siths' venom is used to tip the spears since it is the only substance capable of killing the creatures quickly enough to save their victims.

## BLADES AND MELEE COMBAT

Most blades, regardless of type, use identical statistics and, while an unusual blade might cause an increase in difficulty the first time it is used in combat, generally all blades conform to the following rules.

### BLADES ARE SHARP

When an effect is rolled a blade inflicts 1 damage to the Injury stress tracker. If a creature doesn't have an Injury stress tracker it simply deals damage.

### BLADES INFLICT DAMAGE

Rather than the usual 1 damage inflicted by a successful attack, unless otherwise mentioned, blades other than daggers inflict 2 damage. Daggers inflict the normal 1 damage. In the rare instance that a club is used it does not gain the Sharp rule.

### BLADES ARE EASILY AVAILABLE

It costs 5xp to carry any single type of blade as core equipment.





## FIREARMS

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In Martian culture, no warrior can engage another in single combat using a weapon greater than that with which he is attacked. If a soldier draws a longsword, no matter how superior the arms of his opponent might be, that opponent is compelled by custom and honor to engage him with a longsword or some lesser weapon. This tradition has almost certainly led to standardization in the array of weaponry carried by most Martians as no warrior would wish to face an assailant without an appropriate choice of arms. It is also perhaps one of the reasons why melee weapons still exist side by side on Barsoom with advanced firearms.

The radium rifle and the radium revolver are the only advanced projectile weapons used on Mars. Both fire small caliber rounds. Each bullet is composed of an opaque outer casing and an almost solid inner glass cylinder. At the tip of the cylinder is a minute particle of radium powder, which is highly explosive when exposed to even diffuse sunlight. When the bullet strikes its target, the opaque shell fragments, exposing the radium in the glass core. The radium then detonates with devastating consequences.

Explosive radium rounds are always manufactured by artificial light and are deployed largely in daytime conflicts, when they are most effective. If they are used at night, morning sends

a tide of staccato explosions rolling across the landscape with the sun's terminator as unexploded rounds finally combust. Any warriors who are still on the field with exposed bullets lodged in wounds must act quickly to cover their injuries or face the possibility of a messy, eruptive death. For obvious reasons, field surgeons prefer to remove bullets at night or under artificial light. This often leads to patients' protracted suffering and difficult triage decisions.

Given their reduced effectiveness at night, and the greater complexity of their manufacture, radium rounds are regularly replaced with solid, flat-nosed bullets for nighttime warfare. These are usually cast or swaged from lead or zinc alloys. Before a battle, swaging is more common amongst the green Martians, who recognize that smoke from a bullet casting process could give away their presence.

Radium rifles and revolvers all use the same caliber rounds regardless of the culture manufacturing them. This standardization is not coincidental, nor did it occur simultaneously across Barsoom. Rather, it was the consequence of warring cultures developing and modifying weapons they could resupply in the field from the bodies of fallen comrades and enemies alike. The rifles hold magazines of 100 rounds; the revolvers are chambered for six cartridges. Reloads and spare magazines are packed in impact-resistant belt







## FIREARM COMBAT

Most firearms, regardless of type, use identical statistics and, while an unusual weapon might cause an increase in difficulty the first time it is used in combat, generally all firearms conform to the following rules. Rarer and weirder weapons may have alternative damage ratings and rules.

### FIREARMS ARE FEARSOME

When an effect is rolled a firearm inflicts 1 damage to the Fear stress tracker. If a creature doesn't have a Fear stress tracker it simply deals damage.

### FIREARMS INFLICT DAMAGE


Rather than the usual 1  damage inflicted by a successful attack, unless otherwise mentioned, firearms inflict 2  damage.

### FIREARMS ARE EASILY AVAILABLE

It costs 5xp to carry any single type of firearm as core equipment.

## Longbows

The most common ranged weapon other than the firearm is the longbow.


Longbows inflict the normal 1  damage but are Quiet. Weapons with the Quiet quality are not easily detected when used. A character attacking with a longbow gains 1 bonus Momentum on any test to conceal their location so long as they have not been spotted.

### OPTIONAL RULE: RADIUM BULLET DETONATION

As noted in the description of Barsoomian firearms, radium bullets detonate when sunlight hits them. This makes them incredibly dangerous during the day and they must be removed from wounds inflicted at night or the later explosion can inflict grievous wounds. Narrators wishing to play up this effect can replace Firearms are Fearsome with the following effects for radium-based firearms:

### RADIUM BULLETS ARE EXPLOSIVE

When an effect is rolled, a radium-based firearm inflicts 1 damage to the Fear and Injury stress trackers if the attack occurs in sunlight. If a creature doesn't have these stress trackers each effect rolled deals 2 damage. If this attack does not occur in sunlit areas, an effect rolled inflicts 1 damage to the Fear stress tracker instead.

In addition, if a target suffers an affliction from a radium-based firearm outside a sunlit area and has not had this injury treated before they are exposed to sunlight, the narrator can spend X Threat to inflict X  of damage to the target as the undetonated bullet explodes inside their wound! A narrator should avoid spending more than 5 Threat on this.



pouches to reduce the risk of accidental damage and a catastrophic explosion. Both pistol and rifle are fired using a raised button on the stock, which minimizes the potentially detrimental effect on accuracy of squeezing a trigger.

Most Martian firearms are constructed from comparable materials, and are exceptionally light and durable. The metal parts are usually fashioned from a white alloy of steel and aluminum, tempered to an extreme hardness. Stocks and grips are typically of a very light, intensely tough wood, though it is not uncommon for these to be made from bone or horn, depending on the materials available locally or through trade.

Despite this standardization of ammunition and construction, radium rifles and pistols often look very different, depending on the race or city-state producing them. Green Martian rifles display a barbaric splendor, being adorned with feathers, items of metal, or the teeth or dried fingers of vanquished opponents. Those of Helium are characterized by clean, graceful lines, and are often filigreed with rank or familial markings. Like the sword, the rifle in red Martian culture can also serve as a status symbol with particular armorers and gunsmiths enjoying greater prestige than others. The Therns are more practical, adding small shields to their utilitarian designs to protect the rifleman's face and upper body.

The range of the Martian radium rifle is misreported in Carter's first manuscript, presumably as a result of his unfamiliarity with the Martian language. He suggests that when equipped with wireless finders and sighters, the weapon has an effective range of approximately two hundred miles. Later accounts omit this range, though the descriptions of the rifle remain consistent. Martian rifles have an effective range of two haads, which Carter interprets incorrectly as two hundred

miles rather than as the correct two miles. Radium revolvers have an effective range of considerably less. The best guns produced in Helium will kill at 100 ads or 0.5 of a haad.

With the perfection of such efficient radium weapons, there has been little change in their design or function for several millennia. This has not prevented individual inventors from developing alternate and more devastating firearms, however. In the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, Phor Tak, a scientist from the red Martian city of Jahar, developed a rifle capable of firing three kinds of invisible ray. Depending on the ammunition selected, the rifle could discharge rays that would disintegrate metal, wood, or human flesh by dissolving the molecular bonds holding the particular matter together. The range of these disintegrating rifles was less than a haad. Nevertheless, they threatened to destabilize the fine martial balance of Barsoom and render all of the Red Planet's armies and navies impotent. The threat was removed when Tan Hadron destroyed all stocks of the disintegrating rifle and ammunition at Phor Tak's estate in the dead city of Jhama. Rumors persist, however, that one or two of the weapons survived and are being actively sought by ambitious jeds and jeddaks eager to advance their power. In response, several red Martian city-states have laid in stocks of the blue substance manufactured by Phor Tak's assistant which provides some protection from the metal disintegrating ray when painted on the metal portions of ships, harnesses, and weaponry.

While pistols and rifles are the norm on Barsoom, some cultures — such as the Bowman of Lothar — do use the long bow. These weapons are effective, but require special training and most Martians will not be trained in their use as a matter of course.

## INCENDIARY COMBAT

Most incendiaries fall into one of two categories; hand-held or satchel. All incendiaries conform to the following rules.

### INCENDIARIES ARE EXPLOSIVE

When an effect is rolled an incendiary inflicts 1 damage to the Fear and Injury stress trackers. If a creature doesn't have these stress trackers, each effect rolled deals 2 damage. The narrator can spend 1 Threat to force any character Near to the blast to roll a difficulty 2 test to evade damage from an incendiary. Players employing incendiaries can spend 1 Momentum on their attribute test to force an narrator character to make a similar test. Characters dodging the blast might roll **Daring + Reason**. Characters taking cover might roll **Cunning + Reason**, but the narrator could consider other combinations.

### INCENDIARIES INFLICT DAMAGE

Handheld incendiaries inflict 3 damage. Satchel charges inflict 4 damage.

### INCENDIARIES CAN BE COMBINED TO DESTROY STRUCTURES

Every extra hand-held incendiary used to destroy an object adds 1 to the damage roll. Satchel charges count as two hand-sized charges.

### INCENDIARIES ARE RARE

It costs 25xp to carry any single incendiary as core equipment. Tharks can pay 15xp to carry a hand-held incendiary.

### INCENDIARIES ARE DISHONORABLE

Their use at all, by any character, will impact the renown of the character. Use against living opponents will lead to serious consequences including censure from allies, loss of rank, and sometimes imprisonment or death.

## INCENDIARY DEVICES

Considered dishonorable weapons by most Martian cultures, battlefield incendiary devices are not unknown, though they are exceptionally rare. Only the green Martians use them and, even then, seldom employ them against living targets. Their use of radium incendiaries is ordinarily limited to the destruction of property, including downed airships that have been looted and set adrift, temporary fortifications erected around

the camps of red Martians or other hordes, or fallen wood and other combustible materials blocking passageways through deserted Martian cities or their pits. In structure, the radium incendiary is a palm-sized version of the radium bullet with a greater amount of active material in its glass core. It is rare for radium incendiaries to be carried into battle given the customs defining Martian combat and the danger they pose to all sides involved in the conflict.

# EQUIPMENT

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The most important item of equipment for any Martian is the harness worn in place of clothing. Barsoomians dislike covering their bodies unless the temperature or climate require them to don robes of silk and fur to protect against the cold. In most circumstances, they find shirts, tunics, gowns and trousers restrictive and grotesque in their masking of an individual's natural health and vigor. Consequently, all Martians wear trappings that cover their modesty but little else.

Martian harnesses are usually of leather ornamented with precious stones, small metal plates, and badges of honor. Some green Martians harnesses bear the body parts of fallen rivals, or the feathers of extinct birds, passed from one defeated warrior to the next down the generations.

Harnesses play an important cultural role on Barsoom. Their jewels and enameled insignia depict the wearer's house or horde, rank, class and family. Awards, rewards and medals of service may also adorn a Martian's leather, providing a visual autobiography of the wearer's exploits. Even the civilian metal worn by non-combatants can be a complex accumulation of social and cultural information. Only common soldiers, panthans, or those who wish to conceal their identity wear harnesses of plain metal. As a consequence, the harness has become the single most important means of identifying individuals, their origins, and their disposition. It is also one of the chief means by which subterfuge and espionage is conducted as Martians often adopt the metal of families, factions, cities and cultures different from their own. It is one of Barsoom's great paradoxes that the harness is both trusted and abused as an indicator of identity.

