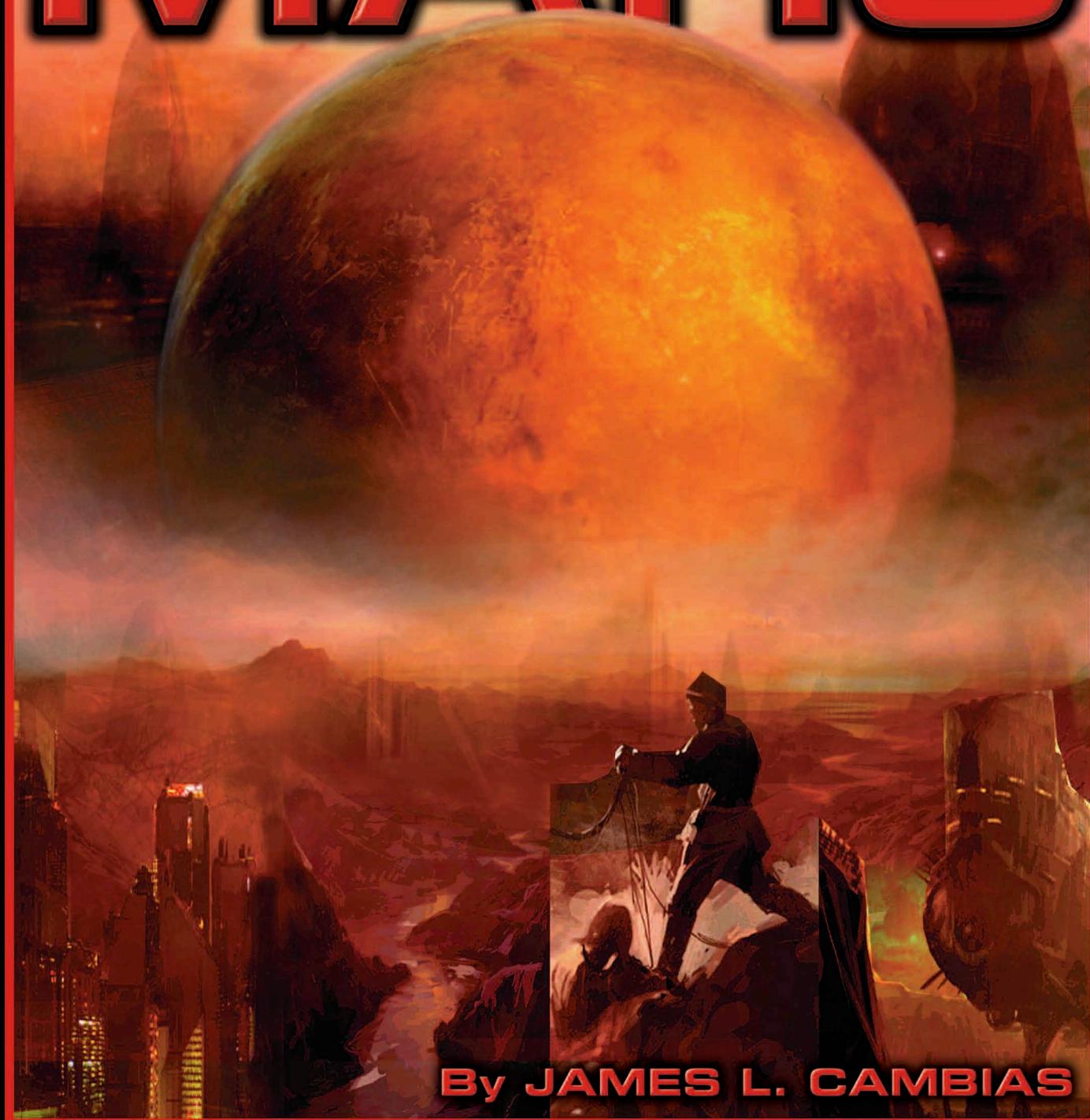


G U R P S[®]

MARS



By JAMES L. CAMBIAS

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

MISSION TO MARS!

GURPS Mars covers every aspect of the Red Planet, from hard-science NASA plans to the role of Mars in ancient mysticism and alchemy. *GURPS Mars* contains *four* complete campaign settings for Martian adventures:

- *Domed Mars*: a scientifically accurate setting based on the latest findings from the *Mars Pathfinder* and *Mars Global Surveyor* probes. Includes designs for spacecraft based on current NASA mission plans and the Mars Society's "Mars Direct" proposal.
- *Terraformed Mars*: how to make the Red Planet into an Earthlike world. Join the Mars Defense Force to protect the colonies, or take up arms as a Red Mars rebel to preserve the world in its pristine state.
- *Superscience Mars*: straight from the B-movies, with insectoid Martians ruled by mad scientists, mutant rebels and outcasts hiding from the Psychic Police, Martian flying saucers and assault tripods, and what brave Earthlings can do when Mars attacks!
- *Dying Mars*: a swashbuckling setting inspired by classic pulp science fiction stories, with cities beside the life-giving canals, sand-boat pirates, science priests, and a Martian bestiary.

Featuring an introduction by **Richard Wagner** and **Robert Zubrin** of the Mars Society.



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GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised and *Compendium I* are required to use this book in a *GURPS* campaign. *Compendium II* and *Space, Third Edition* are recommended to those who desire detailed rules for environmental hazards. The factual and campaign material on Mars can be used with *any* game system.

THE MARTIANS:

Written by **James L. Cambias**

Edited by **Scott Haring**

Cover by **Christopher Shy**

Illustrated by **Paul Daly**

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G U R P S[®]

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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CONTENTS

Introduction 4

About the Author 4

1. Mars Observed 5

THE RED STAR 6

Early Theories and Observations .. 6

Percival Lowell: A Man,

A Planet, A Canal 6

Naming Names..... 7

Gulliver's Travels and

the Moons of Mars 8

MEN AND MARTIANS 9

The War(s) of the Worlds 9

Sword and Planet..... 10

Mars in Classic Science Fiction .. 10

Space Age Mars..... 11

Martians and Popular Fears 11

Mars Probes..... 12

2. Mars in Reality ... 13

BASIC PHYSICAL DATA 14

The Planet 14

Motion 14

CONDITIONS 15

Time on Mars..... 15

What to Wear..... 15

Calling Home..... 15

Climate..... 16

Atmosphere 16

The Mean Datum..... 16

Soil..... 16

Water 16

Resources..... 17

Hazards 19

What Mars Doesn't Have 19

FEATURES 21

Uplands and Lowlands 21

Tharsis and Elysium..... 21

The Caverns of Mars?..... 21

Topographic Map of Mars in 2002 –

Mercator Projection 22

Topographic Map of Mars in 2002 –

Stereographic Projections.... 23

Martian Geography..... 24

Channels and Valleys..... 26

Crater Basins 27

The Polar Caps..... 27

Missions to the Moons..... 28

THE MOONS OF MARS 28

Phobos 28

Deimos..... 29

LIFE ON MARS? 29

Conditions in the Past 29

Where Life Might Survive 29

Looking for Life 30

Invaders from Earth..... 30

The Martian Meteorite..... 30

GETTING TO MARS 31

Mars Direct 31

The NASA Design

Reference Mission..... 31

Trajectories 32

New Rocket Engines 33

Mars One-Way..... 33

Regular Service:

The Mars Cycler 34

The Cycler Spacecraft 34

The Mars Lander..... 35

Getting Around on Mars 36

Mars 1956 37



3. Mars in Fiction and Myth 38

DIAL M FOR MARTIAN 39

Hard Science vs.

