

ROVERS

Burger Games 2014

Since the collapse of nation-states, Earth has been under corporate rule. Artificial Intelligence is about to rival human. The advent of post-human technologies has resulted in speciation along the social divides. Civil unrest, inter-corporate strife and ecocrises continue to ravage the Blue Planet.

In the year 33 (Mars)

Half-a-century of terraforming has finally made air breathable in the deep canyons and depressions. The population just shot past 10 million and colonies and outposts ring the polar ice cap. Life is taking root on the Red Planet and for the millions of colonists, the Terraforming Project was a way out of the troubled Earth.

Now the Project is in shambles.

In 2147, the remains of alien life and civilization were found in Valles Marineris. Preserved in pseudofossils called xenoliths, the alien DNA is rewriting the rules of biology. Relics, surviving pieces of alien technology, defy our understanding of physics and engineering. On Earth, new religious movements are emerging. On Mars, fortunes are being made overnight.

More than a million colonists fled the Terraforming Colonies to strike it rich “the Canyon”. The exodus threw corporate politics and interplanetary economy into chaos. The loss of equipment and trained personnel crippled the Terraforming Project, while the alien treasures from the Canyon threatened to upset the agreed balance of power within the Cartel.

Today, one Mars Year later, the Canyon is a law-less frontier of prospectors, adventurers, bandits and rogues. A handfull of mining camps, trading stations and Indie outposts hundreds of kilometres apart have done little to tame it. The only link back to civilization are the massive landtrain caravans. Every day the caravans keep bringing in new people with new ideas and more ambitious agendas. A new society is emerging and growing more complex by the day.

The Canyon spares no one. Sandstorms tear flesh off the bone. Radiation wreaks havoc on people and gear alike. Temperatures can hit +50 by day and -100 by night. Wind gusts can knock over a car and the rim cliffs are so tall that blood boils on the top. Even the xenoliths are dangerous. Direct exposure warps flesh and shatters minds. “Blooms” are biohazard zones where xenolith is corrupting terraformed life. As for the Relics or Tombs, we have barely scratched the surface of a long-lost alien civilization.

ROVERS & RUSTPUNK

Rovers is a pen&paper roleplaying game of the Mars pioneers inside the Canyon. A motley collection of adventurers, prospectors and rogues, they are caught up in a 22nd century gold rush and the most momentous event of the century. With more than a million people in the Canyon, the game focuses on a small elite: rovers, mobile teams of prospectors and troubleshooters at the forefront of exploration and adventure. Ideally, rovers prospect new grounds and scan promising claims for the miners and colonists who follow. In reality, they are often caught up in the troubles of a new society about to emerge from the Canyon.

Rustpunk is a genre of science fiction where Humanity has reached the stars but been forced to take a few steps back. The marvels of 22nd century technology mean little in the Canyon, tools and weapons are best made simple and durable and sunstorms make short works of advanced electronics. All that supercience and hypertech exists: eyes can be replaced with bionic cameras and vast spaceships sail on ion clouds between planets. But until it really gets, you are stuck with whatever you can hammer together from old junk. And any high-tech that has made its way down here is treasured.

So where does the 'punk' come in? Well, everyone who has come to the Canyon has turned his back on the status quo: the lifelong assignments in the planned economy of the Terraforming Projects, the bustling megacities of Earth or the luxuries of the Corporate Elite. Good, Bad or Ugly, the Canyon pioneers are forging a new world and a new society. The lawless anarchy has caused a great deal of suffering but it also means freedom from the powers-that-be, where anyone can be the master of his own destiny, provided they have the luck, skill and perseverance required.

When the Blue Corps look at Mars, they see the alien treasures and the threat to the established balance of power and way of life. But when the Red Corps in charge of the Terraforming Project look at the Canyon, they see the beginnings of a new nation, a Free Mars that is

still unaware of its own identity.

The Canyon acts as both a physical and a spiritual frontier. By sheer geography, it invades the dead highlands, allowing life and settlements to exist when surrounded by death all sides. The Canyon is the frontier between Civilization and Anarchy, Oppression and Freedom, High-Tech and Low-Tech, and finally the Humanity itself and the alien, as incomprehensible to us in death as they would have been in life.

WHAT YOU NEED?

One or more 6-sided dice, papers, pencils, erasers, hopefully printouts or photocopies of the character sheet, these rules, 2-7 friends and one of them has to volunteer to be the Gamemaster. Snacks, soft drinks (occasional alcohol doesn't hurt) and sufficiently subtle background music. I recommend movie and game soundtracks as those have been designed to stay in the background.

Rovers is not a complex game but as a setting it is not recommended for beginners, especially as GMs. Anyone reading this book is should know what pen & paper RPGs are about.

INSPIRATIONS

Besides my own roleplaying games, Rovers has been inspired by various books, comics, movies, videogames and historical time periods.

Movies

No Country For Old Men, Discovery: Gold Fever, Ghosts of Mars, Road Warrior, Mad Max III: Beyond the Thunderdome, Last Border, Book of Eli, Postman, Pitch Black, Alien, Aliens, Outland, Tank Girl, Total Recall (original), Terminator 1 & 2, Babylon AD, Klondike

Videogames

Call of Juarez: Gunslinger, Borderlands 1-2, Anarchy Online, Fallout 1-3 + New Vegas, RAGE, Red Faction 1, Devastation, Metro 2033 + 2034, Chronicles of Riddick, S.T.A.L.K.E.R.

BECOMING A ROVER

So, you want to explore Mars and roam the Canyon Looking for treasure in 2150?

Tough luck, that is way in the future and you can't go, so you have to create a character, a rover, to do it for you. Born and raised in 22nd century, he or she will be your avatar in the world of Rovers, but he is also a different person with his own background, skills, life experiences and goals. That's why you roleplay your character, step into the role and circumstances of someone else and make decisions as him or her, not yourself.

However, your personal rover is just one half of the coin. The team is the other half. Rovers operate in teams and rover is going to be part of this one. The rovers of all other players Your rover is going to be part of a team made up from all the characters and sharing the spoils, so make sure your rover brings something to the table. While Rovers has no character classes or fixed professions, it may help to think along those lines. Rover companies recruit their members from a large pool of applicants. What made your rover stand out and get picked?

A. CHOOSE BACKGROUND

In short, where were you born? The original Martian colonists have been bioengineered with hereditary adaptations to the Red Planet and even dregs of the society have them. By contrast, explorers from Earth are usually vanilla humans and thus poorly acclimated. But they also have tougher bone density and muscles honed by Earth's high gravity. Earthlings also tend to be financially better off upon arrival.

The ability to induce controlled mutation, or "genetic therapies", has made it possible to create sub-species of humanity better adapted to their particular surroundings. Sometimes this is done on purpose and in a controlled fashion. In other times... not so much.

Note: If you choose a Colonist as a background option and then pick "Scion" as an Edge, you area Mars-bred clone of some corporate big-wig, genetically acclimated for Mars but otherwise a biological carbon copy of the "donor".

Corporate Elites are too far gone to breed normally and among them the process of cloning younger copies of yourself has effectively replaced childbirth. There is a host of unresolved moral, legal and social problems associated with the creation of scions but the elites are above the law and in many cases above morals as well.

Bodyguard

Carries a gun to keep the team safe.

Dealer

Business, bartering and book-keeping.

Grease

Keeps your gear running a bit longer.

Hauler

Has the wheels and takes you to places.

Medic

Keeps you breathing a bit longer.

Miner

for finding gold, stones and xenoliths.

Skipper

Discipline, responsibility, Leadership.

Colonist

You or your parents were brought to Mars as part of the Terraforming Project and were Red Corp citizens at least on some point. Second-generation colonists also tend to be taller, more lightly built, have less bodily hair and sport a solid tan from both cosmic and solar radiation.

No stat changes, acclimated

Wastelander

You were born in an illegal settlement or a shantytown on the outskirts of the legitimate colonies. Your friends and family were bandits, vagabonds, desperadoes and dregs, ostracized and oppressed for having abandoned the Project and the Red Corp citizenship. You yourself never had a choice in the matter. Genetically, you are a colonist but bad food, bad luck and bad radiation shielding took their toll. The hardships of the Canyon feel just like home to you.

-1 BODY, +1 SENSE, +1 GUTS, -1 CHARM

Free Edge: Survivor

Acclimated

Earth Explorer

You have just arrived to take part on the Canyon Rush. This usually takes money and/or connections. As an Earthling, you tend to be shorter, more heavily built and more hirsute than the locals. You also speak a different dialect of Standard.

+2 BODY, -1 MOVE, -1 SENSE

Free Edge: Tough

Non-acclimated. After each combat round of physical exertion you get a -1 penalty. Resting for a round reduces it by two.

Elite Fugitive

You are a product of the corporate elite, painfully handsome and groomed with the best genetic therapies and biomedical advances money can buy. You are so removed from the human species you can no longer breed. So why did you leave all that behind? Especially in such a hurry and under a false name and citizenship account.

+1 BODY, +1 MIND, +1 CHARM

+3 against toxins and diseases

Free Edge: Wealthy

Non-acclimated. After each combat round of physical exertion you get a -1 penalty. Resting for a round reduces it by two.

***Note:** Acclimation problems can be overcome with pressurised breathing apparatuses.*

B. DETERMINE STATS

You have six stats on a scale from 1 to 10+. Rovers tend to be superior specimens, so for people like you the average stat value is 6.5 is rather than 5. Remember to add the background modifiers. There are two ways to get your attribute values.

1. Roll 2D per attribute

If the roll result is 10 or less, that is the value. If it is 11 or 12, re-roll. If the total for all six stats is less than 36, re-roll, starting from the lowest value.

When done, distribute the values into stats in any order you wish. Finally add the Background bonuses, if any.

2. Distribute 36 points

Distribute 36 points between your stats, with no less than 2 and no more than 10 in each of them. Then add the background bonuses.

Let's say that Jari rolls 8, 3, 11, 7, 5 and 4. He has to re-roll the 11 right away, scoring 9 instead. His total is 37, so yes, this is an acceptable character. However, if you are truly unhappy with your stat scores, talk to the GM. There is no point in playing a character you truly don't like.

BODY stands for physical strength, size and stamina. People with high Body values tend to be big, hit hard and able to take a lot of punishment.

MOVE stands for reflexes, running speed and overall agility. People with high Moves value tend to be lightly built and move with cat-like grace.

SENSE describes the perceptiveness and the sheer acuteness of various senses. People with high Sense value have excellent eyesight and an alert mind, constantly taking in information.

MIND stands for intellect, wit, the powers of deduction and the ability to learn new things. People with high Mind also tend to be well-educated but there are exceptions.

GUTS stands for mental fortitude, stamina, authority and daring. People with high Guts value tend to be natural-born leaders and inspire fear and confidence in others.

CHARM covers social skills, sex appeal and maybe even physical beauty. There are big exceptions to this, as demonstrated by ugly but charismatic dictators throughout history.

C. CHOOSE PROFILES

Profiles describe the stuff you did before becoming a Rover. They are not just sets of skills but also fields of personal experience, life history, social networks and so on. When used, the profile dice are rolled and the result is added to the attribute value most relevant to the task.

Profile values range from none to 5D (master). They can be slowly increased during gameplay. Some profiles start with a value of 1D, because everybody knows at least something about it. Your average professional has a profile value of 2D. Anything beyond that is exceptional.

Your Biography

At each stage of life, you can choose a number of profiles that best describe the circumstances. And to become good at something, you must choose the same profile in multiple stages.

Childhood profiles describe the conditions you grew up in. Choose two profiles and add +1D to them.

Youth profiles reflect teenage years and formal/informal training. The number of profiles varies by background. Pick your profiles and add +1D to them.

Profession is your adult life and what you left behind when you left for the Canyon. The number of profiles varies by background. Pick your profiles and add +1D to them.

Wild Card is any profile **not** chosen at previous life stages. It reflects hobbies, interests, ideologies or freakish circumstances. Basically, anything goes. Add +1 to the chosen profile.

Agent	Athlete (1D)
Bandit	Brawler (1D)
Corporate	Driver (1D)
Entertainer	Explorer
Fixer	Gambler
Gunslinger (1D)	Hacker
Lawman	Leader
Medic (1D)	Officer
Pioneer	Prospector
Reporter	Scientist
Sneaker (1D)	Spacer
Techie (1D)	Thief
Trader (1D)	Xenologist

Child Youth Prof Wild

Colonist	2	2	2	1
Wastelander	2	1	2	1
Earth Explorer	2	3	2	1
Elite Fugitive	2	1	1	1

AGENT

You have been a spy, a counter-espionage operative, or a deep-cover agent, perhaps in a criminal organisation. You are familiar with the various tactics, surveillance equipment, data mining procedures and goals of espionage operations, as well as the open and covert factions involved in it. You still have sensitive dirt on them as well and a few contacts there. There is a saying that spies never really retire.

ATHLETE (1D)

You have probably been a pro-level athlete, mountaineer or spelunker and can also dive for cover quickly. The low gravity of Mars helps with climbing, jumping, leaping, running and various sports. Sports is a popular form of entertainment on Mars and physical exercise is deemed important in most Corporate training programs to offset the negative effects of light gravity.

BANDIT

There have always been those who don't fit in and live on the outskirts of society, robbing and stealing what they need. You used to run with bandits even before the Canyon Rush and still have the gang tattoos to show for it. You know the dealer contacts, turfs and the important names from the gangs still in business. You have intimate knowledge of bandit tactics, ambush sites, loot preferences and weaknesses.

BRAWLER (1D)

For reasons fair or foul, you excel in close combat, whether it is with fists, clubs or blades. You are also familiar with all sorts of archaic weapons, like spears, bows and shuriken. You may have had martial arts training in the militia, or maybe you were a boxer moonlighting as an illegal cage fighter. You also know other fighters, organizers and the hidden arenas and can recognize fighting styles and wounds.

DRIVER (1D)

Anyone can drive safely on smooth terrain, but mastering the rocky wastelands in a variety of scrap-built vehicles wobbling under heavy loads in low gravity is the real challenge. You have made at least part of your living behind the wheel or

joystick. You also know how to use special vehicles like crane trucks or lifters, or aim the weaponry mounted on vehicle chassis, like the militia fighting vehicles and bandit raiders tend to have.

ENTERTAINER

There are few full-time entertainers in the colonies and even fewer in the Canyon but there are many who do it as a second job. There are storytellers, stage magicians, comedians and musicians going at it in both solo and in groups. Choose your primary artform but you can also do stuff close to it at a -1D penalty. In addition, you know the stars, managers, club owners and so forth.

EXPLORER

You are no stranger to the great outdoors and knows both the hazards and the tricks to avoid them. Explorers make their living locating lost things and people in the wasteland, guiding caravans to unmapped places far away and scouting out new and faster routes across harsh terrain. These are all vital skills in the Canyon and former explorers are always welcome in Rover parties.

FIXER

There are two kinds of deals out there and Fixers handle the shady kind. You have been part of the organized crime syndicates and the wheeling and dealing of illegal, or at the very least questionable, goods and services on the black market. You are a fast-talker, a hustler and a con-man if need be, know people from both sides of the fence and can haggle with the best of traders.

GAMBLER

You have practised your poker face, reading the other players and figuring out the odds in your head. Although luck remains a part of gambling, some are clearly better than others. Some gamblers also cheat but all are good at spotting cheating. Gambling, both legal and illegal, has always been part of the Martian Society but now the bars of the Canyon have given rise to a new breed of professional gamblers who "mine the miners".

GUNSLINGER (1D)

You have plenty of experience with guns and know how to handle yourself (and the enemy) in a firefight. You understand where the best tactical positions are, know the effects of various weapons and can spot the weaknesses and limitations of the enemy. You may have been trained by the militia, or learned it the hard way in a bandit gang. Perhaps you were trained as a hitman or a bodyguard. They all fit the profile.

HACKER

You used to work with computerized systems and the deeper layers of the InfoNet. With the right tools you can break into data systems, make, break or alter the programming of "smart" devices, hack accounts and so forth. Mars does not have the same kinds of information-driven subcultures as Earth but hackers still know each other through InfoNet and there is a virtual economy of software and services that is slowly spreading into the Canyon as well.

LAWMAN

You've had training in things like crime scene investigation, interrogation tactics, hostage negotiation and reading autopsy reports. The closest thing to law enforcement on Mars is the colonial militia but you could have also been a bounty hunter, a private detective, a corporate security contractor or even just a well-prepared vigilante. There may be no law in the Canyon but there are still crimes to solve and clues to follow.

LEADER

You were in charge of something greater and lead other people by authority and example. It might have been about politics, project management, community leadership or even keeping a tight rein on a rowdy gang of bandits. Whatever it was, you can take charge, organize people, inspire loyalty and wield authority backed only by your charisma and force of will. You probably know a lot of people from those days.

MEDIC (1D)

You have had medical training and perhaps even a doctor's license, not that anyone cares in the Canyon. You

know the good and bad uses of medical chemicals, can diagnose diseases and other ailments, can administer first aid to injured and perform such surgeries as the conditions and tools permit. You also know the ins and outs of the corporate medical practises and have a deep knowledge of human and post-human anatomy, biology and psychiatry.

OFFICER

You have held a commissioned rank in the Colonial Militia or even the Red Corp security forces. You understand both squad-level tactics and larger strategies, can handle large-unit logistics, knows how to operate large-calibre support weapons and sophisticated military equipment and how the armed forces of Mars operate. You also know their tactical preferences, typical uses and inherent weaknesses.

PIONEER

You were a terraforming pioneer, building and expanding the colonies, setting up greenhouses and operating the colony infrastructure and machinery on a massive scale. You still know how to construct or take colonial buildings apart, where the various crawlspaces and ventilation ducts lead to, how much food and water it takes to feed an outpost and what are the structural and procedural breaking points.

PROSPECTOR

You were a mining engineer or a prospector even before the Canyon Rush. Your knowledge of ores and Martian geology is extensive, you have a good understanding of shaft, open pit and placer mining techniques and have a nose for prospecting. You can also identify danger spots in tunnels, identify xenolith fakes, improve and improvise mining equipment and use explosives for more or less peaceful purposes.

REPORTER

You used to be part of the Corporate media, giving the truth good and bad spin as your masters needed. You know how the PR and publicity machines work, how to sell news and stories in different mediums, how to cross-reference different sources to get at the truth and how to make people slip up in interviews. You

are also good at getting to know people, have an extensive network of contacts and know how to sound convincing, or at least convinced.

SCIENTIST

You have had as good a higher education as you can get on Mars. This usually means an extensive and wide-ranging general education and then focusing on a specific group of hard or soft sciences with synergy benefits. You are also familiar with laboratory equipment, experiment setups, testing methods, safety protocols and finally the weaknesses and malpractices of the Red Corp scientific community.

SNEAKER (1D)

Anybody can try to hide, move quietly or tail someone. For some reason, you have become pretty good at it and may have been an accomplished pickpocket and trickster. You may have also had special ops or guerrilla warfare training, or learned your moves by hunting rats in the colony superstructure. Sneaking up on someone with a knife at the ready is a deadly tactic, even if you are not much of a brawler.