Harness designs differ widely, but two predominate. The most common type features a broad belt from which a strap rises to the center of the sternum. This strap then splits at a small triangular metal plate, often bearing the wearer's rank or family insignia, before crossing over each shoulder and buckling to the main belt in the small of the back. A second popular version features two or three narrow belts around the waist. X- and Y-shaped straps cross the chest and back linked either by metal rings or stitched behind metal plates. Both forms sometimes feature leather pauldrons, the only piece of armor seen regularly on Barsoom.

The Martian harness serves a number of practical as well as cultural purposes. It has hangers and holsters for longsword, short-sword, dagger, and pistol. Hoops and ties accommodate the hand mirrors carried by many warriors for signaling and observing activity from behind cover. Its belt loops hold the long straps and boarding hooks used by air-sailors when effecting repairs to airships or boarding an enemy vessel. Cross-belts and pocket pouches provide storage for ammunition and the numerous other articles essential for life in the wilds of Barsoom.

## MEDICINES AND COMMON ITEMS

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Typical items include tiny folding jetan boards, concentrated food pellets made from preserved vegetable milk and the flesh of the Usa, or "Fighting Potato", and fire pistons and char cloths, the common Martian devices for producing flame. Most green Martians and red Martian soldiers, panthans, and explorers also equip themselves with a supply of healing salves, which are capable of curing all but the most grievous of wounds. The yellow, black and white races produce similar medicines, and it is rare for a Martian to die from injury unless they do so before medical care can be administered.

### MEDICINES IN GAMES

Martian salves are miraculous in their ability to heal flesh and prevent death. Minor applications of salves are assumed to take place at the end of every combat as cuts and bruises are attended to. These applications don't need to be tracked, though not having salve might increase the difficulty of a healing test at the narrator's prerogative.

Entire jars of salves can be used to repair significant injuries. A small jar contains 1 dose of salve which can be used to instantly repair a single Wounds affliction. A large jar contains 2 doses and a medicine bag contains 4 doses. Up to 3 doses can be used in any 8-hour period but 1 dose is sufficient to prevent death most of the time.

Salve is reasonably common. A small jar of salve is available as core equipment for 5xp. Larger jars are less common, but a large jar is available for 20xp and a medicine bag is available for 45xp.

## TORCHES AND ILLUMINATION DEVICES

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Some red and black Martians carry radium flash torches, especially if they intend to explore Barsoom's subterranean realms or need to signal their presence to allies. These torches are compact devices six or seven sofs long. The duration of the light emitted is controlled by a button on the side of the torch. The button activates an iris that dilates between the torch's lens and its radium bulb, exposing or concealing the light source. The intensity of the light emitted is governed by a thumb-lever that raises and lowers the radium bulb's luminance. Such torches need no batteries since their radium bulbs will emit light for an inestimable period of time. A torch set on maximum intensity with a fully opened iris will provide a diffuse circular cone of light 100 sofads long with a target area 30 sofads wide. They can also be used to activate and deactivate locks keyed to particular sequences and intensities of light.

No new torches have been manufactured for millennia and the secret of their production has been lost. As a result, torches tend to be passed down through noble families or shared within military units. Purchasing a radium flash torch on the open market is an expensive undertaking and many dealers regularly commission panthans and explorers to scour the dead cities and sea bottoms for these ancient devices. In the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, rumors suggest that a considerable number might be found in the ruins abandoned by the Holy Therns in the Valley Dor. Few heroes have dared the area's white apes and plant men to uncover the truth of this speculation, however.

### TORCHES IN GAMES

Torches remove all penalties for darkness and can be used to activate or pick some sophisticated locks.

Torches count as rare and can be purchased for 10Xp as core equipment.

## FIELD GLASSES AND SIGHTS

Red Martian officers, nobles, merchants and more successful panthans are often equipped with a monocular field glass. Only the red Martians have the skill in lens and prism making to produce these items and the finest examples are manufactured in Helium and Ptarth. They are usually carried in leather cases suspended from their owner's harness.

The red Martians are reluctant to trade their field glasses since they recognize the military advantage obtained by restricting their availability. This has not prevented them from finding their way into the hands of other nations, however. It is not unusual, for example, to see them amongst the green Martians, who have procured many during their assaults on red Martian airships and settlements. In the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, many disgraced red Martians from Zodanga have sold glasses to the Okar and to the First Born.

High quality field glasses designed for locating individuals in a landscape have magnification ranges of 20x – 25x. Varieties magnifying in the 10x – 15x ranges are ideal for surveying the landscape, or large troop movements. Most models are expensive and beyond the means of regular soldiers, novice heroes, or unsuccessful panthans.

Weapons scopes can be manufactured using the same process that creates field glasses, but they are rare.

### FIELD GLASSES IN GAMES

Field glasses provide 1 Momentum for the purposes of investigating an area at a distance. If mounted as a sight, they decrease any difficulty increase for range by 1 step. Possession of a field glass is a mark of rank and senior military figures without one may suffer increased difficulties in social settings.

Field glasses count as rare and can be purchased for 10Xp as core equipment.

## CHRONOMETER

Cost prevents Martians of more humble status from affording a Barsoomian chronometer. These delicate instruments record and display the tals, xats and zodes of Martian time beneath a thick crystal carapace. They are usually worn on the wrist as part of a gold or leather bracelet. The finest are produced in Helium and Okar. Robust versions are standard issue to red and yellow Martian officers and few red Martian nobles would be seen without an elaborate timepiece amongst their courtly attire. By contrast, green Martians reject artificial chronometers, believing that true warriors are so in tune with their environment that they always possess an inherent sense of time.

### CHRONOMETERS IN GAMES

Chronometers do not provide any obvious Momentum benefit, though few nobles wouldn't be seen without one. Failure to wear a chronometer marks the character as an outsider and may make some social tests more difficult.

Chronometers are a status symbol and cost 5xp as core equipment.



## INVISIBILITY

The invisibility spheres manufactured by the warring cities of Invak and Onvak in the Forest of Lost Men are truly exotic Martian science. Within an hour, anyone consuming one of these large pills is rendered invisible for a full Martian day. This effect is also conferred onto objects coming in contact with the affected individual, though it passes quickly once contact is broken.

Although little is known regarding the composition of these pills, it seems probable that they are derived from glandular extracts from the chameleonic darsen. Most Martian scientists agree that true invisibility is impossible, implying that the pills make the skin of its user capable of mimicking its surroundings.

Several researchers have sent expeditions into the Forest of Lost Men in search of the secret of invisibility. None have returned. It would take a brave party of adventurers to solve the mystery. Similarly, many unscrupulous warlords and jeds wish to learn the formula of Phor Tak's invisibility compound. This substance has the quality of bending light rays, making any object coated in the material invisible. The answer to its mystery lies in ruined Jhama now.

### INVISIBILITY IN GAMES

Invisibility is a game changer in a lot of ways. Attacking while invisible is dishonorable, but travelling while invisible is not. The invisibility compound allows a person to gain 2 Momentum on any attribute test to hide, sneak around, or evade pursuers reliant on sight.

A single pill is enough to hide a character and their carried equipment for a day. The effect cannot be controlled or extended except through eating a pill and starting the clock again. "Coating" an object is possible, but requires multiple pills or it will fade in much less time. An object coated in the invisibility serum maintains its effect for  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a day for every pill used.

Invisibility pills are not available as core equipment.

## GENERAL PREPAREDNESS

Any hero will begin with equipment appropriate to their nation, social standing, and profession. This is a permissive and fluid list in many cases, with characters being presumed to be sensible Barsoomians who have the things they need to prosper and survive unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Thus, a soldier is presumed to have a dagger, sword, pistol and battle harness with various tools and medicines. A scholar would have scientific instruments, writing materials for taking notes, field glasses, chronometers, and other high-tech tools. Pretty much every hero save a newly arrived Earth-born would have some form of weapon, though military and combat-focused characters carry more and deadlier weapons than others.

If there is some doubt that a character would have a particularly useful item with them at a given time, the narrator may require them to spend a Momentum to have it on hand. However, generally, characters should never be considered to be wholly unarmed or unprepared unless the situation dictates they have been ambushed, sabotaged, betrayed, or otherwise caught unawares.

# BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

In addition to airship design and communications, Martian expertise excels in the biosciences. The origins of that excellence lie in the ancient past when Barsoom's five vast oceans were the major means of trade across the planet. Among the Orovars of the city of Horz, Lee Um Lo distinguished himself as an embalmer of unparalleled renown. So great were his skills that those he embalmed still considered themselves among the living. Many of Lee Um Lo's subjects remained inert and undisturbed in the pits of Horz until the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, providing sustenance for Lum Tar O, a cowardly contemporary of Lee Um Lo whom he had embalmed. When John Carter killed Lum Tar O and woke the sleepers, they disintegrated on exposure to the realities of modern Barsoom.

It is possible that what the Orovars considered embalming was in fact a sophisticated form of suspended animation, administered in the moments before death to permit the subject's body an extended period of time to heal itself. Many of those interred beneath Horz were in their prime, untroubled by illness or injury, and were seemingly 'embalmed' for no other reason than to feed Lum Tar O.

Lee Um Lo's techniques remain a mystery, however, known in part to few modern Martians. Nevertheless, other caches of sleeping Orovars may exist elsewhere on Mars, either beneath the dead cities or in undiscovered rocky chambers in Barsoom's mountain ranges. They may hold the answer to Lee Um Lo's strange art. No doubt there are Martian factions eager to discover such groups for what they might also know of Mars' ancient history and of arcane knowledge lost in time and dust. Enterprising heroes will have little difficulty in being recruited for perilous expeditions in search of the secrets of the Orovars.

It is likely that Hin Abtol, the ambitious jed of Panar, knew something of Lee

Um Lo's practices since he used a crude form of suspended animation to keep a standing army of a million men frozen in the ice around his capital. The true successor to Lee Um Lo, however, is Ras Thavas, the arrogant, detached Mastermind of Mars. Ras Thavas advanced Martian biological science in two significant areas: longevity through transplant surgery—including brain transference—and the propagation of vat-grown synthetic life.

The transference of brains from one subject to another is an intricate process used to provide an aging or endangered brain with a young or undamaged body. The first stage involves the withdrawing of all blood from both subjects. This is replaced with a specially prepared embalming fluid that prevents decay without damaging the nerve or tissue structures of the body. The second stage is the removal and transfer of the brains, the reconnection of severed nerves and ganglia, and the sealing of the wounds with an anesthetic and antiseptic healing tape. The withdrawn blood is then treated with a revitalizing agent, rewarmed, and transferred to the body containing the corresponding brain. This revitalizing agent restores healthy function to all of the body's organs and systems. Should the surgeon wish not to reanimate one of the subjects, the embalming fluid will preserve the body and the withdrawn blood can be stored for later revivification.