Planetary Romance 39

Primitive vs. Advanced 39

Silly Mars..... 40

Three Little Men From

Mars Are We 40

Dying World vs. New Frontier .. 41

MYSTIC MARS 41

Mars in Astronomy 42

Mars and the Cabal 43

The Mars Effect..... 43

Space Gods From Mars?..... 43

Mars in Alchemy 44

Worlds in Collision 44

Mars in Magic 44

Sailing Through the

Crystal Spheres 45

WEIRD MARS 45

Pyramids of Mars?..... 45

Artificial Moons?..... 46

Fortean Mars 46

Velikovskian Mars..... 47

Capricorn One 47

Spiritualist Mars..... 48

Illuminated Mars 48

4. Domed Mars 50

COLONIES ON MARS 51

The First Base..... 51

Chryse Colony 2050 52

Chryse Planitia 2050 52

Other Colonies in 2050 53

Domed Colonies in 2050 – Western

Hemisphere 54

Domed Colonies in 2050 –

Eastern Hemisphere 54

Deimos Base 56

Life Under Glass 56

Somebody Else Is On Mars 57

Secret Colonies 58

TECHNOLOGY 58

Ground Vehicles..... 58

Mars Rover 58

Vehicle Statistics 59

Pressurized Rover 59

Power Unit Trailer..... 60

Aircraft..... 61

Mars Blimp 61

Robots 61

The Mars Launcher 61

MARS PIONEERS 62

Administrator..... 62

Astronaut 62

Mars Suits 62

Colonist 62

Mission Specialist 63

Prospector 63

Rebel 63

Kids on Mars?..... 63

Scientist 64

Weapons..... 64

Technician 64

Vehicle Operator 64

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES,

AND SKILLS 65

Advantages..... 65

Master Minds of Mars..... 65

Disadvantages 66

Skills 67

CAMPAIGNS AND ADVENTURES 67

Disaster!..... 67

Martian Gold Rush 68

Return of the Martians..... 68

Independence..... 69

<i>Other GURPS Settings</i>	69
Squatters	70
Martian Marshal	70

5. Terraformed Mars 71

<i>Preserving the Old World</i>	72
<i>What if it Goes Wrong?</i>	72
TERRAFORMING	72
Why Terraform?	72
What Mars Needs	73
Big Jobs	73
Biology	75
<i>Mars Needs . . . Um</i>	75
THE NEW WORLD	75
Phase One	75
Phase Two	76
Phase Three	76
The New Landscape	76
<i>Hydrographic Map of Terraformed Mars</i>	77
<i>Time Scale</i>	78
Martian Organisms	79
MARS COLONISTS	79
<i>Planet of Roofs</i>	80
<i>Moving Mars</i>	80
Society on Terraformed Mars	80
<i>Humans into Martians</i>	81
<i>The Skyhook</i>	82
<i>Elevator Car</i>	82
Genetic Engineering Packages	83
Characters	84
<i>Red Planet, Blue Sky</i>	85
<i>Pedal Ultralight (TL9)</i>	85
<i>Martian Prickly Pear</i>	86
ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS	86
Advantages	86
Disadvantages	87
Skills	87
CAMPAIGNS AND ADVENTURES	87
GREENS VS. REDS	87
<i>Other GURPS Books</i>	88
Mars vs. Earth	90
Ski Olympus Mons!	90

6. Superscience Mars 91

Geography	92
THE MARTIANS	92
<i>Other Kinds of Martians</i>	92
Biology	92
History	93
<i>Martian Psionics</i>	93
Martian Society	93
Domed Cities	95
<i>Martian Names</i>	95
MARTIAN TECHNOLOGY	96
Flying Saucers	96

Attack Saucer	96
Transport Saucer	97
The Tripod Expeditionary Force	97
<i>Martian Tripod</i>	97
CHARACTERS	98
Martian Character Types	98
<i>Martian Mutants</i>	100
Advantages	100
Disadvantages	101
Skills	101
CAMPAIGNS AND ADVENTURES	102
Invaders From Mars	102
Invaders From Earth	103
<i>Other GURPS Settings</i>	104
Rival Planets	105
<i>The Solar Federation</i>	105
The Martian Campaign	105

7. Dying Mars 106

The Landscape	107
<i>How a Planet Dies</i>	107
<i>The Past – or the Future?</i>	107
<i>Canals and Territories of Dying Mars</i>	108
Inhabitants	109
CITIES AND KINGDOMS	111
The Marineris Cities	111
<i>Map of Marineris Cities</i>	111
The Underground Empire	112
<i>Ruins and Lost Cities</i>	112
The Acidalian Theocracy	113
The Hellan Empire	113
<i>Pirates of Mars</i>	113
Nomads of the Desert	114
SWORDS AND SUPERSCIENCE	114
Ancient Wonders	114
<i>High-Tech Transportation</i>	115
<i>Peroxide Pistol</i>	116
<i>Or Is It Magic?</i>	116
Ceramic Guns and Glass Daggers	116
MARTIAN BEASTS	117
Sand-Sharks	117
Riding-Lizards	118
Night Horrors	118
CHARACTERS AND ABILITIES	118
Character Templates	118
Advantages	120
Disadvantages	121
Skills	122
CAMPAIGNS AND ADVENTURES	122
Men From Earth	122
<i>Other GURPS Settings</i>	123
Sand Raiders of Mars	124
Merchants of Mars	124
The Last Engineers	124
Bibliography	125
Index	127

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our website (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE. Or download them from the Web – see below.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, e-mail majordomo@io.com with “subscribe GURPSnet-L” in the body, or point your web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com.

