

THE SONS OF TARA

A MARS ONE-SHEET

WHAT CAN A MOTHER DO FOR HER CHILDREN?
A STORY OF DESPERATION AND SURVIVAL AMONG THE HOT SANDS OF MARS!

TARA'S STORY

You look with admiration at the Red woman standing in front of you. Despite her poor attire, she has the bearing of a queen and the body of a goddess.

"My name is Tara." She says "And I have heard that you can help me. Five years ago my husband Koran and I, newly wed, were returning to our home city, Callor Maralin, when our airship was ambushed by Sky-Corsairs, not far from here, over the ruins of Kelt Amon. The crew of the Emerald, our ship, fought valiantly but the pirates were too numerous. I can still see my husband's face as he fell, stabbed to death by many swords, while I was being dragged away by a grinning pirate.

The Emerald was severely damaged by the pirates' cannon and crashed. At the end of the battle, I was the only survivor.

The Corsairs sold me to the Lonarians and for five long years I was the concubine of Archpriest Lok Onn, the Veiled One, till his death, three months ago. Then I managed to escape and, after a terrible journey, I arrived here, only a few days away from Kelt Ammon. I haven't committed suicide all these years for one reason only: inside the Emerald, in a sealed, refrigerated box my eggs are stored, the fruit of my love for Koran. I want you to escort me there, and help me retrieve my still unborn children!"

Kelt Ammon is a ruined city, some days away from the heroes' current location. It can only be reached by land, because very nasty air currents make flying over the area impossible.

Tara has several black diamonds with her, which she will use to pay the heroes and to buy Jalfs for the whole group to ride.

ASSASSINS IN THE FOG

The journey to Kelt Amon takes three days. On the first day the party crosses a vast, featureless land where the only living plant is a sort of azure lichen, called Ult. At sunset the heroes find shelter in an old, ruined tower, remnant of a forgotten past. During the night a thick fog rises and with a Survival roll a hero can understand that it is a natural phenomenon, caused by the massive presence of Ult, which during the night releases a harmless but unusual gas.

With the advantage of the fog, a group of black-veiled assassins, who have been following the party since morning, attacks the heroes' camp, using Stealth to catch the sentinels unaware. Use a Large Burst Template to represent the tower, which has two openings, 2" wide.

Remember that the fog causes the whole scene to be in Dim Lighting (-1).

The assassins' main goal is to kill Tara, not the heroes. Before dying, their leader says: *"Beware of her, strangers! She killed our beloved master. She is not..."*

With a successful Persuasion roll Tara reveals that the men were Archpriest Lok's most loyal guards and they blame her for their master's death. With a raise she confesses to having killed the filthy pig to regain her freedom.

ASSASSINS (1 per hero)

These Red Martians are all dressed in jet-black jewel armor and wear veils. They were the personal bodyguards of Archpriest Lok Onn and seek vengeance for their master's death. They have been hunting Tara for several weeks.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d8, Survival d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5;

Edges: Loyal.

Gear: short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4), jewel armor (+2 Parry, +1 Toughness vs. ranged attacks).

THE FOREST OF STONE

On the second day the party crosses a valley dotted with stone columns, hundreds of feet tall. Suddenly, as they go past a big heap of rocks, something unexpected happens: the "rocks" roar and rise up! In truth, the party has come face to face with a Baak, an enormous desert turtle, known for its ferocity. The beast charges toward the heroes with reckless fury. The Baak is so big and strong that it can only be killed by heavy weapons, like airship cannons, so the only chance the heroes have is to flee!

The Chase starts with the party at a Medium distance. Each Range Increment equals 5" on the tabletop. The heroes use Riding as Chase skill, opposed to the beast's Agility. The Baak is dim-witted, although immensely powerful. Every round she runs and shoots a ball of acid, incurring a multi-action penalty. For this encounter tweak the Innocent Bystander rules a little: in case of 1 on the Baak's Shooting die, the ball of acid hits a pinnacle, making it collapse in the heroes' path! During the next round, every player who draws a black suit action card must do an Agility (-2) roll or suffer 2d6 damage from the fallen debris.

BAAK

A gargantuan desert turtle, with a bad temper. It is omnivorous and has no natural enemies.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+6, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d4, Shooting d4.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 17(4);

Special abilities:

Acid Ball: Baaks spit balls of digestive acids (Range: 5/10/20, Dmg: 2d6, AP 2).