Later in his career, Ras Thavas pioneered a technique for growing Synthetic Men—Hormads—in culture laboratories in the city of Morbus in the Toonolian Marshes. Although most of these deformed creatures were of low intelligence, some were as intelligent as most Martians. Following a coup by the Hormads and their almost complete destruction by John Carter and the air-fleet from Helium, Ras Thavas has taken residence in the Twin Cities.

# TECHNOLOGY

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Barsoom is a world of wonder, a curious fusion of barbaric splendor, magnificent cities, and startling, sometimes unexpected, technological brilliance. Its fabulous streets are illuminated by eternally bright lights that eliminate shadow; at night, its houses and farms rise for protection on pneumatic shafts; magnetic elevators convey passengers to the heights of lofty palaces; and intricate locks exchange crude metal keys for sophisticated melodies or sequences of light. Even the pits found beneath Martian cities have their wonders, not least the antique radium illuminator bulbs that seem destined to burn forever, or until some violence destroys them. Nevertheless, these achievements pale in comparison to what has been achieved through the eighth and ninth rays.

## THE EIGHTH AND NINTH RAYS

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In addition to the spectrum of seven colors known to those of Jasoom, Martian scientists have long recognized the existence of two additional rays, both indescribable to those who have not witnessed them for themselves.

The ninth ray is fundamental to life on Barsoom. In the vast and virtually impregnable atmosphere plant maintained by Helium, its energy is separated from the spectrum and transformed electrically into gas. This gas is then pumped to the five great air centers on Mars. When it is released into the air and comes into contact with the ether of space, it is transformed into the planet's breathable envelope, thus sustaining the planet's fragile atmospheric balance. Quantities of the gas sufficient to support Barsoom for years are stored in the atmosphere plant, which is safeguarded against failure by the redundancy of its engineering. A battery of twenty back-up radium

pumps, any one of which can provide the power needed to circulate the ninth ray gas, ensure that the system will not experience a catastrophic failure.

A second atmosphere plant in Martentina in the Okar nation will sustain life at only Barsoom's northern pole should the primary plant fail.

The eighth ray, also known as the ray of propulsion, is an intrinsic property of light regardless of its source. The solar eighth ray propels the light of the sun to its orbiting planets. In turn, the individual eighth ray of each planet reflects the light received back into space once more. Barsoom and the other planetary bodies absorb the solar eighth ray, but their own eighth rays are constantly emanating outwards. On Barsoom at least, the emanations of the eighth ray provide a force counter to that of gravity. When the eighth ray is enclosed in tanks, it can be employed to raise huge weights from the ground.

For almost a thousand years, this technique has been used on Mars to develop and perfect aerial travel, transport, and combat.

## MARTIAN FLIERS

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Of all the wonders of Barsoom, few are as breathtaking as the majestic fliers that ply the azure skies of the dying world. From private and public pleasure craft to bulk cargo carriers to the mighty battleships of the red Martian navies, these fliers depend on their shipwrights' exploitation of the anti-gravitic properties of the mysterious eighth ray.

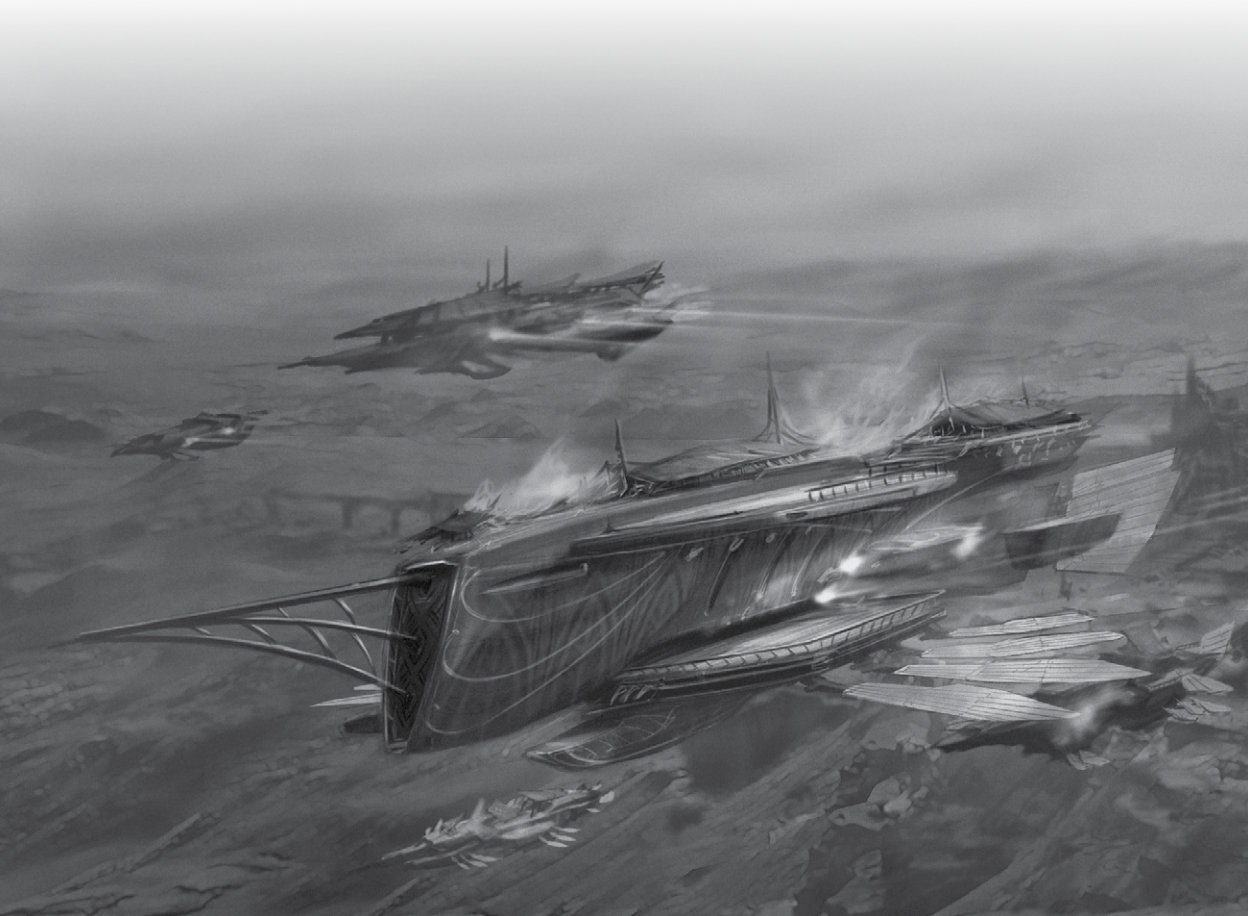
Airship design on Mars follows a set of standard principles. Tanks filled with the eighth ray and located below decks or lining the outside of the hull provide lift. This makes Barsoomian fliers vulnerable to being disabled by marksmen whose shots can rupture the tanks causing the eighth ray to vent into

the atmosphere. Navigation controls are elementary and highly effective. A preset-altimeter ensures a vessel follows the uneven contours of the landscape, maintaining a fixed altitude. The air compass, when set for a particular destination, remains locked on that location. The pilot need only keep the vessel's prow in line with the directional indicator to reach the defined destination by the shortest route. In the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, Carthoris of Helium improved on the directional compass by adding an auxiliary device that steers the airship automatically on the selected course. On reaching the designated location, this destination control compass brings the vessel to a halt and lowers it to the ground.

Propellers powered by light radium motors drive Martian airships. Before the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, the fastest one-man flyer could attain speeds of approximately eleven hundred haads

per zode, or one hundred and sixty-six miles per hour. After John Carter's ascension as Warlord of Mars, a padwar in Helium's navy designed a lighter, faster motor that doubled the speeds of almost all airships. These new motors are fuelless, drawing their energy from Barsoom's magnetic field, which is channeled through the accumulator to armature-like bearings surrounding the propeller shaft. By moving a simple lever to increase or reduce the number of armatures in series with the accumulator, the pilot controls a flyer's speed.

A flier's maximum speed is governed by the ratio of strength to weight in the vessel's hull. One-man flyers fitted with this fuel-less engine reach speeds in excess of two thousand haads per zode or three hundred miles per hour. Helium's scientists and aeronautical engineers are engaged in research to determine how to attain the greatest strength with the minimum of weight





in the design of airship hulls. Their inquiries have seen numerous expeditions sent out across Barsoom in search of new materials for the construction of models and prototypes. Other red Martian cities regard Helium's air superiority with envy. Spies and infiltrators, especially from Toonol and Zodanga, constantly probe for weaknesses in the city's security to learn the secret of the new motors. On more than one occasion, Helium's forces have embarked on a frantic pursuit across the dead sea bottoms to reclaim stolen plans.

In addition to whatever decorative silks or flags they may bear, all ships carry identification lights, banners, or pennons, usually proclaiming their city of origin and the family of the ship's captain. It is not unusual, however, for ships to run under false colors to deceive enemies or pass unmolested through hostile territory. As a result, most red Martian city-states run air-patrols that will challenge

approaching airships and seek clarification of their purpose and intent.

In structure, fliers vary considerably, though the majority of smaller vessels are built with skeel wood hulls and decks. Sorapus wood is used for cabins and upper works. Carborundum-aluminum, a light alloy, is used extensively in Martian fighting ships.

The smallest one-man air scouts are little more than a skeel wood deck over a thin metal hull containing the eighth ray. Sixteen sofads long, two wide, and three sofs thick, these delicate vessels are particularly vulnerable to ground fire. The pilot is either seated or lies on the deck behind a windshield.

Like the scouts, two- and three-man fliers have windshields rather than cockpits or cabins. Buoyancy tanks occupy all the below-deck space. For safety, the crew attach themselves to metal rings fixed to the deck using their harness hooks. Low metal handrails sur-



## AIRSHIPS, FLIERS, AND EQUILIBRIMOTORS IN GAMES

Martian Airships vary in many ways and are very useful devices, but for the purposes of gameplay the only things that matter are size and purpose. Size is determined entirely by the number of passengers and amount of cargo the vehicle is carrying. A vehicle's size is either **Lumbering**, **Capable**, or **Graceful**. A vehicle's purpose is either **Cargo**, **Civilian**, or **Military**.

- \* Lumbering vehicles are slow and steady craft and offer no advantage in chase or combat. Capable vehicles gain a 1 Momentum advantage when trying to avoid or engage a Lumbering craft. Graceful craft gain a 1 Momentum advantage in similar circumstances when engaging or avoiding Capable craft or a 3 Momentum advantage against Lumbering vehicles.
- \* Just as a Lumbering crafts suffer penalties against a Capable vehicle, Civilian vehicles gain a 1 Momentum advantage against Cargo vessels, Military vessels gain a 1 Momentum advantage against Civilian and a 3 Momentum advantage against Cargo vessels.

**Example:** A personal flier (*Graceful, Civilian*) escaping a military frigate (*Capable, Military*) gains 1 Momentum (*Graceful beats Capable*) but loses 1 Momentum (*Military beats Civilian*) to have a net 0 bonus, but, when escaping a Lumbering Cargo vessel, it gains 4 bonus Momentum.