The *GURPS Mars* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/mars/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are BIO for *GURPS Biotech*, CY for *GURPS Cyberpunk*, U for *Undead*, and WWi for *GURPS Who's Who I*. A full list of abbreviations can be found on p. CI181, or see the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

INTRODUCTION

Here's the scene: Grand Central Station, New York City, 5:15 p.m. It's rush hour madness in the station on a sultry summer afternoon in 1976. Suits are darting across the cavernous expanse of the main terminal, heads down, briefcases held tight. Thoughts are focused on getting home, maybe snagging a seat on the train, maybe actually making the 5:17 to Greenwich, or Larchmont or some other suburban digs. Kodak's Colorama display looms over the scene, an outsized transparency nearly 20 feet high and 60 feet wide. It's been displaying Kodak moments for years, but right now it's showing something a tad different, something that's forcing heads up and slowing down the usual crazed pace. Quick strides melt into an ambling walk; conversations drift away momentarily as people gaze at the scene on display. A few simply stop and stare in momentary befuddlement. They're looking at Mars, as seen by the robotic eyes of the Viking 1 Lander.

At first sight it's a weirdly familiar scene, a desert-like expanse, barren and ruddy with ancient-looking chunks of rock littering the landscape. But it's the dull pink sky that catches the eye. It takes a smattering of time, maybe a few seconds, for people to realize that the reason the scene looks unearthly is because, well, it is unearthly. Looks of bewilderment melt into looks of astonishment and wonder. They entered the station to commute to the near suburbs of New York, after all. They hardly expected a quick commute to the near suburbs of Earth, and a glimpse of another world. For a

few moments, those who chose to raise their eyes from the ground are transported from their familiar world to another, and in those moments their understanding of this world and this universe becomes just a tad deeper, a bit richer.

Mars does that to us.

For decades, centuries even, Mars has fired the human imagination and beckoned us to imagine worlds beyond our own, worlds we frequently populated with our own fears or dreams. It's tempting to say that the Red Planet is a blank page, but, as is well demonstrated by James Cambias, it's anything but. We know quite a lot about Mars. We've penned a scientific narrative of its past and present. We've

collected reams of data concerning its atmosphere and surface environments. We've captured innumerable images of its surface (the Mars Global Surveyor alone, in orbit since 1997, has logged more than 78,000 images). Taken together, all

that we know describes a world at once alien yet familiar. This isn't to say that we've written the book on Mars – far from it. There are plenty of questions to be answered, careers to be made, and perhaps a Nobel yet to be snagged from the study of the planet.

Mars is an intriguing canvas for the imagination. Tales ranging from space swashbucklers to hard science SF have drawn on the Red Planet as backdrop and inspiration. Within the realm of the imagination, Mars is what you make of it. Whether you play by the rules of science and what we know of the planet today, or bend them a tad, is your own call. Be assured, though, that you'll find enough information, ideas and imaginative scenarios between these covers to make you a master of the planet, at least in the short term.

For those with their eyes fixed on the long term, again, Mars is what you make of it. You can help make real a future where Mars is not simply an entertaining diversion, but a destination. The Mars Society (www.marssociety.org) is a global organization of individuals who share a passion for the human exploration of Mars. Society projects in the Arctic, the American Southwest and elsewhere are helping to define and test the skills and techniques human explorers will require.

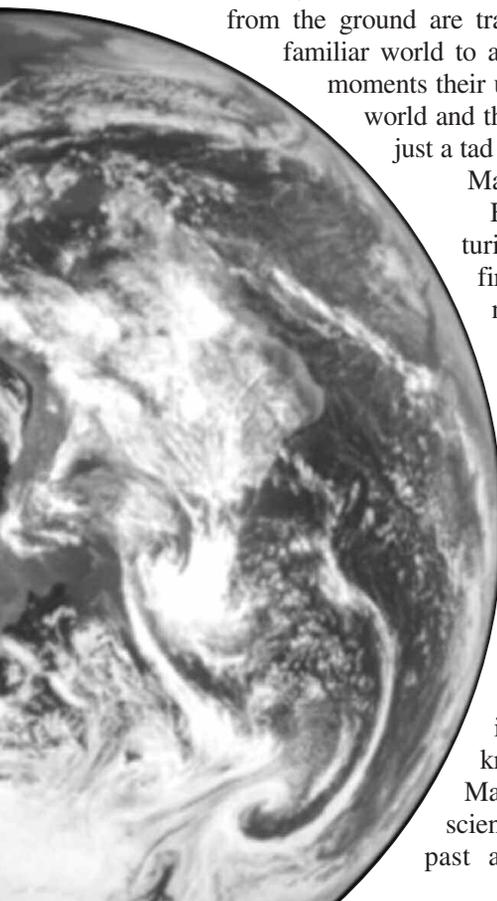
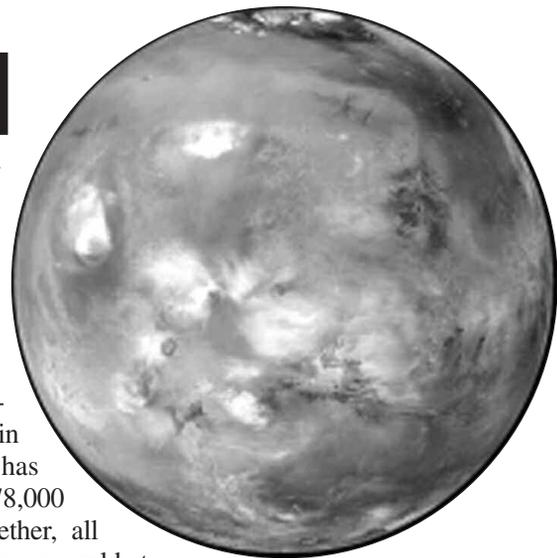
GURPS Mars offers a solid introduction to Mars as a planet and Earth's near neighbor. More to the point for gamers, though, it's a grand introduction to Mars as an abode of the imagination. What's left to say?

On to Mars.

Richard Wagner
Robert Zubrin
The Mars Society

About the Author

James L. Cambias is a blatant poseur. He has never visited any planet other than Earth, but he didn't let that stop him from writing *GURPS Planet Krishna* and the upcoming *GURPS Planet of Adventure*. His experience with Mars is limited to watching it through a telescope from a distance of 40 million miles. Truly he has no shame. Mr. Cambias lives in western Massachusetts with his wife and daughter, who seem willing to endure his pretensions.



MARTIAN GEOGRAPHY

Place Names

The features on Mars were named by scientists who wanted to come up with specific terms to describe them which wouldn't be the same as words used for features on Earth. Saying something is a "canyon," for example, implies a lot about how it formed because canyons on Earth are cut by rivers. On Mars, canyon-like features are called "chasma" or "vallis." In some cases, features on Mars don't match their technical name very well, due to misinterpretation of early space probe images.