Armor +4: A thick, rock-like hide.

Claws: Str+d6

Heavy Armor: It can only be damaged by Heavy Weapons.

Large: Attackers gain +2 to Shooting and Fighting roll against the Baak.

Size +6: Baaks are as big as elephants.

The Chase ends when the heroes gain ten Range Increments or after five rounds, when they find the Crevasse (see below).

Crevasse. The party finds their path blocked by a vast crevasse, several yards wide. A Jalf can jump over it, but barely. A Riding (-2) roll is required to persuade the beast to jump. In case of failure, the mount refuses to move. With a critical failure the beast jumps but misses the landing by a few inches. The hero manages somehow to hold onto the edge of the crevasse. A Strength (-4) roll is required to regain solid ground, while the poor Jalf falls to a horrible death hundred of yards below. This is the perfect moment for the players to do some memorable Stunts.

When all the heroes are on the other side of the crevasse the Baak arrives, screaming in rage, but she doesn't try to cross the chasm.

KELT AMMON

The city of Kelt Ammon was destroyed by terrible earthquakes, so all its marvelous palaces are damaged and its streets ravaged. After a couple of hours the party finds the wreckage of the Emerald. The ship crashed on top of a tall palace, and it is precariously positioned: the slightest shift in balance and it could plummet dozens of yards!

The palace is abandoned and the party quickly reaches the airship. Tara and the heroes jump on it and start searching. Let the heroes do an Agility roll. In case of failure, the old hull moans and trembles, but nothing serious happens. In the end Tara finds her old quarters, in the stern. The party walks in and sees a big metal coffer, engraved with precious metals. Inside there are some eggs (one per hero). They are slightly bigger than normal Red Men eggs and have strange pale dots on them.

With a smile, Tara caresses the eggs and they suddenly crack and open! *"Wake up, my sons, come to life!"* she says. At this point, something horrible happens: from the eggs emerge strange, gray, multi-legged beasts. At the same time Tara's splendid face melts revealing a horrid gray mass of tentacles. Each hero must do a Fear check.

"Here, my beloved ones, I brought you food and hosts!" Tara shouts. At this point Tara and her sons attack the party. The battle happens on the unstable ship, so, every time a Joker is

dealt, the ship moves, and every character who doesn't have the Wall Walker ability must do an Agility roll; in case of failure they are scattered d4" away in a random direction. If this results in their hitting an obstacle, they are automatically Shaken. Tara and her Sons are all Wild Cards.

TARA

Apparently a stunningly beautiful woman, Tara, in truth, is a member of the Yugs, a race of parasites that devour the heads of their hosts and take control of their bodies. Their metamorphic powers allow them to replicate the former face of their victims. They are very rare, and the common belief is that they were created by Grey Martians to infiltrate Red Martian communities.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidate d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Stealth d6, Survival d6.

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6;

Special abilities:

Metamorphic face: Tara is usually gorgeous (as per the Very Attractive Edge).

Fear -1: Tara is actually horrible in appearance and this causes a Fear Check.

Tentacles: Tara's tentacles deliver a terrible toxin to anyone they touch (+2 Fighting rolls). Targets must do an immediate Vigor (-2) roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. They have Reach 2.

Improved Frenzy: Tara can perform two tentacle attacks each round without penalty.

TARA'S SONS (1 per hero)

These gray spiders are the larval stage of the Yugs. They usually attack humanoids to assimilate their heads, gaining a fully functional body.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6.

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3;

Special abilities:

Bite: Str+d4.

Face Eater: If it hits with a raise, this means that the creature managed to grab the victim's face, dealing +2 damage. A victim who is hit in the face by one of Tara's Sons and suffers a Wound must immediately do a Spirit roll or be controlled by the Yug, as per the *Puppet* power until the creature is removed from the victim's face or killed.

Size -2: Tara's Sons are the size of a cat.

Wall Walker: Tara's Sons can walk at their normal Pace even on vertical and inverted surfaces. They do Climbing rolls only in extreme situations.

AFTERMATH

After dealing with Tara and her terrible progeny the party can finish exploring the Emerald. Reading the captain's logbook, they discover that the ship crashed here more than fifty years ago. What is the truth in Tara's story? Are there other assassins seeking her? All these unanswered questions could lead to an interesting story...