- \* Equilibrimotors count as Graceful Civilian fliers.
- \* Ground fliers count as Lumbering Civilian fliers.
- \* Unless specified all personal fliers are Capable Civilian fliers.

A flier or equilibrimotor is not available as core equipment without the narrator's permission, and even then costs 50xp to purchase a Capable Civilian flier or Lumbering Cargo vessel. Having such a vehicle always at the ready is a potent advantage indeed.

mounting the gunwales provide further protection from falling overboard. The First Born favored such vessels until the destruction of their religion in the Prince of Helium era.

The patrol boats found in most red Martian cities follow the design of the ten-man cruisers operating in the navies of several city-states. Bulkier in structure, these vessels are equipped with a steel prow, rapid-fire radium guns in the bow, and cabins of sorapus constructed on their keel decks. The patrol boats are all outfitted with horns and bulky searchlights.

Larger cruisers with crews of thirty to fifty men are also in service. These are fitted with radium guns fore and

aft and three to four guns to port and starboard. Bomb traps (in bow and stern), the magazines, the galley, crew quarters, and storage areas occupy the hull space below deck.

Battleships are the largest aerial vessels seen over Barsoom. Rising in multiple decks, their upper works bristle with gun batteries set amongst observation platforms, firing positions, and command posts. Below decks, the magazines, bomb bays, crew and officers' quarters are built around the multiple propeller shafts, engines, and vast buoyancy tanks required to lift such massive airships. Most are armed with stern and bow guns, heavy batteries with wireless finding



and sighting to port and starboard, and lighter weapons on the upper decks. Many have bomb batteries in their hulls, which are used not only to bombard ground troops, but also to devastate other airships targeted from above. Each battleship carries a complement of five ten-man cruisers, ten five-man scouts, and one hundred one-man scouts. Together with their fearsome firepower, this makes them the most formidable weapon on Barsoom.

Less massive are the giant freighters and passenger liners that trade and communicate between the docks and landing stages of friendly Martian cities. For heroes wishing to travel quickly and covertly, freighters and liners provide countless compartments, nooks, and hideaways where they can conceal themselves. Alternatively, they can book passage in the guise of travelling merchants or civilians and arrive at their destination concealed by the disembarking crowd.

## EQUILIBRIMOTORS

Available in most red Martian cities for rent or purchase, the equilibrimotor is an individual aerial mode of transport. It consists of a broad belt lined with pouches containing sufficient amounts of the eighth ray to render the wearer's body weightless. The buoyancy of the belt can be reduced by venting some of the eighth ray through the belt's main valve, or increased by purchasing pressurized vials of the eighth ray from belt merchants or suppliers.

Attached to the front of the belt is a control panel linked to the small radium motor fixed at the back. Strong, light wings are connected to the upper rim of the belt and these can be repositioned using the hand levers that alter their position.

The silence and stealth afforded by equilibrimotors mean that assassins, thieves, spies, and kidnappers favor them as a means of infiltration and escape. As a result, they cause consider-

able work for the air patrols of most cities. They are also used to drop troops on cities from hovering fliers, though this strategy is only used when the besieging forces wish to occupy the settlement or capture its inhabitants.

## GROUND FLIERS

Ground fliers are the most common means of private transportation in many Martian cities, including Helium, Ptarth, and Gathol. Most wealthy families have at least one ground flier and nobles may have several. Less wealthy Martians tend to hire public fliers. Servants and slaves always sit with the driver.

In Marentina, the Okarian ground fliers only travel along roads of ochre vegetation cultured from the dead sea bottoms. Powered by a small propeller at the stern, the vehicles move on rubber-like gasbags filled with enough of the eighth ray to raise the flier yet still allow it traction on the close-cropped sward. The rear wheels are geared to the engine for steering. These ground fliers are the only means of artificial transportation in the Okar nation until Talu becomes Jeddak of the Okar at the start of the Jeddak of Jeddaks era.

Elsewhere, ground fliers operate terrestrially and aerially. They have a ceiling of approximately one hundred sofads, with a top speed of sixty haads per hour. Vehicles travel either on the ochre roads, or rise to overtake slower transports or cross lanes. North-south traffic has right of way, with east-west traffic rising over it at intersections using the runways leading to each junction. All traffic moves in one direction along any given avenue. Parking areas are located at regular intervals in buildings sixty sofads above the pavement. Underpasses provide pedestrians with the means to cross major junctions safely.

Public and private ground fliers enable Martians to move quickly and discreetly around their cities. The anonymity of the public fliers makes

them the transport of choice for spies and assassins wishing to avoid local air patrols.

## PNEUMATIC TRAINS

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The twin cities of Helium are unique on Barsoom, not least for their pneumatic train system. This remarkable feat of engineering uses conical-nosed, eight sofab long projectile-like caskets to transport passengers to their destinations at high speed along grooved tracks. Travelers purchase tickets from a station gatekeeper, locate their designated casket, and select their destination using the dial on its nose. They then lie down in the upholstered interior beneath the canopy where an attendant secures them in position. The casket accelerates slowly from the station before reaching supersonic speeds in the tunnels connecting each location. Most passengers are commercial or government commuters. The nobility and their servants and slaves rarely use the pneumatic system, which makes it useful for any aristocrat wishing to travel incognito.

## SUBMARINES

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Until the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, submersible vessels are found only in the Omean Sea under the command of the First Born. These vessels are compact, torpedo-like oily-black objects containing little more than a command cabin, engine room, and stowage areas. With the fall of Issus and the collapse of the Martian religion centered on the Valley Dor, some of these vessels may have been piloted and taken overland into the red Martian irrigation system by disconsolate or resentful crews intent on piracy and revenge. Rumors are already beginning to circulate of strange, smooth-skinned beasts prowling the canals of Barsoom, and of shadowy figures haunting the margins

of remote farmsteads. If such vessels are responsible, their crews could cause considerable panic and destruction along the Martian waterways. Brave heroes would earn considerable fame for exposing and ending such activities.

## COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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Although radio aerogram communication is possible between Barsoom's cities and ships, such technology is never used during wartime and only rarely employed in moments of peace. Martian code-breakers are so efficient in decrypting the newest and most elaborate cyphers that covert transmissions are almost impossible. Military commanders fear a loss of surprise, freighter captains dread air piracy, and the crews of passenger liners worry their airships will be victims of indiscriminate attacks. As a result, there is little electronic communication across Barsoom, leaving the airship as the major mode of personal and written interaction on the planet. The single exception is the use of photographic facsimile transmissions, which are employed within and between most Martian cities for recording and inspecting the identity of citizens and visitors. Photostatic devices are also publicly available in the Temple of Knowledge in most red Martian cities. These enable copies to be made of the temple's texts and scrolls.

Given the restrictions acting on wireless communication on Barsoom, it is perhaps unsurprising that Martians have turned their attention outwards to the other planets in the Solar System. Martian astronomical instruments, wireless photography, and wireless telephony have all been applied to monitor life on Jasoom and other worlds. Many Martians now speak Urdu, English, Russian and Chinese. It was not until the discovery of the Gridley Wave in 1930 that two-way communication between Mars and Earth became possible.



## EXPERIMENTAL VESSELS AND INTERPLANETARY CRAFT

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Necessity and egocentricity often drive the incentive to produce unique and dangerous designs of airship, particularly in the Jeddak of Jeddaks era.

In an attempt to foil the schemes of the vengeful inventor Phor Tak, Tan Hadron of Hastor, and Nur An of Jahar designed the *Jhama*, a cylindrical vessel, pointed fore and aft, and fitted with a standard engine, making it no faster than a three-man flyer. Inside the *Jhama*'s outer hull is a cylindrical shell with the control cabin and quarters for four crew. The buoyancy tanks are located between the two hulls, and observation ports at the bow, stern, and along both sides pierce all three structural elements. These ports are shuttered on the outside and controlled from within. Hatches open onto a narrow walkway located along the upper surface of the cylinder. Disintegrating ray rifles are mounted fore and aft with a periscope giving the gunner an excellent view of anything coming within range of the guns. The ship is finished with a blue undercoat that protects it from the disintegrating ray rifles invented by Phor Tak and finished with a layer of the invisibility compound that bends light waves around the hull. Following Phor Tak's defeat, the *Jhama* was taken to Helium where it remains closely guarded.

In design, the *Jhama* is modeled on "The Flying Death", an aerial torpedo-like mine developed by Phor Tak to destroy the Jaharian fleet. The airships of Jahar were coated with the protective blue paint and equipped with the disintegrating ray rifles Phor Tak invented, originally for Jahar's ambitious jeddak, Tul Axtar. In an ironic twist, the torpedoes were attracted to the vibration frequency of the blue coating and target any ship it protects. The secret of the blue paint and The Flying Death may have gone to the grave with Phor Tak, but this is not certain. A servant may have taken the inventor's notes, or a hidden chamber may conceal the plans and formulae. The answers could lie in the ape-haunted corridors of *Jhama*, for anyone brave enough to risk the dangers.

Phor Tak's scientific eccentricity and egomania is not uncommon on Barsoom. During the Jeddak of Jeddaks era, Fal Sivas and Gar Nal, rival Zodangan inventors, exhibited similar traits in their competition to build Barsoom's first interplanetary craft and pillage the resources of Thuria.

In outward appearance and internal structure, both ships are almost indistinguishable as a result of the espionage conducted between their designers. Ellipsoidal in shape, with a bulbous bow tapering to a pointed stern, the ships are fifty sofas long and fifteen wide at the prow. A control room occupies the forward section of the ships and houses the complex mechanical and electrical systems for piloting the craft. From here, two crystal portholes provide views of the exterior world. Behind the control room are the crew cabins, more luxuriously appointed in Fal Sivas' craft. The storerooms, motors, oxygen- and water-generating systems, and temperature regulation controls are located in the stern. At full power, both ships can travel at speeds in excess of 3,250 haads per zode, or approximately 1,300 miles per hour.

These two craft differ in one important aspect: Fal Sivas' vessel is fitted with a mechanical brain, perfected through the vivisection of countless slaves. This brain is located above and between the view ports in the control room in a grapefruit-sized metal sphere. The brain has no capacity for independent thought, but governs the mechanical operations and autonomic functions of the ship's systems. Lenses in each of the two viewports relay visual information to the brain, which responds either automatically or as directed telepathically by the pilot. The brain also aims the ship's high-powered radium rifles when it enters combat.

The whereabouts of the two vessels is currently a subject of concern in Helium. After they returned from Thuria, both disappeared from Zodanga and have not been found. What new mischief might arise from Fal Sivas' ambition following the death of Gar Nal remains unclear.

# CHAPTER 6: GROWING YOUR LEGEND

It is strange how new and unexpected conditions bring out unguessed ability to meet them.