Catena: A chain of craters or depressions.

Cavi: A steep-sided hollow.

Chaos: A region of broken terrain.

Chasma: A very large linear chasm.

Crater: A round hollow with raised walls.

Dorsum (Dorsa): A ridge.

Fossa (Fossae): A straight linear depression.

Labyrinthus: A network of linear depressions.

Mensae: A small plateau.

Mons (Montes): A mountain.

Patera: A crater with irregular or scalloped edges.

Planitia: A low plain.

Planum: A large plateau.

Rupes: A cliff.

Scopulus: An irregular, degraded escarpment.

Sulci: A network of ridges and lines.

Terra: A general region of the planet.

Tholus: A small domed hill.

Vallis (Valles): A valley.

Vastitas: An extensive plain.

The Cydonia Face and Other Weird Places

The Face

The Face on Mars has replaced the canals as the one thing about the planet everyone has heard of. The Face is a small mesa in the Cydonia region of Mars, located at approximately 40° north latitude, 9.5° longitude, at the northeast end of Cydonia Mensae. It stands amid smooth plains studied by similar outcrops, looking much like islands that resisted ancient water erosion. What makes the Face an icon for conspiracy theorists and fans of the paranormal is that in the first Viking orbital photos of the region, the angle of sunlight and the poor resolution made the mesa look startlingly like a huge human face. Richard Hoagland and numerous others began cranking out a vast array of books, articles, and Web pages devoted to proving the Face was a sign of extraterrestrial intelligence.

Nearby features were identified as a "fort," a "city," and (of course) "pyramids." See Chapter 5 for more on the Face's place in the pantheon of weirdness. When the Mars Global

Surveyor probe took higher-resolution pictures at a different time of day, the Face was revealed as nothing more than a natural geological formation. (Predictably, Face fans reacted to this by alternately claiming the new images were fakes and trying to find artificial-looking features in them.) Astronaut characters may be sent there by NASA to prove once and for all that it isn't a big artificial structure, or a well-funded crackpot might mount an expedition to prove that it *is*.

So what is the Face *really* like? It is a rectangular mesa with sloping sides, approximately 1.5 miles long by 1.25 miles wide. It is oriented north by northwest. The top of the mesa (the "headdress" of the Face) is about 700 feet above the surrounding plains, and the hills that make up the features of the Face reach another 600 feet above that.

The City

About six miles west-southwest of the Face is a complex of structures known as the "City." There are five pyramidal hillocks arranged roughly in a pentagon, with smaller objects in the middle space. The biggest of the pyramids has four sides, while the rest appear to be three-sided. They are all big features, on the same scale as the Face, with bases a mile or more across and altitudes in the 1,000-foot range.

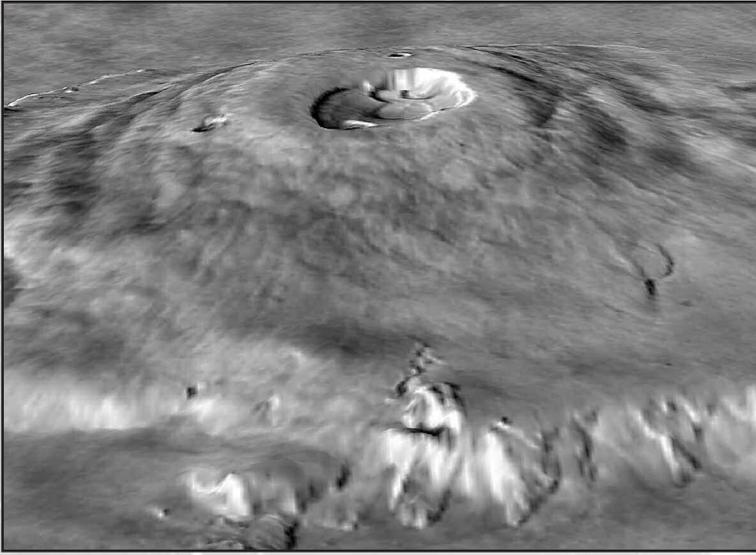
Just outside the City, in the direction of the Face, is a weird triangular mesa known in the trade as the "Fortress" because of its resemblance to defensive earthworks on Earth. A faded water channel appears to run between the Fortress and the City. Hoagland and others have worked out a complicated arrangement of sight lines among the objects in the City and the Face, claiming that they line up with the rising of the sun or important stars at the solstices, much like the stones of Stonehenge.

The D&M Pyramid

Five miles southeast of the City, forming a roughly equilateral triangle with the City and the Face, is a very big object called the "D&M Pyramid" by Face fans (named for its discoverers, DiPietro and Molenaar). The pyramid is about 3 miles across at the base, and is 1,500 to 2,000 feet tall. It looks like a slightly distorted five-sided pyramid. Mars Face aficionados are fond of pointing out that the Pyramid's longitude is exactly a third of the way around Mars from the summit of Olympus Mons.

Chaotic Terrain

On Mars the term "Chaotic Terrain" refers to curious regions of land which is broken and jumbled up on a scale of tens or even hundreds of miles. From space, a piece of chaotic terrain looks like a colossal gravel bed, except that the pebbles are sometimes miles across. Chaotic terrain often occurs at the head of channels or canyon systems, leading some geologists to speculate that it is caused when the surface collapses into underground voids left by melting ice.



Dying World vs. New Frontier

Over the years writers have imbued Mars with all kinds of symbolism. Is it a new home for humanity, an unspoiled Eden, or a dead world?

At one end of the dial is the idea of Mars as the New Frontier, the American West lofted into space. This Mars is just waiting for human settlement. Realistic treatments of the New Frontier vision are often terraforming stories, as in *Green Mars* or *Martian Rainbow*. The examples in Chapters 4 and 5 implicitly follow this view. Romantic versions of the Martian frontier include Heinlein's *Red Planet* and Moore's "Shambleau." If there are Martians, they fill the role of Apaches or possibly East Indians under the British Raj – either primitive savages or decadent ones.

One notch over is the notion of Mars as an Eden which shouldn't be sullied by human beings. C.S. Lewis was explicit on this point in *Out of the Silent Planet*, in which the inhabitants of Mars live in direct contact with God and only Earthmen are sinful. A more secular and hard-SF approach is the attitude presented in Brian Aldiss' *White Mars* or that of the Preservationists in *GURPS Transhuman Space* – the lifeless natural beauty of Olympus Mons or the Valles Marineris shouldn't be turned into a poor imitation of Earth.