SPACER

You have lived and worked in space, perhaps on the orbital station, or flying transorbital shuttles. Either way, you can move in zero-G, know the hazards and possibilities, understand how the relevant equipment works and can pilot the more common types of spacecraft. Spacers tend to develop a longing for space and viewing the world, any world, from orbit. You probably still know a few people who are flying up there.

TECHIE (1D)

Survival on Mars depends on technology and the mechanics and engineers that keep it going. You used to be one of them. While technically limited by their tools, rover techies have become quite resourceful at improvising simple solutions to complex problems and repurposing parts scavenged from wrecks of completely different kinds of machinery. Being able to repair your vehicles and weapons can be a matter of life and death in the wasteland.

THIEF

For reasons best left unsaid, you know how to pick locks, circumvent or dismantle security systems, debug rooms, fool security scanners of various types and so forth. Incidentally, you also happen to know where to find buyers for stolen goods, who are the top names in the business and how to plan complex heists in facilities protected by human and automated security and defence systems. I wonder why?

TRADER (1D)

From street vendors to the corporate stock markets, the laws of economy are pretty much the same. You know them, from both training and personal experience. You can make sales pitches over barrel fires and present million-credit projects, evaluate various goods, haggle over pretty much everything and foresee economic shifts and thus opportunities beforehand. You also understand accounting, banking and financial scams.

XENOLOGIST

The research into all things aliens is more of an art than science at this stage but rovers are the leading experts. A xenologist isn't something you have been, it is something you have just become. You have learned to identify alien relics, know how to test their authenticity and use, have a general idea of the layout of alien structures and finally know enough of them to deduce the location of more undiscovered treasures.

D. CHOOSE EDGES

For every profile with a value of 2D or more, your rover has an Edge for your character. Some more powerful edges, require a profile value of 3D or more. Edges are often (but not always) related to the circumstances in which the profiles were acquired. They are positive things from strokes of luck to near-mystical awakenings of inner reserves. Or just plain making a killing with the profile the rover was learning at the time. Some edges can be taken more than once, at the Gamemaster's discretion.

ARTIST is particularly gifted in a specific form of creative or expressive art: painting, singing, dancing etc. and has +3 to all related task rolls.

BULLET TIME (3D+) reacts very quickly when ambushed. If you avoid the attack entirely, make an instant counter-attack against the enemy.

BUREAUCRAT has a knack for organizing, logistics, legalities and overall red tape. You have +3 to all related task rolls.

CON-ARTIST is good at convincing people about things that aren't true. You also have a knack for forgeries. Add +3 to all related task rolls.

CONTACTS enable name dropping, getting special information and trading powerful favors with the elites of a select profession or industry.

CYBERWARE (3D+) gives a body part (arm, eyes, legs etc.) superhuman performance, thanks to custom-built robotic enhancements. Choose a system from the equipment list and consult the GM for details.

FAMOUS means a positive reputation in the circles it was acquired. Add +3 to social interaction tasks with the people who care.

FEAT is a specific trick, move or tactic that almost no one else on Mars knows how to do. Add +3 to relevant tasks rolls when applied.

FOLLOWER (3D+) can be an NPC companion, an uplifted pet or a semi-intelligent robot. Moderately talented (2D) and loyal if not mistreated.

GHOST AI is a helpful AI in the InfoNet. When connected to InfoNet, it gives +3 to tasks involving software or computerised systems and you can ask it to do tasks independently (it uses the same Profile and Stat values as you would).

GUN can be a handgun or a melee weapon of superior make (+2), or any the really expensive weapons that are usually out of reach for rovers.

HIDEOUT is a shack, cave or restored basement equipped with the basic comforts and enough supplies to last a month. You can decide the location of your hideout at any time during play and but once set, it stays there.

IMPROVISER has +3 to all task rolls involving the use or alteration of things to be or do something completely different from what they were originally intended for.

INTIMIDATING has +3 to all task rolls when threatening words, appearance or presence might come useful.

INTUITION gives +3 to task rolls when it comes to figuring out other people's intentions, motivations, emotional states, body language and overall "vibe".

KARMA gives you 2 points of Karma for past deeds, fair or foul. New rovers (and most other people) have none but you have already made your mark on the world.

MARTIAL ARTS means advanced training in the secrets of the orient. Add +3 to attacks, blocks and dodges when unarmed.

MULE is an expert at packing things and lugging them around in the wasteland. Increase the carry limit by +3 item slots.

PARKOUR gives +3 to task rolls involving running, jumping and quickly finding unorthodox paths forward on top and inside artificial structures and facilities.

POST-HUMAN (3D+) gives an inhuman biological ability such as night vision, water breathing, electrosensitivity etc. Either a mutation or a genetic upgrade.

POTION is a secret recipe using altered plants, mosses and fungi from Blooms. It takes 12 hours of foraging (dangerous) and mixing to make and restores 1D Blood when drunk. No one else can make it, even if you tell them the recipe.

RESEARCH is a specific, narrowly defined field of knowledge, science or lore that the you have studied in great detail. Add +3 to all related task rolls.

SCAVENGER gives +3 to task rolls whenever you needs to find something working or otherwise useful from piles of junk, heaps of garbage or the ruins of human settlements.

SCION makes you a clone of some corporate bigshot. Genetically groomed to be pretty and immune to disease, you are also identical down to retinas, fingerprints and DNA.

STREETWISE keeps your ear to the ground listening for rumors. +3 to task rolls when trying to learn about recent events and local conflicts, conspiracies and scandals.

SURVIVOR learns to cope in the wasteland the hard way. You can eat or drink almost anything non-lethal and have +3 bonus to rolls against storms and deprivation.

TOUGH got beaten to a pulp more than once. Now you are harder to kill because of it. +3 Blood Points.

VIP (3D+) grants a higher status and societal and legal privileges with all corps and especially within a specific Red Corp.

WEALTHY (3D+) adds 10000 credits to your pocket, for whatever reason.

WHEELS gives you a Rock Jeep, a vehicle usually well beyond the means of newly arrived rovers. Who knows how you got it?

E. CHOOSE FLAWS

For every Edge, your rover must also have a flaw. Flaws are setbacks, bad fortune, accidents and weaknesses, often but not always related to the circumstances where the corresponding Edge was gained. They can also alter, restrict or modify your Edges. Some Flaws can be taken more than once at GM's discretion, especially if they affect different things through the same mechanic. Some flaws are also relatively benign and meant mostly as guidelines for roleplaying.

ADDICT needs a daily fix of his poison or has -3 to all tasks requiring concentration or finesse. The drug costs about 50-100 credits per fix.

BERSERK flips out in battle, paying little heed to strategy, personal survival, friendly fire or collateral damage. Waagh!

BOUND means being obliged to follow someone else's orders and promote their interests. Corporate field agents are a prime example of this.

COWARD likes to steer clear of immediate danger and you have -3 penalty and plenty of complaints when forced to confront them.

CRIPPLED means a long-term injury even colonial medicine couldn't cure. It is visible to most observers. -3 to task rolls where it matters: missing arm, poorly adjusted leg etc.

DEEP SLEEPER needs 10 hours of sleep per day or he has -3 to all tasks. Once asleep, you won't wake up to anything less than a kick.

DEPENDENT is a fairly helpless or low-powered companion, like a regular pet, a small child or a decrepit grandfather. Dear to you and occasionally useful, the dependent must be supported and protected during the adventures in the Canyon.

DISEASE is a debilitating medical condition. Cut off from medication (or treatment facilities), you suffer a general -3 penalty.

ENEMY is a powerful individual who hates your guts. Whenever entering his sphere of influence, roll 1D and on "1" the enemy, his minions, or his influence shows up.

FRAIL makes you susceptible to damage. -3 Blood Points.

FUGITIVE is a common flaw among rovers. You breached your corporate contracts when you left and cannot re-

turn north without wealth to pay the fines and some bribes.

GREMLIN jinxes high-tech when using or even touching it. Have -3 to all tasks involving high-tech and fine electronics.

HILLBILLY hails from someplace so remote that you have trouble working with civilization and larger communities. -3 to tasks when needed.

HOLY GRAIL is an impossible goal you obsessively strive for, like a owning personal spacecraft, finding a legendary alien treasure or becoming the Warlord of Mars.

HONORABLE never lies, cheats, harms a prisoner or goes back on his word. And if you are forced to do so, you are at a -3 penalty and will go the extra mile to make up for it.

JONAH has such epid bad luck at prospecting that it affects everybody else. When you are around, -3 to prospecting task rolls and find table rolls for the whole camp.

INDEBTED means owing money to someone powerful and ruthless. The sum is likely to be near-astronomical, so striking it rich in the Canyon is your only hope.

MADHATTER is borderline insane in some way and adjusts poorly to the mainstream society. -3 to social encounters with strangers. You tend make a bad first impression.

MOTION SICKNESS inflicts -3 penalty to all task rolls when aboard a moving vehicle.

MUTANT has an physical abnormality that cannot be fixed or easily hidden. Often but not always caused by xenolith exposure. Mutants like you often become outcasts.

NON-ID means having been wiped from Corporate databases. You cannot use anything InfoNet-related or deal with

the authorities without pretending to be someone else. Even the aliases get deleted soon after creation.

NOTORIOUS gives you a bad reputation for some alleged misdeed. -3 to social tasks with those who care and general distrust from others.

PET TOOLS is your favorite toolset, weapon or other device. Tasks involving similar tools have -3 penalty without the pet tools.

PHOBIA is an irrational fear of something relatively common. You avoid it if possible and suffer -3 penalty from sheer terror when you can't.

RADICAL makes you a devout adherent and promoter of a non-conformist ideology or religion. This flaw is mostly about roleplaying but -3 to social task rolls when it matters.

REBEL has a problem with authority. Suitable trait for a loner or a leader but not for a follower or a team player unless carefully managed. -3 to rolls when it matters.

REVENGE makes you defy someone or something much more powerful than yourself because you want payback for some past wrong.

SLUMGULLIONER is rover slang for "lazy". You are unhappy with prolonged bouts of labour, lose interest in repetitive work (-3 when applies) and rarely volunteer.

SUPERSTITIOUS believes in omens, lucky charms, quantum horoscopes and whatever new rituals of good luck the prospectors have come up with.

TRAUMATIC is a mental trauma over something terrible. It bothers you, haunts your dreams and makes you susceptible to vices and provocations related to it.

VICE is a bad habit getting out of control. It is not a physical addiction but you are always tempted.

F. BLOOD POINTS

BODY + GUTS + 2

Whenever some damage gets through your defences and armour, it is subtracted from your Blood Points. As you lose blood, your condition deteriorates and eventually you will lose consciousness or even die.

At 50% Blood Points or less you are **Crippled** and have a general -3 penalty to task rolls. Also, all movement rates are halved.

At 0 Blood Points or less you are in **Shock**. You are incapacitated and possibly unconscious, although some people have managed to crawl. Any further hits will kill you and without treatment you'll bleed to death after BODY x 1 hours.

Note: Any damage breaks concentration, spoils aim and interrupts long actions.

Deep Wound

Blood Points/2, round up

If you lose half or more your Blood to a single attack, it is a **Deep Wound**. You are knocked down and will bleed 1 Blood Point per combat round until you are treated or go into Shock. Also, roll for **Deep Wound Effect**.

For example, the Average Joe has 12 Blood Points. At 6 points or less he is crippled. At 0 he goes into shock and at -5 (he has BODY of 5) he dies. If he loses 6 or more points of Blood from a single hit, he takes a Critical Wound.

Rovers are typically tougher than that but no one is superhuman and a single well-placed hit from virtually any weapon can kill anyone or anything.

Most people in the Canyon wear some sort of light armour because it also protects them from the elements and wind-borne rocks. It also does an adequate job against a handgun but has little effect on rifle fire.

G. CARRY LIMITS

2 + BODY item slots

Don't bother to mark down weights. Anything that fits into a pocket (marked with a "P" in the list) can be carried freely, within reason. You can lug around this many big items like weapons, water camteens, toolkits etc. assuming they have straps, handles or fit inside a backpack (or there is just one item per hand).

Really big items (marked with "L") on the list require two hands to wield (rifles, spears, tripods) and take up two slots. Clothes worn on person do not count but carried otherwise do: light clothing takes 1 slot, heavy clothing or light armor takes 2 slots and when in doubt, take 3 slots. Armors can impose their own penalties when worn.

Carrying too much inflicts a -3 penalty on all physical task rolls per extra slot needed. It also slows you down (exact effects at GM's discretion).

Starting Gear

Rovers have left behind the comforts of polar civilization and in the process most of their domestic possessions. This chapter deals only with the equipment needed to survive the Canyon. As a rule of thumb, your new Rover has, without the Edge modifiers:

One normal item/tool per 2D+ profile
Rugged outdoor clothing + underwear
Handgun & Knife
Wastelanders: 500 gold
Colonists: 1000 gold
Earth Explorers: 5000 gold
Elite Fugitives: 10000 gold
Anything gained from Edges
A good-luck charm

Any or all of that gold can be used to buy more equipment and supplies as long as your background or profiles justify access to that kind of materiel. It has most probably been acquired while still in the colonies.

Exploration Gear

Audio Recorder (P)	60
Backpack (L)	70
Backpack Comms (L)	3000
Binoculars (P)	100
Biomedical Scanner	2000
Cable, 100m	50
Cage, Small	50
Cage, Large	500
Camo Tarp, 5x5m	10
Can of Glow-Paint	5
Cap (P)	20
Cargo Net	30
Climbing Gear	500
Clothes, Light	50
Clothes, Worker	200
Clothes, Business	1000+
Clothes, Rugged	300
Clothes, Arctic	500
Clothes, Designer	2000+
Comm Scrambler (P)	1500
Compass (P)	20
Crane (L+)	500
Cutting Torch	100
Datastick (P)	10
Demolition Charge	250
Digital Camera 3D (P)	2000
Doctor's Field Kit	1500
Drugs, Hard (P)	200
Drugs, Medical (P)	100
Drugs, Soft (P)	50
Electronics Toolkit	1000
Field Rations, day	15
First Aid Kit (P)	20
Fission Battery (L)	3000
Flare (P)	5
Flashlight (P)	20
Folding Shovel	10
Fission Furnace (L)	1000
Freezer Can (L)	400
Fusion Generator (L+)	15000
Gas Mask	100
Glowing Sticker	1
Goggles (P)	20
Gold Tester (P)	100
Ground Radar (L)	800
Gun Tool Kit	200
Handcuffs (P)	60
Handheld Comms (P)	400
Hat, Felt	150
Headset Comms	400
Heat Blanket	100
Holotable (L)	1000
Industrial Robot (L)	3000
Laptop Computer	600
Laser Rangefinder (P)	120
Liftjack (3 tons) (L)	1000
Lighter (P)	5
Magnifying Imager	70
Mainframe Computer(L)	6000
Mechanical Tools	800
Metal Detector (P)	200
Mineral Scanner	1800
Mobile Phone (P)	80

Motion Detector	400
Nightvision Goggles (P)	200
Portable Heater	200
Pressure Suit (L)	20000
Radiation Counter (P)	200
Radio Receiver (P)	20
Razorwire, 50m (L)	60
Refridgerator, Small (L)	100
Refridgerator, Big(L+)	500
Respirator (P)	250
Rock Hammer	50
Rope, 50m	20
Scale	80
Sleeping Bag	80
Solar Panel (weak) (L)	100
Stimpak (P)	500
Tablet Computer (P)	150
Telescope	300
Tent, Small (L)	100
Tent, Camping (L)	200
Tent, House (L+)	500
Tent Heater	150
Thermal Goggles (P)	200
Tracer/Bug Device (P)	300
Watch (P)	10+
Water Bottle	5
Water Condenser (L)	400
Water Filter	100
Weather Radar (L)	1500
Windmill Generator (L+)	300

Services

Landtrain Passage	200
Caravan Passage	500
Custom Passage	2000
Lodgings, poor	20
Lodgings, good	100+
Storage/Garage Unit	5
Glass of Spiced Water	1
Ethanol Shot	2
Beer	2
Cocktail	7
Earth Whiskey	200
Fast Snack	5
Decent Meal	10
Fine Dining	100
Monthly rent, Bunk	200
Monthly rent, Shack	500
Monthly rent, Room	1000
Monthly rent, Module	2000
Monthly rent, House	5000
Medical Treatment	200
Contraceptive Implant	100
Mechanical Repair	300
Scientific Analysis	500
Explorer Report	100
Data hack	5000
Laborer, day	100
Prostitute, night	200
Courtesan, night	1000
Entertainer, evening	100
Guard, day	300
Escort vehicle, day	700
Ticket to Orbit	100K
Ticket to Earth	1M

Protection

Camo Cape	30
Storm Cape	100
Leather & Padding	300
Ballistic Vest	500
Riot/Sports Gear	800
Leather & Chain	1200
Trooper Cuirass & Greaves	1800
Hard Suit	5000
Power Armor	50000
Heavy Hat	50
Helmet	200
Enclosed Helmet	1000
Extra Padding	+100
Extra Plating	+300
Condoms, 20 (P)	50
Lucky Charm (P)	10

Weapons

Knife (P)	30
Club/Baton	40
Machete	100
Axe (L)	80
Spear (2h, L)	150
Chainsaw (2h, L)	300
Vibroblade (L)	1000
Shuriken (P)	10
Bow (2h, L)	120
Crossbow (2h, L)	240
Handgun	500
SMG (2h)	1200
Shotgun (2h, L)	800
Frontier Rifle (2h, L)	1500
Assault Rifle (2h, L)	2500
Chain Gun (2h,L)	5000
Hand Grenade	100
Rocket Tube (2h, L)	20000

Accessories

20 x arrow/bolt	80
100 x rifle ammo	200
100 x pistol ammo	100
50 x shotgun ammo	150
+special ammo	x 5
rocket	1000
Laser Sight (P)	200
Optical Sight	300

Vehicles

Landyacht	500
Motorbike	2000
+sidecar	500
Trike	3000
Quad	5000
Dust Buggy	10000
Rock Jeep	25000
ATV	50000
Desert Hauler	75000
Landtrain Cart	100K
Corporate APC	250K
Raider Tank	300K

Treasures

Silver Nugget (P)	1
Silver Bar (P)	50
Gold Nugget (P)	5
Gold Piece (P)	10
Gold Stick (P)	100
Gold Bar (P)	500
Reroll dice scoring "6"	
"Sand Pearl" (P)	2D x 10
"Blood Crystal" (P)	2D x 40
"Blue Eye" (P)	2D x 60
"Fireball" (P)	2D x 80
"Ares Star" (P)	3D x 100
Xenolith "Chip" (P)	2D x 200
Xenolith "Crystal" (P)	2D x 500
Xenolith "Bone" (P)	2D x 1000
Xenolith "Skull"	2D x 1500
Xenolith "Icon" (L)	3D x 2000
Xenolith "Tombstone" (L+)	3D x 5000
Relic "Cog" (P)	3D x 200
Relic "Toy" (P)	3D x 500
Relic "Tool"	3D x 1000
Relic "Weapon"	4D x 2000
Relic "Crown"	4D x 5000
Relic "Monolith" (L)	5D x
10000	

Martian Gravity

On Mars, the surface gravity is only 0.38G and people can lift more than twice the load they can on Earth. Earth media loves to show rugged prospectors lugging around ridiculously huge backpacks. Unless going for extremes, carrying things around is more up to packing, general convenience and the effects of inertia on movement (inertia is based on mass, not weight, and is thus unaffected by gravity).

