



# MARS TO STAY

## MARS TO STAY

BY FREDERIK J. JENSEN

*Do you have what it takes to survive on Mars?*

*Join a team of colonists as a Shepherd, Visionary, Explorer, Specialist, Scientist, or Inventor. All of you are smart, tough, competent, and passionate about Mars.*

*Travel to Mars to build a new future for humanity.*

*Face extreme survival challenges and science the shit out of a bad situation.*

*Hard science fiction. No aliens. No machinery of gods. Just smart humans with a will to survive.*

One MC, 4 players, 6 hours. [#MarsToStay](#) [#Fastaval2017](#)

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***The Yesterday Crater.** It wasn't there the day before yesterday. A meteor impacted head on somewhere west of the colony. Good for us that it didn't arrive a few minutes earlier. According to the visuals from the satellites, it was the size of a firetruck. That's where we are going now. To the crater to see if anything valuable has surfaced.*

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# PREFACE

The dream of establishing a colony on Mars is not new. What is new is that we now have the technology to do it. The price tag is still insane and the risks are many. However, private pioneers such as Elon Musk are attacking the problem already today. With a manned mission to Mars likely within a generation, we could see a colony on Mars within another generation.

Humans populate most of Earth – but there remote places such as Sahara or Antarctica that is much easier for humans to survive, where humans do not live today.

So why go to Mars?

In the Great Age of Polar Exploration, pioneers raced to the poles, surviving (or sometimes dying) in extreme environments, relying on the equipment brought with them and their ability to adapt to the situation at hand. Nansen, Amundsen, Scott, Shackleton – people with passion and drive to go where no human has gone before.

In the Colonial Age, European settlers sailed for months around the globe to establish colonies with harsh stories of starvation and bad fortune. No doubt, the first settlers greatly underestimated the effort required, and no doubt, they had poor outlook for a better future at home. Still they risked their lives to pursue a dream.

Why?

In Mars to Stay, the business case for the private venture is based on harvesting rare minerals for space travel. However, for the characters of Mars to Stay, this is just an excuse to go where no human has gone before and do what no human has done before. Mars to Stay is a story of exceptional individuals pursuing an almost impossible dream – a colony on Mars. Get under the skin of the first colonists on Mars and explore what drives the human race to go to Mars.

Frederik J. Jensen

Oxie, 15 February 2017

# INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO MARS TO STAY

We are a generation or two into the future. It is the best of times; it is the worst of times – a time not unlike the present. Humanity has found solutions to the climate change and other threats – solutions that are not perfect and most likely not fair, but good enough for humanity to survive.

There are no aliens or machinery of gods. No terraforming, no faster-than-light communication. There has been scientific and technological advances, but nothing that fundamentally changes the scientific paradigms of today. The technology used to build the colony on Mars is as known today.

You play extraordinary characters. Smart, tough, competent and driven to go to Mars to stay, founding humanity's first off-world colony. You signed up for a 20-year contract, sent to Mars in teams of ten with a new team arriving every 2 years. Funded by a private company to exploit resources available on Mars to pay back the investment.

The Mars environment is extremely hostile to human life. There is no breathable air, almost no atmospheric pressure, and water is extremely rare. If something goes wrong, help is months away.

Can you survive on Mars? Can you make it back to Earth if things go wrong?

## WHAT IS THIS

This is a game about survival in humanity's first colony on Mars. You play the game as a conversation around a table with friends. Sometimes you roll dice and take notes. Sometimes you yell, laugh, whisper, and cry. Through play, you create a story about exceptional individuals pursuing an almost impossible dream.

Four players play the main characters in the story. These characters chose to go to Mars to stay.

One player is the MC, Mission Control. This is most likely you. You have a bit more preparation to do, mainly to read and understand this text so you can present it to the other players. You play Mission Control, people back home and people in the colony. You also make Mars and the colony seem real. Don't worry, it will be fun and rewarding.

The outcome of the story is open. Maybe all make it back alive. Maybe all die on Mars. Most likely, some will die and some will live, some on Mars and some on Earth. I don't know and you play to find out. No matter what, the characters have changed, and we as players have new insight into the human condition.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

You need five players (yourself included) and a quiet place for 6 hours. You can break it up over two sessions or play it in one go. You also need two six-sided dice, pencils for everyone, an eraser, and 30 or so tokens, e.g. coins.

## HOW TO USE THIS TEXT

The text is divided into three parts:

*Before the game.* Read this before the game to prepare for the session. Overview, crunch and setting.

*At the table.* This is your script for the session. Getting started, character generation and chapters of the story.

*Handouts.* Refer to these and give these to the players during play.

You can refer to the text easily during play if you print on both sides, flip on the short edge.

## POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE

Mars to Stay is *Powered by the Apocalypse*. This means that the game engine is a hack of Apocalypse World by D. Vincent Baker. The key implication of this is that the agenda of the player characters drive the story and that characters are defined by what they do in the game.

If you are familiar with running games that are Powered by the Apocalypse, you will find that I have simplified moves and made a very tight setup, all for the sake of concentrating the drama into a single session.

# BEFORE THE GAME

# STORYLINE AND CHARACTERS

## STORYLINE

The story of Mars to Stay is told in three parts: The *set up* establishes the situation and is scripted. The *build up* is a sandbox where you and the players explore the theme. Finally, the *resolution* ties up loose ends and come to a dramatic conclusion.

Here is a brief outline of the story.

## SET UP

The private company Mars to Stay funds a colony on Mars with the goal to become self-sustained and profitable in 20 years. When fully developed more than 100 colonists will live in the colony.

In brief glimpses, we follow the first team of colonists from their departure from Earth, over the long journey to Mars, the landing and the construction of the first colony infrastructure, until life on Mars is now routine.

One year later, a large meteor impacts Mars somewhere west of the colony. No direct threat to the colony, but a dust storm builds up with the sediments stirred up from the impact. The storm hits

the colony, and lightning damages vital equipment. The characters have their test by fire.

Weeks later, the colonists watch the countdown for the second mission on a live broadcast from Earth. The mission is due to arrive on Mars four months later with the next team of colonists. However, as the mission spaceship Hermes leaves Earth orbit, the colonists learn that the company is broke and the colony has been abandoned. The second mission is unmanned. However, if they build a surface-to-orbit launcher in time, they may be able to catch a ride home to Earth.

## BUILD UP

The colonists discuss the situation. Should they try to return to Earth or should they try to survive on Mars on their own? As they pursue one or both of these goals, four plotlines explores their motivations and challenges their choice.

**Exploration of Mars.** The colonists venture out to explore Mars. They overcome sinkholes, radiation events, and malfunctioning equipment and are rewarded by discovering lava tubes, rich sources of minerals, water, and equipment from past Mars missions they can salvage.

**Life in the colony.** The colony slowly returns to the daily routines. Colonists share hopes and dreams. As the pressure from the extreme situation increases, disagreements and personal conflicts

## BEFORE THE GAME : STORYLINE AND CHARACTERS

surface and – if not dealt with in time – leads to bad cases of cabin fever that threatens the survival of the colony.

**A ride home.** As Hermes approaches Mars, Mission Control loses contact with Hermes. Without connection to the spaceship, neither Mission Control nor the colonists can adjust the trajectory of Hermes nor release the supply drop, making both catching a ride home and receiving much needed supplies highly unlikely. When connection to Hermes is restored, the colonists learn that one of the members of the second mission team has stolen on board Hermes and is now on the way to Mars.

**A future on Mars.** Back on Earth, a new investor takes over the bankrupt company of Mars to Stay. After the initial celebration, the colonists learn that the new owner has some very different ideas of how to run a colony.

Four months later, Hermes arrives to Mars and the colonists either drop the supplies on Mars or intercept Hermes and catch a long ride home.

### RESOLUTION

If some of the colonists want to catch a ride home, the launcher is not strong enough to carry all and they need to decide what or whom to leave behind. As they start the ignition, they risk missing the intercept with Hermes. Or they may die from starvation, thirst, suffocation or equipment malfunction before they reach Earth.

If some of the colonists wants to stay on Mars and they have not achieved a sustainable colony yet, they must retrieve the supply drop and complete the work before they run out of resources. If they are close, or hit by further mishaps, they have a second chance for catching a ride home, when Hermes returns in 2 years.

Finally, in the epilogue we learn if the characters still dream of going to Mars to stay.

## CHARACTERS

### PLAYER CHARACTERS

The players play one character each, chosen between six playbooks:

- Brice the Explorer
- Shane the Visionary
- Mason the Scientist
- Glen the Inventor
- Francis the Specialist
- Alex the Shepherd

Players create and develop their character during the game. Besides being smart, tough, competent and passionate, each character has a personal goal and a personal issue.

### PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

Further six colonists are present in the colony:

- Stacy the Kid
- Kelly the Hammer
- Lewis the Joker
- Terry the Veteran
- Evan the Friend
- Robin the Clock

You play these. Create complications for the player characters to learn what is important for them. Decide gender, age and other additional details as needed.

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### PEOPLE BACK HOME

The colonists will be in contact with Mission Control and family and friends back on Earth. You play these:

- Morgan, Brice's sponsor
- Kim, Shane's partner
- Jade, Mason's adult child
- Tony, Francis' parent
- Adrian, Glen's foster parent
- Sasha, Alex' foster child

Explore the motivations of the player characters through these relations. Why did they leave Earth? What do they have to come back to?

# BACKSTORY AND SETTING

## BACKSTORY

### THE FIRST HUMANS ON MARS

The first manned missions to Mars happened 20 years ago and these were all government funded. One of them nearly cost an astronaut his life. Governments lost interest in funding expensive missions as the scientific breakthroughs seen so far were less than hoped for. However, advances in manufacturing dropped the price for space travel and a new treaty on commercial exploitation of the solar system opened up Mars for private ventures.

### MARS TO STAY IS FOUNDED

The private venture company *Mars to Stay* was founded around 12 years ago by a health care millionaire, an ex-astronaut, and a retired professional athlete. Joining up with a commercial media company and a crowd funding campaign they succeed in funding a colony on Mars unlike many before them.

Besides being a cool idea, the business case behind the investment is solid: As humankind venture into space there is an increased demand for heavy structures placed in space.

Mars has minerals in abundance that can be mined easily once you have a basic infrastructure in place. With a lower gravity and less dense atmosphere than Earth, it is cheaper to send heavy structures in orbit. Once they are up there, they can go pretty much everywhere in the solar system for a very low price using the gravity fields around the planets.

Long term, Mars is the stepping stone to the stars.

### SIGNING UP

6 years ago, the first team of colonists is formed. Going through an extensive selection process, passing health checks, and completing the training, a team of 10 people got a seat on Mission One.

The colonists sign a 20-year contract with Mars to Stay with a share of the future profits as a reward for staying on. What they do after 20 years on Mars is up to them. Maybe they buy a return ticket to Earth. Maybe they buy up huge areas of Mars or show tourists around the local places of interest.

### THE JOURNEY TO MARS

2 years ago, the first mission launches. The journey to Mars is on board Hermes II, a spaceship that travels between Mars and Earth like a shuttle. Powered by an ion drive and solar panels, it needs no refueling for normal operations, though it has emergency thrusters for when quick accelerations are necessary.

As Hermes flies by Earth, it intercepts supply ships and takes on passengers and supplies. Fully automated it needs no crew. It takes 10 passengers comfortably.

As Earth and Mars moves around in their orbits, the transit time varies between 4 months and 18 months. The shorter legs are for manned missions, while longer legs are freight runs or return flights from Mars.

### FIRST LANDING AND FOUNDATION OF THE COLONY

After 4 months in space, the colonists successfully lands on the designated location for their new home. Besides the inevitable delays and setbacks from such a major and ambitious undertaking, the first team of to-be Martians makes it to Mars safely and sets up the base.

### SETTING

The setting of Mars to Stay is super realistic:

- Details are important. Dive in deep a few places to create the illusion, but don't paint every detail in high resolution.
- Things are never too rosy or too bleak. In any situation, there is both hope and frustration.
- Events appear as if out of the blue and play together in complex patterns. They can leave you puzzled or perplexed.