Ever since Percival Lowell, Mars has been depicted as a dying world. Beyond the concept of Mars as unsullied Eden is the idea of Mars as a once-great world now in its last days. Often this includes a warning to humans about the potential fate of the Earth some day (as Wells noted in passing in *The War of the Worlds* and elsewhere). Dying, decadent Mars may be home to civilizations wiser than humanity, or may have nothing but the ruins they left behind. A ghost of this idea lives on in the continuing fascination with the Face on Mars beloved of pseudoscientists.

Twisting the dial all the way over, a dying world may be dangerous if the Martians aren't ready to go extinct just yet. The Martians may decide to look for a new home somewhere else, in which case it's *Earth* that is the New Frontier – and humans are the oppressed natives. Or perhaps the microorganisms which manage to survive in the tough Martian environment become a killer pandemic on Earth. More realistically, Mars could turn out to be a lethal dead end for human explorers, simply by virtue of being more hostile than they expect. The greenhouse plants die from toxic trace elements in the melted ice, dust causes respiratory illnesses and fouls up the vehicles – and no help can arrive for six months.

MYSTIC MARS

Mars has powerful mystical connotations. After all, it's named for a god, and a pretty high-powered one at that. Mars was one of the chief gods of the Romans, a protector of crops and patron of the army. In some versions of the legend of the founding of Rome, Mars was the father of Romulus.

Throughout ancient Italy he was known variously as Mars, Mavors, Maurs, Mamers, Marmar, Marmor, Mamurius, and Marspiter. The month named for Mars, Martius (our March) was originally the start of the Roman calendar, before reforms moved the new year to January. The Ides of March (March 15) was the chief festival of Mars, marked by horse races on the Campus Martianus and processions by the Salian College of priests. (The fact that military leader Julius Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March puts an interesting mystical spin on his career: was Julius somehow a sacrifice to ensure that the Empire's legions would be victorious for the next three centuries?)

The Salians carried a sacred shield called the Anchile, which fell from heaven at the feet of the early Roman king Numa. (A midget flying saucer?) To keep anyone from stealing the shield of Mars, Numa had eleven duplicates made, which the Salians kept. The genuine Shield of Mars would be a swell MacGuffin for some Indiana Jones-style archaeology in Fascist Italy, with Mussolini's Blackshirts as villains instead of the Nazis. Otherwise, it could be yet another item for Warehouse 23. The powers of the Shield of Mars weren't clearly specified, but it would certainly be appropriate for the God of War to give victory to the side bearing his shield.

The horse was sacred to Mars, and his bird was the woodpecker. Trees sacred to Mars included the oak (even today, majors in the Army wear an oak-leaf insignia), fig, dogwood, and laurel. Besides being a tutelary god of Rome, Mars was also the patron of Florence. Mars' consort was Bellona, a terrifying goddess of war and death, worshipped by ex-gladiator priests who wounded themselves in her honor. She was depicted as a wild-haired woman in armor holding a bloody lash.

The Greek god Ares closely paralleled Mars, but lacked his identity as a patron of agriculture. Ares was a pure war-god, and as such was much less attractive. In early Sparta, prisoners of war were sacrificed to him. The cock, the dog, and the vulture were his animals. He was the brother or husband of Eris, and like all Greek gods had liaisons with several other women and goddesses. By the princess Astyoche he had twin sons, Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, who fought at Troy. With Aphrodite, Ares had several children, including the minor gods Phobos, Deimos, Anteros, Harmonia, and Eros. Through his liaison with the maiden Chryse, Ares was the grandfather of the hero Pirithous, and the ancestor of the Centaurs. In the later Roman Empire, Mars and Ares were essentially combined, and Mars increasingly took on his Greek avatar's boastful and semi-comic personality.

In the pre-Olympian cosmology of the Greeks, the Titans Dione and Crius presided over the planet Mars. Crius is something of a cipher, but Dione was a goddess of moisture and the oceans, whose name may be a cognate of Diana. This can be taken as an indication of the "Venus-dominated" tone of myths in the Age of Taurus (see the section on Astrology below). In a particularly mystic campaign, characters might be part of a "theological terraforming" project to exorcise the life-destroying influence of Mars and restore the planet to its watery, hospitable identity under Dione.

The Terraforming Consortium

The most important single organization on Mars is the Terraforming Consortium. The Consortium is the body in charge of the entire terraforming project. As its name suggests, the Consortium is a cooperative venture. The list of Consortium members is long, and includes the United Nations of Earth; the governments of the United States, China, Canada, India, Brazil, Japan, and Egypt; the Skyhook Company, Singapore Biotech Holdings Ltd., Macrodynamics, Mars Properties, Eurospatiale, and Leung Asteroid Enterprises; the Mars Society, the High Frontier Foundation, the Panspermia Society, and the Hermosa Charitable Trust.

All these partners mean that the Consortium must cope with powerful centrifugal forces. Without strong leadership, the Consortium would rapidly disintegrate into squabbling petty “empires” as each partner and each project scrambles for money and resources. For much of the project’s history the charismatic terraforming expert Isadora Braudel has provided that leadership, first as the most outspoken member of the Science Advisory Board, then as Chief Scientist, and finally as Director of the whole Consortium.

The Terraforming Consortium’s operations are spread all over the Solar System, with 10,000 employees on Mars or in Mars orbit, another 2,000 at Saturn or aboard comets in the outer system, and 15,000 on Earth working as administrators, lobbyists, and researchers. The biggest single assets belonging to the Consortium are its two deep-space vehicles, the *Persephone* and the *Athena*. The two identical ships support comet-herding operations in the outer system, and ice mining on Saturn’s moons. Each is a mobile industrial base in its own right, equipped with automated factories to build mass-drivers, habitat modules, and just about anything else needed to capture a comet or set up a mining base. Each ship has a crew of 32, with room for another 32 technicians and workers.

Other Organizations

The Skyhook Company is the biggest purely private company on Mars. It is part of the Terraforming Consortium, but owns the Pavonis elevator outright (along with Deimos and most of the Pavonis colony). Skyhook’s business plan is much like that of the railroad companies in the American West: spend a lot of capital building the transport system, then find ways to encourage traffic and discourage competition. The Skyhook Company favors anything which promotes Martian trade, since each elevator load means another \$10,000 profit. At times Skyhook expresses its disapproval of Red activism, small independent space transport companies, and labor organizers through physical threats and intimidation.

The Martian Unity Party is a political party with chapters in all the colonies which allow free elections. The goal of the organization is to form a unified planetary government for Mars. The Unity Party is pro-terraforming, but anti-Earth sentiment is fairly strong and this means the party often reflexively opposes the Terraforming Consortium and the Skyhook Company simply because of their roots on Earth. At its most extreme end, the Unity Party overlaps with the “Brown” and “Pink” factions of the Red Mars movement.