Lesser gravity also enables truly spectacular sports, surprisingly agile large vehicles and larger structures since they need less support to hold up their own weight. Add to this the abundance of iron and you can see how the huge colony structures came to be so quickly. There are limits, of course, but it is easy to build big on Mars and there is plenty of space for more.

Guns on Mars

It is illegal to import, manufacture or own firearms on Mars. Only corporate-sanctioned agencies such as the militia can wield guns and even then they are usually of local and decidedly low-tech manufacture. Black-market gun industry exploded with the Canyon Rush. While they are primitive slug throwers compared to the energy weapons from Earth, the Martian guns are simple, rugged, reliable and ugly as sin.

All guns are chambered for the default calibres used by Colonial Militia. Thus the standard 10mm pistol round fits all available handguns and SMGs on Mars, while the 8mm rifle round goes for Frontier Rifles, Assault Rifles and Chainguns alike.

Energy on Mars

While there are some combustion engines using methane or hydrogen and some solar or wind power, vehicles and camp machinery usually run on fission batteries. Declared illegal on Earth as risky, the standard Martian fission battery is a 50cm x 20cm cylinder. It holds a direct current charge for a year whether used or not. So they don't store well.

Radioactivity is negligible unless the hard outer shell is cracked. Then it would slowly leak irradiated fission byproducts, contaminating its immediate surroundings. This is sometimes a problem with old wrecks. Contrary to action holovids, fission batteries will not explode.

For the small stuff, like household infrastructure, wind power is the preferred solution. For big industrial plants, fusion power in the form of Tokamak plasma cores is the preferred option but in the Canyon, supersized fission reactors are also being used.

Credits vs. Gold

Corp transactions are handled in C-credits, or just plain “creds”. However, in the Canyon the preferred currency is gold. Easy to weigh and test for purity, to cut into smaller pieces or re-melt into big ones, fingernail-sized gold chips are worth 10 creds each.

Xenoliths

These are petrified remains of Martian organisms. Black, dark red or sometimes blue with black veins, xenoliths are the driving force of the Canyon Rush.

Relics

Relics are sometimes discovered by exploring the ruins and catacombs of the long-lost Martian civilization. Thought to be fragments and shards of alien devices and machinery, they are near indestructible and made of unknown materials. Higher-level relics have retained some of their original energy and functions.

Quality Levels

As a rule of thumb, any items listed here are of good and reliable quality. Cheap knock-offs and second-hands might be available for 50-75% price. Conversely, paying more gets you more. The improvement comes in a form of +1..+5 bonus to whatever the item is primarily used for. For example, a business suit impresses others, a brimmed hat gives a bonus to SENSE-rolls for visual observation and so on. Details and interpretation are up to the Gamemaster but the typical price multipliers are as follows.

Bonus	Cost	
+1	x 2	<i>Top-of-the-line model</i>
+2	x 5	<i>Custom-made masterpiece</i>
+3	x 10	<i>Corporate super-tech</i>
+4	x 100	<i>Earth prototype</i>
+5	x 500	<i>Alien technology</i>

As a rule of thumb, the orbital factories and laboratories around Earth represent the peak of human technology and the pinnacle of scientific achievement. Some of that was available on Mars as well but in many cases the Red Corps preferred simpler, more reliable and more labour-intensive options.

The level of technology found in the northern colonies is roughly equivalent to early 21st century Earth, except that certain hypothetical technologies have been adopted for widespread use (e.g. cybernetics).

While all that knowledge is still available in the Canyon, other limitations restrict most technology and industrial production to roughly the level of World War 2, or the 1950s.

H. CYBERWARE

Cybernetic prosthetics brought accident victims back into the workforce faster than complex surgeries and post-treatment therapies. So restrictions on high-power body modifications were lifted and together with the artificial Colonist Genotype, Mars is a true, if also low-key, post-human society. You can have cyberware through Edges. They cannot be acquired later on except through big favors and services to the high-and-mighty.

Cyberarm replaces one arm and most of the shoulder with high-tech robotics and reactive polymer coating. It never hurts, never tires, can block blades and bullets and gives +1D bonus to everything done directly with that arm, such as close combat. No ranged combat benefits except +50% throw distances and using rifles with one hand.

Cyberleg gives one or both legs similar treatment and extends up to the hips on the sides. It gives +1D to running, jumping, climbing, falling and perhaps close combat rolls when it is specifically about using your legs. And of course, dodging out of harm's way.

Hardwired is a reflex booster that can momentarily make time slow down for the user. It doesn't eliminate inertia so no bonuses for close combat, but it adds +1D to all ranged combat attacks by slowing enemy movements to a crawl.

Cybereyes are camera implants hooked into the brain. They give +1D to all visual observation and search, enabling the user to scan through different wavelengths, contrasts and zoom levels. With most models you can also see in the dark, or project images up to range of 1 metre.

NeuroJack allows direct plugging into computer systems and experiencing the data environment in a sort of Augmented Reality bubble. This adds +1D to all tasks related with computers, computer networks and robotic machinery.

Synaptic Processor lets you to generate store, process, analyze and compile vast quantities of statistical information by thought, often projecting the results into your field of vision. +1D to tasks related to research, analysis, mathematics and predictions.

Wetware is a bionic brain implant that store vast quantities of data and sync it from InfoNet whenever there is a local wireless connection (or wired through NeuroJack). When it comes down to just knowing something, you have a +1D bonus.

Spinal Filter controls all traffic via spinal column, including pain signals and reflexes. Removes hit effect for Wounds and halves the task roll penalty (round up). Spinal Filter also gives +2D to all tests about holding your breath.

Myomer Muscle adds electrosensitive synthetic muscles on the body. +2 to BODY stat for all intentions and purposes. +1D to all rolls concerning pure strength.

Endoskeleton replaces a significant part of the skeleton with carbontube prosthetics, giving +1 to BODY stat and an internal Armor Value of 1D-1.

Voice Modulator gives complete control over voice, including mimicry and subtle tone variations. +1D to oral performances or other circumstances where the tone of voice can be used to affect others. Near-perfect mimicry of other people's voices.

J. FINISHING TOUCHES

As far as the rules are concerned, you are done. The rest is for your own benefit: final polish and tweaks, agreeing on your past history, setting things straight on what you want or don't want the other rovers to know, your rover's appearance and personal details, that sort of stuff. By this time you and the group should have an understanding on how you become to be part of it.

Personal details, such as...

Name and possibly a nickname. It doesn't have to be the birthname but just what you are known as.

Age can be set freely between 16 and whatever. Most rovers are from 20 to 50 years old.

Birthplace might come handy, especially if there is something relevant like enemies back home, or if you are from Earth and has thus have a good chance of having actually grown up in an ethnic subculture.

Family is something rovers have usually left behind but making a few notes on your parents, siblings and possible spouse and children helps to flesh out your personality and past. As dictated by the Terraforming Project, colonial families are large. Rovers born on Mars have 1D-1 elder and 1D-1 younger brothers and sisters.

Personality can be decided beforehand, or you can choose to play with a blank slate and see how it turns out.

Appearance like facial features, skin colour, gender, preferred clothing and decorations. There is room for a picture but if you can't draw, it usually pays to focus to describe just 3-5 most distinct features and let the imagination do the rest.

Lucky Charm could be a memento from home, a gift from a dear friend, a holo of a child or spouse, or something else that has relatively little monetary but significant emotional value.

About Languages...

Back on Earth, the Cartel has sought to erase the very concept of ethnicity in favor of a global corporate society free of the usual historical tensions. One way of doing this was to enforce the use of a single language.

Built on English but with a lot of Chinese, Hindi and Russian influence, the Standard Lingo is the lingua franca of the 22nd century. On Earth, this policy of social globalization has still some ways to go, though. Most people speak at least one other language besides the Standard, local dialects and slangs about and all the while ethnic divisions live on.

On Mars, this policy has succeeded much better. Coming to Mars was a fresh start and the colonists see themselves first as Martians and then (if at all) as the citizens of their respective Red Corp. Overt displays of Earth-based traditions are frowned upon and few second-generation colonists speak anything else than the Standard Lingo.

However, the Martians rapidly developed their own distinct dialect and no amount linguistic indoctrination by the corporate media has managed to curtail its use. Now the rovers are adding new slang expressions on top of that and the Red Corps have effectively lost control of the conceptualization and memetics of Martian Standard. Explorers coming from Earth say they can hear the colonists talk in Standard and yet it takes them a week or more before they understand a word of it when spoken. However, once you get a hung of the rhythm and tone, Earth and Mars Standards are almost identical.

If the Gamemaster wants to make Languages a part of gameplay, then everybody speaks Standard. Earth Rexplorers know one other language besides it and the Elites know two. Anyone with the Scientist profile will also know (not necessarily fluently) one additional language per die. However, on Mars, almost everybody speaks the Martian Standard. Regional dialects are yet to form but the Canyon is quickly developing its own vocabulary for things encountered there.

ROVERS

BODY MOVE SENSE



KARMA



MIND GUTS CHARM



Agent ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Athlete ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Bandit ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Brawler ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Corporate ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Driver ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Entertainer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Explorer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Fixer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Gambler ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Gunslinger ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Hacker ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Lawman ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Leader ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Medic ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Officer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Pioneer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Prospector ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Reporter ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Scientist ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Sneaker ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Spacer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Techie ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Thief ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Trader ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Xenologist ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

name

age

sex

home

description

Edges

Flaws

Protective Gear

Blood Points

full

deep

dead

Armor roll _____ Misc _____

WEAPONS

Dam Mag Range Notes

_____ _____ _____ *m*

_____ _____ _____ *m*

_____ _____ _____ *m*

_____ _____ _____ *m*

_____ _____ _____ *m*

Cyberware

Inventory

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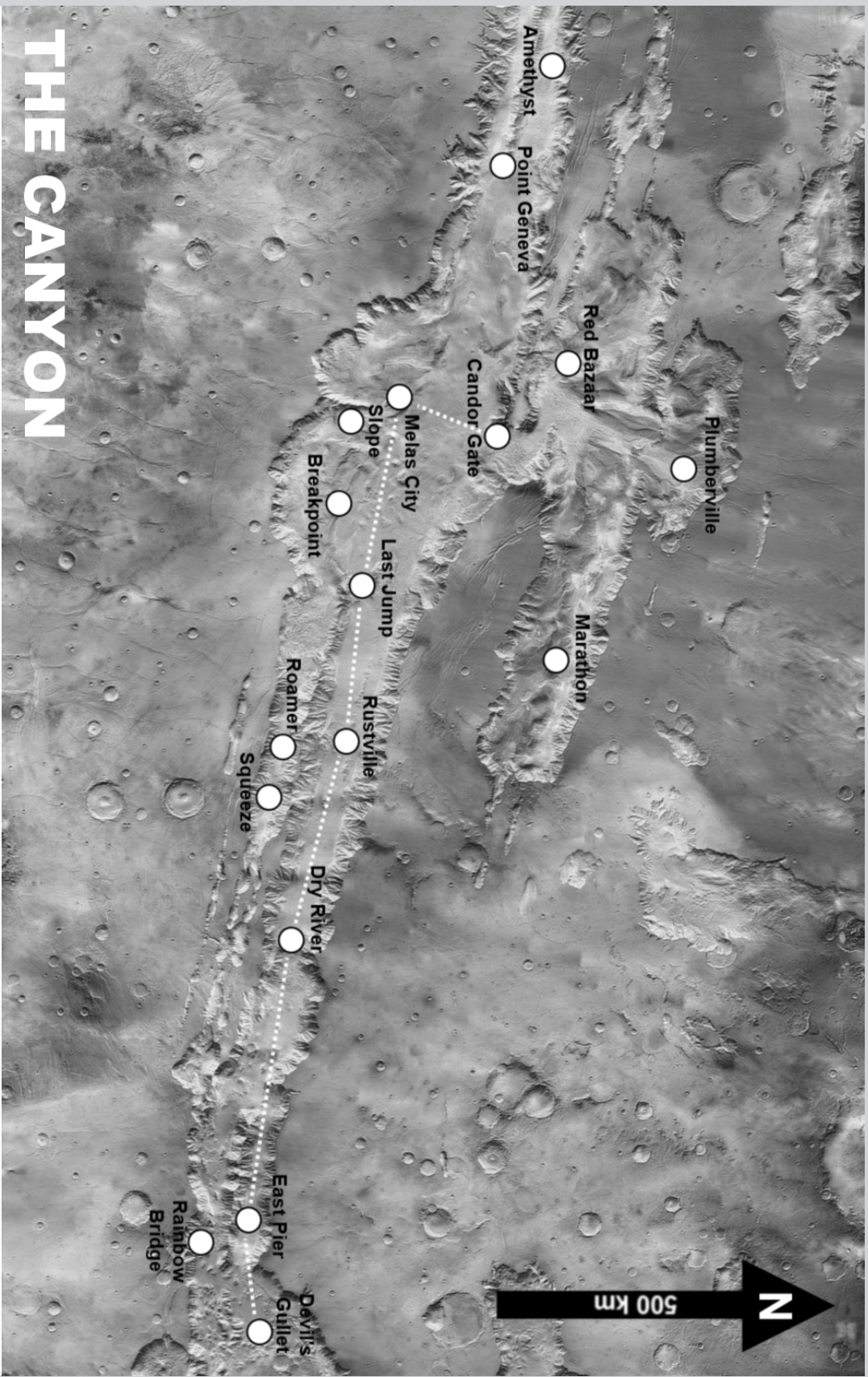
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THE CANYON

The map here shows the habitable parts of the Canyon and the major settlements in ca. 2150. Note that when figuring out travel times, it is safe to triple the straight-line distance because of terrain obstacles. Even the landtrain routes meander through narrow canyons and between towering (and shifting) sand dunes.

RULES OF THE GAME

Rules are not meant for doing ordinary things. Dice rolls should be preserved for situations that push the boundaries, involve considerable risk and/or drama and high stakes. Ideally, succeeding in the roll takes the adventure and story into one direction, failing into another.

THE BASIC ROLL

Profile Dice + Stat Value + Bonuses

When faced with a task that calls for a roll, choose a profile that best fits the task at hand, roll the dice and add the most relevant stat. **Dice that score "6" are re-rolled**, so there is no upper limit to the result. On the other hand, **if all dice score "1", the task fails automatically and counts as 0 (Foul!)**.

Add the most relevant stat value and any applicable bonuses and penalties. To succeed, you must score equal or over the **difficulty threshold** of the task.

Critical Success

If you score 5 or more above the threshold (or the competing roll), it's a Critical Success. For every margin of 5, you get an extra benefit or some stroke of luck associated with the task.

Fumble!

If you roll "1" on all dice the task fails automatically. This usually makes things much worse before. If the consequences of fumbling are not immediately obvious, roll 1D:

- 1 Embarrassing but that's about it
- 2 Oops, you need a new part!
- 3 Find a different stat/profile
- 4 It's twice as bad as before!
- 5 Destroyed! Beyond all repair!
- 6 Blew up! Lose 1D points of Blood!

Easy (5+)

If you can just make the roll, you can do it. It's more about having the right profile than the task being difficult.

Routine (10+)

Jobs like these are just bread and butter for professionals and good exercises for trainees.

Challenging (15+)

Pushing the boundaries, are we? Although a professional still stands a fair chance and veterans are confident, this is definitely out of the ordinary and the risk of failure is real.

Difficult (20+)

Doable but not with the basic training. It's time to call in the experts and even they are frowning. Are you sure you know what you are doing.

Very Difficult (25+)

It has been done but you've only read about it. Failure rate exceeds the success rate even for the masters, especially without the proper tools.

Near Impossible (30+)

Never been done. Probably won't be now.

Competing Rolls

As a rule of thumb, if two people are competing against each other in something, the highest roll wins. Combat uses a mixture of difficulty thresholds and competing rolls.

Cyber Dice

Having a cybernetic implant (or implants) that is directly beneficial in the task **adds +1D to the roll**. This die is handled just like it was one of the profile dice. Good explanations can expand the usefulness of cyberware far beyond its original description.

Crippled and Shocked

If you are at 50% Blood-Points or less, you are **crippled** and have -3 to all task and stat rolls. If you are at 0 Blood Points or less, you are in **shock**. No task rolls can be attempted but you may still be subject to stat rolls (e.g. if the weapon that took you down to 0 BP was also poisoned) and have -3 penalty to them.

Stat Rolls

If the task is all about seeing if your natural abilities are up to the task, **roll 2D + STAT**. Cyberdice can apply if the player can explain why the implant would be beneficial.

Helpers

If you can figure out a way for others to help you, add +1 bonus per helper, up to a maximum of +6. If helped by someone better than you, use his profile and/or stats for the roll and add yourself as a helper!

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROFILE

Your profiles represent loosely defined fields of expertise and related life experiences over multiple years. They definitely overlap and when looking for a profile matching the task you may be spoiled for choice and naturally go for the best one. But if there is no exact fit but the task at hand is still something you might have some experience with, you can roll the closest matching profile with penalty dice.

Profile is spot-on	Full Dice
Secondary activity	-1D
Tangential connection	-2D

For example, fixing a broken a gun is spot-on for a Techie (full dice) but well within the competence of a Gunslinger (secondary activity, -1D) as well. It is sort of plausible for Agents, Bandits, Lawmen and Officers to have done it in emergencies and training scenarios (tangential, -2D).

Hacking into a secured database is obviously spot-on for a Hacker. However, the Gamemaster might allow it as a secondary activity for an Agent and as a tangentially related activity for a Reporter. You get the picture.

No Dice?

If there are no dice left due to these penalties, the task usually can't be attempted with any credible hope of success. You should probably try to figure out a different approach to it that is better suited to your experience and skill set. **If you must roll**, the GM might allow you to go ahead with 1D but halve the die outcome! You can still re-roll if the die scores 6, though.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT STAT

Depending on the task, any profile can be combined with any stat, although some combinations occur more often than others. High stat values are often indicative of the dominant features in your thinking and personality, so coming up with solutions based on them is often also good roleplaying.

BODY for tests of strength, endurance and sheer hitting power. It is the brute force option and sometimes even Techies need a Bigger Hammer.

MOVE for tests of agility, running speed, climbing, leaping, balancing acts and the more acrobatic forms of close combat.

SENSE for tests of perception, aim, reflexes and manual dexterity (the perceptiveness of touch). This is the finesse option for physical tasks.

MIND for tests of deduction, logic and memory. Can the rover remember something from past training, or figure something out from the clues?

GUTS for tests of authority, determination, leadership and focus. It is used less often than other stats but where there is a will, there is a way. Also, if in doubt about the stat, use Guts. Especially if you want to succeed really, really badly.

CHARM for tests of impressing others, arousing emotions, breaking down social barriers and bonding with groups and individuals. While bartering may come down to Guts, any sales pitch is definitely about Charm.