Watch movies and read books about colonies on Mars if you like, but don't bother learning everything out there. It's a game, it's fun and you will have a great time with an awesome group of people playing the game.

For further inspiration, *The Martian* (2015) and *Interstellar* (2014) are two easy places to start. For facts, there is NASA ([mars.nasa.gov](https://mars.nasa.gov)) and Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mars\\_to\\_Stay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mars_to_Stay)). You can explore the surface of Mars on <https://www.google.com/mars/>.

### FACTS ABOUT MARS

Mars is approximately half the diameter of Earth and the surface area is slightly less than the total area of Earth's dry land. Surface gravity is about 40% of that of Earth. One sol on Mars – the time it takes for Mars to rotate around itself – is about 24½ hours. One Martian year is 668 sols or about 1.9 Earth year.

The main ingredient of Mars' atmosphere is carbon dioxide. The surface pressure is very low – less than 1% of that of Earth. Surface temperature ranges from -143° C to 35° C. The daily temperature swing is large as the heat-holding capacity of the dust that covers most of the surface is low.

The distance to the horizon is shorter than on Earth. There is no moisture and no clouds, so usually there is a very high visibility. Year-round dust storms can block sunlight for weeks at a time. Mars has two moons – Phobos and Daimos. Both are much smaller

## BEFORE THE GAME : BACKSTORY AND SETTING

than the Moon. Jupiter can be seen with the naked eye. Earth can be seen if you know where to look.

The main surface features on Mars are impact craters, volcanos and deserts. The colors range from red-orange, golden, brown, tan and greenish, depending on the minerals present. Olympus Mons is the largest volcano in the solar system and there are still areas with volcanic activity. The Borealis basin that covers 40% of the surface was created by an impact four billion years ago. Dikes are the remains of ancient lava streams and deposit valuable minerals.

The most abundant chemical elements in the Martian crust, besides silicon and oxygen, are iron, magnesium, aluminum, calcium, and potassium. The elements titanium, chromium, manganese, sulfur, phosphorus, sodium, and chlorine are less abundant. Rarer metals are Niobium, Lanthanum, Neodymium, Europium, lead, silver, tin, bismuth, antimony, nickel, copper, platinum, palladium, and chromium. Hydrogen is present as water ice and in hydrated minerals.

The most rare thing on Mars is life.

# THE CRUNCH

## MOVES

Most of the time when playing the game, you will just be having a conversation around the table. You will speak as the characters, say what they say, think out loud what they are thinking and narrate what they do and what happens to them. Sometimes, when the characters do something specific in the story, these rules kicks in and tell you what happens. We call this a move.

Moves connect the fiction with the crunch. Moves drive the story forward and creates branching points. Dice and player decisions tell us which turn the story takes. The crunch are the hard numbers that ultimately decides if the colonists live or die.

Moves always start in the fiction with the player character doing something worthwhile and difficult and end in the fiction with a clear consequence and a new situation.

## STATS

The player characters are smart, tough, competent and passionate as described by four stats:

**Smart.** Wit. Ingenuity. Creativity. Smart characters can science the shit out of a situation and explore a dangerous environment.

**Tough.** Physique. Strength. Constitution. Tough characters can endure hardship and apply brute force.

**Earth.** Experience. Training. Everything you learned on Earth. Competent characters can operate, build, and repair tools and equipment.

**Mars.** Drive. Initiative. Leadership. Passionate characters can lead by example and act in the face of danger.

Stats range from 0 to +3.

## TOKENS AND TRACKS

We keep track of the state of the colony through tokens and tracks.

### RESOURCE TOKENS

The players have a pool of resources tokens. These represent tools and supplies from Earth or resources harvested on Mars. They keep the characters alive and the colony running.

### THREAT TOKENS

You have a pool of threat tokens. These are the bad stuff you hit them with when things go wrong. They blow up facilities and kill characters.

### TIME

Time is limited. Science and construction take time, time that you may not have if you are about to run out of food or miss the one ride that will take you home to Earth. One time is about one week.

### COLONY TRACK

The colony track tells you how close the colony is to being self-sustained. Until the colony is self-sustained, it costs resource tokens to keep the colony operational and the colonists alive.

### LAUNCHER TRACK

The launcher track tells you how close the colonists are to build a launcher that can intercept with Hermes and give them a ride home.

### PLAYER MOVES

Player moves are either basic moves or playbook moves. Basic moves are available to all player characters. Playbook moves are specific to each playbook and gives that character a specific benefit or skill.

### SMART

Smart characters science the shit out of a situation and explore a dangerous environment safely. When players succeed a smart move, they come up with smart things to do or a way to build

something. If they fail, they get less or wrong information or they take a long time to come up with it.

It takes one time to science the shit out of a situation or explore a dangerous environment safely.

### TOUGH

Tough characters apply brute force to problems and endure hardship. When players succeed a tough move, they overcome an obstacle with strength or stamina and avoid injury or harm. If they fail, they get hurt or something valuable breaks.

### EARTH

Competent and well-trained characters operate, build, and repair tools and equipment in dangerous or difficult circumstances. When players succeed an Earth move, they successfully operate, repair or build something. If they fail, they need more time and resources to finish the job, the result is flawed, someone is injured or something breaks.

To build something costs one resources and takes one time. To complete one part of the colony or the launcher, they must first come up with a solution, find the resources and then build it.

**MARS**

Passionate and driven characters lead by example and act in the face of danger. When players succeed a Mars move, they lead others into action and act in the face of danger without anyone getting hurt. If they fail, morale drops or someone gets hurt.

**ROLLING DICE**

Often, moves will ask you to *roll plus stat*. This means roll two six sided dice and add your stat and any modifiers to the roll. The maximum bonus is +4 and the maximum penalty is -2. Disaster is always an option.

The outcome depends on the total:

Total	Result	
<b>13 or higher</b>	Strong hit	Yes, and <i>opportunity</i>
<b>10-12</b>	Hit	Yes
<b>7-9</b>	Weak hit	Yes, but <i>complication</i>
<b>6 or less</b>	Miss	No, and <i>disaster</i>

**STRONG HIT: YES, AND OPPORTUNITY**

The characters are kings of survival – for a short while. Give the player a choice between two opportunities:

- Lucky break. Remove one threat token.
- Discovery. Take one resource token
- Quick result. Spend one less time
- MC choice

**HIT: YES**

Success through hard work, skill and luck.

**WEAK HIT: YES, BUT COMPLICATION**

Partial success. Give the player a choice between two complications:

- Flawed. You overlook something. Take one threat token.
- Cost. Something valuable breaks (e.g. your bio suit or your rover when you are 5 hours from the colony). Spend one resource token.
- Slow. Spend one extra time.
- Painful. You are exhausted, bruised or injured.
- Detachment. Give up your personal item/goal.
- MC choice

### MISS: NO, AND DISASTER

Something bad happens that escalates the situation. Chose one:

- A player character is out of action, trapped, incoherent or left for dead.
- Equipment and facilities blow up/are destroyed. A lightning bolt takes out all power in the colony, an airlock blows out, the launcher explodes during refueling. Decrease colony or launcher by one.
- Forewarn future calamity. E.g. sensors pick up an approaching dust storm, someone doesn't show up for lunch, an alarm goes off. Take three threat tokens.
- Time passes. Skip to the next chapter.
- MC choice. Someone takes off in a rover with the last crate of food, a rover falls into a canyon. Spend threat tokens as desired.

Don't hold back. This is where the shit hits the fan and things get lethal.

Here is what you can buy for your threat tokens:

- **1:** Remove one resource token, exhaust/bruise/injure a character, increase time by one.
- **3:** Reduce one challenge track by one, kill a supporting character, take a player character out of action
- **5:** Kill a player character (only on explicit stakes).

If you have threat tokens enough to spend, and the story requires it, you can wipe out the entire colony in one sweep.

Player characters can die as the result of a low die roll, but only if death is an explicit stake (MC: "If you roll a miss, you will die. Do you still want to do this?").

### HELP AND HINDER

Player characters can get the help from other player characters and supporting characters, or circumstances can make life difficult.

#### HELP OR HINDER

When you help or hinder someone who is making a roll, they take +1 (help) or -1 (hinder) now. If the roll is a miss (help) or a strong hit (hinder), you also expose yourself to danger.

Be specific in the fiction on how you help or hinder the character that is making the roll. More than one player character can help or hinder if it makes sense in the fiction, but the maximum modifier to a roll is +4.

#### HELP FROM A SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Each character has a named supporting character from whom they can get help. E.g. Stacey is smart and can help Glen science the shit out of a situation.

When you ask for the help of a supporting character and they agree, you get +1 to a roll against a specific stat. They may ask you

for a favor in return. There is no effect from getting help from other supporting characters than the one named in the playbook.

### DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

You can spend **threat tokens** to give a -1 modifier per threat token to the roll. Explain the circumstances that make the move difficult as you spend threat tokens: *The rover is not fully charged after you returned from the previous mission. Stacy has not slept for 28 hours and is a nervous wreck by now.*

### DAMAGE

Player characters don't have hit points but can take mental and physical damage.

They can be **alive** and kicking. This is the normal state.

They can be **exhausted, bruised or injured**. In this case, they have -1 on all dice rolls. Characters recover fully at the end of each chapter assuming proper rest and care.

They can be taken **out of action, trapped, incoherent or left for dead**. In this case, they are unable to take action on their own.

Characters recover to exhausted, bruised, or injured at the end of the chapter.

Or they can be **dead**.

### ADVANCES

Players get advances by completing personal goals, resolving personal issues and completing team goals. Advances are either +1 to one stat or a new playbook move.

# HOW TO RUN THE GAME

## AGENDA AND PRINCIPLES

Your agenda is to find out who the characters are: What are they capable of and what is important to them?

Pursue your agenda by doing this:

- Address yourself to the characters, not the players
- Provide adversity for the characters and let them show what they can do. Let them shine every now and then. Then take away what they take for granted and make them pay dearly for what they want.
- Make us care about the people in the colony and the people back home. Have them act, feel and think like real persons. Then throw them under a rover because of something the players did.
- Make Mars and the colony seem real. Let them taste the dust between their teeth. Let them smell the sweat and the oil. Remind them of the all present hum of the life support systems – so they notice when it stops.
- Ask questions and build on the answers. Where do you like to hang out when you are off duty? Guess which area is

destroyed by the fire. What is your favorite food on Mars? Guess what supplies they run out of first.

- Play to find out what happens. Don't play for a specific ending or outcome. Explore the situation and be ready to be surprised and to improvise. Roll with the dice and the choices made by the players.
- Play with open cards. Explain the situation in details and point out risks and opportunities. Let them know the odds and the consequences before choosing whether to roll for a move. Disaster is always an option when the dice are rolled – otherwise don't roll.
- Ask: "What do you do?"

## GOALS, ISSUES, AND NEEDS

Each player character has a goal, an issue and a need.

The personal goal is something they want to achieve on Mars. Shane wants to reunite with his/her partner on Mars. Mason wants to create life that can live on Mars. An object they brought from Earth represents their goal. The goal symbolizes the passion that drove them to go to Mars. The players can work towards achieving the goal. Or they can give it up and move on.

The issue is a personal issue the character is struggling with. Players can keep their issues secret, in which case it builds up emotional stress over time. Or they can bring them out in the open and make other player characters understand and help them resolve the issue.

Unknown to the players, each character also has a need. Shane needs to let others set the goals and direction from time to time. Alex needs to let others help him/her. Francis needs to step out of his comfort zone. Glen needs to build relationships with other people. Mason needs to resolve the conflict that he/she ran away from on Earth. Brice needs to turn back before it is too late. Push the characters into situations, where the needs are within reach if the players choose to reach for it. These are pivotal moments for the characters to grow.

## PLAYER CHARACTER DEATH

The characters constantly face life-threatening situations and from bad judgement and poor luck, they may die. However, as this is also a game you play for fun, you don't want players waiting around for the other players to finish the story.

If a player character dies, let the player play one of the supporting characters. If it is early in the game, give them a new playbook. If it is late in the game, let the player stay around as you finish the story.