– John Carter, *The Warlord of Mars*

Player characters in *John Carter of Mars* gain power and influence in two ways: through experience and renown. Experience is how a character gains new talents, increases attributes, and generally becomes a stronger warrior, diplomat, hunter, or whatever their personal calling. Renown represents fame and influence gained during a character's adventures. It is used to acquire new allies, titles, and other social and political advantages.

Essentially, experience represents internal character growth and renown represents how the character grows as a part of the setting. At the end of each adventure, player characters will receive both experience and renown based on what they have learned and how

their actions have impacted the world as a whole. These amounts are often tied to each other, with dangerous and dramatic adventures providing sizable experience and renown. However, it is possible an obscure adventure in the wilds of Barsoom may be great for experience but provide little renown. Conversely, a powerful player character might manage to conquer a foe relatively easily but in doing so gain a great amount of notoriety. Still, these rare adventures are outliers — generally the bigger the danger and obstacles, the greater the gains in both experience and renown.

## EXPERIENCE AND UPGRADES

UPGRADE	XP COST
Add a talent	5xp per grade of talent
Change a flaw	10xp per change
Increase one of your attributes a first time	10xp
Increase one of your attributes a second time	20xp
Increase one of your attributes a third time	40xp*
Add a piece of core equipment (hand held)	5xp per item

# EXPERIENCE

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Experience is awarded by the narrator at the end of every adventure and represents how much a character has personally struggled and what potential they may unlock through adversity. Characters use experience to purchase new talents, change their flaws, gain core equipment, and improve attributes.

The costs for advancing your character through experience are provided on the chart on the facing page.

Experience is generally awarded at the end of every session or adventure, depending on the preferences of the narrator. The methods of awarding experience vary with each narrator as well. Some prefer to give all player characters the same amount of experience. Others prefer to hand out awards for great roleplaying or particularly effective uses of talents and other abilities.

A good general guideline is to give players 1-3 experience per session. The end of an adventure or major campaign or story arc typically provides a bonus of additional experience, usually 3-5, though grand adventures and major campaigns may award even more.

Awarding additional experience causes characters to grow faster, which can be fun. It can also unbalance the game. Likewise, awarding too little experience can stagnate characters, making them feel like they never learn anything or improve. Narrators are cautioned to keep an eye on how quickly characters are developing and adjust experience awards as necessary. As a general guideline, it is usually better to give a bit too much than too little.

If periods of extended downtime occur during a game session, the narrator may award experience for an adventure so far and allow players to

spend it at that time. This is a good way to represent periods of training and development. However, as characters in *John Carter* tend to change somewhat slowly and usually only through active and dramatic conflict, it is not required.

## CHANGING YOUR FLAW

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Over time a character may learn from mistakes or have a substantial change to their destiny or position that alters their character's flaw. An **Overconfident** character may finally learn he cannot handle every situation, or a character given to **Romantic Flights of Fancy** may adopt a more realistic outlook after some tragedy or other life-changing event.

Through their experience and by spending experience, a character can change their flaw. However, there are two conditions. First, they cannot remove a flaw, they can only exchange it for another. Second, there must be a valid and significant reason during play to motivate this change. The character does not one day suddenly wake up and decide to change their ways, this change must make sense based on how the character is played, their experiences, and events of past adventures.

Note that changing a character's flaw is fairly rare in the Carter stories, but it may be more frequent in *John Carter* campaigns. Also, a narrator may elect to let you change your flaw without charging experience if situations arising through play demand it, such as your character going through a serious loss or triumph that changes their outlook or destiny.

# RENOWN

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As noted earlier, renown represents the social impact, reputation, fame, and political power characters gain through their actions. In addition to providing a general guideline as to how famous a character and his exploits are on Barsoom, renown is also a character advancement resource that can be used to purchase allies, titles, and other useful representations of their fame and reputation collectively known in the game as accolades.

## STARTING RENOWN

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All player characters start with renown which they can spend during character generation. Even beginning characters in *John Carter of Mars* are usually socially well-connected or exceptional in some way. They may have a respected title or rank, or they may begin with several close allies, but they are not alone or unknown even in their earliest adventures on Barsoom. Earthborn characters are the exception; they start with no renown. No matter how famous they may be on Earth, on Barsoom no one knows or respects them until they prove themselves worthy through their actions.

By default, all player characters aside from Earthborn ones start with 10 renown.

## GAINING RENOWN DURING PLAY

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Renown is gained as a reward for great deeds witnessed by others. Even enemies who survive encounters with a character will one day relate tales which grow their renown. Saving large groups of people, rescuing important dignitaries, defeating fearsome enemies, or uncovering great secrets and lost treasures will gain a character renown.

Renown gains can be delayed by the narrator if no one other than the

player characters witness a heroic or exceptional deed or exploit. However, eventually people will find out about the great things a character accomplished and they will receive renown for their actions.

Most adventures that make the player characters look good, skilled, or effective grant them 1 renown. If they do something truly exceptional or heroic, they gain an additional 1 renown. In some rare cases, such as saving a whole nation, ending or preventing a great war, or destroying an apocalyptic threat, they may gain even more renown. Acting dishonorably or villainously can often reduce or even eliminate renown rewards.

Note that until people are aware of their exceptional might and other abilities, Earthborn characters tend to gain a few extra renown as they leap and bound through their early adventures on Barsoom. This helps them mitigate some of the renown they lack in the beginning.

**Example:** After defeating a plot by a cabal of Holy Therns to replace a popular jeddak with a more devout and tractable ruler, the player characters each gain renown for their actions. Because discovering and defeating the Therns was both difficult and culminated in a high-profile battle in the jeddak's great hall, the narrator awards each character 2 renown. However, he grants the Earthborn characters, Jane Porter and Kale Singh, 1 additional renown as their exceptional strength and strange ways makes their heroism especially noteworthy. He also grants an additional renown to Haren Phel, who took a blow meant for the jeddak and nearly died doing so. Conversely, he reduces the award for Volan Von by 1 renown, as he refused an offer to duel a Holy Thern swordsman and shot the villain instead. While this action helped end the threat, it is in defiance of standard Martian codes of honor and thus, Volan's action hurts his overall reputation somewhat.



# UNSPENT RENOWN

Unspent renown does not go away, it remains until a player uses it to purchase something for his character. In fact, characters and narrators will want to keep an eye on a character's total renown (spent and unspent) as it gives a general idea how famous a character is.

Characters trying to travel in disguise in areas where they are well-known find difficulties to do so raised by 1, more in places they frequent. Characters may also spend 1 Momentum in such areas to have an admirer recognize them. What they do with that recognition is up to them, but this individual is favorably disposed to being helpful in minor ways. For characters of lesser renown this means being recognized in your home district in a city or among a small tribe. For the most famous faces on Barsoom, this means there is nowhere they can go without a chance of being discovered! Such is the price of fame.

Unspent renown can also be used in place of Momentum to secure assistance temporarily during an adventure. Often a narrator allows characters to spend Momentum to

## OPTIONAL RULE: RENOWN USE DISCOUNTS

Narrators who want to encourage players to spend renown in play to secure aid can offer a discount on permanent renown purchases when renown is temporarily spent to achieve an in-play effect. A 1 renown discount is usually sufficient. This means that characters will more often make allies and friends of those they meet, or gain titles from those they already have excellent relations with during play, but it might require a bit of extra bookkeeping, so it is optional.

gain additional insight or assistance in the form of useful information, the sudden appearance of an ally, or other types of "dramatic editing" to a scene. Unspent renown can be spent in place of Momentum to accomplish the same thing. Renown spent is returned at the end of the session it is used.

TOTAL RENOWN	REPUTATION AND EFFECTS
0-9	Obscure and unknown, reduce all difficulties to disguise yourself or travel unrecognized by 1.
10-20	Known in some circles or regions. No modifiers.
21-35	Known in your city or immediate region but generally unknown elsewhere.
36-50	Famous in your city or immediate region and known to your homeland's neighbors and rivals.
51-60	Famous in your entire nation and among its closest allies and enemies. Well-known in more remote lands with regular contact with these places.
61-75	Among the great heroes, jeddaks, and other champions of Barsoom. Known across most of the planet, save isolated enclaves and faraway lands.
76+	One of the most famous faces on Barsoom, like the great John Carter. Likely a jed or jeddak with many allies. Recognized by name or reputation everywhere on Barsoom.

## OPTIONAL RULE: SHARING RENOWN

Player characters often only gain 1 renown at a time, but if they gain 2 renown or more for a particularly noteworthy deed, they can choose to grant one of their renown to another character. This represents the character humbly downplaying their own accomplishments and praising those of others. This altruistic act has no direct effect, but it can have long-term or significant effects during a campaign.

Sharing renown is meant to enable fun roleplaying situations and allow particular characters their unique moments and triumphs through play. If this leads to quibbling over renown, player conflicts, or other problems during play, feel free to ignore it.

**Example:** *During an adventure where the player characters save a beloved jeddak from certain death, preventing a civil war, each of them is awarded 3 renown. However, realizing their friend Zala Zors wishes to marry the jeddak's son whom she fell in love with during the adventure, Kale, Volan, Haren, and Jane all downplay their own heroism and each grant Zala 1 of their earned renown. With 7 new renown (3 she earned and 1 each from four other player characters), Zala now has 7 additional renown and has greatly impressed the jeddak, his family, and the people of his nation. She uses this renown to help purchase a title within the jeddak's nation, representing the position she gains when she weds the prince at the beginning of the next session. The other player characters gain less renown because of their humility, but one of their own gains significant power and influence in exchange.*

## TRAVELING IN DISGUISE

Characters in the John Carter novels often protect themselves in strange lands by concealing their identity. This is useful when some villain has sworn to kill you when you meet, but makes it difficult to use the advantages your renown brings.

When traveling in disguise, characters cannot take advantage of their renown or any accolades they have purchased with it. They also cannot spend any of their existing renown.

However, they can still gain renown through their actions and may, if they desire, spend that for their false identity. This is how John Carter himself sometimes would earn a position or title in a foreign land while posing as a panthan or mundane traveler.

Of course, eventually a character's disguise will end and they will return to their real identity, revealing to all around the heroic adventurer they truly are. When this happens, renown purchases either transfer or are refunded, depending on what makes the most sense. Any unspent renown is added to the character's regular renown total.

Narrators and players alike should note these rules can be a bit fiddly, requiring the tracking of two different amounts of renown and accolades. Some groups may wish to avoid these rules, simply freezing all renown awards and uses until the disguise is revealed. In this case, narrators should still track renown gains to be awarded later once word gets around who the character really was.

# ACCOLADES

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Renown can generally be used to purchase accolades. Accolades are social or political advantages falling into two major categories: allies and titles. The following section details these accolades, what they do, and how much renown they generally cost.

## ALLIES

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Allies are groups or influential individuals the character can call on when they need assistance. Allies are often members of the same family or organization as the character, but this need not always be the case. After all, John Carter himself regularly makes allies of individuals from various races and cultures. Not all allies are even necessarily humanoid or sentient — an excessively talented and loyal beast may be an ally as well.