Karen McClusky, a bounty hunter, is about to break into a Dead Colony that has been converted into a bandit base. The backdoor into the installation appears to be locked and McClusky is weighing her options. As a former Militia Sergeant from Crescent Ridge she has Lawman 3D. Breaking the door down is certainly a tangential activity for a Lawman but the -2D penalty would only leave her with 1D + BODY roll. The metal door is old but it is thick and sturdy enough to hold vacuum at bay, so the roll would be Very Difficult. Poor odds, to say the last.

Power systems on the door are long dead but she decides to try to hotwire her vehicle's fission battery into the lockbox and make it think it has received the opening command. It's a good idea: the wiring is easy to get to and the system was designed to be idiot-proof back in the day, so Gamemaster declares this to be Challenging (15+). With a Techie of 2D and MIND of 8, McClusky has much better odds.

She rolls 2 and 6, and adds 8 for a total 16. That is already a success but she can reroll the die that scored "6". The new roll is 5, bringing the total up to 21. With a margin of 6, the roll is now a Critical Success. The GM decides that the old rusty door opens so quietly that bandits won't notice a thing.

Had she scored 25 or more (multiple criticals), the Gamemaster might have even decided that besides the quiet entry, there is something going on that is keeping the bandits preoccupied and thus less watchful than usual. Something good for every margin of 5.

THE MARTIAN KARMA

As you roam the Canyon, you leave your foot-steps in the red sand. Will they all vanish with the next gust of winds?

For every significant and lasting change you help bring about in the Canyon or on Mars in general (or anywhere in the universe, for that matter), you earn a point of Karma. It does not matter if the change is good or bad. The only rules are that it has to be something not easily undone and significant enough to affect the lives and fates of many whom you have never met and probably never will.

Most people never earn a single point of Karma but as the future of Mars is being forged in the Canyon there are more people touched by fate here than anywhere else. The heroes and the villains, not all will be remembered but their actions will nevertheless become a part of this world.

USING KARMA

Once you have it, you can use Karma to change your own fate. By expending a point of Karma you can do one of the following things:

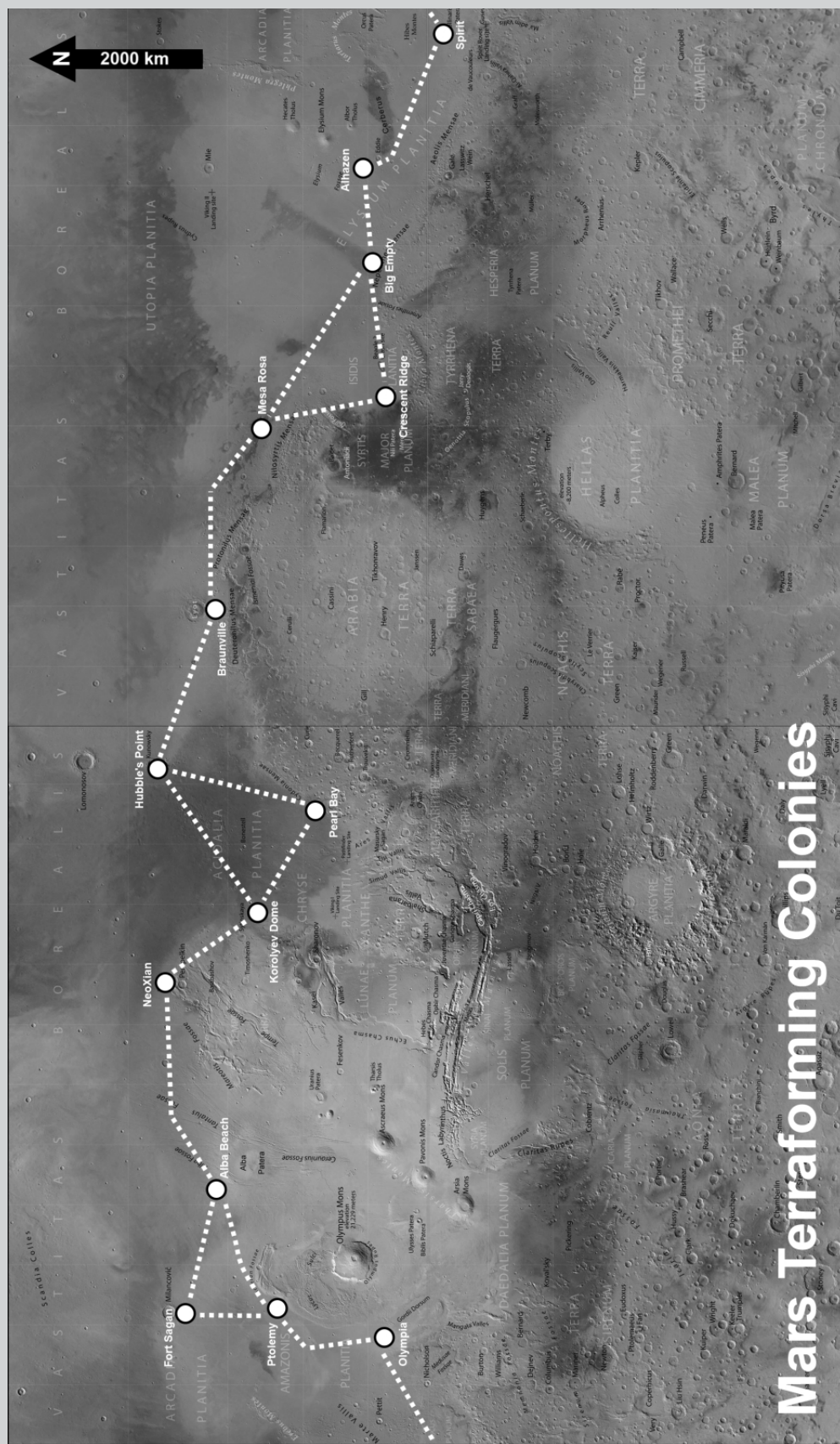
<p>Add +1D to any roll you make Reroll any the roll you just made Have a roll affecting you rerolled Heal a Wound immediately Recover from Incapacitated Survive an impossible peril</p>
--

IMPROVING A PROFILE

As a rule of thumb, improving a profile by a die requires an explanation on how you have learned new things about it and **New Dice x 2** in Karma Points. Any half-way sensible explanation will do since opportunities for improving profiles come seldom anyway because of the amount of Karma required.

To Learn a new profile at 1D costs 2 points of Karma. To improve a profile from 4D to 5D will costs 10 points of Karma ($5 \times 2 = 10$). Most people never improve in their profiles once reaching full adulthood. Only those not content with their lot in life and willing to push the boundaries can improve further. And it's a hard road to the mastery (5D) in any profile.

Developing a profile from nothing to master costs $2 + 4 + 6 + 8 + 10 = 30$ points of Karma. That is a lot of significant changes and heroic deeds.



Mars Terraforming Colonies

Mars is a sphere and not a rectangle, so the scale is increasingly off towards the poles. The Terraforming Project is based on 14 colonial hubs and hundreds of smaller outposts and settlements stretching between them along the monorail lines. At night, you can see the pattern from space and it encircles the entire northern polar plateau. At Elysium Planitia the low elevation reaches the equator, putting Spirit at the same latitude as the Canyon. Together, the 14 colonial hubs and 800 smaller outposts are home to 9 million terraforming pioneers. Korolyev Dome and Pearl Bay have spaceport facilities. Spirit has them under construction.

COMBAT SYSTEM

As a genre, Crimson Rover is from somewhere between post-apolyptic action and mecha anime. Things are expected to get violent and a deadly force is a solution like any other. Sometimes even the most practical one.

Athlete

The primary profile for avoiding attacks by dodging. Can also be used as a secondary for unarmed combat.

Bandit

Works as a secondary profile for most other types of combat. Perhaps even a primary profile for using dirty tricks.

Brawler

This is the primary profile for all things close combat and a secondary for thrown or otherwise muscle-based weaponry such as bows and slingshots.

Gunslinger

This is the primary profile for all ranged combat, from thrown weapons to actual guns. Perhaps dodging for cover in a firefight could be a secondary activity and use of heavy weaponry is tangential.

Lawman

This the primary profile for using holds, armlocks and other non-lethal tactics. Much like Bandit, it is a fitting secondary for most other types of combat.

Officer

Primary for large-caliber military weapons, rarely encountered in the Canyon. A fitting secondary for gunfights and tangential for close combat and muscle-powered weapons.

NEVER HESITATE!

Combat should be run as fast and fluid as it happens. If you hesitate, you lose your turn. If the Gamemaster hesitates, take over and tell him how you see it going down. If you get bogged down with the rules, skip, ignore and improvise! That's what they do in combat.

CINEMATICS VS. REALISM

Realistic combat is quick, flat and unrewarding. In **Rovers**, most participants have active defences that make up for epic leaps, rolls and blocking bullets with a frying pan. Basically, anything can be attempted if it would look cool and doesn't break the laws of physics too much.

It is impossible to give rules for every possible occurrence in combat, so the Gamemaster should remain open-minded and improvise. As a rule of thumb, a good idea/trick will earn you a +3 bonus into whatever you are trying to do. A great idea will give you +6. And if you are trying something extra difficult, the penalties might be -3 or -6 but the rewards for success should be correspondingly greater.

COMBAT ROUNDS

For the sake of clarity, combat has been divided into **10-second combat rounds**. During a combat round every able participant has one Action Turn and any number of Defences.

Short and Long Actions

Any actions taking 3 seconds or less can be done on your Action Turn. Actions that take longer than that but can still be completed in about 10 seconds will take up the whole round instead. If not interrupted (a bullet usually does the trick), a long action is complete at the end of the combat round.

Shortlist of Short Actions

Attack, Shoot, Reload, Stand Up, Go Prone, Open Door, Close Door, Throw Something, Two-Word Shout, In/Out of vehicle, Jump, Use Stimpak, Draw Weapon, Holster Weapon

ACTION TURNS

In some cases you can figure out who goes first from the circumstances but if not, it is up to the Stats: MOVE for close combat, SENSE for ranged combat and starting with the highest. If the stats are even, the higher profile value goes first. If those are even, roll a die!

GUARD ACTION

Instead of using his Action Turn, you may choose to “guard” a location or a person. If something happens later during that round, you get to shoot first no matter what. Guarding is very tiring and you usually can’t guard something effectively for more than GUTS x 1 consecutive combat rounds.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS?

You can do up to three actions on your turn for every extra action to have -3 penalty to the action-related task rolls. So, no penalties for a single action, -3 penalty to both for two actions and -6 penalty to the maximum three actions. Of course, some actions, like reloading, don’t usually need a roll.

Facing two enemies with just one bullet in the clip, McClusky decides shoot one, slap in a new clip and then shoot the other. That is three fast actions, so she has a penalty of -6 to both shooting actions. Fortunately she is a veteran gunslinger with a profile of 3D, so there is still hope for him. And since there is no roll for reloading, the penalty won’t affect it.

NO DICE LEFT?

Then you have no hope of succeeding in the action under these circumstances. You would be better off trying to figure out how to improve those circumstances or doing something not so heavily impeded.

Allowing half-dice rolls in combat is an exercise in futility.

MOVING AROUND

Anything that fits common sense will work but if you *must* have numbers, here we go. You can move up to his MOVE in metres during your action turn and still do all the actions. If you forego your actions, you can move MOVE x 4m, or at least 10 metres, during your action turn.

If you spend the entire combat round running, you can cover roughly MOVE x 10 metres. Uneven terrain or pushing it further may call for MOVE rolls. However, long run is technically a long action and while a small scratch won’t stop you, a Critical Wound will throw you to the ground, ending your run. The Gamemaster will then have to decide how far did you run before the bullet caught up with you.

ATTACK

To hit someone with or without a weapon is an attack. The objective is not always straight out injuring: holds and throws can be more effective, especially against an armored target. Choose profile by the circumstances. The Stat is determined by the weapon of choice.

CLOSE COMBAT ATTACK

To hit someone in close combat is **Routine (10+)** Positive circumstances add more dice to the roll, negative circumstances take them away. If there are no dice left, there is no chance of hitting the target and the fighter should use his actions to improve the circumstances.

Cyberarm(s)	+1D
Attack from behind	+3
Armed vs. unarmed	+3
Hold/Throw/Throttle	-3
From the ground	-3
Tight space, big blade	-3
Blindfighting	-3
Crippled	-3

Defense is really important in close combat, which is why sneaking up on somebody with a knife between your teeth is so often deadly.

RANGED COMBAT ATTACK

The default difficulty of hitting someone with a gun, a bow or a thrown weapon depends first and foremost on the range. Muscle-powered weapons cannot shoot beyond Long Range.

Point Blank	5+
Short (range x 0.5)	10+
Medium (range x 1)	15+
Long (range x 3)	20+
Extreme (range x 10)	25+
Hardwired	+1D
Aiming for 1 turn	+3
Aiming for really long	+6
Full Auto (per 3 shots)	+1*
Small target	-3
Running target	-3
Indirect fire	-3
Poor visibility	-3
Blindfiring	-6
Shoot in close combat	-6
Crippled	-3

**Max bonus is +6*

Our favority bounty hunter McClusky wants to shoot the gun out of a criminal's hand in a club rocking at full tilt. Range is short, so the difficulty is 10+. However, the gun is a small target and the flashing lights make visibility is poor, so that's -6.

Fortunately, McClusky has Gunslinger at 3D and MOVE of 8. She rolls 13, adds MOVE of 8 and subtracts 6 from the penalties. That's still a total of 15, a critical success over the threshold of 10. So unless the bandit does something, she is going to hit that gun.

DEFENCE

If you are about to be hit and know it, you can still try to defend yourself. If you are unaware of the attack or immobilized, you have no defence. Virtually anything that spoils attack can be used for defence (at GM's discretion) but the most common defences are **Block** and **Dodge**. To stop or avoid an attack, your defence roll needs to exceed the attack roll. You can defend yourself any number of times during a combat round but doing so will interrupt any long action you might have been attempting.

McClusky just succeeded in her attack roll to shoot the gun out of the bandit's hand. Bandit defends by trying to Leap into the crowd. He rolls Athlete + MOVE and if he scores better than McClusky (16 or more), he avoids the attack and keeps his gun. If not, the gun gets shot out of his hand and flies somewhere into the panicking crowd. That's a Dodge.

BLOCKING

Put something in the path of the attack to stop or divert it. In close combat, this is usually a weapon and the roll is the same as the attack roll for it. For chairs, tables or unconscious bodies roll **Brawling + BODY**. Almost any movable object will do but at a penalty of -3 or -6 if it is generally poorly suited for the job.

Cyberarm(s)	+1D
Shield-like object	+3
Armed vs. unarmed	+3
Side attack	-3
Rear attack	-6
Blindfighting	-3
Blocking arrows	-3
Blocking bullets	-6*
Crippled	-3

* Bullets can't usually be blocked without a shield-like object that is also bullet-proof. A large frying pan, a small bar table made of Martian iron etc.

In another fight at another time, a terrorist with a crossbow lets McClusky have it with an attack roll of 17. Caught in a flat open space, McClusky doesn't fancy her chances of dodging but she is carrying a metal suitcase containing the terrorists' bomb ingredients.

It is a shield-like object, easy to move and capable of stopping the bolt, so she can make a Block roll. -3 for blocking arrows is compensated by the +3 of having a shield-like object. Of course, if the ingredients inside ignite in the process she'll still be in a world of hurt.

DODGING

Simply put, get out of the way, preferably behind or via some cover. As long as you have room to move into, dodging can be attempted against pretty much any attack. The usual dodge roll is **Athlete + MOVES** and again the result must exceed the attack roll result.

Cyberleg(s)	+1D
Excellent cover	+6
Good cover	+3
Running start	+3
No cover at all	-3
Holding a long object	-3*
Limited movement	-3
Back to the wall	-3
On the ground	-3
Crippled	-3

* Such as spears, all types of bows, rifles or rocket tubes

Back to the rock club. The bandit leaps for the crowds just as McClusky's gun spits fire and lead at him. He has Athlete of 2D and MOVE of 5 and scores a perfectly average 12. That is less than McClusky's attack roll of 15, so what really happens is that he starts to leap and McClusky's bullet rips the gun out of his hand. It flies off into the crowd, with a soft lead bullet jamming all the moving parts.

Because the dodge was technically a failure, the GM rules that the leap became a stumble, leaving the criminal down on all fours on the club floor, while crowds flee from between him and McClusky.

SPECIAL CASES

CRITICAL DEFENCE

For every margin of 5 your defence roll beat the attack roll, you get a +1 bonus to your next roll (attack, defence, whatever) against the attacker. Bonus is lost if combat ends.

For example, if the attack roll was 12 and the block was 27, the defence won by a margin of 15. That's +3 to the defender's next roll against this attacker, whether it is about attack or defence.

FULL AUTO

Weapons capable of automatic fire can be used in full auto. For every 3 rounds fired in the attack, add +1 to the roll, up to a maximum of +6. There will be a lot of collateral damage, so precision attacks are impossible. Ultimately, the effects and consequences of drowning an area in lead are up to the GM.

Assault Rifle has a 30-round magazine. McClusky empties it at three enemies, making three attacks with 9, 9 and 12 shots respectively. Instead of the usual -6 penalty to all attacks, full auto reduces them to -3, -3 and -2. However, random things in the general direction of the enemy now have random bullet holes in them.

INDIRECT FIRE

If there is no line of sight but the projectile can still physically reach the target, you can use mirrors, cameras, shadows, sounds, instructions from an observer and the like to locate the enemy and shoot. This is indirect fire and attacks are made at -3 penalty. Obstructions between you and the target are also likely to reduce the bullet damage. But maybe you lobbed an explosive over a wall..?

EXPLOSIVES

If the attack roll succeeds, the explosive lands roughly where it is supposed to. Those caught in the area of effect can take cover (Dodge). This is usually Challenging (15+), unless there are foxholes or sturdy obstacles (10+) or they are trapped in an enclosed space

(20+). If the explosive actually hits a person, the difficulty target for him is either 20+ or the attack roll success level, whichever is higher.

Taking cover halves the damage (and damage drops by 1D for every metre away from ground zero anyway). On a critical success, every margin of 5 reduces the damage by 3 more points, or if the explosive was thrown, the Gamemaster may allow you to muffle it with something or even throw it back.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

Although barroom brawls mostly fought with fists, using an object such as a broken bottle gives you the advantage of being armed against unarmed opponents. Add +1D to damage if it's a two-handed object. Improvised weapons tend to break upon hitting or blocking something.

HOLDS AND THROWS

This is slightly more difficult (-3) than just swinging your fist. The exact effects are up to the Gamemaster but a hold is meant to immobilize the enemy, a throw is meant to move him involuntarily into some direction and throttling silences and asphyxiates him.

Throwing someone is instantaneous. Holding or throttling someone for more than one combat round means hanging on to the target and the target struggling to get free. It's a long action with a BODY vs. BODY contest at the end of the round. The combatants can roll their Brawler dice instead if they think they get better odds that way. Martial Artist bonuses apply in either case.