The Unity Party’s main rival is the Pan-Human Society, which urges Martian membership in the United Nations. The Society is regarded by most Martians as a mouthpiece for Earth interests.

Genetic Engineering Packages

Approximately half of the children born on Terraformed Mars have some form of genetic modification. Human engineering is something of a political statement among Martians: adapting your kids to Martian conditions means you believe in “Mars for the Martians” instead of close cooperation with Earth. Spending the money to have a parahuman who can survive where humans can’t often reflects Red Mars sentiments (especially those of the panspermist “Pink” faction).

Modified Human (“Carter” Series) 23 points

The Carter genemod package is a favorite among parents who want their children to be relatively comfortable on Mars but don’t want to cross the species boundary. Carter-series humans are as cold-tolerant as Eskimos, have lungs and blood like an Inca or Tibetan, and are as resistant to dry conditions and strong ultraviolet as any Australian Aborigine or Sahara dweller. Like many commercial genemod templates, it also edits out several undesirable traits, particularly alcoholism and epilepsy. Carter humans are tall and very dark-skinned, with massive chests and a layer of subcutaneous fat which makes them look stocky despite their height. They have beaky noses and eyes with a distinct epithicanic fold. A Carter-type embryo costs \$48,000.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

Advantages: Breath Holding [2], Temperature Tolerance-1 [1].

Features: Taboo Trait (No Genetic Defects). Home gravity of 0.38G.

Cost: \$48,000.

Martian Parahuman (“Thoris” Series) 46 points

The Thoris parahuman template was created by the Mars Terraforming Consortium to produce ideal inhabitants for the planet’s new conditions. Thoris parahumans are not obviously inhuman, although they cannot breed with humans without help from a genetic engineer. Like the Carter parahumans they tend to be barrel-chested and dark-skinned. Many Thoris Martians deliberately take cosmetic treatments to make themselves look less like Earthlings (a green skin tinge or implanted antennae are common choices). The Thoris template includes oxygen storage ability and allows Martians to live without life support equipment even on the Tharsis Bulge (although even they still need compressor masks for a climb up Olympus Mons). Though they can survive in conditions which would suffocate a normal human, Thoris Martians do need at least 30 millibars of oxygen to breathe. Buying a Thoris genemod embryo costs \$96,000.