## SAFETY

The story you create will contain strong fictional content. The extreme survival situation can bring up starvation, cannibalism, suicide, and death from exposure.

It is your responsibility that everyone is comfortable with what is going on at the table and in the fiction.

Pay attention to everyone at the table. Read your players and ask questions ("Are you comfortable with that?") if in doubt. Encourage players to speak up and veto elements. Accept a no without asking for explanations. The game will be better for all.

Cut a scene early and let strong content happen off screen. If the game is broken for someone, stop the game and see if you can fix it. Retrofit the story if needed. End the game early if you can't fix it.

Take your time to debrief after the game.

# AT THE TABLE

# OVERVIEW

## PREPARE TO PLAY (1 HOUR)

- Welcome:
- What the game is about.
  - Why we play.
  - Player goals. MC goals.
  - Expected playtime
- Character generation:
- Chose playbooks
  - Crunch: Stats, moves
  - Customize characters
  - Relations
  - Advances

## PLAY THE STORY (4-5 HOURS)

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Set up (scripted)                                   | The journey to Mars        |
|   | Life on Mars               |
|   | Impact                     |
|   | Bad news from home         |
| Build up (sandbox)                                  | Exploration of Mars        |
|   | Life in the colony         |
|   | A ride home                |
|   | A future on Mars           |
| <i>When they have an agreed plan that may work:</i> |                            |
| Resolution  | Stay or leave, live or die |
|   | Epilogue                   |

## REFLECT (15 MINUTES)

- Talk about the game.

# PREPARE TO PLAY

## ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

This is a game about survival in humanity's first colony on Mars. Through play, we create a story about survival in an extreme situation. Survival is about working together, not giving up, and coming up with smart ways to use the resources you have.

You're the players. You play a team of exceptional individuals who chose to go to Mars to stay. You are smart and tough, but are in an extremely hostile environment far away from home. Your job is to **play your character as though they are real people**, in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

I'm the MC – Mission Control. My job is to treat your characters as though they are real people too and to act as though Mars and the colony are real. I'm not out to get you. **I'm here to find out what's going to happen.** Survival? Death? Stay? Leave? I don't know – I'm here to find out. Same as you.

I expect the session will take **6 hours**, breaks included. Longer if we take time to chew the scenery and feel the characters. Shorter if we fast-forward and skip some details.

## SAFETY AND SETTING

The setting is **super realistic**. A chaotic world rich in details where things never are simple.

The story we create may contain strong fictional content. The extreme survival situation can bring up starvation, cannibalism, and death from exposure.

It is **my job to ensure we are all comfortable** with what happening in the story. However, I need your help. Speak up or let me know in private if something doesn't work for you. We can veil out strong content. We can stop the game, discuss what doesn't work and fix it. If you discover that this game is not for you, you are free to walk out of the game at any time, no explanation needed.

## CHARACTER CREATION

Lay out the 6 playbooks on the table. Ask each player to **choose one playbook**. Remove the two that are not picked.

Place the list of **people in the colony** on the table. Explain that these are other colonists that I control.

Explain **stats** and **moves**.

Explain **threat** tokens and **resource** tokens. Place four threat tokens and 12 resource tokens on the table.

Explain **advances**.

Ask the players to customize their character:

- Choose gender, age
- Increase one stat by +1
- Choose one playbook move
- Choose one item that you brought with you from Earth and that is special to you
- Chose something you haven't told anyone yet

Once completed, ask the players to describe their character for each other.

Next, explain that the strongest relations you have are with each other. You will create these now.

Who are:

- **Siblings.** You have known each other all your life. Do you still have your disagreements or have they long since been sorted out?
- **Partners.** You have been a couple for a long, long time. Do you trust each other completely or is there unresolved tension?
- **Friends.** You have known each other since you were children. Can you share your innermost thoughts and emotions or have you grown apart?
- **Peers.** You have worked together for a long time. Do you respect and trust each other or are you competitors?

You are part of a handpicked and well-trained team, so inter player conflict level should be low.

Once agreed, write it in your playbooks.

# SET UP

## HOW TO RUN THIS PART

Follow the script to set up a tight situation ripe for dramatic survival choices. Take the time you need for you and your players to learn the rules and try out a few moves.

Expect this part to take one hour.

## PROLOGUE: THE JOURNEY TO MARS

Take the players to Mars with a brief voiceover:

- Signing up, basic training, passing the exams
- Travelling to Mars on Hermes, 4 long months in space
- Mission One landing on Mars
- Setting up the colony. Even with the help from robots, it was hard work.

Ask each player a question along the way:

- What was the last thing you did on Earth before going to the launch site?
- What do you remember from the journey?
- What did you feel the first time you set foot on Mars?
- When did you notice that you had gotten used to living on Mars?

## CHAPTER 1: LIFE ON MARS

Place the **colony handout** on the table and describe the colony as it looks right now.

Next, introduce the player characters on a normal day nothing out of the ordinary. Life on Mars is now routine. Ask each player character what they are busy doing.

- **Brice:** What are you most excited about right now? Where are you right now?
- **Shane:** What is your vision for the colony? How will it be in 20 years? What are you doing right now to make it happen?
- **Mason:** What research are you working on right now?
- **Glen:** What machine are you working on right now?
- **Francis:** What difficult and important task have you been trusted with solving?
- **Alex:** Who is not doing well and needs your help?

Ask them to describe their routines and their workshop, lab, sleeping quarter etc. Let them talk with each other and with people in the colony if they want, but don't jump into moves at this point.

## ASSIGN CHORES AND RUN THE COLONY

When all player have introduced their characters, remind them that keeping the colony running is hard work and there are a number of boring routine tasks that must be done or life critical systems may fail.

Ask: “Who is in charge of running the colony today?” If no one is in charge, disaster hits the colony.

The chores that the colonists must do are:

- Sweep the dust off the solar panels
- Operate the bio waste recycling facility (aka emptying the lavatories)
- Inspect the habitat for cracks and leaks and repair them
- Tend the fields and prepare food

Each chore takes two people to carry out safely.

Ask in turn: “Who is doing this?” Characters can volunteer and assign tasks to supporting characters.

For each chore not assigned, take one threat token. If someone takes on multiple chores, take one threat token.

Now, the player in charge rolls to operate the colony.

On a miss, fast forward to Chapter 2.

Some minor mishaps in the colony that can complicate life on Mars:

- Food crates spoiled – no more chocolate. Take one threat token.
- Water source contaminated from exposure to Mars minerals – restrictions on showers. Take one threat token.

- Solar panel destroyed by accident – restrictions on use of entertainment systems. Take one threat token.
- Lavatory disposal unit malfunctions – bad odor in Babylon for weeks. Take one threat token.

Give them time to science, build, explore, and talk if they want. If they ask about improving the colony, explain the **self-sustained colony handout** to them.

If they miss a roll, fast forward to Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER 2: IMPACT

**Take one threat token for each personal issue not yet resolved.**

A message from Mission Control informs that an observation team has picked up a large incoming object on collision course with Mars. Visuals confirm the object to be a large asteroid the size of a firetruck. The most likely trajectory indicates that it will miss the colony but it may land somewhere close.

A few days later, the meteor impacts somewhere west of the colony, forming a huge crater that is named the **Yesterday Crater** – the crater that was not there yesterday.

### THE DUST STORM

The meteor causes no immediate damage to the colony, but the meteor stirs up a huge cloud of dust that in the coming weeks forms into the largest dust storm ever observed on the planet.

## AT THE TABLE : SET UP

Then it turns towards the colony.

Ask: What do you do?

Smart things to do could be to move all loose items indoors or secure them, seal off the colony compartments and go to the emergency stations.

Then the dust storm is upon them.

Due to the low surface pressure and the fine-grained dust, the danger from the dust storm does not so much come from the wind or the debris with it, as from the electrostatic charge that builds up in the clouds.

They see the flashing light of electrostatic energy before they hear the storm.

Then a huge electric charge takes out one of the habitats. Fire breaks out. Airlocks are jammed, life support systems break down. Someone dies. The colony core systems are damaged.

Spend your threat tokens to put them in danger and give them something to fight for:

- Lead by example to run a team of colonists through the storm to put out the fire in the reactor room.
- Apply brute force to open jammed airlocks or to lift the overturned rover from atop a fellow colonist
- Endure hardship to stay awake while the habitat is depressurized and you find a spare bio suit.

- Repair the life support system before the colony is out of breathable air.

## AFTER THE STORM

Outside, everything is covered in deep dunes of dust. Getting the solar panels up and running again will take weeks of hard work. Communication with Earth is down until they recover the main antenna or get an emergency system up and running.

They need to dig out crates with food and equipment. Robots lie buried in dust, carried miles away by the storm.

**Each player takes one advance for surviving the storm.**

## CHAPTER 3: BAD NEWS FROM HOME

**Take one threat token for each personal issue not yet resolved.**

Three weeks later, at the launch of the second manned mission – Mission Two. Launch has been postponed a couple of times. In the lounge, waiting for the signal from the live stream to reach Mars.

Mission Control interrupts with a message:

*This is Mission Control. Sorry, I have some bad news for you. Mission Two will be the last mission – and a supply mission only, no passengers. Mars to Stay has filed for bankruptcy. Creditors have requested that all assets be liquidated and all future missions aborted. It has not been possible to find a new investor. We are still working on it, but hopes are low.*

*As you know, the emergency return vehicle from Mission One has been recycled. You may be able to reconstruct it. Hermes will reach Mars four month from now or 120 Mars days. If you are ready by then, you may be able to catch a ride home. Let us know at that time if you want us to deliver the supplies as planned. God bless you all.*

*Our legal department has asked me to give you this message: Please note that bankruptcy is one of the exit clauses in the contract. Consider this a termination of your contract. As of 120 Mars days from now, you are no longer employed by Mars to Stay, and Mars to Stay has no responsibility to provide for you. You are free to leave at that time. Until then we expect you to carry on your duty to protect and improve the company assets on Mars.*

Short break. Then: What do you do?

When they ask, explain the details of the challenges – building a launcher, making the colony self-sustained.

# BUILD UP

## HOW TO RUN THIS PART

This part of the story is a sandbox for you and your players to explore. Your job is to keep these **questions** open until the resolution:

- Can we survive on Mars? Do I want to stay on Mars?
- Can we go back to Earth? Do I want to go back to Earth?

Expect the build up to take two hours. If you have time and the players enjoy engaging in the survival details or exploring their relations, you can stay in this part of the story for longer. Save some time and energy for the ending.

This part of the story spans four months. At the start of each month, take one threat token for each personal issue not yet resolved.

There are four plotlines for you and the players to explore:

**Exploration of Mars.** The colonists explore their new home. If they overcome the hostile environment, they are rewarded with new resources.

**Life in the colony.** Mishaps and routine. Tension and conflict.

**A ride home.** Though the second manned mission was cancelled, someone with a burning passion to go to Mars stole on board just before launch.

**A future on Mars.** Back on Earth, a new investor buys into the dream of a colony on Mars but with quite different terms and conditions.

Each plotline provides threats, challenges, opportunities, and complications. You are free to skip and improvise. If the players are active, respond to their initiatives. If they are passive, hit them with a challenge they can't ignore or fast forward the story.

If the players have all made up their mind about staying or leaving even after you have hit them with a few plot twists, and if the players don't engage in the science & build tasks, just skip to the resolution.

End this part when they run out of time or when the characters are all aligned on a plan, they have proven that it can work, and they have the tools and materials they need to finish on time.

## PLOTLINE: EXPLORATION OF MARS

Explorers venture into the hostile lands and must overcome radiation exposure from solar flare events, sinkholes, and extreme temperatures.

Persistence is rewarded when they find lava tubes, mineral deposits and remnants of old missions to Mars they can salvage. Resources that can help them return to Earth, survive on Mars, and make people back home dream of Mars again.

Explorers navigate by signal beacons and by observing Phobos, stars and the sun. Mars has no magnetic field so compasses are useless.

### THE SUPER FLARE

When out on a long-range mission, a surveillance system picks up increased sun spot activity. Solar flare events are likely. What precautions do they take? Do they return to the colony for shelter?