Holds, throws and throttles apply only to targets of roughly similar or smaller size and mass. Use common sense.

POISONED WEAPONS

Any bladed or pointed weapon can be coated with poisons but they won't have an effect unless the attack costs the enemy at least 3 Blood Points. For dedicated poison delivery systems even 1 Blood Point is enough but there has to be a mechanism to inject the poison in the weapon/projectile.

BIG F***ING GUNS!

Artillery! Missiles! Orbital bombardments! Laser cannons! Railguns! All that stuff exists but it is not something rovers like you would normally use. Still, if you get the opportunity to horse around with some strategic or tactical-level firepower, the right profile is Officer and the targets are usually structures, areas or big vehicles.

With 22nd century targeting systems you can drop a guided warhead from orbit and have it land on a running human but that's just wasting it. If you are on the receiving end of a Big Gun, hiding in a hole is usually the best option. Explosion damages and areas of effect are huge but for the sake of adventure and fun the Gamemaster usually offers a challenge to escape a certain death.

The orbital missile punches through clouds, shooting out shockwaves as it pierces different atmospheric layers. McClusky is standing at the edge of an old mine shaft under the broken dome of a lost colony. Not knowing how deep it is, she jumps in. After a brief eternity she hits freezing water with bone-jarring force.

Just as she resurfaces, the missile strikes. The dome is vaporized and a huge jet of flame shoots down the shaft, pushing her back under. Holding her breath, she swims for her life as the shaft above her collapses. When she finally breaks surface, all is quiet but she is trapped in a dark labyrinth of half-drowned tunnels.

WEAPONS & ARMOR

MELEE WPN

STAT

DAM

<i>Unarmed</i>	BODY/MOVE	1D*	<i>Use the better stat</i>
Knife	MOVE	2D	<i>Also thrown, 10m</i>
Club/Baton	BODY	2D*	
Machete	MOVE	3D	
Axe	BODY	3D*	
Spear (2h)	MOVE	3D	<i>Also thrown, 10m</i>
Chainsaw (2h)	BODY	4D*	
Vibroblade	MOVE	3D+6	

**Add +2 to Damage if your BODY is greater than the target's.*

RANGED WPN

STAT

DAM

MAG RANGE

Thrown Rock	BODY	1D*	1	0	<i>Double Armor**</i>
Shuriken	MOVE	1D	1	10m	
Bow (2h)	BODY	1D+6	1	60m	
Crossbow (2h)	MOVE	2D+6	1	60m	<i>Slow to reload***</i>
Handgun	MOVE	2D	10	50m	
SMG	MOVE	2D	18	50m	<i>Full Auto</i>
Shotgun (2h)	MOVE	4D	6	10m	<i>Double Armor*</i>
Frontier Rifle (2h)	SENSE	3D	5	200m	
Assault Rifle (2h)	SENSE	3D	30	150m	<i>Full Auto</i>
Chaingun (2h)	BODY-3****	3D	100	100m	<i>Full Auto, slow to reload***</i>
Hand Grenade	BODY	6D exp	1	30m	<i>Explosive</i>
Rocket Tube (2h)	BODY	10D exp	1	100m	<i>Explosive, slow to reload***</i>

* Add +2 to Damage if your BODY is greater than the target's.

** Enemy AV is doubled against rocks and shotguns.

*** Reloading this weapon is a Long action

**** No penalty when firing from a bipod/tripod/mount

ACCESSORIES

Laser Sight

+2 to attack rolls with MOVE-based guns up to 50m

Optic Sight

+2 to attack rolls with SENSE-based guns at ranges of 100m or more

ARMOR

Sturdy Clothes*

1D3-1

1 item slot

Leather & Padding*

1D6-1

1 item slot

Ballistic Vest*

1D6-1

1 item slot, concealable

Riot/Sports Gear*

1D6-1

1 item slot

Leather & Chain*

2D-2

2 item slots, -1 MOVE

Trooper Cuirass & Greaves

2D+2

2 item slots, -1 MOVE, -1 SENSE

Hard Suit

3D+1

3 item slots, -2 MOVE, -2 SENSE, +3 elements/radiation

Power Armor

4D

4 item slots, -6 stealth, counts as having cyberarm/

cyberLeg

*Only these armors can have add-ons

ARMOR ADD-ONS

Camo Cloak

+1

1 item slot, +2 stealth in outdoors

Storm Cloak

+2

1 item slot, +3 against elements and radiation

Heavy Hat

+1

1 item slot, +1 against elements

Helmet

+2

1 item slot, -2 hearing

Enclosed Helmet

+3

1 item slot, -3 hearing

Extra Padding

+1

Extra Plating

+2

-1 stealth

INJURY AND DEATH

If you score hit on the enemy, **roll for weapon damage and add +1D to the roll for every margin of 5** (figured out from the default difficulty or the defense roll, whichever was higher). Damage roll is not open-ended but because the attack roll is, in theory there is no limit to the amount of damage that can be inflicted.

Weapon Damage

The damage roll for each weapon is given in the descriptions. Unarmed combat damage is 1D, small weapons have 2D, large weapons 3D and heavy weapons and shotguns have 4D. For weapons that go through armor like hot knife through butter, there is usually a large fixed bonus to the roll (such as 2D+6 for cross-bows).

For unarmed combat and BODY-based melee weapons, if the attacker's BODY is greater than that of the enemy, add +2 to the damage roll.

Damage Bonus

If the attack was a critical success against the default threshold or the defense roll, add +1D to the damage roll for every margin of 5. Because the attack roll is open-ended, there is no theoretical limit to the damage inflicted.

Damage bonus indicates hitting a vital part, a crack in the armor and so forth. Basically, anything can be killed with any weapon, if the shot was good enough.

Margin	Bonus
0..4	-
5..9	+1D
10..14	+2D
15..19	+3D
20..24	+4D
25..29	+5D
+5	..+1D

Armor Roll

If the target is wearing armor, the Gamemaster makes the AV roll for his armor and subtracts the result from the incoming damage. If there are multiple types of armor, the AVs are added together. After subtracting AV, any remaining damage is taken from target's Blood.

McClusky attacks a fleeing bandit at point blank range (default 5+) and scores an attack roll of 24. The bandit dodges but scores only 11. It's a hit and with a margin of 13 the damage bonus of +2D! McClusky is using a handgun with Weapon Damage of 2D, so total damage roll is now 4D. She rolls 16, slightly above average.

The enemy is wears "bandit armor" of Leather and chain, with an AV roll of 2D-2. He scores 7, also better than average. 16 - 7 = 9. The bandit loses 9 points of Blood. Since it was more than his full Blood, it is also a Critical Wound.

CRIPPLED

If your Blood count has been reduced to half or less, you are **Crippled**. You have -3 to all activity and movement rates are halved.

SHOCK

If reduced to 0 Blood or less, you go into shock. You are incapacitated, possibly unconscious. Any further hits will kill you and without treatment you'll bleed to death after BODY x 1 hours.

Unimportant NPCs die if taken into 0 Blood Points or Less. However, no instant deaths for player characters.

DEEP WOUND

If half or more of your full Blood was lost to a single attack, you have suffered a **Deep Wound**. You are knocked to the ground and bleed 1 Blood Point per combat round until treated or in shock.

At GM's discretion, trying to plug the wound with anything, including fingers, may reduce the bleed rate to 1 per minute. **Roll 2D for the Deep Wound Effect.**

2D Deep Wound Effect

- 2 Skull fracture. Target is delirious for 2D days (-6 to SENSE & MIND tasks) and may have amnesia.
- 3-4 Right arm is disabled for 3D days.
- 5 Right leg is broken. Unable to stand for 3D days, then movement rate is halved for an equal length of time.
- 6 Chest trauma and organ failures. Even after treatment it takes 3D days before healing begins.
- 7 Leaves an impressive scar.
- 8 Gut shot. -6 to all attempts at medical treatment and it takes 3D days before the healing starts.
- 9 As in 5, but for the left leg.
- 10-11 As in 3-4, but for the left arm.
- 12 Shot in the face. Roll 1D, on 5+ lost an eye (-2 SENSE, -3 to actions on the blind side). Notable facial scarring.

TREATMENT AND HEALING

Any loss of Blood that leaves an open wound can be treated. The typical roll is **Medic + MIND** but other combinations are possible. Giving first aid takes about 10 minutes and as a rule of thumb, all Shock victims live long enough for at least one attempt.

Diagnosis or check-up	10+
Treat a flesh wound	10+
Treat Crippled patient	15+
Treat Shock patient	20+
Complex Surgery	25+

No tools or supplies	-3
Doctor's tools	+3
Clinical equipment	+6
Filthy, noise, hassle	-3
Clean, peaceful, quiet	+3
Medical drugs	+3
Biomedical nanites	+6
Treating yourself	-6

If **successful**, 1D3 Blood Points are restored, bleeding is stopped and patients in shock are revived. On a critical success, add +1 Blood Point for every margin of 5.

You can't heal more Blood than the patient has lost since the last time he was treated, though. Also, once treated, further treatment to the wounds has no effect.

Natural Healing

As a rule of thumb, a day of downtime and rest restores 1 BP unless there are Deep Wound-imposed waiting periods on natural healing. If you want to stay active, you must make a *Challenging BODY-roll* or there is no healing on that day. Make the roll *Difficult* if the conditions are especially adverse. On a Fumble you lose 1 BP to a localized infection.

Stimpaks

A concoction of nanites and bioactive chems in a disposable pre-pressurised needle. Stabbing yourself takes one action, hurts like hell and heals 1D Blood Points immediately with all the effects of medical treatment.

OTHER HAZARDS

There is more than one way to get killed on Mars. Here are some of the more typical ones.

Fire, Electricity or Acid

Glancing contact costs 1 Blood Point. Serious contact inflicts 1D damage per combat round, or 3D if doused in the damaging material. Unless the armor is an enclosed suit (such as a hard suit or a power armor), the AV roll is halved against fire, electricity or acid. Strong acids also eat away the armor at the rate of -1 per round. When it is no longer possible to get a positive AV roll result, the armor has been completely destroyed.

Falling

In the low gravity of Mars, you take 1D damage for every 3 metres fallen. If making a controlled fall, roll *MOVE* (or *Athlete* + *MOVE* if that's better). Every difficulty level achieved reduces the fall damage by one. Armor is of no help but lots of padding might be. Halve the distance if falling on something soft. Quarter it if falling into water.

Storms

Martian storms are fearsome displays of tornadoes of flying rock, suffocating dust clouds and fierce electrical discharges. Those caught out in the open are in serious danger.

If caught out in a storm, make a **BODY** roll (or **Explorer** + **BODY**, if you want) once per hour. If the roll fails, the winds throw you around for 1D damage. Armor does not help but if it covers most of the body, add +2 to the survival roll for every point of Armor Value.

Hide in a hole	5+
Enclosed vehicle	5+
Crouch behind a rock	10+
Flat on open ground	15+
Ignore it and press on	20+
Naked	-6
Light clothing	-3
Covering Armor	+?
Stormcloak	+6

For each margin of 5 you can ignore one future **BODY** roll. A margin of 15+ would keep you safe for the next 4 hours, so finding a good hole (or digging a fox hole when you see the storm approaching) is always advisable.

Radiation Sickness

"The Cramps" in Canyon slang. When exposed to a significant radiation source, make a **BODY** roll after the first hour of exposure. If successful, there are no immediate effects. Add +1 to the next roll for each margin of 5.

If the roll fails, you lose 1D Blood Points and acute radiation sickness sets in. You have a general -6 penalty from vomiting, bleeding from soft tissue, subtle burns and muscle spasms. After one hour of hell, make a new roll to see if the sickness continues. Damage from radiation sickness cannot be treated. It will have to heal away naturally. Long-term effects are up to the Gamemaster.

Caught outside during a sunstorm, McClusky must score 15+ to avoid radiation sickness. She makes it but if she doesn't find shelter, she has -6 to the next roll.

Radioactive ores	5+
Fission battery leak	10+
Highlands, daytime	10+
Fallout zone	15+
Sunstorm, Canyon	15+
Fission Reactor Core	20+
Sunstorm, highlands	25+
Nuclear flash*	30+

Continued exposure	-6
Eating or drinking	-3
Filter or gas mask	+3
Covering armor	+3
Cloaks, tarps	+3
Storm Cloak	+6
Heavy/metallic Armor	+6
Inside a vehicle	+6
Inside a tank	+10
Enclosed suit	+20

**Every kilometre of distance reduces the difficulty by 5.*

Poison and Illness

If either enters the metabolism in significant quantities, there is a *BODY* roll against their relative potency and if it fails, the effects will take place. If successful, poison has only half-effect (there is always some effect), while the illness cannot be contracted from that particular source anymore.

Illnesses have gestation periods of hours or even days after contracting them. An intravenous poison works in 1D rounds and an ingested poison in 1D minutes, unless it was a specifically slow-acting poison.

Poor hygiene	5
Spoiled food/water	10
Aerial transmission	15
Contact with the sick	20
Intravenous contagion	25
Natural Laxative	5
Medical/Soft Drug	10
Chemical/Hard Drug	15
Organic Venom/Heroin	20
Synthetic Neurotoxin	25
Partial Dose	+3/+6
Overdose	-6

Asphyxiation

Lack of oxygen to the brain for whatever reason. If prepared, you can hold breath for *BODY* x 1 combat rounds. Once reserves (if any) have been used up, you must make a *BODY* roll at the end of each round. The first roll is *Easy*, the second is *Challenging* and so on.

When you fail, you pass out. In water or total asphyxiation you draw breath and drown, dying in *BODY* x 1 minutes. In bad or dusty air you might live for *BODY* x 1 hours before drifting to death in your sleep. If in toxic air, the toxins take effect.

Having something like a mask or a filter gives a bonus of +3 or +6 against dust and chems. It has no effect on sheer lack of oxygen.

Starvation

You need an average of 3000 kcal of food and 3 litres of water per day (slightly more for Earthlings). But this is not a dietary plan. What will happen when you are stranded in the Canyon without food and water? Well, **you can cope without food for *BODY* x 1 days** (after which you will take -1 to *BODY* per day and go into coma at 0), although you will be uncomfortably hungry.

Without water, however, you have make a *BODY* roll (or Explorer + *BODY* if that's how you roll) at the end of each day. The first roll is *Easy*, the next roll is *Routine*, the third roll is *Challenging* and so on.

If a success, you can take it and get +1 bonus to the next roll for every margin of 5. If a failure, you lose 1D Blood and any normal healing ceases. Damage caused by thirst is not treatable except by Stimpaks but they can be erased with enough drink (3-5 litres + some salts) and resting for a day. Finding smaller amounts of water can keep the roll from getting more difficult or suspend it for a day but the thirst-damage is not healed.

Road Rash

Falling, jumping or being thrown off vehicle, use the falling rules. Add +2 to the falling distance for every 5 kph of speed.

A bandit is making his way across the roof of a desert hauler when he is shot. The hit knocks him off the roof and being a Lowly NPC, the Gamemaster won't allow him last minutes saves to see if he can hang onto something on the side of the vehicle. The distance from the top of the hauler to the ground is just 3 metres but the real killer is that the hauler is moving at 50 kph, adding 20 metres to the equation, for a total 23 metres. The Bandit makes a MOVE roll with -3 penalty (the Wounds he just took) and scores 11. 23 - 11 = 12 metres' worth of damage.

So, his rough landing is a 4D damage affair but his padded synthleather armor is designed to protect against road rash, so by GM's decision he gets an AV roll of 1D-1 from that. Severely injured, he lifts up his bloodied

face from the ground and watches both the hauler and his gang mates drive off into the distance, leaving him stranded in the desert.

Low Pressure

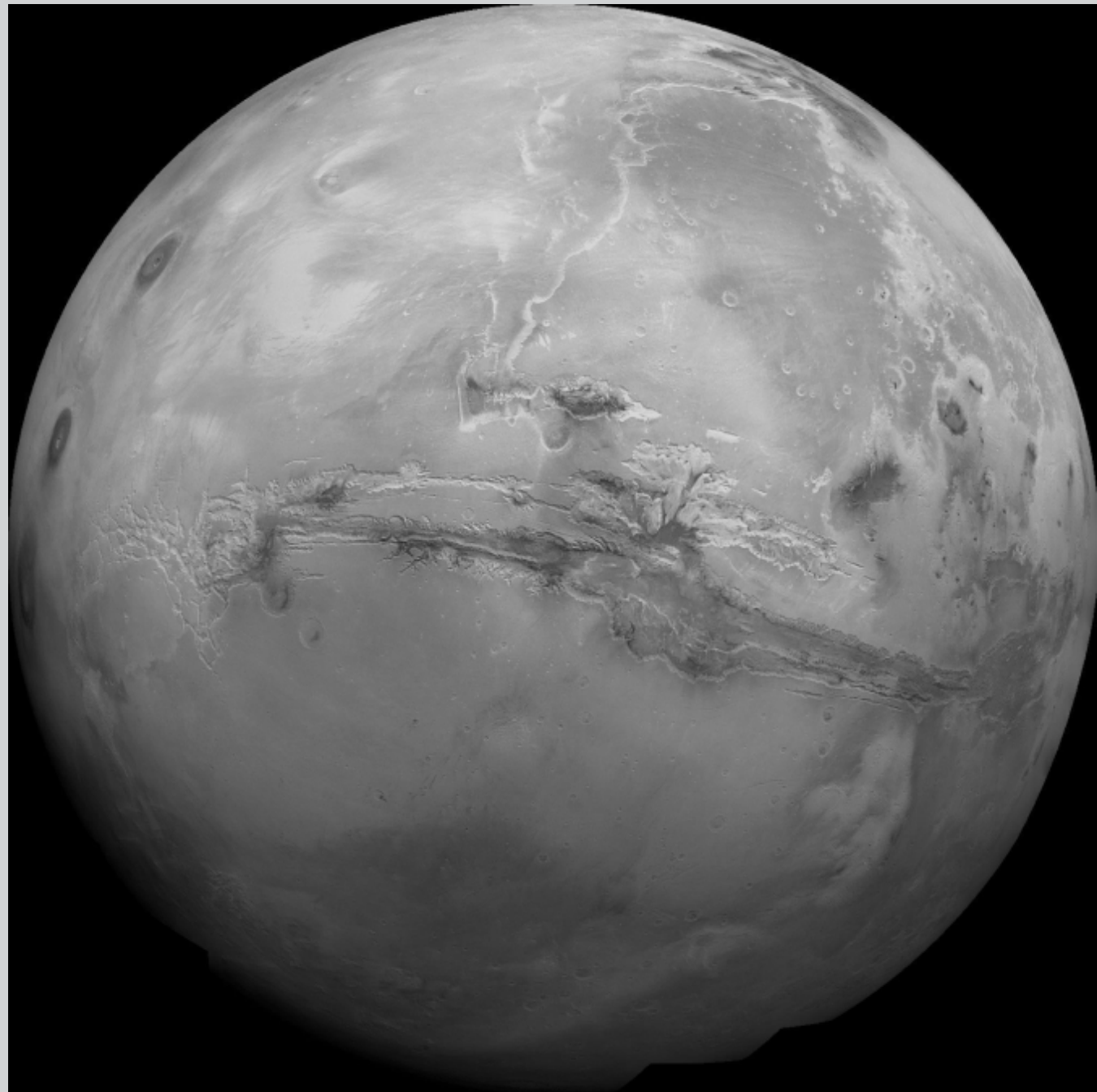
Earthlings on Mars suffer from the low air pressure all the time. Martians start getting the same effect after climbing about 3 kilometres above the canyon floor and typically inside the many tributary canyons around Valles Marineris. Anything above the mean planetary elevation will asphyxiate even the colonists and on the mountains you need a pressure suit.