Allies are also how characters represent heroic or positive reputations within a particular group when they possess no particular position or title (for those, *see Titles*) with that group. Thus, a character who saves a fleet of Helium navy airships may take the Helium navy as allies, even if he holds no official naval rank. He also may take just the commanders and crews of those ships as allies, which would be less useful but also cost less renown to acquire.

Note that allies can be lost through death or if a character severely mistreats them or abuses their trust. Allies lost through misadventure and calamity are often eventually replaced with characters of similar backgrounds, history, or temperament; those lost by a character's own evil acts rarely are so replenished.

Generally, a group of allies will be no larger than a mercenary company, ship's crew, or similar band of half a dozen to fifty or so individuals. Having the favor of groups much larger is

either significantly more expensive or involves purchasing titles instead (*see Titles*). Allies often have their own followers, titles, or resources they can bring to help a character. However, remember these things come to a player character indirectly through the ally and, because of this, may come with their own complications and limitations. After all, a jedwar may order some of his soldiers to aid a character, but that does not mean they will always follow the character unquestioningly or even enthusiastically.

In addition to seeking out allies for help, they may show up to aid a character if Momentum is spent. How much Momentum it takes for an ally to show up and help depends on how much aid they bring and how difficult or unlikely it would be for them to show up to offer assistance. It may only cost 1 Momentum for a jed to show up to render aid outside his city gates, but to have that same jed mount a rescue mission halfway across Barsoom would be much more expensive.

**Example:** *John Carter has the First Born Dator Xodar as an ally and wishes his ally to assist him when his airship is shot down near Xodar's homeland in Omean. As Carter is near to Xodar's home base and the First Born has access to his own airships, the narrator says it will only cost 2 Momentum for Carter's ally to send a ship to pick him up. If Carter had been shot down in the arctic wastes of the north far from Xodar's realm or taken prisoner and locked away somewhere hard to reach, it would have been considerably more expensive.*

Narrators can also decide certain allies are unable to assist a character at a particular time. This can be due to time, distance, or even some problem of which the characters are not yet aware. If your ally has been imprisoned by a rival or is seriously injured, he obviously cannot come to your aid. In fact,

seeking out allies who previously failed to come to your assistance and finding them in peril is a great way to start a new adventure!

**Cost:** The exact cost of an ally depends on how skilled and connected they are. Allies that can regularly lend large numbers of troops or other resources to a character cost additional renown.

- \* An ally that is either personally exceptional due to abilities and training or politically connected costs 2 renown.
- \* An ally who is a powerful or otherwise exceptional beast costs 3 renown.
- \* An ally that is politically connected and personally exceptional costs 4 renown.
- \* An ally that has a band of soldiers, a single airship, or similar resources characters can make use of usually costs 1 additional renown.
- \* An ally can have a company of soldiers, several airships, or similar resources for 2 more renown.
- \* An ally can have an army, navy, or other vast resources for 4 renown.

**Example:** A heroic young officer or loyal gladiator a character meets on their adventures would be a fine 2 renown ally. If it turns out he is also a lost prince of a kingdom, he would be worth 4 renown. If it turns out he is the jed of a nearby nation and his father is the jeddak, giving him access to considerable resources? He is worth 6 or more renown.

## SPECIFIC VERSUS GENERAL ALLIES

As noted earlier, allies can be defined as an individual of some importance or a whole group. Both are permissible and useful allies, though in practice they work a bit differently. Having an ally that is a single person, even one who brings other people and resources with them, provides the character with a person who will go to great lengths to assist them. However, this person may not always be available or in a position to assist the character. Such allies also require a more personal relationship be maintained and valued by the character lest they become alienated.

By contrast, an ally defined as a larger group has more diverse resources and availability but less focus. Their assistance usually takes longer to acquire and is often less enthusiastic and invested. A group may provide ample supplies, information, and even troops and transportation to a character they see as a great friend, but they will not spend months or even years seeking to save, aid, or otherwise assist their ally.

**Example:** An ally who is a loyal Thark chieftain will fight and even die for the character who is their friend. This ally costs 4 renown, as he is skilled and influential. If this ally can regularly lend the services of his warband of Tharks he would cost 6 renown. However, when this chieftain is absent, wounded, or otherwise occupied, the character cannot gain as much aid as when his friend is present.

By contrast, an ally in the form of the whole Thark warband is also worth 4 renown, more if they are willing to lend the character Thark warriors or other potent resources on a regular basis. Any Thark of that band would see the character as a friend and give him some assistance, but none are pledged to follow, serve, or defend him as a personal ally like the Thark chieftain.

These differences tend to balance out in play, which is why there is no additional charge for specific or general

allies, you simply pay for their capabilities and what extra resources they may provide the character, though doing so usually does make general allies; such as ruling families, armies, and other major groups, more expensive. It is allowable and even expected for characters to purchase allies of both general and specific types that overlap, though it may be more cost effective in some cases to purchase a title instead.

## ALLIES CHANGING POWER AND INFLUENCE

Sometimes allies may increase or decrease in power. A jed may become a jeddak, a jeddak may abdicate in favor of his daughter or son, or the leader of a nation, army, or organization may see their group rise or fall in influence. If these changes happen in play as a direct result of player character action, there is no change in the renown cost of the ally. They are simply a natural consequence of play.

However, if these changes are a result of narrator fiat or a player wishing his ally to become more powerful without enabling their rise in station, then either the player is refunded the difference between the ally's old and new value (in the case of a decrease) or they must pay the difference between the old and new value (in the case of an increase). In other words, the cheapest way to make allies more powerful is to go out and help them rise in prominence and influence, but the quickest way is to just spend renown, meaning they have found their own avenues of advancement. The latter method is not necessary arbitrary; it simply represents how associating with daring heroes like the character has freed up time and opened opportunities for the ally to advance while off on their own.

### OPTIONAL RULE: OUT OF YOUR ELEMENT

If a campaign begins with a character in a situation and location that would render an accolade largely ineffective or even a hindrance, the narrator may allow the character to purchase the renown for less than its normal cost. This allows a character to begin with an accolade they could not usually afford, such as the jeddak of a nation, or having both a respectable title and a very strong ally. However, this discount comes with a price. They cannot reach or access this accolade early on in any direct way until they repay the discount with renown earned during play. They may still benefit from the existence of the general accolade, but they cannot draw upon it directly in any meaningful way. With this option, you can even begin as a jeddak of a great nation with great potential power, but you are going to spend many adventures in exile, believed dead by most of your people or otherwise unable to take advantage of the prime benefits of your accolade.

This option is of most use when a character begins play as a captive, hostage, or is for some reason very far from home when a campaign starts.

Narrators, as a rule, should rarely decrease the value of an ally without giving player characters allied with them a chance to prevent this effect. However, sometimes a decrease is logical or necessary due to events in the campaign. When this occurs, player characters with such diminished allies get the renown spent returned to reinvest in a new accolade.

# TITLES

Titles are the most direct translation of renown into tangible benefit, providing a position of respect and access to the resources of a group or institution. Titles are earned ranks or hereditary positions that provide the character with both position and responsibility. Membership in the group that grants the title is implicit in gaining it; you are considered to be part of the nation, tribe, or organization that grants you rank and position among them. A title can give characters authority and access to groups with powerful resources. However, titles also come with the expectation of service or sworn allegiance. Betraying a group with whom you hold a title is a great way to lose it.

Titles may be official or unofficial, noble or professional, but they all work in essentially the same way. Every title conveys four things:

- \* A general rank in a group or society, such as dwar or jeddak.
- \* Membership in that group, such as the Helium Navy or the Kingdom of Okar.
- \* Resources that membership and rank grant the character access to, such as the ability to requisition troops, equipment, and secure sensitive information.
- \* Responsibility to the group to serve their interests loyally and faithfully, including protecting fellow members and commanding with integrity and skill when called to.

Most of the benefits of a title are common sense. However, there are also some direct mechanical benefits. When a character is dealing socially with a character in the same organization or group whom they outrank, they gain a bonus die in all social-based actions and

conflicts. The same bonus applies when attempting to gain the respect or mercy of an enemy or rival. A **jeddak** of a rival nation may not help you, but they are less likely to kill you casually if they realize you are an important enemy, and thus a useful hostage or source of intelligence! In this case, any title equal to or above dwar (captain) will provide such a bonus, not simply a superior one.

Titles are also often impressive, lowering the difficulty of actions involving convincing someone of your importance or authority. In general, even if a title does not provide a bonus, it will have some effect on the difficulty of a social-based contest. Note that, at times, this may be an increase in difficulty, such as trying to convince a foe to release you when they know you are a valuable member of a rival's ruling class or military hierarchy. In some cases, a title might even grant a bonus die to your opponent in an opposed test, though these circumstances should be rare.

**Example:** *Dejah Thoris, Princess of Helium, is trying to convince a Zodangan jedwar to release her after he has captured Thoris' airship in a raid. Dejah's title as Princess of Helium would provide her a bonus to convince the enemy jedwar to let her live or send word of her capture to her family. It might even reduce the difficulty for her to charm or seduce the jedwar into letting his guard down. However, attempting to demand her release from an enemy who stands to gain much fame and profit from her capture is highly unlikely, raising the difficulty of such tests and granting the jedwar a bonus die on any opposed test. Dejah attempts to secure her release.*

A character may also spend Momentum to immediately acquire the use of resources appropriate to their title. The exact cost depends on the circumstances. Getting a couple of guards to accompany a princess in her own palace is a 1 Momentum spend.



COST/TITLE	DESCRIPTION
<b>40:</b> <b>Jeddak /</b> <b>Jeddara</b>	Leader of a nation, horde, or city state. Akin to an emperor or king. Have serious responsibilities of position and office.
<b>20:</b> <b>Jed</b>	Leader of a city or settlement that is part of a greater nation or horde. Akin to a lesser king, duke or baron. Numerous responsibilities.
<b>10:</b> <b>Prince /</b> <b>Princess</b>	Member of the royal or ruling family of a nation or city-state. Usually has fewer responsibilities but less defined authority than more formalized ranks.
<b>8:</b> <b>Chieftain</b>	Noble, equivalent to an Earth duke or baron. Part of an influential family or faction with holdings and responsibilities accordant to their station. Often used by the Tharks and other green Martians.
<b>15:</b> <b>Jedwar</b>	Great leader within a city-state or nation. Also known as lord-officer or marshal. Great responsibilities, but generally a fair amount of freedom.
<b>12:</b> <b>Odwar</b>	A general or commander of an army or armada. Serious responsibility to your troops as well as to your superiors, but high degree of personal discretion.
<b>8:</b> <b>Teedwar</b>	A major, commands a battalion or a major warship with escorts. Responsible for your junior officers and troops, responsible to your superiors.
<b>5:</b> <b>Dwar</b>	A captain of a ship, company, or similar group. Very responsible for those under your command and must obey superiors, but some freedom of action.
<b>2:</b> <b>Padwar</b>	Lieutenant, commands a small group of soldiers or serves under a dwarf of a ship as an officer. Moderate and well-defined responsibilities when on duty.
<b>0:</b> <b>Than</b>	Lowest rank of navy or army.
<b>10:</b> <b>Dator</b>	Prince of the First Born. Unique title to First Born nations.
<b>5:</b> <b>Master /</b> <b>Mistress</b>	Leader or high-ranking member of a guild, such as the assassin's guild.
<b>2:</b> <b>Guildsman /</b> <b>Guildswoman</b>	Member of a guild, such as the assassin's guild.