Then a super solar flare event occurs and takes out the navigation satellites. A proton storm will arrive 20 minutes later with deadly levels of radiation. Do explorers have time to seek shelter in a canyon or underground?

If not, exposed explorer will experience radiation sickness and maybe fatal cancer over time. Will they return to Earth in hope for a cure?

Will **Glen** sacrifice himself/herself to save others, knowing that he/she may not have long to live anyway?

### OLYMPUS MONS

Olympus mons is the largest volcano in the solar system.

When exploring, they come upon active volcanic activity. Can they harvest thermal energy from a lava stream?

What does **Brice** find at the top of the mountain? How will future generations know that he/she was here? Where will he/she go next?

### THE YESTERDAY CRATER

When exploring the crater, they come upon a **lava tube** with a closed water system, exposed by the meteor impact that formed The Yesterday Crater. Can they find a way to harvest the water before it evaporates? Can it be sealed and provide habitable living space?

### DYSPROSIUM

When they survey and sample a dike or a cave, they discover a rich source of the rare mineral Dysprosium. Dysprosium that can repair control rods in nuclear reactors, increase battery efficiency, and provide rocket fuels. Can this get Earth commercially interested in the colony again?

Will **Shane** report a realistic value of the deposit to Earth?

### LOW BATTERY

While out on a long range rover mission, the batteries wear down due to extreme temperature changes. Due to a malfunctioning alarm, this was not discovered in time. Can they build an emergency solar panel to power the rover? Can they reach the forward base before they run out of power (and air)?

### OPPORTUNITIES

Explorers discover **remnants** from an old Mars mission that can be salvaged for spare parts or even food. Take one resource.

Explorers discover a field of **'blueberries'** – small structures on the surface rich in hematite that can be gathered up and reduced to metallic iron. Take one resource token.

Recover Francis' package from mum in the Million Dollar Desert.

### COMPLICATIONS

Rovers get stuck in **dunes** with fine-grained sand that gets in everywhere. The airlock does not seal completely, power consumption increases. The explorers will need to take everything apart for a thorough cleaning to get it back into safe operation standard. Take one threat token.

**Micro meteors** punctures a rover windshield air leaks out. Unlike on Earth, micro meteors don't burn up in the atmosphere. Immediate field repairs are needed ("has anyone seen the silver tape?") or they will have to return for repairs. Take one threat token.

A **sinkhole** opens up below a rover or explorers. Valuable equipment is damaged and explorers are trapped or injured.

An automated robot miner **malfunctions** and drives over a cliff. Remove one resource token.

### QUESTIONS

- How do you feel when you step out of the airlock and into the Martian sunshine?
- What comes to your mind when you look up into the Martian night sky?
- What do you feel when you see the sunrise on Mars?
- What is the most annoying thing about your bio suit?

## PLOTLINE: LIFE IN THE COLONY

The colonists struggle with routine tasks and boredom in an environment where mistakes can be fatal. Drills, checklists, routines. They spend 24½ hours per day with the same 9 people. Outside, a big uncaring opponent.

Rituals keep the colonists sane: Mediation in the Earth room. A work out in the gym. Solving math puzzles. Still tension build up to dangerous levels. When someone snaps, it threatens the survival of all.

### THE SOLAR FLARE DRILL

A routine drill to practice a solar flare event situation. You have done it a million times before.

Shut down non-core systems. Inspect and manually seal all airlocks. Put on bio suits and go to the emergency stations. Monitor personal radiation monitoring devices. Wait for signal. Restart all systems in order and run tests.

Kelly or Lewis skips a trivial step on the checklist. **Francis, Glen, or Mason** notices. Does anyone step up and reinforce the importance safety regulations? **Alex?**

### NEWS FROM HOME

A video message arrives from home with news to one of the player characters:

**Francis'** aging parent Tony brings news of the birth of a healthy baby, a nephew or niece. Tony expresses pride in Francis' achievements, but it is also clear that Tony is getting older and is not getting the proper attention from the social services.

**Mason's** adult child Jade is expecting a child. Mason will be a grandparent. How does Mason respond?

**Brice's** sponsor Morgan brings news on the success of Brice's latest feature on the exploration of Mars. Morgan encourages Brice to pursue even higher goals, but there is a trace of problems to come. Public interest is fading. Morgan's interest is fading. Mars has become old news, a new dream is stealing the headlines.

Twist the message to push the character's personal issue.

### THE ASSISTANT

Stacy wants to be **Mason's** research assistant and pushes some of his/her buttons unintendedly as Stacy reminds Mason of Jade. Stacy tries his/her best but mistakes happen. Plants are over watered, the ultra violet light is turned up too high, test tubes are mislabeled. Or maybe Stacy discovers a trivial mistake made by Mason? Does Mason have the patience to deal with the new assistant?

While Evan is helping **Glen** constructing a facility or component, Evan learns that Glen is secretly medicating himself/herself and informs Alex or Shane.

### THE FIGHT

It will be another four weeks before the next harvest. You only have protein bars until then – the protein bars that you salvaged from the Million Dollar Desert. They kill your stomach and make your toilet visits painful.

Then Terry accuses Robin of theft.

Then suddenly **Shane** finds himself/herself in the middle of a fight.

Or **Glen** can't find his/her pills. Have they been stolen or just misplaced?

### CABIN FEVER

Lewis or Kelly has been losing it lately. Not turning up for lunch on time, leaving tools and dirty laundry around, answering angrily or dispassionately when addressed.

One day he/she snaps and drives off in a Mars Rover on a hopeless mission to nowhere (somewhere north of the North Pole).

Can they get back their fellow team member? Can they afford to spend precious time and resources on a rescue mission? Who makes the decision?

### OPPORTUNITIES

Someone discovers a forgotten or misplaced **crate with supplies**. Chocolate or coffee is back on the menu. Take one resource token.

### COMPLICATIONS

Someone discovers cracks in the shielding of the reactor. Take one threat token.

A leak from **micro meteor** impact was not discovered and repaired quickly. An electric charge burns out the regulators. It is now always either too hot or too cold.

A storage box is spoiled from faulty packing. They are **out of toilet paper**, coffee, carbon filters, pain killers, or chocolate. Remove one resource token.

Someone replaces a carbon filter with a used filter by mistake. Life support systems provide poor quality air. Take one threat token.

### QUESTIONS

- What do you miss most about Earth?
- Do you enjoy the two-hour mandatory daily workout in the gym? Do you sometimes skip them?
- What is your favorite feature in the entertainment system?
- When did you last receive a message from home? Was it good news or bad news?

## PLOTLINE: A RIDE HOME

The soon-to-be space travelers race against the clock to come up with inventive ways to build a launcher that will carry them up to intercept Hermes when it flies by. An emotional roller coaster between hope and despair as they come up with smart ways to use the limited resources they have and what they have worked hard on creating is taken away from them by an oversight, accident, or just plain bad luck. Sometimes an unexpectedly message from Mission Control changes the situation completely.

The communication delay between Earth and Mars is between 3 and 22 minutes. The sun blocks communication for up to one month when Mars and Earth are on opposite sides.

### STOWAWAY

Mission Control has detected a **deviation** in the Hermes trajectory. They have been unable to determine the cause, but they have now adjusted the course to compensate. Consequently, the return journey will be longer than first predicted and you will need more food.

Next, Mission Control **loses contact** with Hermes. Without connection to the spaceship, neither Mission Control nor the colonists can adjust the trajectory of Hermes nor release the supply drop, making both catching a ride home and receiving much needed supplies highly unlikely.

Finally, when connection to Hermes is restored, the colonists learn that one of the members of the second mission team has stolen on board Hermes and is now on the way to Mars. While clearly a reckless thing to do, it was the **stowaway** that fixed the communication problem.

The stowaway is **Shane's** partner Kim who desperately wants to join Shane on Mars. Alternatively, it is **Alex's** foster child Sasha, fueled up on dreams of glory and ultimate adventure.

### CONSTRUCTING A HULL

They can construct a hull for the launcher from the descent vehicle though it now holds the bio bank. The colonists can move the temperature controlled boxes with plant seeds into one of the habitats or the biosphere but they will take up space and be vulnerable to contamination. Will **Mason** and **Alex** agree to this?

Alternatively, they can build a frame from scratch using debris from the colony and previous supply missions.

The hull does not have to be sealed and aerodynamic as there is not much atmosphere and they can sit in pressure suits during the ascent. However, it needs to be strong and well balanced in order for them to control the launcher.

### CONSTRUCTING AN ENGINE

To construct an engine that is strong enough to lift the payload to intercept with Hermes in high orbit, they will need to modify the engines from the descent vehicle.

Can **Brice** and **Glen** find the engines that crashed in the Million Dollar Desert and get them fixed up?

Can **Glen** construct the missing parts from scratch, possibly with the help of the plasma former and Mission Control?

### PRODUCING FUEL

Methane based fuel for the launcher can be constructed from sub-surface ice and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Perhaps supplemented with high power fuel left over from the landing.

It takes time to produce enough fuel though. Will they risk launch if they don't have enough fuel?

Can they turn off all non-critical systems to divert more energy to the process? What is the impact on morale of going for weeks without hot water, warm dinner, and Saturday night movie shows?

### CONTROLS FOR THE LAUNCHER

Whatever plan they come up with for constructing the launcher, it is worthless if they cannot steer the launcher. Reusing the control systems from the descent vehicle

Do they have time and fuel for a test launch? If not, how can they calibrate the control systems without a test run?

Mission Control can control Hermes but the time delay means that getting help from a stowaway on Hermes for last minute course corrections may be critical.

### LIFE GOES ON

**Mason's** adult child Jade forgives. *"It's ok – come back home and we will sort it out."* Will Mason give up Mars, go home and try to repair the broken past?

**Shane's** partner Kim has married someone else. *"I didn't wanted you to know. The farm is sold, your father is dead and I married Nelson, yes, I know you don't like him."* How does Shane react when he/she finds out that it was not their dream, but only his/her dream?

**Brice's** sponsor Morgan gets sick and dies suddenly. *"I am sorry to inform you that Morgan passed away this morning..."* Morgan has always encouraged Brice to go on and climb the next mountain. Will Brice finally turn around or go on alone?

**Glen's** foster parent Adrian gets sick and dies suddenly. *"I am sorry to inform you that Adrian passed away this morning..."*

### QUESTIONS

- What life awaits you if you return to Earth?
- Whom on Earth do you look most forward to seeing again?
- When was the last time you had a red steak/fresh strawberry/cold beer/glass of wine?
- What is the worst thing about coming home?

## PLOTLINE: A FUTURE ON MARS

The colonists must make the colony self-sustained and attract new investors from Earth to keep the dream of a human colony on Mars alive.

While coming up with smart ways to use the limited resources available, news from Earth about a new investor challenges their resolve to stay on Mars.

### A NEW INVESTOR

A new investor is interested in Mars to Stay. It is a religious foundation. They have a shitload of money and want to populate Mars for religious reasons. They believe in a society with strong roles defined by gender and age. They are either a matriarchy or patriarchy – as opposite to the gender of Shane. They hold servants – harems of young boys/girls – to serve the patriarch/matriarch.

The first colonists will arrive in two years. You are all expected to stay according to your contract but you will be given new job titles and new supervisors.

### A NEW SOURCE OF WATER

To make the colony self-sustained with water, they need to find a new source of water.

Maybe **Brice** or **Shane** can find a source of water or ice they can get to, e.g. in a lava tube uncovered by the Yesterday Crater or deep in a cave system somewhere in Valles Marineris.

Maybe **Francis** or **Glen** can build a fleet of robots that can cover a large area or detect traces of steam seeking through cracks in the ground?

There is also water ice on the surface near the North Pole of Mars but it is way out of range of the rovers and the ground based navigation systems. Can **Brice**, **Glen** or **Francis** find a way to retrieve ice from 4,000 km away?

Water can also be created from a chemical process such as burning hydrogen. Maybe they have some rocket fuel left over from the descent or that **Glen** or **Brice** salvaged from Elon Musk's landing site. Will they use it for the launcher or to create water for those who stay on Mars?