If operating at an abnormally low pressure, you have a cumulative penalty of -1 after each combat round involving considerable physical exertion. Correspondingly, each round spent resting reduces the penalty by two. If the colonists are having these effects, double the penalties for Earthlings. These problems can be temporarily overcome with respirators but using a respirator doubles any penalties from Wounds. The Gamemaster has the final say in at what point the ill effects of pressure become asphyxiation.

On Mars, low pressure also means higher radiation. Even without a sunstorm, loitering in direct sunlight in a low-pressure area corresponds to being in the vicinity of radioactive ores (*BODY* rolls). Even if the rolls are made, expeditions up the tributary canyons will give you a good tan, even through most clothing.

Sleep

Not sleeping for a night inflicts a -3 general penalty on practically everything. Not sleeping for several nights inflicts a -6 penalty and long-term effects are up to the gamemaster. The need for sleep varies individually, so unless you are a Heavy Sleeper, cat naps and even a couple of hours of sleep will help get rid of the penalty for a while, although you will be uncomfortable, tired and often cranky. Heavy sleepers need 8-10



WELCOME TO MARS!

MARS 101

Welcome to the red planet. Despite decades of terraforming, it is an alien world roughly 1.5 AUs from the Sun and operating under somewhat different rules. Much of the information given here applies to the whole planet but when necessary, special attention has been given to Valles Marineris, AKA "The Canyon".

THE MARTIAN DAY

At 24 hours 40 minutes, the Martian day is comparable to Earth's. Time is measured in Earth hours with just the last 40 minutes stuck into the end. Each corporation follows its Time Zone but for all intentions and purposes the Canyon follows Chryse Planitia time, which gets more and more out of whack as you move towards the Labyrinth in the western end. The scientific term for the Martian day is "sol" but the locals speak of days with little regard for the possible confusion with Earth days.

Mars also rotates the same way as Earth, so the Sun rises from the east and sets into the west. Since the Canyon runs east-to-west almost along the equator, the Sun seems to pass over the Canyon during the day. The exact angle to the Sun varies by season. Dawns and dusks tend to be spectacular as the Sun often rises or descends into the horizontal depression left by the Canyon and shines through the Canyon before rising above or after sinking below the rest of the horizon.

Because of axial tilt, Colonies around the Northern Plateau experience changing day/night lengths throughout the Martian year and a sizable polar area experiences endless night in the winter and neverending day in the Summer. In the Canyon, lying at the equator, changes to daylight hours are minimal.

THE MARTIAN YEAR

Mars orbits around the Sun in 668 Martian days (684 Earth days). In the Martian dating system, the day number is given along with the Martian year, measured from the Comet Impact that officially began the terraforming proc-

ess. For example, the current Earth year is 2148 and year 27 in the Martian Count. It'll be almost 2150 on Earth before Mars gets to year 28. Year starts with the date 001/27 and ends with the date 668/27. Newcomers from Earth tend to cling to the Earth calendar for quite a while. Corporations and scientific organizations usually give the Mars and Earth dates together: 001/27 (22.02.2148).

There is nothing like the concept of months on Mars as the two moons do not lend themselves well to this use. In the colonies, people still follow 7-day weeks but in the Canyon most people take two days off for every 10 days and the Canyon Fever tends to make prospectors ignore weekends altogether. There are some commonly observed holidays, some adopted from Earth and others unique to Mars.

THE SUN

Compared to Earth, the Sun on Mars appears to be 2/3 of the size and about 40% as bright. This is comparable to a slightly cloudy afternoon on Earth. Fully overcast days, rare as they are in the Canyon, can be quite gloomy and colors appear drained. It can be almost pitch-black inside sandstorms and during the actual storm season (AKA "winter"), skies can be dark for days as planet-wide dust storms sweep from pole to pole. Even if the skies occasionally clear during the storm season, you can probably see the next dark wall of dust, clouds and dry lightning on the horizon.

Atmospheric dust also gives the Martian horizon a tinge of brown or red, which can appear green at dusk or dawn. The Sun often has a dust halo around it and any rays of light from between the clouds are very clear cut because of airborne dust. Reflective arches and other dust-based optical illusions on the sky are also commonplace.

THE MOONS

Mars has two moons, **Phobos** ("Fear") and **Deimos** ("Terror").

Phobos orbits Mars in 7 hours and 40 minutes. Only 6000 kilometres away and moving faster than the planet rotates, it appears to rise from the west and set 4 hours and 15 minutes later in the east twice during the Martian day. Compared to Moon, Phobos appears to be about one quarter in size and a lump rather than sphere. Orbiting very close to the equatorial plane, it is below the horizon from most Colonies but in the Canyon it appears to pass directly overhead.

Deimos is a captured asteroid orbiting at 24600 kilometers. Although highly irregular, to the naked eye it looks like a bright star. Orbiting Mars in per 30 hours and 20 minutes, Deimos rises from the east and sets into the west. However, due to Mars' own rotation, the passage appears to take 64 hours and 45 minutes (2.5 Martian days). Its orbit is also very close to the equatorial plane and from the Canyon it appears to pass right overhead, getting frequently eclipsed by Phobos.

NEW ATMOSPHERE

After 50 years of terraforming, Mars still has a mean atmospheric pressure of just 0.2 bars and only the extreme elevation differences have made depressions like the Northern Polar Plateau, the Canyon and Hellas Depression habitable. Atmosphere is 65% nitrogen, 17% oxygen, 3% argon and 15% of a locally varying mixture of carbon dioxide, methane, sulphur dioxide and a mix of other greenhouse and volcanic gases.

Even with enough pressure, this cocktail is semi-breathable to Earth humans and newcomers say it has a whiff of rotten eggs due to sulphur compounds. Gene-engineered adaptations have acclimatised the terraforming colonists and their offspring, enabling them to breathe normally down to a pressure of 0.25 bars or so. Still, anything at or above the mean elevation is unsurvivable, which is still most of the planetary surface. In the near future, increasing pressure will open up areas south

of Chryse Planitia and the Canyon mouth, all the way down to Argyre Planitia. On the southern hemisphere, Hellas Depression would already be habitable but has officially only been visited by drones.

Mars is still warming up and the atmosphere is going to get thicker. Melting permafrost is expected to release even more greenhouse gases and both moisture and vegetation are changing the planet's albedo. Still, with little or no magnetic field to hold the solar wind at bay, this new terraformed atmosphere will be lost to space in a million years or so.

Strong axial tilt (25.19 degrees as opposed to Earth's 23.44) and an elliptical orbit mean the Martian year has four distinct seasons. Terraforming and the thicker and warmer atmosphere has mellowed some seasonal aspects and aggravated others. While Valles Marineris lies at the equator and is less affected by the tilt, some seasonal changes affecting surrounding areas make themselves felt in the Canyon as well.

The defining seasonal feature on Mars is the 150-day storm season during the northern winter. Fierce windstorms, rock tornadoes, poor visibility and comms cutouts make overland travel difficult and dangerous. Skies can darken for days, temperatures plummet and any moisture soon freezes on rocks and gravel. Canyon Pioneers are trapped in their mining camps, colonies and outposts, so it is imperative to have enough supplies to survive and keep the operations going throughout the storm season. If the supplies run out or the already shaky frontier infrastructure fails, famine is sets in and no amount of gold or alien treasure will buy you an ounce of food.

GRAVITY

Mars has a surface gravity of 0.38 G. In short, the weight of an average person is around 30 kilograms. People can easily jump their own height vertically and drop down several metres without injury. Certain sports, especially baseball, can have the ball flying for well over a kilometre. Low gravity also makes it easy to build big. Huge vehicles and heavy loads can be moved around with much less energy, enabling the colonists to jury rig vehicles out of all sorts of contraptions. Structural strength calculations have to worry about wind more than the weight of the structure, so everything can be easily supersized.

Because of the low pressure and the fierce storms, aircraft are almost unknown on Mars. Those who fly, do so in space.

SPACE TRAVEL

With a thinner atmosphere and an escape velocity of just 5 km/s (Earth = 11 km/s), surface-to-orbit transportation is easy. The terraformed atmosphere is also thick enough to enable effective aerobraking and gliding landings for shuttles, even if flying as such is rare. Laser lifters (beams from the ground are aimed at the reaction chamber of the vehicle, superheating the gases inside) carry cargo from the space ports of Koryolev Dome and Pearl Bay into the orbit. Civilian traffic is handled with trans-orbital delta shuttles, while corporate security forces have dropships with powerful but cost-ineffective rocketry.

The low-flying moons are a hazard to everything on Mars orbit and eventually pull objects placed onto areosynchronous orbits off it. For decades, *Siddhanta Waystation* used to be the only significant orbital structure, facilitating all traffic between Earth and Mars. Since then, been joined by five Blue Corps spacecraft, each of them about as big as the station itself. However, there are almost no satellites.

Other than that, Earth-Mars transportation depends on six Cyclor-X spacecrafts placed on a permanent and looping Earth-Mars trajectory. When close to either planet, specialized shuttles fly out to meet it and arrange the exchange of cargo and passenger modules before the Cyclor moves out of range once more. With six cyclers in place, there is one one visiting Mars every 50-70 days. They are within shuttle range for about a week. An Earth-Mars trip aboard a cycler takes about one Earth year. Most passengers are in suspended animation during transit. Some spacecrafts can do it in six to ten months if the planets are optimally aligned and/or they can use an obscene amount of reaction mass.

COLONIAL TIMELINE

		2130	Unassisted breathing in Pearl Bay
2039	The first manned flight to Mars	2131	Unassisted breathing in Braunville, highest of the hubs
2081	WorldCrash ends the era of nation-states on Earth	2133	Pearl Bay Spaceport opens, rivaling Korolyev Dome
2082	Global corporate takeover under the Cartel (“Blue Corps”)	2134	Deadly riots as the Red Corps reject initiatives for freedom of movement and enterprise from second-generation colonists.
2085	Cartel grants the “Red Corps” an exclusive deed to Mars		
		2137	Mars population reaches 8M.
2087	Comet Ishiga IV is diverted to collide with Mars	2140	Mars Corps dismantle a Blue Corp colony at Arcadia
2088	Ishiga IV hits in and around Mare Cimmerum	2142	The Blue Corps reaffirm the Red Corps’ deed to Mars.
2090	First Cyclor Ship on a permanent Earth-Mars trajectory	2144	Mars population reaches 9M.
2091	The Ishiga Storm ends. Seeding of terraforming biomes.	2146	More riots as Red Corps crack down on unlicensed outposts by Indies who fled the Terraforming Project.
2092	Korolyev Dome founded, monorail construction started	2147	Excursions into Valles Marineris, under somewhat shady circumstances, discover xenoliths, relics and the Dead Colonies.
2096	First baby born on Mars		
2103	All colonial hubs and the monorail network established	2148	The Canyon Rush, an exodus of more than a million colonists into Valles Marineris cripples the terraforming project. Those leaving frequently steal supplies, vehicles and even industrial machinery from their home colonies.
2105	Mars population exceeds 1M		
2108	Cyanoplague almost destroys NeoXian		
2111	More complex terraforming lifeforms introduced with varying results		
2112	Mars population exceeds 2M	2150	Now. Second Martian year of the Canyon Rush. First explorers from Earth reach Mars. Cartel is putting pressure on Red Corps for a crack-down on the Canyon, something the Red Corps have neither the resources nor political will to do.
2114	First Pioneer Plantations along the monorail		
2122	Mars population exceeds 5M		
2128	Unassisted breathing possible at Hubble’s Point		Some Blue Corps interpret this as a breach of Red Corps’ deed on Mars and consider it null and void.
2129	Mars population exceeds 6M		Mounting tensions on two planets.

THE RED CORPS

Back in 2082, the Cartel issued five megacorporations an exclusive deed to Mars. In return for a monopoly on the Red Planet, their rights within the Cartel were curtailed and it is widely thought that the deed was supposed to be a Kiss of Death to a dissident faction. Few believed the terraforming of Mars to have any hope of success and that the **Red Corps** would simply bankrupt themselves in the attempt. Yet the Red Corps are still there, a sovereign faction even if still nominally part of the Cartel. They are also in legal, if not actual control of xenolith and relic sales, as all off-world trade on and from Mars should only happen via the Red Corps.

Korolyev Dome, the very first colony and spaceport, is governed jointly by all Red Corps. The other hubs also act as the main or regional headquarters of their respective corporations. Although the network of colonies encompasses only half of the Polar Plateau, the Red Corps have divided regions north of Pearl Bay into their specific sectors. Colony Hubs are miniaturized 22nd century Earth cities and while a far cry from Earth orbit, they represent the peak of civilization and technological progress Mars. Stretching between the Hubs, mostly along the monorail connections, are the pioneer plantations, terraforming collectives, industrial facilities and collection points for resources harvested further afield. In time, this network of hubs and connections is meant encircle the entire Vastitas Borealis.

The Terraforming Project is a planned economy where every colonist has an assigned role and a limited lifetime promotion scheme. The colonists have no right to travel except by visas issued by their respective administrators and even then they are usually limited to colonies and hubs controlled by their respective corporation. Laws, or rather "policies, are enforced mostly by the local militia in each major settlement but each of the Red Corps also maintains its own paramilitary security force loyal only to the corporate board.

Corporate control also extends to free enterprise, media and even arts, all of which are tightly regulated. Creating a family unit, i.e. "marriage", is a contractual obligation for all Red Corp citizens and there are considerable benefits for having large numbers of children. However, pairing up requires a certificate of medical health and genetic compatibility, as well a license from the colonial administration to ensure the infrastructure and population development can handle the relocation of personnel and expected population increase. Same-sex pairings are not officially recognized, although only rarely actively suppressed. There has also been a counter-culture of unregistered cohabitation, which is sometimes cracked down on in the form of residence permit checks.

The first-generation colonists, eager to escape the troubles of Earth, embraced these roles and their respective limitations. The second- and third-generation colonists born and raised on Mars have been less than impressed. In 2134, a popular initiative to liberalize parts of the Martian society was soundly rejected, resulting in violent riots and the proliferation of anti-corporate countercultures. Even before the Ca-nyon Rush, thousands of second- and third-generations colonists had either abandoned the Project or lived double lives to create their own shadow communities and black market economies on the fringes of the colonial society. The Red Corps response to this varies from place to place, since especially in smaller colonies everybody knows each other.

On an interplanetary scale, the Red Corps operate independently from the Cartel and only the top management and owning elite maintain steady contact with Earth. Everybody else is supposed to work for the Terraforming Project and need visas to leave their home settlements. Some Red Corps also have projects and business enterprises unassociated with the Terraforming Project but until the Canyon Rush, these have been completely isolated from programs on Mars. Since the Canyon Rush, enforcing this rule has become progressively more difficult.

The Red Corps' exclusive deed to Mars means that only the Red Corps have the right to set up permanent bases on Mars (now defined as fixed structures) and can decide who gets to live there. They are obliged to accept a quota of visitors from elsewhere but in practise these have been restricted to the spaceports of Korolyev Dome and Pearl Bay. However, inter-corporate rivalry between the Red Corps has lead to cracks in the system and there is a new spaceport under construction in Spirit.

Another crack is the relaxation of visitor rules on Pearl Bay. Blue Corp interest in the Canyon is bringing in a lot of new capital into the otherwise meager planned economy and individual Red Corps or their subsidiaries are bending the rules to cash in on it. Some Red Corps are closer to the fence than others and Blue Corps lobby tirelessly to break up the old cohesion in the defence of Red Corps' interests on Mars.

POWER HIERARCHY

Officially, a corporation is governed by a board of directors. In a megacorporation, these boards in turn answer to a nameless and largely undefined cabal of majority shareholders. In a corporate society, this shadow regime wields absolute power and the entire society conforms to their ideological goals and endeavours, the terraforming of Mars being one such example. Usually the identities of this ruling elite have not been made public but everybody knows they and those close to them do exist. While many refer to them as the "elites", the only elites they have probably seen are the offspring and clones of the actual elite. Elites are above the law and wield absolute power, although they always prefer to operate through a chain of middlemen.

You could compare it to a system of mafia dons and henchmen but they are not criminals since they have the power to define crime within the society. Many of the leading elites have been with the megacorps since the takeover of Earth in 2081. With increasingly sophisticated treatment and genetic therapies not bound by the same treaties or financial limitations as those for mere mortals, the life expectancy of these shadow rules is fast approaching 200. Too far

gone to live without their genetic therapies and too altered and sometimes arrogant to breed, many of them are producing scions: younger clones of themselves that they regard as both their children and property. In theory, the most successful scions would one day inherit their donors' status but so far this has never happened.

CORRUPTION

It is difficult to give an exact definition of corruption in a corporate society but there is plenty of it on both Earth and Mars. Those in the Colonies have no real way of getting ahead in life by legal means, so they have no qualms in making profit outside the legal means and usually become more jaded about it over time. While untouchables always exist, corruptibility has become to define the corporate governance in many ways.

While corruption has always been a problem, things have gotten out of hand with the Canyon Rush. Fugitives from the Project are coming back loaded with alien treasure. Colony administrators are selling machinery and supplies to the Canyon settlements via smugglers and then forge accident reports for the corporate HQ. This is pocket change compared to the favors traded by top managers or the political deals between the elites. In a corporate society, the planned economy of the Terraforming Project is ultimately an alien state of affairs.

XJB Automatica

Pearl Bay, Big Empty, Ptolemy

Specializing in interplanetary transportation, robotics, XJB Automatica remains influential also on Earth and having opened Pearl Bay spaceport to the Blue Corps, benefits from the trade of xenoliths and relics with Earth.

Q1Ndustrries

NeoXian, Olympia

Chinese state corporation that outlived its state. Q1Ndustrries has been involved in mining for a long time, exploiting mineral resources beneath the Tharsis Bulge. Completely cosmopolitan by now, the oriental heritage lives on in logos and brand characters.

ZoluCion

Hubble's Point, Crescent Ridge, Fort Sagan

This genetics, agriculture and biotech giant is the mastermind behind the terraformed biosphere of Mars. It has a very strong overall science arm and in advanced processing technologies it rivals the Earth orbitals.

EVO Kombine

Braunville, Alhazen, Alba Beach

Originally a heavy industries and construction giant, on Mars the EVO-K has expanded to meteor deposit mining and large-scale energy production technologies. Much of the heavy infrastructure on Mars was built by EVO Kombine.