INDEX

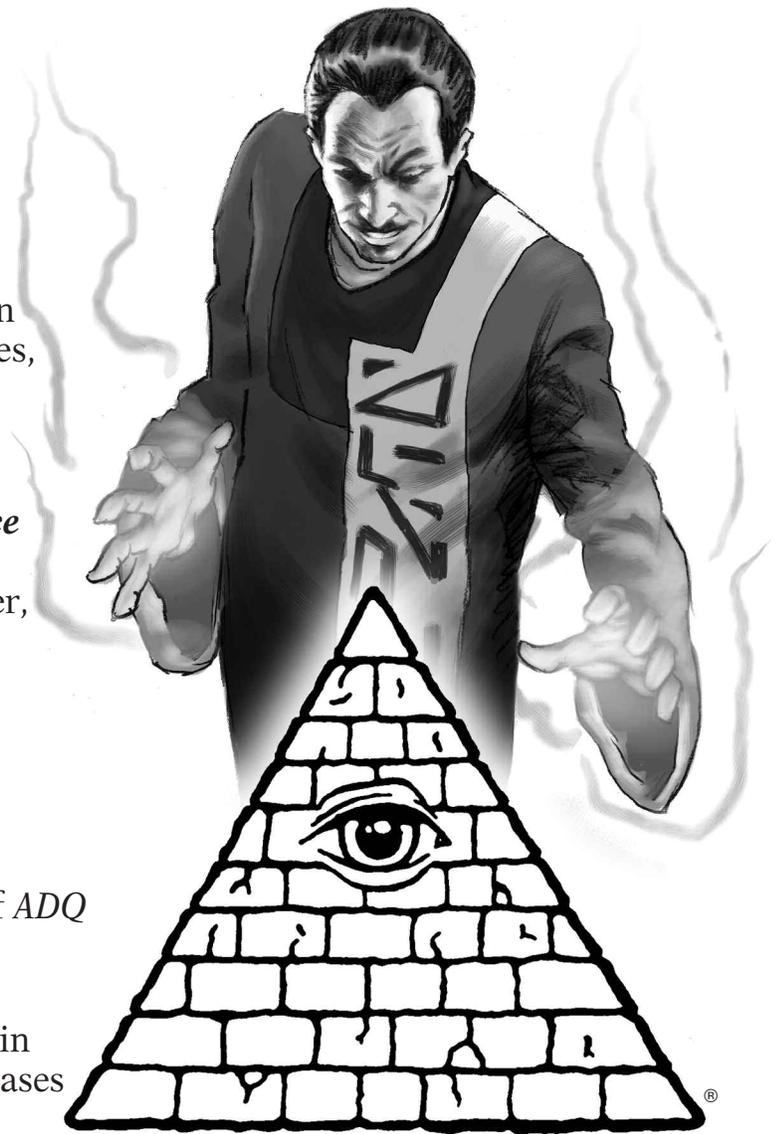
- 1956, 37.
Acidalian Theocracy, 113.
Acute Hearing advantage, 120.
Advantages, *Domed Mars*, 65;
Terraformed Mars, 86;
Superscience Mars, 100; *Dying Mars*,
120.
Adventures, *Domed Mars*, 67;
Terraformed Mars, 87;
Superscience Mars, 102; *Dying
Mars*, 122.
Afterburner, liquid-oxygen, 33.
Agronomy skill, 67.
Air, 19, 73.
Air-Boats, 115.
Airplanes, 37, 61, 85, 90.
Airships, 37.
Alchemy, 44.
Alcohol, 56. 
Aldiss, Brian, 41.
Aldrin, Buzz, 34.
ALH84001, 29, 30.
Ancient astronauts, 43.
Ancient Wonders, 114.
Animals, 79.
Antares, 42.
Appearance advantage, 100, 120.
Ares, 41.
Argyre, 14.
Argyre Planitia, 27.
Aries, 42.
Armor, Martian, 117.
Assassin, *template*, 118.
Astrology, 42.
Atmosphere, 16, 17.
Atmospheric pressure, 74.
Attack Saucer, 96.
Axial tilt, 15.
Aztec mythology, 42.
Babylon, 6.
Bahram colony, 55.
Balloons, 37.
Barclay, Andrew, 46.
Basic Physical Data, 14.
Battle Saucers, 96.
Beasts, Martian, 117.
Beer, Wilhelm, 6.
Biblical mystical tradition, 44.
Biology, *Terraformed Mars*, 75;
Superscience Mars, 92.
Bisson, Terry, 12, 40.
Blind Fighting skill, 122.
Boats, 37.
Bombs, 75.
Bonestell, Chesley, 37.
Boreal Seas, 78, 90
Bradbury, Ray, 10, 11.
Brahe, Tycho, 6.
Burroughs, Edgar Rice, 10, 39.
Cabal, The, 43. 
Caffeine, 56.
Calendar, 15.
Campaign parameters, 39.
Campaigns, *Domed Mars*, 67;
Terraformed Mars, 87;
Superscience Mars, 102, 104; *Dying
Mars*, 122.
Canals, 6, 8, 92, 93, 109.
Candor, 111.
Capricorn One, 47.
Carapace advantage, 100.
Carbon dioxide, 17, 19.
Carter, John, 10.
Cassini, Giandomenico, 6.
Castes, *Superscience Mars*, 93.
Cave Martians, 110, 112.
Caverns, 21.
Celtic mythology, 42.
Ceramic guns, 116.
Channels, 26.
Chaotic terrain, 24.
Character types, *Domed Mars*, 62-64;
*Terraformed
Mars*, 84-86; *Superscience Mars*, 98;
Dying Mars, 118.
Chocolate, 56.
Chryse colony, 80.
Chryse Planitia 2050, 52.
Chryse Planitia, 51.
"City, The," 24.
Claim to Hospitality advantage,
65, 86, 120.
Clarke, Arthur C., 11.
Climate, 16, *Dying Mars*, 107.
Cloth, 57.
Code of Honor disadvantage, 101, 121.
Cold war, 104.
Colonies, 51, 67, 79; *other*, 53; *secret*,
48, 55, 58.
Comets, 74.
Communication delay, 15.
Communications, 51.
Conditions, 15; *past*, 29.
Cooperative Planetary Law
Commission, 80.
Coprates, 112.
Core, 14.
Courtesan skill, 101.
Courtesan, *template*, 118.
Crater basins, 27.
Crius, 41.
Cryosphere, 17, 29.
Cryptodendoliths, 29.
Crystal spheres, 45.
Cultural Adaptability advantage, 100.
Currency and Customs
Community, 80, 81.
Cyber-Rejection disadvantage, 87.
Cycler Spacecraft, 34.
Cydonia Face, 24, 45, 113.
"D&M Pyramid, The," 24.
Daggers, glass, 116.
Darwin, Charles, 9.
Data, Basic Physical, 14.
de Camp, L. Sprague, 39.
Deimos, 6, 8, 28, 29; *base*, 56.
Density, 14.
Design Reference Mission, NASA,
31, 32.
Detect Lies skill, 101.
DiGregorio, Barry, 49.
Dinner, 56.
Dione, 41.
Diplomat, *template*, 98.
Diplomatic Immunity advantage, 100.
Dirt, 18.
Disadvantages, *Domed Mars*, 66;
Terraformed Mars, 87; *Superscience
Mars*, 101; *Dying Mars*, 121.
Disguise skill, 101.
Domed Cities, 95.
Domed colonies in 2050 maps, 54.
Domed Mars, 50.
Draper, Henry, 46.
Driving skill, 67, 101.
Dust devils, 20.
Dust storms, 20.
Dust, 19.
Dying Mars, 106.
Dying Race disadvantage, 121.
Dying world vs. new frontier, 41.
Egyptian mythology, 42.
El Dorado colony, 55.
Electrolasers, 96.
Electronics, 58.
Elevator Car, 82.
Elysium, 14, 21, 26.
Enemy disadvantage, 66.
Energy, 18.
Eos colony, 55, 80.
Eos, 112.
Erotic Art skill, 101.
Escape velocity, 14.
Ethics, 72.
Face of God, 113.
"Face, The," 24, 43, 45.
Fantasy roleplaying, 45.
Farm units, 52.
Fat disadvantage, 66.
Features, 21.
Fencing skill, 122.
First Aid skill, 101.
First Base, 51.
First Race, 109.
Flammarion, Camille, 6.
Flash Gordon, 47.
Flournoy, Theodore, 48.
Flying saucers, 96.
Fontana, Francisco, 6.
Fort, Charles, 46.
Fortean Mars, 46.
"Fortress, The," 24.
"Free-return" trajectory, 32.
Galileo, 6.
Genetic engineering, 75, 79, 81, 83.
Geography, 24; *Superscience Mars*, 92.
Geology skill, 67.
Geothermal power, 19.
Getting around, 36.
G-Experience advantage, 65, 86, 100.
Gilbert & Sullivan, 40.
Glass daggers, 116.
Goddard, Robert, 48.
Gravity, 14, 20
Greed disadvantage, 66.
Greek mythology, 41.
Greenhouse Road, 52.
Greenhouses, 56.
Greg, Percy, 9.
Greys, 49.
Griffith, George, 9.
Ground vehicles, 37, 58.
Gulliver's Travels, 8.
Guns, ceramic, 116.
GURPS Alternate Earths, 37, 105.
GURPS Arabian Nights, 123.
GURPS Atomic Horror, 37, 105.
GURPS Autoduel, 105.
GURPS Bio-Tech, 88.
GURPS Black Ops, 69.
GURPS Cabal, 116.
GURPS Cliffhangers, 123.
GURPS Cyberpunk, 69.
GURPS In Nomine, 44.
GURPS Magic, 116.
GURPS Ogre, 105.
GURPS Places of Mystery, 44.
GURPS Planet Krishna, 123.
GURPS Reign of Steel, 69.
GURPS settings, *Domed Mars*, 69;
Terraformed Mars, 88; *Superscience
Mars*, 105; *Dying Mars*, 123.
GURPS Spirits, 116.
GURPS Steampunk, 123.
GURPS Supers, 69, 105.
GURPS Swashbucklers, 123.
GURPS Technomancer, 88.
GURPS Ultra-Tech, 88.
GURPS Uplift, 88.
GURPS Vehicles, 37.
GURPS Voodoo, 44, 116.
GURPS Y2K, 105.
Habitat module, 35, 51, 53.
Hall, Asaph, 6, 28.
Hard science vs. planetary romance, 39.
Haskins, Byron, 10.
Hazards, 19.
Hearing, 19.
Heat beams, 96.
Heinlein, Robert, 10.
Helium colony, 53.
Hellas Empire, 113.
Hellas colony, 80.
Hellas Planitia, 27.
Hellas Seas, 90.
Hellas, 14.
Herschel, William, 6.
Hidden Martians, 57.
Hidebound disadvantage, 101.
High Technology advantage, 120.
Highlands, 21.
Hindu mythology, 42.
History, *Superscience Mars*, 93.
Hite, Kenneth, 40.
Hoax, Lifeless Mars, 49.
Hohmann orbit, 32.
Honesty disadvantage, 66.
Horus colony, 55.
Hospital, 53.
Humanoid Martians, 92.
Huygens, Christiaan, 6.
Hybrids, 111.
Hydrographic map of Terraformed
Mars, 77.
Hyperion, 74.
Illiteracy disadvantage, 87, 121.
Illuminated Mars, 48.
Illuminati, 49.
Immortality advantage, 121.
India, 6.
Infrared lasers, 96.
Intelligent life, 57.
International Astronomical Union, 7.
Invaders from Earth, 30.
Iron, 18, 44.
Ius, 111.
Jets, 37.
Jung, Carl, 48.
Kabbalism, 44.
Kasei Vallis, 27.
Kepler, Johannes, 6, 8.
Kids, 63.
Kircher, Athanasius, 9.
Koch, Howard, 9.
Labyrinth of Night, The, 27.
Lander stage, 35.