Finally, **Mason** may come up with draught resistant crop so they can survive with less water or **Glen** may improve the recycling systems to achieve almost loss-less recycling.

### A NEW ENERGY SOURCE

To get a new, sustainable energy source, **Glen** or **Alex** can attempt to harvest **electrostatic energy** from the dust storms to charge the batteries. They will need to build an array of conductors and an underground capacitor. This will also reduce the risk of a second super electrostatic charge hitting the colony.

**Shane** or **Brice** may also find a source of **thermal energy** when exploring Olympus Mons, Valles Marineris or the Yesterday Crater.

Transporting the energy to the colony may be too difficult and they may decide to build a new colony closer to the energy source.

Finally, while Mars neither has fossil fuels and an atmosphere rich in oxygen, **Shane, Brice** or **Glen** may find a mineral deposit and a process that produces excess thermal energy that they can harvest. Possibly even a new source of plutonium for their reactor.

### CREATING SOIL

The Eden biosphere is a research facility to experiment with different plants to grow on Mars. To grow sufficient food on a large scale, they will need to scale up the production. For this, they need soil, seeds, and space.

Besides recycling organic waste, **Shane** and **Brice** can find minerals on Mars that can be used for fertilizer once some of the harsher chemical have been removed.

**Mason** can experiment with crossing seeds from the bio bank to find plants that are well adapted to the conditions on Mars. Cassava (yucca) and sweet potatoes can be eaten raw and does not need a lot of water.

**Alex** and **Glen** can plan and build a new facility that provides space for new farms instead of filling up the biosphere and habitats. The crop does not have the same high requirements for pressure, temperature, radiation shielding and atmospheric composition.

### A NEW SOURCE OF PROTEIN

Just growing enough calories to eat will not be enough. At some point they run out of vitamins, proteins and fat or they will develop a host of symptoms: Night blindness, nerve damage, and weak bones.

Maybe **Mason, Francis** or **Alex** has a pet they can clone and grow for protein? Or they have insect eggs in the bio bank? Or **Shane** finds insects in a crate with spoiled food?

*“Ladies and gentlemen, let me present tonight’s menu: Mealworms. Or as I like to them: **Snackworms**. Good source of protein. Efficient use of bio waste. Requires no energy for cooking.”*

### QUESTIONS

- What about life here on Mars do you appreciate most?
- What have you learned about life here on Mars?
- What have you learned about death here on Mars? Do you think you will die on Mars?
- Why did you chose to go to Mars?

# RESOLUTION

## HOW TO RUN THIS PART

End the story with the choice of staying on Mars or leaving for Earth.

Consequences of rolls in this part are long term and final. Disasters are fatal. Injuries are permanent. Opportunities are lasting.

Players take one advance when they have decided whether to stay or leave.

## LEAVE: A RIDE BACK TO EARTH

If the launcher is ready when the countdown for the arrival of Hermes reaches zero, the transport home approaches Mars and the colonists must decide if they try to catch a ride back to Earth.

There is a real chance that something will go wrong and kill everyone.

## LAUNCH AND DOCK WITH HERMES

The players must decide who boards the launcher and who is operating the launcher during launch and docking. Spend your threat tokens to modify the roll – the stakes are high!

The launcher can explode on launch, fail to intercept Hermes and crash land on the other side of the planet, or crash into Hermes, allowing them to board Hermes but changing the course of Hermes in the process, making Hermes miss Earth.

Complications may be that they have to leave someone behind or throw something valuable overboard last minute. Will you leave your research samples behind to make it lighter? Someone you care about?

## THE LONG JOURNEY HOME

If the docking was successful, each character on board Hermes must roll endure hardship to determine if they return safely to Earth.

Failure means death from starvation, exposure, or injury. Let the player decide where, when and how it happens.

Possible complications are scars on the soul, the death of someone close, or the loss of something valuable.

## STAY: A FUTURE ON MARS

Characters that have decided to stay on Mars will go through a tough time as resources run short and equipment wear down.

## STARVATION

Character staying on Mars must roll to endure hardship.

## AT THE TABLE : RESOLUTION

If they have failed to make the colony self-sustained, apply -1 modifier per missing colony advance.

Failure means death from starvation, exposure, or injury. Let the player decide where, when and how it happens.

Complications are scars on the soul, the death of someone close, or the loss of something valuable.

Those that survive live to see the arrival of the next colonists.

## EPILOGUE

Finally, round off the stories of the characters.

If they stay on Mars, do they live happily ever after? Will Marsborn Martians arrive?

If they return to Earth, do they find a new purpose in life? Will they return to Mars one day?

## REFLECT

After the game, take some time to talk about the game. What was exciting, moving, intense, surprising? What did you enjoy?

If you want to share your feedback, I'd love to hear from you on [mail@thoughtfulgames.com](mailto:mail@thoughtfulgames.com).



# HANDOUTS

# TIME TRACK

Prologue: The Journey to Mars

Chapter 1: Life on Mars

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Chapter 2: Impact

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Chapter 3: Bad news from home

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Chapter 4:

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Chapter 5:

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Chapter 6:

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Chapter 7: Stay or leave

Epilogue

# STATS

## SMART

Smart characters science the shit out of a situation and explore a dangerous environment safely. When you succeed a smart move, you come up with smart things to do or a way to build something. If you fail, you receive less or wrong information or you take a long time to come up with it.

It takes **one time** to science the shit out of a situation or explore a dangerous environment safely.

## TOUGH

Tough characters apply brute force to problems and endure hardship. When you succeed a tough move, you overcome an obstacle with strength or stamina and avoid injury or harm. If you fail, you get hurt or something valuable breaks.

## EARTH

Competent and well-trained characters operate, build, and repair tools and equipment in dangerous or difficult circumstances.

When you succeed an Earth move, you successfully operate, repair or build something. If you fail, you need more time and resources to finish the job, the result is flawed, someone is injured or something breaks.

To build something costs **one resources** and takes **one time**. To complete one part of the colony or the launcher, you must first come up with a solution, find the resources and then build it.

## MARS

Passionate and driven characters lead by example and act in the face of danger. When you succeed a Mars move, you lead others into action and act in the face of danger without anyone getting hurt. If you fail, morale drops or someone gets hurt.

# ROLLING DICE

Roll + stat + modifier. Help or hinder: +1 or -1. Exhausted, bruised or injured: -1. Circumstances: -1 per threat token. The maximum bonus is +4 and the maximum penalty is -2.

Total	Result	
<b>13 or higher</b>	Strong hit	Yes, and <i>opportunity</i>
<b>10-12</b>	Hit	Yes
<b>7-9</b>	Weak hit	Yes, but <i>complication</i>
<b>6 or less</b>	Miss	No, and <i>disaster</i>

## STRONG HIT: YES, AND OPPORTUNITY

MC gives the player a choice between two opportunities:

- Lucky break. Remove one threat token.
- Discovery. Take one resource token
- Quick result. Spend one less time
- MC choice

## WEAK HIT: YES, BUT COMPLICATION

MC gives the player a choice between two complications:

- Flawed. Take one threat token.
- Cost. Spend one resource token.
- Slow. Spend one extra time.
- Painful. You are exhausted, bruised or injured.
- Detachment. Give up your personal item/goal.
- MC choice

## MISS: NO, AND DISASTER

MC chooses one:

- A player character is out of action, trapped, incoherent or left for dead.
- Equipment and facilities blow up/are destroyed. Decrease colony or launcher by one.
- Forewarn future calamity. Take three threat tokens.
- Time passes. Skip to the next chapter.
- MC choice. Spend threat tokens as desired.

# PLAYER CHARACTERS

## MC OVERVIEW

This overview of the player characters help you keep track of goals, issues, needs, and custom moves.

## BRICE THE EXPLORER

Brice goes where no one else has gone before – but can he/she turn around and go home before it is too late?

Brice wants to go to the top of Olympus Mons.

## WHAT BRICE BROUGHT FROM EARTH

- A rock from Mars that has been on Earth
- Ashes from someone Brice has lost

## WHAT BRICE HASN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

- I can't have children of my own
- I miss Earth and want to go home

## PEOPLE BACK HOME

Brice's mentor and sponsor **Morgan** has relentlessly worked for Brice to be able to pursue the dream of going to Mars to stay.

## PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Kelly the Hammer** has saved Brice's life.

## EXPLORER MOVES

**One small step.** When you go where no person has gone before, take one resource token.

**Enthusiastic.** When someone rolls for a move and you help, remove one threat token.

## SHANE THE VISIONARY

Shane leads others but can Shane follow a goal set by someone else?

Shane wants to reunite with his/her partner on Mars.

### WHAT SHANE BROUGHT FROM EARTH

- A wedding ring shaped as two snakes eating each other
- A rattle shaped as a pink elephant

### WHAT SHANE HASN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

- I faked the numbers for the colony business plan
- I'm slowly going blind from cataracts

### PEOPLE BACK HOME

Shane's spouse **Kim** will join Shane with the next mission – the one that gets cancelled.

### PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Lewis the Joker** has saved Shane's life.

### VISIONARY MOVES

**Inspirational.** As lead by example, except that you do not need to take part in the action yourself and don't expose yourself to danger.

**Thrives on pressure.** When someone's life is at stake, add +1 to your roll.

## MASON THE SCIENTIST

Mason creates new life on Mars – but can he/she repair his/her broken life on Earth?

Mason wants to create a life form that can survive on the surface of Mars.

### WHAT MASON BROUGHT FROM EARTH

- Seeds from a lotus flower
- A double helix hologram

### WHAT MASON HASN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

- I no longer find joy in my research
- I'm sad that I wasn't a better parent

### PEOPLE BACK HOME

Mason's grown up son/daughter **Jade** from a marriage gone bad.

### PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Clockwork Robin** is only here because of Mason.

### SCIENTIST MOVES

**Systematic.** When you science the shit out of a situation, you may spend one extra time and succeed without making a roll as if you scored a hit.

**Rational in the face of danger.** When you act in the face of danger, roll+Smart instead of roll+Mars.

## GLEN THE INVENTOR

Glen builds machines – but can he/she build a family?

Glen wants to build an artistic masterpiece on Mars. In order for it to be a masterpiece, it must be exceptional in some way.

### WHAT GLEN BROUGHT FROM EARTH

- A music box playing Ode for Joy
- A mechanical watch showing the orbits of the planets

### WHAT GLEN HASN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

- Pills make life bearable. Don't know what I will do when we run out.
- Bad genes. I'm dying, slowly.

### PEOPLE BACK HOME

Glen's foster parent **Adrian** – a teacher who took Glen in from the streets and got him/her through university.

### PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

Glen has promised to take care of **Stacy the Kid**.

### INVENTOR MOVES

**Right tools.** You always have the right tools for the task when you build or repair something.

**Robotics specialist.** You can operate and modify robots to do tasks that otherwise only humans can do. Send a robot to do a dangerous task and avoid exposing yourself to danger.

## FRANCIS THE SPECIALIST

Francis excels in his/her comfort zone – but can he/she move outside his/her comfort zone for the team to succeed?

Francis wants to build a self-sustained colony.

### WHAT FRANCIS BROUGHT FROM EARTH

- A lock of hair from a child
- A souvenir from Aqua World

### WHAT FRANCIS HASN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

- I want to have a family of my own
- I regret that I signed up

### PEOPLE BACK HOME

Francis' aging father/mother **Tony** who are so proud of what Francis has achieved.

### PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Terry the Veteran** is Francis' uncle/aunt.

### SPECIALIST MOVES

**Meticulous.** When you build, repair or operate, you may spend one extra time and succeed without making a roll as if you scored a hit.

**Satellites & surveillance systems expert.** You can operate and modify the surveillance and communications satellites to help solve advanced tasks. Add +1 to explore a dangerous environment or operate something if you use the colony computer systems.

## ALEX THE SHEPHERD

Alex takes care of others – but can he/she let others take care of him/her?

Alex wants to build a self-sustained colony.