TransMek

Mesa Rosa, Spirit

TransMek started out with vehicles, small-scale engineering, portable energy systems. Now it is another agricultural producer on Mars and also produces a fair bit of biosynthesized chemicals. TransMek built much of the Monorail and has recently begun the construction of spaceport facilities at its remote colony hub of Spirit.

Politically, the Red Corps have split into three camps. XJB and TransMek would compromise on their exclusive rights to attract more investment from Earth Corporations. They are also holding back on any corporate crackdown on the Canyon Rush; a job made easier by XJB's control of Pearl Bay, a popular jump-off point.

ZoluCion and EVO Kombine consider Mars as good as theirs, advocate strong measures to bring the Canyon settlements under corporate control and would throw anybody not in the Project off the planet. Q1Ndustrries hasn't come down strongly on either side and instead is rumored to have undertaken massive and perplexing underground construction projects beneath the Tharsis Bulge.

THE BLUE CORPS

On Mars, the Cartel and its Earth-based members are collectively known as the "Blue Corps", although only a few of them are truly active on Mars. While the Red Corps are also nominally members of the Cartel, the sheer distance and their non-involvement in terrestrial politics has made them largely autonomous. Now that the discovery of xenolith and relics threatens to upset the balance of power, the Blue Corps intend to re-integrate the Red Corps into the Cartel. The Red Corps rightly see this as a power grab and resist on the basis of their exclusive 2082 deed to Mars. Tensions are mounting and some predict the Red and Blue corps will come to blows within a few years.

Officially, the Blue Corps cannot establish settlements, claim authority or conduct financial transactions on Mars. Blue Corp citizens with visas can visit Mars as private individuals and by now the colonial black market has been thoroughly infiltrated by Blue Corp agents. It is also highly likely the Blue Corps already have a clandestine base or two on Mars. There are currently five Blue Corp spaceships on orbit, acting as both the embassies and the local headquarters of their respective corporations.

Spacecraft

Lowell Navigator
Dragonstar
Beagle 2141
Ark Regal
Azure Comet

Blue Corp

Merkano Syndicate
SolMek Group
Ceroke
AKG-Imperiale
Cinaptika

Needles to say, the Canyon has more than its fair share of agents from these five Blue Corps, with the spaceships acting as bases.

The Indigo Conspiracy

Not all Earth Corps agree with the Blue Corps' aim of overturning the deed on Mars. Action like that would undermine the legitimacy of all the other treaties, deeds and contracts that hold the Cartel together and many elites on Earth believe this would eventually trigger a pan-corporate conflict on Earth.

"Indigo" is often mistaken for a Free Mars terrorist organization but it is actually a codeword for a network of omni-corporate agents with a mission thwart the Blue Corp takeover of Mars. Many of these agents are on Mars on specific long-term missions of their own but when diverted to an "Indigo Mission" they collaborate, exchanging information and services. If Red Corps and Blue Corps come to blows, it remains to be seen what role this "fifth column" will play.

THE CANYON

From space, Valles Marineris looks like a long and ragged cut bleeding white clouds downwind. About 4000 kilometres long in total and running west-to-east just south of the equator it extends for one fifth of the planet's entire circumference.

Valles Marineris starts from fractured badlands of crisscrossing canyons known as *Noctis Labyrinthis* ("Labyrinth of Night"), or more commonly, "the Labyrinth". When primordial plate tectonics first opened the canyon, its west tip cut into the Tharsis Bulge and the highland collapsed into it, creating this curious web-like formation. *The Labyrinth* is mostly too high for even the Colonists to explore but there are speculations that the fracture zone would extend underground for kilometres.

From there, *Ius Chasma* and *Tithonium Chasma* run side-by-side for almost 1500 kilometres, separated by a mountain range the size of the Alps. The southern channel, *Ius*, remains uncomfortably high all the way to **Point Geneva** at the end of the mountain range. The northern channel, *Tithonium*, descends faster and the air becomes breathable just after midpoint, about where the settlement of **Amethyst** is now. Both channels have tributaries cutting into the sides of the Canyon but being mostly too high for unassisted breathing, they remain unexplored.

At the center of the Canyon is bowl-shaped (some say butt-shaped) depression called *Melas Chasma*, with its bottom 8 or 9 kilometres beneath the Canyon rim. To the north is another depression, *Candor Chasma*, a multi-pronged rift valley over a thousand kilometres long and half as wide. *Melas* and *Candor Chasmas* are the heartland of the Canyon. Although the edges of the bowl are badlands of winding canyons and ancient riverbeds, between **Melas City** and **Candor Gate** lie open desert plains and salt flats, extending all the way to **Point Geneva** in the west and **Last Jump** in the east.

The settlement of **Last Jump** sits at the mouth of *Coprates Chasma* leading east and eventually out of the Canyon. What appears to be a fairly smooth canyon floor in satellite imagery is actually made rough by rubble cones and river channels running north to south across it. There are well-established routes through *Coprates Chasma* but they are winding and torturous, multiplying the total distance travelled. At **Devil's Gullet**, the Canyon opens into *Ganges Chasma* in the north and *Eos Chasma* in the south. They are a maze of valleys, ridges and badlands separating the Canyon from the plains of *Chryse Planitia* and the colony of **Pearl Bay**.

Nothing goes in a straight line as far as Mars is concerned. Travelling along the smoothest routes it is a 4000-kilometre trip from Pearl Bay to Devil's Gullet. If you risk the unexplored side canyons and the confusing mazes of badlands you can cut the distance by half but a breakdown somewhere outside the main routes is usually fatal. So most people stick to the landtrain routes and many actually wait for the landtrains to depart and follow it, forming impromptu convoys their wake. With weather and luck playing such a big part, the landtrain completes the trip in 1D+9 days. A smaller, more agile vehicle might do it faster but not safer.

MOVING ABOUT

Most of the Canyon has a relatively narrow flat bottom of packed gravel and dust, surrounded on all sides by breathtaking cliffs and steep-walled mesas. The valleys between them are obscured by dust drifts or heat haze beyond the range of few kilometres. The horizon, if visible is usually only 5 to 10 kilometres away but many terrain features are tall enough to rise from behind the horizon.

Thus arriving to an open area in the Canyon is like arriving at the seashore, with slow-moving waves of red sand, their peaks rising out from a river of dust drifts. The other edge of the open patch is often out of sight but the mesas and ridges behind it look like

islands floating above the horizon.

Real Distances

As a rule of thumb, multiply the distance between any two points on the map by three to get the true overland travel distance with all the bends and twists. For somebody on foot or a motorbike, the multiplier might be just two if he is willing to go off the beaten path. However, given the enormous distances involved, most people travel by big vehicles. If you want to scout out new routes, going off-trail and rolling 15+ on *Explorer + SENSE* lets you shave off 20% of the distance. Add 10% for every additional margin of 5. Maps, especially those of previous explorers going that way, give bonuses to the roll. And once a route has been discovered, your team can use it again and again.

Travel Speed

Human on foot moves at about 5 kph. For everything else, the safe travel speed is set by terrain (or the top speed of the vehicle). Safe speed can be exceeded but the GM may impose repeated driving rolls to see if there has been a mishaps. Very controllable vehicles such as motorbikes have an edge here but overall, travel speeds are fairly uniform.

Salt Flats	80 kph
Desert Plains	60 kph
Dunes/Riverbed	40 kph
Gravel Plain	30 kph
Hills and valleys	20 kph
Mountain paths	10 kph
Well-traveled route	+20 kph
Bulldozed trail	+10 kph
Scorching weather	-10 kph
Windy	-10 kph
Freezing weather	-20 kph
Fierce Winds	-20 kph

Also, apart from salt flats and desert plains, travel is only recommended by daylight. Usually, there are **10 hours of efficient travel time per day**. The rest is taken up by sleep, food, map-reading and minor repairs.

Land Trains

One of iconic sights on Mars are the land trains. They were being phased out by the Colonies when the monorail was built but the Canyon Rush has given them a new lease of life. Land Trains are essentially wheeled trains made by connecting vastly oversized trucks (abt. 5 metres wide and 20 long, giving it roughly double the dimensions of Earth trucks) into a long column, all responding to the controls of the first vehicle. Depending on terrain, non-powered carts can be added between the pulling units and the longest trains have 30+ units. Travelling at an average speed of 30 kph, land trains transport people, ore, large machinery, other vehicles and so on across the vast distances of Mars.

The primary land-train route runs from Devil's Gullet to Candor Gate. With four land trains plying that route, there is one roughly every three days. Another route runs from the colony of Pearl Bay to Devil's Gullet. There are two of these and they are regularly over 30 units long. In theory, there is a departure every two weeks but in practise they wait for the units to be loaded and breakdowns cause delays. Life aboard is noisy, dusty and cramped but they have the population and services of a small settlement.

Convoys

Whenever a group of people wants to move from one place to another, they organize into vehicle convoys for safety and support. Bandit are less likely to attack a large group and if one vehicle experiences a break-down, help it as hand. Some convoys are specific to their respective groups but in others anyone can join provided they have wheels of their own or pay for their seat. In any of the named settlements in the Canyon, a convoy is leaving for one of its neighbours in 2D-2 days with 2D vehicles, one third of them haulers. Note that there is almost constant traffic between Melas City and Candor Gate. There is talk of even building a railroad between the two.

Parties

Rovers, explorers, bounty hunters, travelling merchants and in short, people like you, tend to travel in groups of 1-3 vehicles. These are very vulnerable to bandits (even if rovers are

not favored targets since they tend to be well armed and brave to the point of recklessness). While land trains and convoys are bold and open about their routes, those travelling in parties prefer to keep their routes secrets and treat encounters in the wilds with healthy suspicion. Even parties prefer to always have two vehicles, in case one breaks down. In the Canyon, the distances and harsh terrain ensure you are not going anywhere without a set of wheels.

Posses

This is a small, armed convoy on a mission and the closest thing to a law or army in the Canyon. They are sometimes set out to chase bandits away, or attack discovered camps. Disputes between settlements may lead to raids and disruptive attacks by Posses. A posse typically has 2+1D vehicles and 1D armed people for every vehicle (if you rolled 1, that is a motorcycle). They are fairly aggressive, especially if they see you as interfering with their mission.

Loners

Those travelling alone take an insane risk but are either too skilled or insane to care. Whether they are rovers, couriers, salvagers or bounty hunters, the loners are usually even more eccentric than the Canyon prospectors in general and prefer to stay solo because they are too eccentric to fit into any sort of community. Being a courier in the Canyon is not a joke. With good skills and a nimble motorcycle, a lone expert can travel much faster and through harder terrain than any party or convoys, thus cutting travel times by half or more. When delivering a vital spare part or a jar of medicine, speed counts!

WEATHER

Valles Marineris forms a deep, long pocket of thick air running along the south side the planetary equator. It is surrounded by highlands that block weather systems and moisture from entering. While the Canyon can experience fierce westerly katabatic winds from the Tharsis Bulge, there is very little temperature exchange out of the Canyon outside the Storm Season. As a result, it is the warmest place on Mars year-round.

To determine weather, **roll 2D** to see the prevailing weather for the next 8 hours. Weather changes can easily by extreme, with an intense calm following a fierce a storm. Add +1 for every 100 days since the start of the Martian Year (during the storm season the add is +5 or +6). -2 if in narrow canyons or badlands, +1 if out in the open desert or salt flats. +2 if within 10 kilometres of the Canyon rim. **Roll 1D+3** if close to Blooms.

..2	Calm and clear, scorching/freezing
3	Calm, wispy clouds, scorching/freezing
4	Calm, high altitude clouds, hot/cold
5	Calm, clouds below the rim, hot/cold
6	Calm, fog, poor visibility, warm/cool
7	Low sand drifts, warm/cool
8	Windy, blinding dust devils, moderate
9	Windy, visibility 100 metres, moderate
10	Fierce winds, poor visibility, moderate
11	Storm, poor visibility, moderate
12+	Storm, zero visibility, cold

Usually, the daytime temperatures are in the high 20s and then plummet to -5 or -10 during the night. A real scorcher might have temperatures of +50 during the day and a true cold snap at night goes down to -70 and carbon dioxide starts raining down as dry ice. However, the record low is -102 degrees centigrade which can cause serious changes in the atmospheric composition. Winds always help to smooth out temperature differences, so any windy day is likely to be moderate.

Really bad storms can see temperatures suddenly drop below freezing as cold air from the highlands pours in. Although the actual temperature within the storm is still only -5 or

-10 degrees centigrade, the wind chill accentuated by the pile-up of ice-cold dust can pose a serious hazard.

Canyon weather swings between extremes several times a day but if the next change is particularly abrupt, you can often see, hear or smell the arriving weather front for about an hour before it hits you.

VEGETATION

The Canyon was never seeded with terraforming biomes but life has spread there. In every nook and cranny sheltered from the wind, lichens, molds and moss are busy converting the surface regolith into topsoil. Here and there are hardy patches of grass and shrub, clinging on to what little top-soil has landed in rock cracks. Although ragged and yellowed, they are still tell-tale signs of life returning to Mars. Plants also indicate the presence of water. Leaves and buds can be chewed on for moisture in an emergencies. There are no flowering plants since there are no insects, so while a heavy dew can lead to a growth spurt of vegetation, there is nothing like the post-rain flowering of deserts on Earth. Not yet, anyway.

Xenological Blooms

While the above is true 99% of the time, the exposure of terraforming biomes to xenolith deposits within the Canyon has created small biohazard zones the locals call "Blooms". It is a verdant oasis of alien life and most are quite small: a stretch of a small canyon, a cave system, the edge of a salt flat and so on, rarely exceeding a square kilometre. The phenomenon is poorly understood but somehow the xenolith deposits and terraforming biomes are exchanging genetic information. Blooms are also famous for having their own microclimates, often (and inexplicably) much milder and calmer than the Canyon weather in general. Not all xenolith deposits create Blooms but they are a strong indication of xenolith presence.

Unfortunately, Blooms are also hostile to the extreme. Blades of blue grass are tipped with venomous spikes. Spores infect soft tissue

and have to cut or even burned off. Mists drifting between the ropy bundles of alien tree trunks are toxic and suffocating. Bloom lifeforms and their spores rarely survive if taken outside the Bloom but killing them within it is difficult. Some mining camps have taken to burning and bulldozing Blooms to clear way for xenolith mines but it is a constant struggle and the presence of xenolith is said to affect the miners as well. There is certainly no shortage of eccentrics in the backwater mining camps.

There are also rumors of Bloom-affected fauna, perhaps created out of the few species that arrived on Mars with Humanity; rats, roaches, some other insects, arachnids and microfauna. While most experts are prepared to consider these rumours, claims of humanoid mutants and hybrid monsters lurking in the depths of the Canyon are dismissed as Martian variations of the Bigfoot and the Loch Ness monster.

HABITATION

Every named settlement in the Canyon is actually a network of smaller settlements and structures within an hour's drive of a central hub. For example, in Squeeze the central hub is an ice mine supplying water to a couple of dozen mining camps within a 20 kilometre radius. In the low gravity, it is easy to build big and there is also usually plenty of space. Up north, the first structure expanded underground because digging tunnels was easier than erecting new structures. By now, those underground levels have either been abandoned or are used for storage. Even with the Martian weather, people prefer the outside and open skies.

Most structures on Mars are made from iron and this extends all the way down to tools and furniture. The planet gets its red color from iron oxides and mineable concentrations are so plentiful that iron is cheaper than wood or plastics. A comfortable chair might have an iron frame with a flexible chainlink mesh to cushion it. Steel, with its carbon requirement, remains at a premium but Martian smelters have other ways of hardening raw iron if necessary. Most buildings develop a fine coating

of rust on unprotected surfaces but oxidation is slow in the thin and dry air. Furthermore, the outside walls are constantly sand-blasted by the wind.

Small structures tend to resemble bunkers and have extensive underground sections. Large structures are domes or sloped-roof hangars. Tents, shacks and dwellings converted from cargo containers are then used to build a townscape inside the dome, sheltered from storms and radiation. Luxury dwellings are pressurised with filtrated air and airlocks to keep the dust out. Everybody else needs to sweep things once a day or the build-up fine, ferrous dust will start causing problems.

If no dome is available and dwellings are built from wrecks and other flimsier materials, earthworks, cave systems or natural storm walls offer some protection. A rudimentary camp may have a bunch of habitats made out of cargo modules and protected by piling dirt around them to keep the wind away. In case of a sunstorm, the residents flee into mining tunnels or a purpose-built radiation cellar. If the settlement has industries, high-voltage equipment is usually powered by fission batteries or even macroscale nuclear reactors. The basic infrastructure relies heavily on wind power. Makeshift wind turbines, their blades battered from storm-flung rocks, are an iconic sight in the Canyon. The colonies up north have fusion plasma cores but that is beyond the means of Canyon settlements.

ALIEN TOMBS

Xenoliths from now extinct Martian life are effectively a type of mineral deposit and can be found anywhere in the Canyon at a rock layer dating back to the last gasps of tectonic activity on Mars. Dating these finds is subject to intense debate but most experts put the formation of xenolith deposits at roughly a billion years ago, a time when first multicellular lifeforms were just emerging on Earth.

Alien Tombs throw a wrench into all that. They are underground structures that may have at one time been part of a huge complex but have since then gotten chopped up into a million pieces by rockfalls and tunnel collapses. How-

ever, given the timescale, the structures are incredibly sound and both the materials and their method of construction is poorly understood. The fact that many of the alien technological systems in them still retain beggars belief, pushing the limits of what has been thought physically possible. These tombs are where the alien relics come from, exhibiting the same perplexing durability and longevity as the tombs themselves.

Officially, only three Alien Tombs have been found. The locations are secret but it is fairly obvious there is at least one Tomb at Roamer. Since Relics, alien artifacts and devices, have been showing up on the black market, it is also obvious that other tombs have been found but the finders keep their discoveries secret. Exploring Tombs is believed to be extremely dangerous. Besides the alien force fields and energy discharges that can scarcely be interpreted as anything else but traps, there are also psychological hazards. Many have gone temporarily or permanently insane in the tunnels, especially if they have been exploring them alone.

The Xenolith Controversy

Some organic remains have been found inside the Alien Tombs but not enough for a reconstruction of the aliens themselves. One thing that really perplexes researchers is that the biologicals discovered inside the Tombs have nothing in common with the xenoliths and exhibit none of the same properties. It is not just about being from a different species but as if the beings that constructed the tombs and those who left the xenolith deposits came from two completely different systems of life. In fact, while the xenoliths bear a disturbing resemblance to the genetic makeup of terrestrial creatures, the remains found inside the Alien Tombs point to completely different (and incomprehensible) biological processes.

The prevailing theory states that as Mars began to lose its original atmosphere, all life on Mars was driven into low depressions such as the Canyon. The advanced civilization built itself underground sanctuaries and probably outlived the rest of the biosphere that

went on to form the xenolith deposits. But there is really nothing to tie the alien civilization to the xenoliths. Is it possible that they are from two completely different time periods; first the loss of atmosphere destroyed a primordial biosphere and hundreds of millions of years later explorers from other stars landed on Mars and somehow got stranded here, slowly dying out in their underground colonies?