Finding loyal cohorts in a rival city costs much more, and may, at the narrator's discretion, be impossible. The more resources a character wishes to use, the more Momentum they must spend.

**Example:** *Dejah Thoris has escaped from her Zodangan captor and is hiding in a settlement on the Helium-Zodanga border. She wishes to find some loyal Heliumites to assist her in eluding her captors and getting back home. Given the distance from the capital and risk involved to any who aid her, the narrator charges her 3 Momentum to secure*

*a few former Helium soldiers who remember their princess fondly and will hide her and defend her. If she wishes more citizens to assist her or seeks to borrow an airship to escape, it will cost her more Momentum. However, if she only desired a brief hiding place for a single night or a lone long-retired soldier to aid her, she might purchase that for 1 Momentum.*

**Cost:** Title cost varies greatly based on what the title is and how large a group it covers. The cost of military rank in a kingdom's navy, for example,

varies based on the size and power of the kingdom and the actual rank held. For the exact cost of a particular title, check the table to the right. These titles can also be used as a basis for unique titles created by narrators to honor and award characters during play.

The basic costs here assume that whatever group grants the title has modest resources, responsibilities, and reach: a small nation, a medium-sized army, a modest-sized guild or institution, or an active and large group of mercenaries or raiders. If a group that grants the title is particularly powerful or far-reaching, the title costs more. Generally, a title involving a large nation, powerful military force, or far reaching organization costs 1 and 5 extra renown from the base cost depending on just how influential and powerful the group or nation is. Likewise, if a group is exceptionally weak then the cost goes down between 1 and 5 renown. Thus, being a prince of Helium costs substantially more renown as it is more generally useful than being prince of a lost nation in a remote corner of Barsoom that has dwindled down to a few hundred subjects. Increased or decreased responsibilities from the normal for a position also affect the renown cost, such as a prince or princess who is far down the line of succession or a retired officer with no active duties or assignment.

## GREEN MARTIAN TITLES

While green Martian tribes and hordes use major titles like jeddak and jedwar, they can sometimes be a bit looser with lower titles. However, green Martian characters can purchase most titles and define them as being an equivalent rank or position in their horde. Thus, even if a horde does not have teedwars, a green Martian character could still purchase the title defined as being a great sub-chieftain of the horde with many warriors under his command. Also, green Martians have no princes or

princesses — their methods of childrearing prevent this.

## HONORARY AND FORMER TITLES

Honorary ranks in a command with few responsibilities usually cancel each other out in terms of benefits and disadvantages, costing the same as an active title. It is generally harder to secure real and effective aid, but little is expected of you. Likewise, being a retired member of a group is similarly balanced. You do not have much active power, but you are deeply respected, even by many of your superiors.

## PROMOTIONS AND TITLE CHANGES

Titles can be replaced as well as acquired. If characters impress their superiors or a ruler they are in line to replace abdicates or resigns, they may acquire a new, more expensive title by paying the difference between the two titles in renown.

In the rare instance that a character loses a title due to circumstances unrelated to their actions, they will receive the renown spent. This is usually part of some larger plot or adventure, and if this loss is intended to be temporary (such as a coup that the player characters are expected to put down in a coming adventure), a narrator does not need to refund the renown spent provided it still has some use.

**Example:** *The nation of Pthar is overthrown by a rebellious jed. During this time, Thuvia, Princess of Pthar, is not officially a princess of her homeland. However, as this development is part of an upcoming adventure and she still has the support of many loyalists among her nation during her time in temporary exile, she does not receive any renown spent on her title back. During this time she is still considered Princess of Helium, as she is currently married to Carthoris, Prince of Helium.*

## USING RENOWN TO CHANGE BARSOOM

Player characters can and should use renown and accolades to change life on Barsoom. Purchasing the right allies when holding certain titles creates lasting unions, alliances, and political shifts larger than the characters themselves. Allies linked by player characters may become friends and companions themselves, changing how whole groups and factions relate to each other. This is how John Carter unified much of Mars, through winning friends and influencing people.

Narrators should take note and keep track of the player characters' accolades for this reason, and so should the player characters. If allies are ignored and the responsibilities that come with titles neglected, things can go badly very quickly. On the other hand, if these things are nurtured and promoted, both the player characters and the characters, groups, and locales important to them will prosper and flourish. They may even unify or change in significant ways.

**Example:** Over time, Mark's player character Tormin has become a dwarf of a famed panthan (mercenary) fleet and gained allies among various groups, including Jeddak Kulan Tith of the red Martian nation of Kaol and a roguish pirate known as Saja Min who commands several airships. After Tormin calls on Saja to transport his company on a mission to save Kaol from invasion, the pirate queen makes a positive impression on the jeddak. Sometime after the adventure, Tith makes an offer to Saja Min, offering her status as a privateer using Kaol as a home base, a move which bolsters Kaol's fledgling airship navy. When Tormin next visits his friend Kulan Tith, he finds Saja Min is now odwar of the nation's growing fleet of privateers. Without Tormin bringing these two forces together, this situation would have never developed.

## SPECIAL ITEMS AND RENOWN

Some readers may feel the ability to purchase special or unique items as character rewards with renown is missing from the accolades. This makes sense if you consider various stories or adventure set-ups where the daring heroes save the day and are rewarded with a magic sword or shiny medal, thanked profusely, and then they leave never to see those who heaped these rewards upon them again.

**John Carter** stories are different. Barsoomians are deeply honorable people, slow to trust and deeply committed to those they choose as their allies and companions. A jeddak may give a beautifully crafted sword to a warrior who served his people, but he will also *always* pledge some favor, offer some title, or arrange some other lasting and socially-oriented reward. A First Born ship's captain may give a red Martian princess who saves his ship a strange artifact he discovered and could never quite figure out the use for, but he will also consider her an ally or honorary member of his crew from that day forward.

Narrators should consider physical rewards for successful adventures or as gifts from allies or luminaries the player characters win over during their adventures. However, these treasures are not purchased with renown, they are side-effects of the heroism and bold actions that win the characters' respect, admiration, and advancement.

This is also how the player characters take control of their own destinies on Barsoom. After a time, adventures and entire campaign arcs will center around the accolades they acquire through play. In this way, adventure begets more adventure, play enables more play.

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# GLOSSARY OF CORE GAME TERMS

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## **Accolade (page 135)**

*Character advancements bought with renown, in the form of allies or titles.*

## **Actions (page 98)**

### \* **Movement action**

*A character takes this action during an action scene. A character can move to any point within away range.*

### \* **Spoken action**

*With this action, a character can use simple speech that requires little to no effort. Spoken actions never include attribute tests.*

### \* **Free action**

*A Free action is used to accomplish a minor activity within a turn that does not warrant the use of a Conflict, Spoken or Movement action, such as moving anywhere within Near range (as long as there is no obstruction to your movement) or picking up an object. A Free action never involves an attribute test.*

### \* **Counterstrike**

*After a character has defended during an opposed test they may spend 3 Momentum to gain an immediate Conflict action. They may only use this action against the character that initiated the opposed test but cannot save any Momentum generated. You may not Counterstrike against a Counterstrike.*

### \* **Conflict action**

*The focus in an action scene. Conflict actions are normally used to make attacks, normally require attribute tests. Characters may only have one Conflict action per turn.*

## **Advancement rewards (page 130)**

*The collective name for the rewards players receive in the form of experience points (xp) and renown.*

## **Affliction (page 101)**

*A long-term effect of damage that is harder to recover from. Each affliction received puts a penalty on certain attribute tests depending on the type of affliction. If a character suffers 5 or more afflictions, they are no longer able to continue in the scene and are blacked out. See below for they types of affliction.*

### \* **Madness**

*When a sufficient amount of the Confusion damage type is inflicted, characters suffer the Madness affliction. Madness increases the difficulty of attribute tests using Empathy or Reason.*

### \* **Trauma**

*When a sufficient amount of the Fear damage type is inflicted, characters suffer the Trauma affliction. Trauma increases the difficulty of attribute tests using Daring or Passion.*

### \* **Wounds**

*When a sufficient amount of the Injury damage type is inflicted, characters suffer the Wounds affliction. Wounds increases the difficulty of attribute tests using Might or Cunning.*

## **Ally/allies (page 135)**

*Allies are groups or influential individuals that characters can call on when they need assistance. Allies are bought as part of character advancement using renown.*

### **Assistance (page 80)**

When a character makes an attribute test, other characters can help to achieve successes in order to pass the test. The character making the attribute test is the leader and the other characters are assistants. The leader makes the test as normal and the assisting characters all roll 1d20 making a test using their own attributes. As long as the leader scores at least 1 success, any successes the assistants make also count towards succeeding on the task. Assistants may not use bonus dice, Momentum or spend Threat when they assist.

### **Attribute challenge (page 78)**

These are used when multiple attribute tests are needed to complete a task. Each attribute challenge has a difficulty and a threshold. The threshold is the number of Momentum that must be generated over multiple attribute tests in order to succeed on the attribute challenge.

### **Attribute test (page 72)**

Whenever the outcome or success of a character's actions is in doubt they must make an attribute test. The narrator will state the difficulty of the test and which attributes to use to get the target number. Then the player rolls 2d20 and any other bonus dice they have for the test. Each dice roll under the target number they generate 1 success. If successes are generated equal to or over the difficulty the character passes the attribute test. Any extra successes become Momentum.

### **Attributes (page 72)**

The six attributes represent the capabilities of a character. Attributes are rated from 4 (average) to 12 (legendary) and these scores represent how competent your character is in each attribute. See below for individual attribute descriptions.

#### **\* Daring**

Comes into play whenever a character is at risk and movement is important. Daring covers movement, piloting, and defense actions of all sorts.

#### **\* Passion**

Governs any attempt to lead, love, or entertain. It is used whenever another character needs to be convinced to attempt an action.

#### **\* Cunning**

Used whenever a character wants to weaken another. Cunning is used for all attacks, insults, and thefts.

#### **\* Reason**

Supports any action that applies the mind or senses to work out a problem.

#### **\* Empathy**

Used whenever a character seeks to understand or heal another. Empathy is used to heal all types of afflictions and to understand what your senses might be telling you about a person.

#### **\* Might**

Used to apply force to inanimate objects. It is used outside of combat to lift, bend, and break items.

### **Black out (page 105)**

Blacking out occurs in one of three ways. First, a character can suffer 5 of any one affliction. Second, a character can be blacked out by the narrator for narrative reasons. Third, a character can voluntarily black out. If a character blacks out they are unable to take any action at all and is no longer a viable character.

**Character advancement (page 130)**

Collective term for when characters spend experience or renown to improve their characters.