### WHAT ALEX BROUGHT FROM EARTH

- A police badge with the words “To protect and serve”
- A crucifix

### WHAT ALEX HASN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

- I want to have a child
- I cheated to get a seat on the first mission

### PEOPLE BACK HOME

**Sasha**, a kid with a fucked up crazy past that Alex connected with and for whom Alex is a role model.

### PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Evan** reminds Alex of someone back on Earth.

### SHEPHERD MOVES

**Organizational talent.** When everyone is acting according to your plan, remove one threat token.

**Professional interest.** When someone shares something important with you and you understand, remove one threat token.

# PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

## STACY THE KID (GLEN)

Stacy the kid wants to prove himself/herself worthy to be on the team. Stacy doesn't want to be the last person alive on Mars. Computers. Smart.

## KELLY THE HAMMER (BRICE)

Kelly the Hammer gets things done. Practical, efficient. Can be a bit inflexible. Mining. Tough.

## LEWIS THE JOKER (SHANE)

Lewis the Joker cracks jokes you have all heard before. Hesitant to make unpopular decisions. Electrical engineering. Earth.

## TERRY THE VETERAN (FRANCIS)

Terry the veteran has seen it all before and have tried worse. Terry will not take stupid chances. Operate Heavy Machinery. Tough.

## EVAN "JUST EVAN" (ALEX)

Evan is everybody's friend. Caring, likes to help, diplomatic. Indecisive in crunch situations and tends to avoid confrontation. Medic. Earth.

## ROBIN "CLOCKWORK" (MASON)

"Clockwork" Robin is reliable and always on time. Slow to respond to new possibilities. Farming. Earth.

# PEOPLE BACK HOME

## MORGAN, BRICE'S MENTOR

The mentor and sponsor of Brice who has relentlessly worked for Brice to be able to pursue his/her dream.

50

## KIM, SHANE'S PARTNER

The spouse of Shane to join him/her with the next mission.

## JADE, MASON'S ADULT CHILD

The grownup son/daughter of Mason from a marriage gone bad.

## TONY, FRANCIS' AGING PARENT

The aging father/mother of Francis who are so proud of what he/she has achieved.

## ADRIAN, GLEN'S FOSTER PARENT

The foster parent of Glen – a teacher who took him/her in from the streets and got Glen through university.

## SASHA, ALEX' FOSTER CHILD

A kid with a fucked up crazy past that Alex connected with and for whom Alex is a role model.

# THE COLONY

## FACILITIES

The colony consists of four sections connected by low-pressure walkways:

- **Athens** with control center, meditation room, life support unit, and sleeping quarters for eight Martians
- **Babylon** with kitchen, canteen, gym, life support unit, radiation shelter, and sleeping quarters for eight Martians
- **Cairo** with main power plant, batteries, recycling machines, and garage with two Rovers and sleeping quarters for four Martians
- **Eden** with production gardens, laboratory, soil detox unit, and water recirculation unit

## NEAR THE COLONY

- A field with solar panels
- A communication tower with antennas
- A storage area with sealed containers with food, medicine, tools, and a bio bank with seeds
- Waste disposal areas with non-recyclable junk

## FURTHER AWAY

- A trail marked with navigation beacons
- A forward base for long distance expeditions
- Excavation sites where basic ore refinement is done
- A waste disposal area with contaminated and radioactive material

## LOCAL SIGHTS

- **Olympus Mons**, the largest volcano in the Solar System
- **The Million Dollar Desert**. Named after a failed landing
- **Musk Hill**. Where Elon Musk landed
- **Valles Marineris**, the largest canyon in the Solar System

## CHALLENGES

You have **food stores** that will last for some time, but you don't produce as much food as you need, and what you produce lacks vitamins and proteins.

You haven't found an easily accessible source of clean **water** and rely on the water you brought from Earth, recycling and an energy heavy process to produce and purify water from a repository deep under the colony.

You produce just enough **energy** to keep the colony going for now but your energy sources require maintenance and will wear out over time. Your solar panels need cleaning and only produces energy when there is sun. The output of your nuclear reactor slowly declines.

You live in cramped habitats where most areas serves multiple purposes. The **life support** machinery eats up a lot of energy to keep the colony heated. Radiation shielding is poor so you have to seek shelter during solar flare events. Moving between sections is time consuming.

Your **robots** are few and constantly break down from working in the harsh climate. You have plasma formers and carbon formers that can produce spare parts, but the process consumes a lot of energy.

# A SELF-SUSTAINED COLONY

To survive on Mars without supplies from Earth, you must build a self-sustained colony.

You need four things to survive on Mars:

- Energy
- Habitat
- Water
- Food

At the beginning of the game, the colony rely on receiving further supplies from Earth. To build a self-sustained colony, you must come up with a sustainable way to produce these (science) and build the facilities required (build).

If everything goes your way, it will take 8 weeks and cost 4 resources.

You also need to maintain the base ongoing (operate).

## COLONY SUSTAINABILITY

### CORE SYSTEMS

- ✓ Energy: Solar + Nuclear
- ✓ Habitat Athens
- ✓ Habitat Babylon
- ✓ Water: Reservoir & recycling

*Pay 1 resource/time if not all core systems are running*

### BASIC SYSTEMS

Science the shit out of these challenges:

- Energy
- Water
- Food: Calories
- Food: Protein

Then build them:

- Energy
- Water
- Food: Calories
- Food: Protein

*Pay 1 resource/chapter until all core systems and basic systems are running*



# A LAUNCHER

To return to Earth, you must build a surface-to-orbit launcher in time to catch a ride home with Hermes when it arrives. As the original emergency return vehicle has been recycled, you need to rebuild it by completing these four tasks:

- Construct a **hull**
- Construct an **engine**
- Produce enough **fuel**
- Construct a **control system**

You need to come up with a solution (science), and then get tools and materials to the construction site (resources) and put it together (build).

Science the shit out of these:

- Hull
- Engine
- Fuel
- Controls

Build the launcher:

- Hull
- Engine
- Fuel
- Controls

Finally, you must fire up the engines and fly the launcher to dock with Hermes (operate). If all goes according to plan, you will spend 8 weeks and 4 resources to complete the launcher.



# BRICE THE EXPLORER

Finds stuff. Exo-geology, Journalist.

*You are cheerful and curious. You pursue opportunities vigorously and bring back new resources to the team. You like to improvise and bring a rush of enthusiasm at the start of new endeavors, though you tend to lose momentum and forget to follow things through.*

## LIFE ON MARS

**20 years.** *We all signed up for 20 years of working for the foundation, building the colony. They provide food and lodging and we promise to not run away. Like there is anywhere to run. With a big bonus paid out at the end and how knows what happens then? Maybe buy a large chunk of the planet. Exploit them newcomers. Or as a custodian, showing around the schoolkids and tell them of the old Mars. Or buy a ticket to Ceres, Europa or wherever the next colony will be.*

**Knudsen Lake.** *An underground frozen lake. We built the colony practically on top of it. First year I spend most of my outdoor time on drilling down to it and putting in the plumbing for the heating and collection system. So now we can take a shower without using precious drinking water. It is pure, Martian H<sub>2</sub>O. We should put it on bottles and sell it for a fortune back on Earth. They would like the rusty taste.*

**Fresh air.** *In the morning just after I get up, I go and stand in front of the big fan that regulates the air in the dining hall. I close my eyes, let the wind from the fan catch my hair and take a deep breath. It's like opening your window on a spring morning in the mountains or in the forest. You get that extra kick from the high oxygen level and the smell of ozone and you can feel it all day.*

# BRICE THE EXPLORER



## BASICS

At the start of the game, circle one for each

- I'm in my 20ies/30ies
- I'm female/male

## STATS

At the start of the game, choose either +1 Tough or +1 Earth.

<b>SMART</b>	+1	Science. Explore.
<b>TOUGH</b>	0	Apply brute force. Endure hardship.
<b>EARTH</b>	0	Build. Repair. Operate.
<b>MARS</b>	+2	Lead by example. Act in the face of danger

## EXPLORER MOVES

At the start of the game, pick one:

- One small step.** When you go where no person has gone before, take one Resource token.
- Enthusiastic.** When someone rolls for a move and you help, remove one threat token.

## DAMAGE

- Exhausted, bruised, or injured (-1 on rolls)
- Taken out, trapped, incoherent, left for dead (no rolls)

Heals at the end of each chapter

## ADVANCES

When you take an advancement, pick one and erase it from the list:

+1 Smart, +1 Tough, +1 Earth, +1 Mars, Explorer move

## WHAT DID YOU BRING WITH YOU FROM EARTH?

At the start of the game, pick one:

- A rock from Mars that has been on Earth
- Ashes from someone you lost

If you bring this item to the top of Olympus Mons, take one advance. If you give it up, reduce Mars by one and take one advance.

## WHAT YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

At the start of the game, pick one and tell the MC but no one else:

- I can't have children of my own
- I miss Earth and want to go home

When you tell someone and they understand, take one advance.

## PEOPLE BACK HOME

Your mentor and sponsor **Morgan** who has relentlessly worked for you to be able to pursue your dream.

## PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Kelly the Hammer** has saved your life.

When you perform a task with the help of Kelly, increase Tough by +1.

## THE OTHER PLAYER CHARACTERS

At the start of the game, decide together with the other players who:

\_\_\_\_\_ is my brother/sister

\_\_\_\_\_ is my partner

\_\_\_\_\_ is my close friend

\_\_\_\_\_ is my highly respected colleague

You can Help (+1) or hinder (-1) player characters rolling for a move.

# SHANE THE VISIONARY

The reason we are all here. Leadership. Chemistry.

*You are driven by a tremendous energy and the need to achieve. You are extravert and enjoy stimulating others, questioning norms, and challenge the team to improve. Though you may appear as impatient and aggressive, you play a crucial role in pushing the team forward to succeed.*

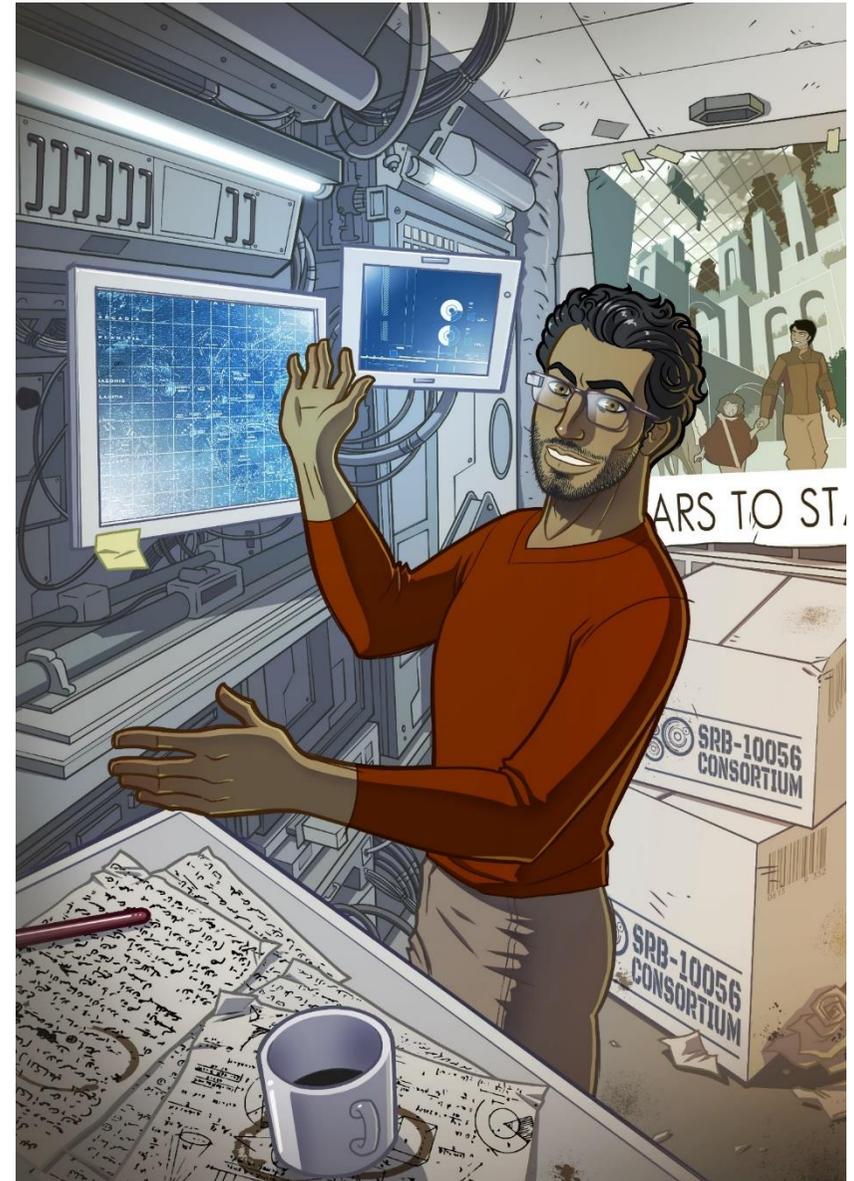
## LIFE ON MARS

**20 years.** *We all signed up for 20 years of working for the foundation, building the colony. They provide food and lodging and we promise to not run away. Like there is anywhere to run. With a big bonus paid out at the end and how knows what happens then? Maybe become the governor of Mars. Or run for president of the United Colonies.*