Or could two completely different family trees of life really have coevolved on the same world and coexisted long enough for complex microbiologicals and an advanced civilization to happen? The answer probably lies somewhere in the tombs. The aliens had a system of writing and the strange glyphs can still be seen floating in the shimmering force fields. But we are still long way away from interpreting them. Many people claim to have heard voices while in the tombs. Maybe the aliens are shouting at us, across a gulf of countless eons?

DEAD COLONIES

One of the great mysteries of the Canyon are the Dead Colonies, remains of pre-terraforming settlements no one seems to know anything about. These vacuum-proof structures and underground facilities with surface airlocks are the remains of a little known colonisation effort in Valles Marineris sometime before the corporate takeover on Earth. Over 20 dead colonies have been identified so far and the best guesses put the population at 2800.

There is no mention of pre-terraforming colonisation of Mars anywhere, let alone down in the Canyon but the outposts seem to have been scientifically oriented, so it is clear someone knew about the alien remains long before their official discovery in 2147. Was the pre-knowledge of alien tech a motivation for Red Corps to risk it all in an insane effort to terraform Mars? On paper, their exclusive deed to Mars now gives the complete control over all alien finds. Only the top elites would know. Everything else is just speculation by conspiracy theorists.

It is not clear what actually happened in the Dead Colonies. The prevailing theory is that these people were sent out soon after the first manned flights and became stranded when the nation-states collapsed. Most seem to have committed suicide but there are signs of violence against unknown assailants and each other. Salvage from Dead Colonies helped to make the first Canyon settlements possible but many miners believe Dead Colonies to be haunted.

BANDIT CAMPS

There are many ways to make your fortune in the Canyon and unfortunately banditry is one. Bandits are armed groups that steal supplies and treasure from other groups, kidnap people and hold them for ransom and extort protection money from those residing or seeking to travel through their territories. While some banditry has existed for almost as long Mars has been colonized, the Canyon is both rich in targets and full of desperate people. It has been estimated there are roughly 15,000 bandits in the Canyon. Many more are desperate enough to do some banditry if they get the opportunity. The biggest gangs are brand names on their own right.

Bandit camp is a hidden encampment, usually in an easily guarded tributary canyon, cave or Dead Colony ruin within striking distance of the gang's preferred targets. The absolute requirements are accessibility by vehicles, garage space, storage space, some form of barracks and a common room for meetings. Many gangs also have a vault for high-value spoils since not all members can be trusted to keep their hands off them. Not willing to give their position away by erecting wind turbines, power source is typically a series of fission batteries. A long-standing problem for any camp is water and bandits are no exception. Water condensers can barely produce enough drinking water, so the level of hygiene tends to deteriorate until disease sets in or the gang is otherwise forced to move off.

Some bandits operate out of legitimate settlements with a front as a mining company or workshop and thus benefiting from the settle-

ment infrastructure. However, unless they have powerful friends in the settlement leadership (i.e. they are in on it for a share of spoils), these arrangements rarely last long. While they always disguise themselves when hitting their targets, eventually someone is going to get recognized and the operation will be exposed. Most bandit gangs also have lookouts in major settlements to keep tabs on potential targets and spy on their routes. It is a coveted job in the gang but many lookouts have blown their cover after partying too hard.

Finally, all bandits want to spend their loot at some point. Smaller gangs simply disperse, possible reconvening again at a later date. Others disguise themselves as lucky miners or salvagers and go to blow off steam in some major settlement. And finally, there are places like Red Bazaar that just do not care if the bandits drove right, colors flying. As long as they don't threaten the settlements immediate interests and have gold to spend, anything goes.

TRADING POSTS

Trading post is nothing more than a designated and militia-protected marketplace. It usually has a single hall or dome for the visitors to take shelter in, a bar and some associated services and a few stalls where enterprising locals push their products. The actual population lives in scattered outposts and ranches within a 50 kilometre radius and strangers are neither expect nor welcome to visit them. In theory, only those locals with something to sell or intent on buying something visit the trading post in any one time. However, unless the attitudes are positively xenophobic, many locals like hanging out at the trading posts to check on exotic new people, the wares of trader caravans and the news on rest of the Canyon and beyond.

MINING HUB

This is a small industrial colony with a trading post attached to it. Mining hubs are typically created on underground ice deposits and have pumps, pipes and cables to feed the mining camps around with water and electricity, a

crusher and smelting plant for processing ores, storage facilities and slag piles that often double as dumps and salvage yards. If the surrounding population is big enough, a shantytown or a dome or two has appeared at the hub with all sorts of additional services, starting with the mechanical needs of the mining camps and proceeding to the more complex needs of prospectors and visitors alike. Since there is energy, water and hungry mouths to feed, sooner or later some pioneer will try hydroponic farming.

AGRICULTURE

Not everybody who took off for the Canyon wanted to be a miner. These pioneering outposts have vast stretches of cheap greenhouses and some of them are even experimenting top-soil farming, growing edible lichens and other hardy shrubs under open skies. There is usually an administrative and commercial hub, much like a trading post, but the agricultural facilities are packed tight all around it and the hub also acts as a sort of a village center. The locals are usually a tightly knit community of families and compared to most other types of settlements, the gender ratio in agriculture settlements is close to 50/50. These are also the rare types of settlements that actively encourage bringing children with you.

INDUSTRIAL

These places usually start out as a collection of mechanical workshops around a central power source and develop into a small factory cluster. Basically, you bring the raw materials or salvage to them and they process something out of it. The living conditions are poor, services non-existent, the locals have little interest in doing anything else they do, community spirit is lacking and any expansion of the settlement usually means tents protected by earthworks. Then again, these places have only been there for one Mars year and will probably go on to form the nucleus of many future colonies.

FRONTIER TOWN

If a mining hub or an agricultural settlement diversifies enough to have most of its people work in service and retail industries rather than production, a frontier town has been born. They are typically larger than other types of settlements, can have multiple competing social, administrative and financial hubs and have typically grown too quickly to have developed any working centralised government or community spirit. There is often a power struggle in the progress that will eventually determine what type of government the place will have. At least for the next few months.

TEMPLE

There is currently just one of these, at Marathon. While the xenophobic settlements around it harbouring every kind of lunatic the Canyon has to offer, the hub is open to all visitors and various radical denominations offer spiritual services in return for basic supplies. There is some traditional trading going on as well but this is frowned upon by some. Scuffles over ideology and cosmology are common but so far Marathon has held together remarkably well.

Devil's Gullet

Trading Post

Population 12,500

Once a peaceful and orderly trading post and mechanical depot for small independent settlements at the Canyon mouth, the Rush turned Devil's Gullet into a lawless bartertown with a disproportionately large redlight districts. It is quite notorious as the place where goods raided by bandits in the eastern half of the Canyon usually turn up for sale. As a settlement, the Devil's Gullet is small but the population grows over the Martian year, until everybody scrambles to get out before the storm season hits.

Rainbow Bridge

Mining Hub

Population 2,300

Your traditional mining hub. An ice mine and pumping station acts as a hub for a motley collection of mining camps spread out in a 30 kilometre-

tre-radius. Exceptional only because of increasing corporate ownership of the surrounding mining camps.

East Pier

Agriculture

Population 4,500

A pre-rush colony with hydroponic greenhouses, top-soil farming and small-scale microbial processing industries. Clean and orderly, with little patients for the rowdy prospectors passing through it.

Dry River

Industrial

Population 1,400

Starting out as the closest thing to a gas station after a particularly rough patch of the Canyon, the settlement of Dry River has grown into a community of independent mechanical workshops, engineering facilities and lone craftsmen. It also acts as a hub for a handful of salvage teams. Dry River also has a

ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG

This is a small research outpost of a reputable organization (usually corporate) with lodgings, laboratories and storage space for researching xenoliths and alien artifacts. They are surrounded by makeshift camps of treasure hunters who care little for science and don't think twice about using explosives on alien structures to get their hands on relics. There is often quite a bit of friction between the research teams and the treasure hunters. The former have all the knowledge and the best gear but the latter have the numbers and the guns, so a measure of diplomacy is always needed.

reputation for being a pretty wild place for something so small.

Squeeze

Mining Hub

Population 1,200

A remote cluster of mining camps with an ice mine as their hub. It sits at the mouth of a small valley leading north to the main landtrain routes. Miners here don't take kindly strangers, preferring to do their trading in Rustville to the north rather than with traders coming to them. However, they also dislike each other and the whole place has a reputation of being a redneck backwater.

Roamer

Archeological Dig

Population 900

A cluster of Red Corp field laboratories and treasure hunter encampments sitting on top of an underground debris field from the alien

culture. Since the location is quite remote and there is no central authority of any kind, the different groups guard their secrets and treasures jealously. However, Roamer is also known to pull together if facing a crisis. There have been scuffles over claim borders with the mining camps of Squeeze.

Rustville

Frontier Town

Population 58,000

The largest settlement in the East Canyon. Rustville started out as a salvage hub. Then it became a mining hub until prospectors set up camp at Squeeze across the mountain. It has since become a port of call for those who give up on striking it rich in the Canyon and instead seek to settle down. Rustville is made up of several distinct communities and joint affairs are handled by a council of elected representatives of these communities.

Last Jump

Agriculture

Population 3,700

At the top of a slope descending into Melas Chasma, Last Jump was an impromptu hydroponic plantation feeding the passing miners. Now it is a cluster of independent plantations who share common infrastructure and sell their produce to the frontier towns of Melas Chasma.

Breakpoint

Mining Hub

Population 9,600

One of the largest mining hubs and most certainly one of the roughest places in the Canyon, Breakpoint sits at the foot of huge rubble fields extending to the southern rim. Besides serving the mines around it, Breakpoint is a hub and a trading post for mobile prospector teams digging the rubble closer to the rim in a hundred kilometre radius. It is also favored by many Rovers.

Slope

Frontier Town

Population 78,000

Third largest settlement in the Canyon, Slope started out as a cluster of mining claims right on the Can-

yon rim just south of Melas City. It has since then outgrown the definition of a mining hub in both population and complexity. Slope is built into the steep cliffs of the southern rim where it juts out towards Melas City. The surface portions are terraced on a near-vertical cliff and constantly battered by rock falls, hurricane-strength winds from the rim and at higher altitudes constant radiation. As a result, most of the actual settlement is underground, built into the old mining tunnels going inside the cliffs. High-altitude entrances have airlocks to maintain the standard Canyon pressure inside.

Melas City

Frontier Town

Population 360,000

Melas City is the closest thing to a colonial hub in the Canyon. With over a hundred domes or hangars, all connected by underground passages, this is where most people end up when arriving to the Canyon or preparing to leave it. In addition, many smaller settlements in and around the Melas Chasma abandon their claims for the Storm Season and come into Melas City to wait it out. If you must find high-tech equipment or advanced processed goods in the Canyon, the trading stalls of Melas City are your best bet. Crime rate is high but the city has done a decent job at curtailing suspicious activities and public disturbances into selected Red Light Domes.

Many Red Corps subsidiaries have offices here and there are some concerns that the Red Corps will soon declare Melas City to be under their jurisdiction. Outside, the city is surrounded by hydroponic greenhouses, mining pits, small scale industrial plants, mechanical workshops and even a clandestine race track or within a 50 kilometre radius. Finally, there is a Helium isotope harvesting facility that sends out mobile regolith processors to scour the flatlands and dust-filled craters between here and Point Geneva for helium isotopes deposited by solar-wind.

Candor Gate

Frontier Town

Population 170,000

The second-largest settlement, Candor Gate began as a cluster of dangerous and polluting industrial plants and refineries that Melas City did not want in their neighbourhood. Now it is the biggest (and only macro-scale) factory complex in the Canyon, building vehicles, mining machinery, high-powered energy systems, volatile chemical compounds and so on.

The immediate surroundings are dominated by waste pools, some cemented over but some not. There is little regulation on what gets dumped and a new haphazard recycling industry has emerged to process the waste back into constituent compounds. If all else has failed you can still get a job here, shoveling dangerous chemicals and crystallised toxins while wearing leaking rubber boots and a used face filter.

On Mars, any fool can produce bulk iron and steel but only in Candor Gate is it produced in modular prefabricated parts for quick assembly, making founding and expanding new settlements much easier. Melas City may be the political and cultural heart of the Canyon but the workshops of Candor Gate is where its economic future will be forged.

Marathon

Temple

Population 8,700

In terms of diversity from mining to agriculture, the near-self-sufficient Marathon would have the makings of a small frontier town. However, it remains a cluster of religious and radicalized communities. The pan-religious Marathon Temple is neutral ground and acts a trading post for traders and visitors.

In the outposts, strangers are rarely tolerated. Marathon outposts are true colonies with more focus on agriculture than mining. They effectively block access to half-a-chasma's worth of potential minerals and xenological finds. There have been gunfights between would-be miners and Marathon vigilantes and only the lack of cooperation between different faiths has prevented Marathon from shutting off the east branch of Candor Chasma.

Plumberville

Mining Hub

Population 6,300

A traditional ice-mine/mining camp cluster setup. The only distinguishing feature is a vast network of pipes carrying water to faraway mining camps excavating the rubble cones of the northern rim, up to 100 kilometres away. Plumberville is also the Storm Season home for prospector camps exploring the high-altitude badlands in the western branch of Ophir Chasma.

Red Bazaar

Trading Post

Population 11,200

A notorious and disorderly “bandit town”, Red Bazaar is also a Storm Season home for a host of small prospector camps and small mining settlements exploring the western reaches of Candor Chasma. Red Bazaar is one of the best black market spots around for dealing in xenoliths and relics. It is also the market leader in bloodsport and death-racing snuff films. You can gamble with anything in Red Bazaar, including your life.

Point Geneva

Frontier Town

Population 13,000

At the foot of a mountain chain on the western edge of the Melas Chasma depression, Point Geneva began as a mining hub but the minerals soon ran out. Miners moved on to Amethyst and settlers from Melas City took over, turning Point Geneva into their home and the westernmost bastion of civilization in the Canyon. It acts a trading and technology hub for a number of plantations built along the western slopes of Melas Chasma.

Amethyst

Mining Hub

Population 2,100

A traditional ice-mining mining hub supporting a number of low and high-altitude mining camps along the entire length of Tithonium Chasma. Originally a Storm Season shelter for high-altitude prospectors. These days many of them prefer to weather the storms in Point Geneva or Melas City instead.

OUTPOST ENCOUNTERS D66

The GM may roll for an encounter whenever he feels it might spice things up. Or roll 1D per 5 hours and on a roll of 5-6 there will be an encounter. There are so many different kinds of outposts that the GM must always consider the circumstances when interpreting the results.

11-13 Crippled Beggar

Asks for alms, water, whatever. 50% chance he is not faking it.

14-16 Derelict Vehicle

Not a runner but there is a 50% chance it might still have some good parts.

21-23 Dome Urchins

You are approached by 1D scruffy, malnourished children. 50% chance one of them tries to steal something.

24-25 Disease Carrier

You are approached by a beggar in filthy rags but she is trying to hide a contagious disease (Medic+SENSE, 15+).

26-31 Travelling Trader

With a vehicle and 2D bodyguards.

32-33 Interested Rover

A lone rover takes interest in your group. 50% chance he is a spy for bandits.

34-35 High-Tech Item

A local trader has a rare high-tech item, tool or weapon for sale and tries to whip up an imprompty auction.

36-41 Gangsters

A gang of 2D thugs. They may try to rob you if they think you'd be an easy target or you come across them at night.

42-43 Company of Miners

A convoy of 3D x 5 miners and 2D vehicles has come to town to refine/sell their spoils.

44-45 Suspicious Group

A group of 1D miscellaneous individuals starts asking awkward questions. 50% chance they are disguised Corp agents looking for information on something.

46-51 Drunken Mob

A rowdy group of 3D drunken miners or bandits have had way too much fun for their own good and are now looking for trouble.

52-53 Posse

A group of 3D armed locals or militia are out on patrol. 50% chance they are responding to a specific disturbance and think your group might have seen something.

54-55 Company of Rovers

A group of 2D rovers on two vehicles. 50% chance they are returning from an expedition with spoils; otherwise they are looking for information and supplies.

56-61 Fiery Preacher

A fiery preacher promoting a religion or a radical political cause is stirring up trouble with the restless crowds.

62-63 Riot and Looting

A crowd of 3D x 2 locals are rioting and looting things for some ideological or religious cause. 50% chance they think your group is somehow offensive.

64-65 False Charges

A settlement leader with a posse of 3D armed militia approaches your group and accuses your group of breaking some outpost rule. 50% chance they are looking for bribes. If not, they are looking for a scapegoat.

66 Sunstorm (daylight only)

For the next 1D hours (or until sunset), anything under open skies is bathed in radiation. Fine electronics malfunction and communications go down.

WASTELAND ENCOUNTERS D66

Again, common sense and circumstances should be considered. Encounters on a well-travelled route tend to be human and everything else just does not happen, or it was a rumor about this region. Encounters outside the beaten path are much less likely to involve people and instead you might only find traces of groups that have passed this way before.

11-13 Starving Stranger

Someone close to death. Roll 1D, on 6 he/she is someone important.

14-16 Wrecked Vehicle

Someone or something did a number on this vehicle. 50% chance it still hasn't been scavenged for parts or cargo.

21-23 Wastelanders

A group of 2D wastelanders on two vehicles. They'll rob you they think they can and trade if they think they can't.

24-25 Corpse

A dead person. 50% it was a violent death. Roll 1D. On a "6" it was a Corp Agent with something important to do.

26-31 Travelling Trader

With a vehicle, 2D bodyguards and a friendly disposition if your group makes no threatening moves.

32-33 Abandoned Mine Camp

Good shelter but thoroughly mined out.

34-35 Natural Cave

Good shelter and possibly worth prospecting.

36-41 Team of Rovers

A group of rovers on two vehicles. They really want to mind their own business.

42-43 Bandits

An ambush by bandits with 3 vehicles, unless they determine the odds positively hopeless.

44-45 Dead Colony

Ruins of a pre-terraforming colony. If outside the main routes, there is a 50% chance it is unexplored.

46-51 Rocknado

A huge gust of wind and tornadoes of whirling rocks. Anyone on foot must make BODY rolls against "storm" or get hurled for 5D metres and 1D3 Wounds of damage. Smaller vehicles are knocked over.

52-53 Posse

Militias or bounty hunters out on patrol with 1D3+1 vehicles. 50% chance they want something with you.

54-55 Corporate Troops

2D well-armed and equipped corporate troopers on a single ATV. 50% chance they are on a mission and don't want witnesses.

56-61 Miner Caravan

3D x 5 miners on 2D vehicles. 50% chance they are moving to set up a new camp. Otherwise they are loaded with ore and headed to somewhere they can sell it.

62-63 Pilgrims/Radicals

4D religious fundamentalists or political radicals on 1D vehicles. 50% chance they are headed for Marathon. Otherwise they are looking for their own "promised land".

64-65 Bloom

Undocumented patch of Bloom sighted. 50% chance of "here be monsters". 100% odds of xenoliths being located nearby, though.

66 Sunstorm (daylight only)

For the next 1D hours (or until sunset), anybody not sheltered by stone or metal gets irradiated. Electronics seize up and communications go down.