**Complication (page 73)**

Complications occur when a 20 is rolled during an attribute test. Complications occur regardless of the success or failure of a test. A complication can present an obstacle to further progress, requiring a new approach (like a route of escape being blocked), a loss of personal resources (such as using up ammunition), or something that hinders the character temporarily (a dropped weapon or a stuck door). It does not represent an injury to the character, and is a temporary setback.

**D20 (page 71)**

A twenty-sided dice that is used for all attribute tests.  $x\text{d}20$  represents how many dice should be rolled with  $x$  being the number of dice.  $2\text{d}20$  (two twenty-sided dice) is the default for all attribute tests before any bonus dice are added.

**D6 (page 71)**

A six-sided dice used to roll for damage. These are called combat dice and are represented as  $x\text{d}6$ , where  $x$  is the number of dice rolled. Special **John Carter of Mars** dice have icons on the faces to represent damage and effects. The table on page 71 describes what each number or icon (for specialized **John Carter** dice) represent.

**Damage (page 101)**

When an attack is successful or a danger is not overcome characters have damage inflicted on them. Damage is inflicted by rolling the appropriate number of  $\text{d}6$ 's, known as combat dice or  $\text{d}6$ . This is a damage roll. Every point of damage inflicted on a character increases the stress by 1 on that character's stress track.

**Damage type (pages 102–104)**

Damage has three types, Confusion, Fear and Injury. Each damage type has a stress track. When a character or creature suffers damage, it will be one of those three types. See below for descriptions of each type of damage.

✱ **Confusion**

Confusion is damage inflicted on the mind. Things such as complex tasks or the fog of war can inflict Confusion.

✱ **Fear**

Fear is damage inflicted on the will. Things such as a terrifying creature can inflict Fear.

✱ **Injury**

Injury is damage inflicted on the body. Things such as being struck with a sword or falling from a height can inflict Injury.

**Difficulty (page 74)**

Difficulty determines how easy or hard an attribute test is and how many successes must be achieved in order to pass that test. Difficulty is measured from 0 to 5, with 0 being so easy that no test is needed and 5 being almost impossible. The difficulty number is how many successes are needed to pass an attribute test and are represented in the text as  $(Dx)$ , where  $x$  is the difficulty number. See page 49 for descriptions of each difficulty.

**Difficulty modifiers (page 77)**

Difficulty modifiers are circumstances that increase or decrease the standard difficulty of a test. These are things such as lighting conditions, noise, distance and even things such as characters understanding (or not understanding) the language being spoken to them or dealing with a narrator character who is distrusting of you.



**Experience (page 131)**

Experience is awarded by the narrator at the end of each adventure, representing the characters overcoming struggle. Experience, or xp, is used to buy core equipment, talents, flaws or spent to increase attributes. Narrators will usually award 1 to 3 experience per session.

**Flaw (page 40)**

Flaws represent psychological flaws, social constraints, or just plain bad luck. Flaws work by costing the player Momentum or inflicting damage on them if they take part (or don't take part) in certain situations or actions. Flaws can be changed by spending experience.

**Luck (page 106)**

Characters usually begin each session with Luck points equal to their lowest attribute and can never accumulate more Luck than this value. Luck represents the characters heroic abilities and allows them to pull off exciting stunts. Luck points can be spent to do things such as purchase bonus dice, take an extra Conflict action or overcome an affliction. Players can regain Luck when it is awarded to them by the narrator or by voluntarily failing an attribute test at a key moment.

**Menace rating (page 102)**

A menace rating is used for monster-class narrator characters or creatures to determine how many afflictions they can withstand before they are dispatched. The menace rating is equal to the number of afflictions the character or creature can tolerate.

**Momentum (page 81)**

When the number of successes on an attribute test exceeds the difficulty, Momentum is generated. Momentum can be spent to improve the outcome of tests, to gain more information, inflict extra damage as well as a number of other options. Momentum can be spent as soon as it is generated or it can be saved in the Momentum pool for later use. Characters can donate generated Momentum to another players Momentum pool with the narrator's permission.

**Momentum pool (page 82)**

The Momentum pool is where Momentum that is not spent immediately is stored for later use. Players can spend Momentum from their pool on a successful attribute test in the same way as Momentum generated on the test is spent. The Momentum pool can never have more Momentum than the characters lowest attribute.

**Momentum spend (page 84)**

A Momentum spend is the term used to describe specific uses of Momentum.

**Multiple effects talents (page 66)**

Multiple effect talents are made by combining two or more low-grade talents into a higher-grade talent. The grade of a multiple effect talent is equal to the combined grades of each effect of the talent.

**Narrator (page 6)**

The narrator is the person who runs and prepares the game. They control all the characters (except the player characters) and decide how they act and what they do. They are responsible for setting scenes, establishing the environment and determining the unfolding events. They must interpret how the rules apply to a given situation and decide on the difficulty of tasks and rule on the outcome of unusual situations or disagreements. The narrator is not playing against the players.

**Narrator character (page 105)**

Narrator characters are any character or creature under the narrator's control. This is all of the characters and creatures aside from the player characters

**Opposed test (page 75)**

An opposed test happens when one player resists the actions of another. An example of this would be during combat. Both characters make an attribute test. To decide who wins the opposed test the amount of Momentum generated on each test is compared. The character that generated the most Momentum wins the opposed test.

### **Player characters (page 6)**

Player characters are the characters that the player controls. They are the player's representation or avatar in the game. Player characters are also called player heroes.

### **Qualities (page 112)**

Some weapons or attacks within the game have qualities. These are ways of dealing extra damage in combat. They come into play when an effect is rolled on the combat dice and some attacks always have qualities. The qualities are Dishonorable, Explosive, Fearsome, Psychic, Quiet and Sharp.

### **Range (page 92)**

Range is how distance is described for the purposes of movement and combat. Ranges are not measured by specific distances but by four categories and one state. See below for descriptions of each.

#### **\* Immediate**

The state of Immediate is when an object or character is within arm's length of the acting character. Immediate is something that the player can declare when the character is moving.

#### **\* Near**

Not immediately adjacent to but close enough to reach a target fairly easily. Characters can shoot at, speak with, and generally interact with anyone Near.

#### **\* Away**

Away distances place a target apart from others. This includes places that can only be reached by dramatic actions such as leaping and climbing.

#### **\* Far**

Reachable only by the most long-distance attacks or methods of interaction. Most firearms have a range of Far, and this generally covers the furthest a character can see.

#### **\* Too far**

Targets that are Too Far may be visible or otherwise detectable, but they are beyond the ability to interact with physically. Communication requires special technology.

### **Recovery (page 101)**

Recovery refers to the way in which a character recovers from stress or treats or recovers an affliction. All stress is lost at the end of a scene. During a scene a character can spend 1 Momentum to remove one point of stress. Characters can also attempt to remove the stress of another character or ally by using the attribute test listed under each damage type. To recover or treat an affliction, a character must make the appropriate attribute test listed under each affliction, following the guidelines on page 104.

### **Renown (page 132)**

Renown is awarded to a character when they do heroic feats. It represents their fame throughout Barsoom. Renown can be used to purchase allies and titles as part of character advancement. Renown does not have to be spent immediately and can be saved for later use.

### **Reputation (page 133)**

Reputation is how well known you are and how you are perceived by the people of Barsoom. Your total renown (spent and unspent) determines your reputation according to the table on page 133.

### **Round (page 89)**

A round is the period of time it takes all characters in a scene to take one turn each.

### **Stress (page 101)**

Stress is how characters are affected by damage. Each point of damage a character receives adds one point of stress to the stress track related to the type of damage inflicted.



**Stress track (page 101)**

Each time a character suffers damage, stress is added equal to the damage to the stress track of the type damage type inflicted. Fear damage adds stress to the Fear stress track, Confusion damage adds stress to the Confusion stress track and Injury damage adds stress to the Injury stress track.

**Talents (page 60)**

Talents represent skill or mastery of certain abilities and allow characters to boost their chances of success on certain actions. Talents have a circumstance that determines when the talent can come into play, and an effect that happens when the circumstance is met. Talents are graded according to how powerful, broad or narrow of an effect they have.

**Target number (page 72)**

The target number is the number that must be rolled under on an attribute test in order to succeed. The target number is calculated by adding together the values of the two attributes used for the test.

**Threat (page 87)**

Threat is used by narrators to increase the tension and drama in a scene. Narrators can spend it in the same way players use Momentum, players can pay in Threat instead of using Momentum and narrators can use it for other effects such as bringing in reinforcements or to alter the scene.

**Threat pool (page 87)**

The Threat pool is the collection of Threat that a narrator has, similar to how players have a Momentum pool. When narrator characters generate Momentum on rolls, they can convert this to Threat and add it to the Threat pool.

**Title (page 138)**

A type of accolade that can be purchased with renown to advance a player character.

**Turn order (page 89)**

The turn order is the order in which player characters and narrator characters take their turns in an action scene. This can be determined in a few ways as described on page 90.

**Voluntary black out (page 105)**

A player can decide to voluntarily black out, this costs them any remaining Luck points they have and removes them from the scene. The character can take no further damage and awakes in the next scene with 1 less affliction, but may be in any situation the narrator decides is appropriate.

**Voluntary failure (page 78)**

A choice that a character can take with the narrator's permission when they are asked to make an attribute test where they stand to gain or lose something significant. A character can choose to fail the test, giving the narrator 1 point of Threat and gaining 1 Luck point for themselves.

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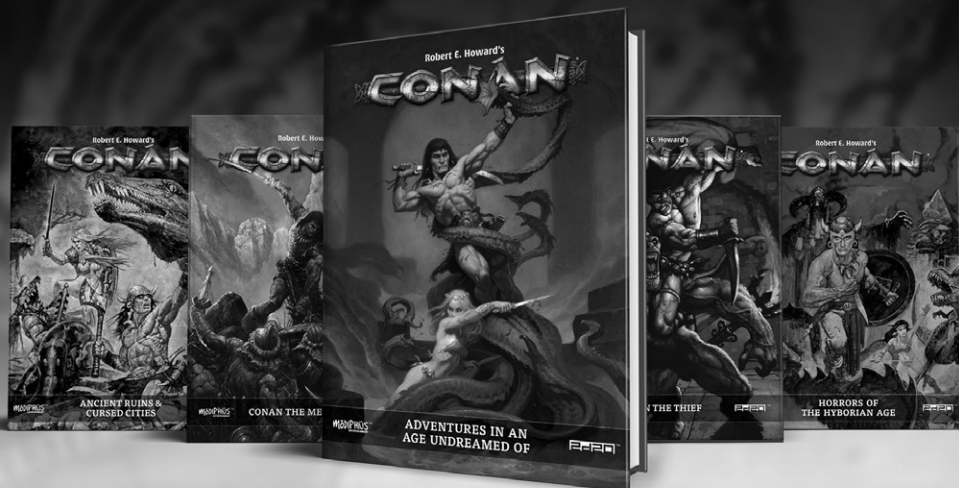
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# THE HYBORIAN AGE AWAITS YOU



# STARFLEET NEEDS YOU