**One Revolution Day.** *669 sols. 687 Earth days. One Martian year. We celebrated the first full circle around the sun on our new planet with a proper party. Alcohol is forbidden on the colony of course. Too many things that can go wrong if someone fools around drunk and presses the wrong buttons. Still, not too difficult to do in the laboratory. So I made some for the party, as a surprise. Of course, nothing happened besides taking out the garbage with a hangover. But we didn't tell Mission Control.*

**Eden, it was not.** *We all knew that. Still, I baptized the first biosphere Eden, as a symbol for the vision that drove us here: To create a world for humankind to live without fear, famine or strife. I do not believe in God. But I do believe in the good of humankind. At least as long as there is enough to eat and enough partners for everyone. Kim will join me with the next mission.*

# SHANE THE VISIONARY



## BASICS

At the start of the game, circle one for each

- I'm in my 30ies/40ies
- I'm female/male

## STATS

At the start of the game, choose either +1 Smart or +1 Earth

<b>SMART</b>	0	Science. Explore.
<b>TOUGH</b>	+1	Apply brute force. Endure hardship.
<b>EARTH</b>	0	Build. Repair. Operate.
<b>MARS</b>	+2	Lead by example. Act in the face of danger

## VISIONARY MOVES

At the start of the game, pick one:

- Inspirational.** As *lead by example*, except that you do not need to take part in the action yourself and don't expose yourself to danger.
- Thrives on pressure.** When someone's life is at stake, add +1 to your roll.

## DAMAGE

- Exhausted, bruised, or injured (-1 on rolls)
- Taken out, trapped, incoherent, left for dead (no rolls)

*Heals at the end of each chapter*

## ADVANCES

When you take an advancement, pick one and erase it from the list:

+1 Smart, +1 Tough, +1 Earth, +1 Mars, Visionary move

## WHAT DID YOU BRING WITH YOU FROM EARTH?

At the start of the game, pick one:

- My wedding ring shaped as two snakes eating each other
- A rattle shaped as a pink elephant

*If you reunite this item with your partner on Mars, take one advance. If you give it up, reduce Mars by one and take one advance.*

## WHAT YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE YET

At the start of the game, pick one and tell no one:

- I faked the numbers for the colony business plan
- I am slowly going blind from cataracts

*When you tell someone and they understand, take one advance.*

## PEOPLE BACK HOME

Your spouse **Kim** who will join you with the next mission.

## PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Lewis the Joker** has saved your life.

*When you perform a task with the help of Lewis, increase Earth by +1.*

## THE OTHER PLAYER CHARACTERS

At the start of the game, decide together with the other players your relations:

\_\_\_\_\_ is my brother/sister

\_\_\_\_\_ is my partner

\_\_\_\_\_ is my close friend

\_\_\_\_\_ is my highly respected colleague

*You can Help (+1) or hinder (-1) player characters rolling for a move.*

# MASON THE SCIENTIST

Sees what everyone else overlooks. Biology. Medicine.

*You react to plans and ideas in a rational and sensible way. You favor a prudent approach to matters and evaluate them according to their accuracy before acting. You can be slow to come to decisions. However, with your persistent, analytical approach, you seldom make mistakes and often catch what others overlook.*

## LIFE ON MARS

**20 years.** *We all signed up for 20 years of working for the foundation, building the colony. They provide food and lodging and we promise to not run away. Like there is anywhere to run. With a big bonus paid out at the end and how knows what happens then? Maybe buy a large chunk of the planet and build ecospheres for Martian hybrid life forms. Maybe buy a return ticket to Earth just to see Jade again.*

**The clock.** *On the wall in the mess hall, there is a large, round analog clock. 25 lines to count the 24½ hours of the Martian day. You know the people who say there is not enough hours in the day? Well, I'm using that extra ½ hour to catch up on some research...*

*When **John Cabot** landed on Newfoundland in 1497, he ordered his men not to advance beyond the distance of a crossbow. I sometimes compare our endeavor to that of the explorers of earlier times. While he feared hostile natives, we fear the hostile environment of Mars. Our lives depend on us getting back to safety in the base if something happens. Mars is no place for taking chances.*

# MASON THE SCIENTIST



## BASICS

At the start of the game, pick one for each

- I'm in my 30ies/40ies
- I'm female/male

## STATS

At the start of the game, choose either +1 Tough or +1 Earth

<b>SMART</b>	+2	Science. Explore.
<b>TOUGH</b>	0	Apply brute force. Endure hardship.
<b>EARTH</b>	0	Build. Repair. Operate.
<b>MARS</b>	+1	Lead by example. Act in the face of danger

## SCIENTIST MOVES

At the start of the game, pick one:

- Systematic.** When you science the shit out of a situation, you may spend one extra time and succeed without making a roll as if you scored a hit.
- Rational in the face of danger.** When you act in the face of danger, roll+Smart instead of roll+Mars.

## DAMAGE

- Exhausted, bruised, or injured (-1 on rolls)
- Taken out, trapped, incoherent, left for dead (no rolls)

Heals at the end of each chapter

## ADVANCES

When you take an advancement, pick one and erase it from the list:

+1 Smart, +1 Tough, +1 Earth, +1 Mars, Scientist move

## WHAT DID YOU BRING WITH YOU FROM EARTH?

At the start of the game, pick one:

- Seeds from a lotus flower
- A double helix hologram

If you create a new life form that can survive on the surface of Mars, take one advance. If you give it up, reduce Mars by one and take one advance.

## WHAT HAVEN'T YOU TOLD ANYONE YET

At the start of the game, pick one and tell no one.

- I no longer find joy in my research
- I'm sad that I wasn't a better parent

When you tell someone and they understand, take one advance.

## PEOPLE BACK HOME

Your grown up son/daughter **Jade** from a marriage gone bad.

## PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Clockwork Robin** is only here because of you.

When you perform a task with the help of Robin, increase Earth by +1.

## THE OTHER PLAYER CHARACTERS

At the start of the game, decide together with the other players your relations:

\_\_\_\_\_ is my brother/sister

\_\_\_\_\_ is my partner

\_\_\_\_\_ is my close friend

\_\_\_\_\_ is my highly respected colleague

You can Help (+1) or hinder (-1) player characters rolling for a move.

# GLEN THE INVENTOR

Builds stuff. Robotics. Mechanical Engineering.

*You are creative, unorthodox and a generator of ideas that often translates into innovative technical solutions to problems. Solutions that often play a crucial role in the success and survival of the colony. You sometimes fail to communicate your ideas with the team, or disrupt with new ideas at a time where the team has already decided on a way forward.*

## LIFE ON MARS

**20 years.** *We all signed up for 20 years of working for the foundation, building the colony. They provide food and lodging and we promise to not run away. Like there is anywhere to run. With a big bonus paid out at the end and how knows what happens then? Who cares? The future is now.*

**Dust devils.** *500 meters wide, thousands of meters high. You see them before you hear them as almost no sound is carried in the thin atmosphere. The flashing light as electrostatic bolts shoot across the sky. If only you could find a safe and reliable way to harvest that energy.*

**Kids?** *Don't want them. The Earth is crowded enough without my offspring joining the rat race and the colony is definitely not a place for kids. At least not for another generation or two.*

**Musk Hill.** *On the way to the excavation sites, near the forward base. It's where that guy Elon Musk put down his Big F\*cking Rocket and planted his flag. That was before the treaty so he got no claim to the lot, just the glory of being first. We recycled his landing gear; it made a nice frame for one of our diggers.*

# GLEN THE INVENTOR



## BASICS

At the start of the game, circle one for each

- I'm in my 20ies/30ies
- I'm female/male

## STATS

At the start of the game, choose either +1 Smart or +1 Earth.

<b>SMART</b>	+1	Science. Explore.
<b>TOUGH</b>	0	Apply brute force. Endure hardship.
<b>EARTH</b>	+1	Build. Repair. Operate.
<b>MARS</b>	+1	Lead by example. Act in the face of danger

## INVENTOR MOVES

At the start of the game, pick one:

- Right tools.** You always have the right tools for the task when you build or repair something.
- Robotics specialist.** You can operate and modify robots to do tasks that otherwise only humans can do. Send a robot to do a dangerous task and avoid exposing yourself to danger.

## DAMAGE

- Exhausted, bruised, or injured (-1 on rolls)
- Taken out, trapped, incoherent, left for dead (no rolls)

## ADVANCES

When you take an advancement, pick one and erase it from the list:

+1 Smart, +1 Tough, +1 Earth, +1 Mars, Inventor move

## WHAT DID YOU BRING WITH YOU FROM EARTH?

At the start of the game, pick one:

- A music box playing Ode for Joy
- A mechanical watch showing the orbits of the planets

If you complete an artistic masterpiece on Mars inspired by this item, take one advance. If you give it up, reduce Mars by one and take one advance.

## WHAT HAVEN'T YOU TOLD ANYONE YET

At the start of the game, pick one and tell no one:

- Pills make life bearable. Don't know what I will do when we run out.
- Bad genes. I'm dying, slowly.

When you tell someone and they understand, take one advance.

## PEOPLE BACK HOME

Your foster parent **Adrian** – a teacher who took you in from the streets and got you through university.

## PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

You have promised to take care of **Stacy the Kid**.

When you perform a task with the help of Stacy, increase Smart by +1.

## THE OTHER PLAYER CHARACTERS

At the start of the game, decide together with the other players your relations:

\_\_\_\_\_ is my brother/sister

\_\_\_\_\_ is my partner

\_\_\_\_\_ is my close friend

\_\_\_\_\_ is my highly respected colleague

You can Help (+1) or hinder (-1) player characters rolling for a move.

# FRANCIS THE SPECIALIST

Damn good with computers. Computer specialist.

*You are an IT specialist and have the skills and expertise required for running and maintaining the core colony systems. You have a strong passion for the task and may get defensive when others interfere with your work. Your team has a great deal of trust and confidence in you.*

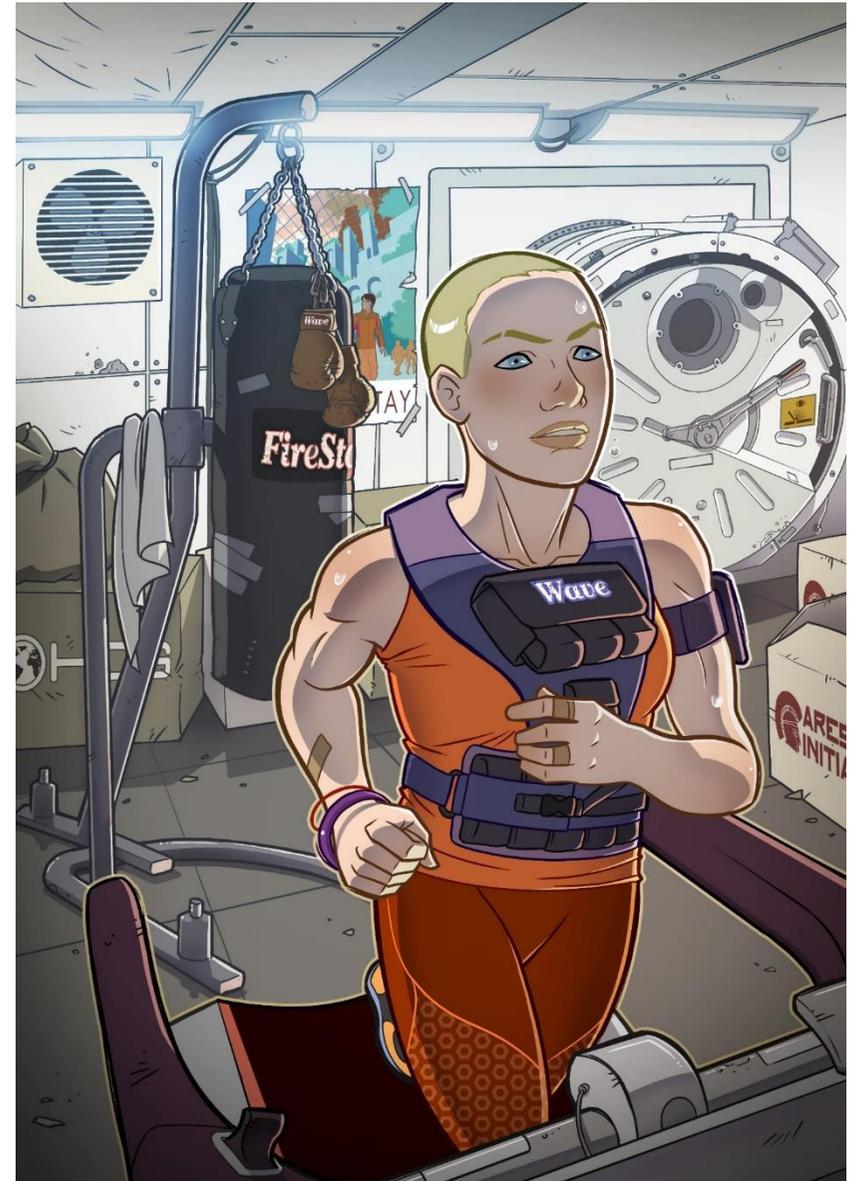
## LIFE ON MARS

**20 years.** *We all signed up for 20 years of working for the foundation, building the colony. They provide food and lodging and we promise to not run away. Like there is anywhere to run. With a big bonus paid out at the end and how knows what happens then? Maybe buy a large chunk of the planet and start my own business. Maybe buy a return ticket to Earth just to see the old neighborhood again.*

Best of all, **no snakes.** *I used to joke with that at home before leaving for the colony. I always had a fear of snakes, as long as I remember. I wore long sturdy boots if I was going anywhere near the wilderness (which included the back yard) even on a warm summer day. When I got older, I called the boots a fashion statement. I never managed to let go of the fear, even here on Mars.*

**The Million Dollar Desert.** *Named after a failed landing. The thing exploded high above the surface, debris spread everywhere. Luckily no one died, it was unmanned, remote controlled from orbit. Just f\*cking millions worth of Earth dollars of food and supplies went up in smoke. Including my private relief package, with vacuum packed chocolate chip cookies and home knitted socks. Mum was devastated. We still pick up bits and pieces when the sand shifts.*

# FRANCIS THE SPECIALIST



## BASICS

At the start of the game, pick one for each

- I'm in my 20ies/30ies
- I'm female/male

## STATS

At the start of the game, choose either +1 Smart or +1 Tough.

<b>SMART</b>	0	Science. Explore.
<b>TOUGH</b>	0	Apply brute force. Endure hardship.
<b>EARTH</b>	+2	Build. Repair. Operate.
<b>MARS</b>	+1	Lead by example. Act in the face of danger

## SPECIALIST MOVES

At the start of the game, pick one:

- Meticulous.** When you build, repair or operate, you may spend one extra time and succeed without making a roll as if you scored a hit.
- Satellites & surveillance systems expert.** You can operate and modify the surveillance and communications satellites to help solve advanced tasks. Add +1 to explore a dangerous environment or operate something if you use the colony computer systems.

## DAMAGE

- Exhausted, bruised, or injured (-1 on rolls)*
- Taken out, trapped, incoherent, left for dead (no rolls)*

## ADVANCES

When you take an advancement, pick one and erase it from the list:

+1 Smart, +1 Tough, +1 Earth, +1 Mars, Specialist move

## WHAT DID YOU BRING WITH YOU FROM EARTH?

At the start of the game, pick one:

- A lock of hair from a child
- A souvenir from Aqua World

If the colony becomes self-sustained with your help, take one advance. If you give it up, reduce Mars by one and take one advance.

## WHAT HAVEN'T YOU TOLD ANYONE YET

At the start of the game, pick one and tell the MC but no one else.

- I want to have a family of my own
- I regret that I signed up

When you tell someone and they understand, take one advance.

## PEOPLE BACK HOME

Your older father/mother **Tony** who are so proud of what you have achieved.

## PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Terry the Veteran** is your uncle/aunt.

When you perform a task with the help of Terry, increase Tough by +1.

## THE OTHER PLAYER CHARACTERS

At the start of the game, decide together with the other players your relations:

\_\_\_\_\_ is my brother/sister

\_\_\_\_\_ is my partner

\_\_\_\_\_ is my close friend

\_\_\_\_\_ is my highly respected colleague

You can Help (+1) or hinder (-1) player characters rolling for a move.

## ALEX THE SHEPHERD

Keeps a caring eye on everyone. Management. Psychology.

*You are well organized and diligent, and quickly turn the ideas of a team into concrete actions and practical plans. You value the wellbeing of others and try to maintain good relations with everyone. You sometimes lack a sense of urgency and do not challenge others or inspire them to perform their best.*

### LIFE ON MARS

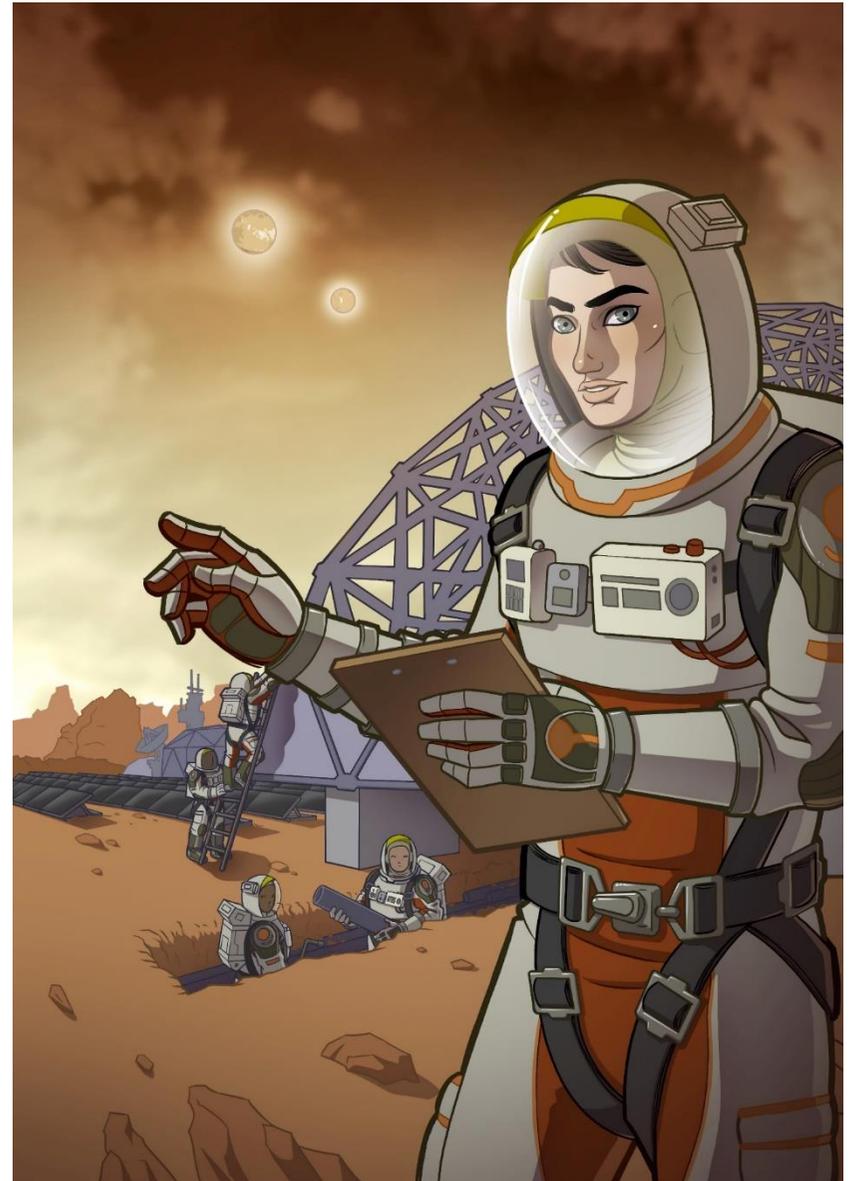
**20 years.** *We all signed up for 20 years of working for the foundation, building the colony. They provide food and lodging and we promise to not run away. Like there is anywhere to run. With a big bonus paid out at the end and how knows what happens then? Maybe become a custodian, showing around the schoolkids and tell them of the old Mars. Or enjoying life with my Martian grandchildren.*

**Empty newsfeed.** *Politics. Earthquakes. Draught. I used to follow the newsfeed closely every day. Breaking news. Peace treaty signed. Prime minister stepping down. Now everything is so distant, so irrelevant. Places I will never go. People I will never meet. I turned it off. The silence was scary.*

**Sex on Mars.** *Yes, it is still a thing. Lewis and Evan are doing it. Kelly and Robin did it but split up and now I never put them on the same team. Everyone knows everyone, there are no secrets, we just pretend not to see or hear. One day there will be baby Martians.*

**Olympus Mons.** *The biggest volcano in the solar system. It's Brice's wet dream to climb it. Never going to happen, would be a complete waste of time and resources. But it's a nice view from here and does well on the postcards we send home every year for the holidays.*

## ALEX THE SHEPHERD



## BASICS

At the start of the game, pick one for each:

- I'm in my 30ies/40ies
- I'm female/male

## STATS

At the start of the game, choose either +1 Smart or +1 Tough.

<b>SMART</b>	0	Science. Explore.
<b>TOUGH</b>	0	Apply brute force. Endure hardship.
<b>EARTH</b>	+2	Build. Repair. Operate.
<b>MARS</b>	+1	Lead by example. Act in the face of danger

## SHEPHERD MOVES

At the start of the game, pick one:

- Organizational talent.** When everyone is acting according to your plan, remove one threat token.
- Professional interest.** When someone shares something important with you and you understand, remove one threat token.

## DAMAGE

- Exhausted, bruised, or injured (-1 on rolls)
- Taken out, trapped, incoherent, left for dead (no rolls)

Heals at the end of each chapter

## ADVANCES

When you take an advancement, pick one and erase it from the list:

+1 Smart, +1 Tough, +1 Earth, +1 Mars, Shepherd move

## WHAT DID YOU BRING WITH YOU FROM EARTH?

At the start of the game, pick one:

- A police badge with the words "To protect and serve"
- A crucifix

If the colony becomes self-sustained with your help, take one advance. If you give it up, reduce Mars by one and take one advance.

## WHAT HAVEN'T YOU TOLD ANYONE YET

At the start of the game, pick one but tell no one:

- I want to have a child
- I cheated to get a seat on the first mission

When you tell someone and they understand, take one advance.

## PEOPLE BACK HOME

**Sasha**, a kid with a fucked up crazy past that you connected with and for whom you are a role model.

## PEOPLE IN THE COLONY

**Evan** reminds you of someone back on Earth.

When you perform a task with the help of Evan, increase Earth by +1.

## THE OTHER PLAYER CHARACTERS

At the start of the game, decide together with the other players your relations:

\_\_\_\_\_ is my brother/sister

\_\_\_\_\_ is my partner

\_\_\_\_\_ is my close friend

\_\_\_\_\_ is my highly respected colleague

You can Help (+1) or hinder (-1) player characters rolling for a move.