- Landis, Geoffrey, 39.
 Landscape, *Dying Mars*, 107.
 Languages skill, 122.
 Lasswitz, Kurd, 9.
 Lear, John, 49.
 Leather, 57.
 Lecherousness disadvantage, 67.
 Legal Enforcement Powers advantage, 65, 86, 100.
 Levin, Dr. Gerald, 49.
 Lewis, C.S., 41.
 Ley lines, 44.
 Ley, Willy, 37.
 Life support, 51.
 Life, 29; *intelligent*, 57; *looking for*, 30.
 "Lifeboat" planet, 72.
 Lifeless Mars Hoax, The, 49.
 Liquid-oxygen afterburner, 33.
 Literacy advantage, 121.
 Longevity advantage, 121.
 Looking for life, 30.
 Lost Cities, 112.
 Lowell, Percival, 6, 39, 41, 48.
 Lowland Martians, 109.
 Lowlands, 21.
 Magic, 44, 116.
 Magnetic field, 14.
 Map, , *domed colonies in 2050*, 54; *hydrographic, of Terraformed Mars*, 77; *Marineris cities*, 111; *territorial, Dying Mars*, 108; *topographic, equatorial regions*, 23; *topographic, Mercator projection*, 22.
 Marconi, Guglielmo, 45.
 Mariner 4, 11.
 Mariner 9, 11.
 Marineris cities map, 111.
 Marineris cities, 111.
 Mars Ascent Vehicle, 51.
 Mars Blimp, 61; *statistics*, 59.
 Mars Cypher, 34.
 Mars Defense Force, 80, 81.
 Mars Direct, 31.
 Mars Effect, The, 43.
 Mars Lander, 35.
 Mars Launcher, 61.
 Mars Rover, 58; *statistics*, 59.
 Mars Society, The, 4.
Martian Chronicles, The, 11.
 Martian Parahuman ("Thoris" Series), *template*, 83.
 Martian Tripod, 97.
 Martian Unity Party, The, 83.
 Martin Marietta, 31.
 Masonry skill, 67.
 Mass drivers, 75.
 Matthews, Arthur, 45.
 Mean datum, 16.
 Meat, 56.
 Medical skills, 122.
 Melas, 112.
 Merchant, *template*, 118.
 Mercury Theatre on the Air, 9.
 Mesopotamian mythology, 42.
 Metal, 18, 57.
 Meteorite, Martian, 29, 30.
 Military forces, 81.
 Military Rank advantage, 65, 87.
 Minotaur Station colony, 55.
 Mirrors in space, 73.
 Modified Human ("Carter" Series), *template*, 83.
 Monsters, 79.
 Moons, 8, 28, 46.
 Motion, retrograde, 14.
 Moving Mars, 80.
 Mutants, 100.
 Mystic Mars, 41.
 Mythology, *Aztec*, 42; *Celtic*, 42; *Egyptian*, 42; *Greek*, 41; *Hindu*, 42; *Mesopotamian*, 42; *Norse*, 42; *Roman*, 41; *Teutonic*, 42.
 Names, *place*, 24; *Superscience Mars*, 95.
 Naming Names, 7.
 NASA Design Reference Mission, 31, 32.
 Naturalist skill, 87.
 Navigation skill, 67.
 New Jersey, 9.
 New Olduvai colony, 55.
 New technologies, 33.
 Night Horrors, 118.
 Night Vision advantage, 121.
 Noble, *template*, 119.
 Nomads, 114.
 Norse mythology, 42.
 Northern hemisphere, 21.
 Northern plains, 14.
 Nuclear rockets, 33.
 Off-road movement, 36.
 Olympia colony, 53.
 Olympus Mons, 26.
 One-way, 33.
 Ophir, 112.
 Orbit, 15; *Hohmann*, 32.
 Orbital velocity, 14, 37.
 Organisms, 79.
 Other *GURPS* Settings, *Domed Mars*, 69; *Terraformed Mars*, 88; *Superscience Mars*, 105; *Dying Mars*, 123.
 Outcast, *template*, 98.
 Overweight disadvantage, 66.
 Pal, George, 10.
 Panimmunity advantage, 87, 100.
 Paper, 57.
 Past conditions, 29.
 Pathfinder, 12.
 Patron advantage, 65.
 Pavonis colony, 81.
 Pavonis Mons, 26.
 Pedal Ultralight, 85.
 Peroxide pistol, 116.
 Persia, 6.
 Phase One terraforming, 75.
 Phase Three terraforming, 76.
 Phase Two terraforming, 76.
 Phobos, 6, 8, 28, 73, 82.
 Phoebe, 74.
 Physical Data, Basic, 14.
 Physician skill, 101.
 Pickering, William, 6.
 Pioneers, 62.
 Pirates, 113.
 Place names, 24.
 Planet of Roofs, 80.
 Plants, 79.
 Polar caps, 14, 27.
 Pope, Gustavus, 9.
 Popular fears, 11.
 Power Unit Trailer, 60; *statistics*, 59.
 Power, *geothermal*, 19; *solar*, 18; *wind*, 19.
 Preservationism, 72.
 Pressure, 19; *surface*, 16.
 Pressurized Rover, 59.
 Prickly pear, 86.
 Primitiveness disadvantage, 87, 121.
 Primitive vs. advanced, 39.
Princess of Mars, A, 10.
 Probes, 11, 12.
 Proctor, Richard, 6.
 Profit, 72.
 Propulsion, solar-electric ion, 33.
 Prospecting skill, 67.
 Psionic Powers advantage, 121.
 Psionic, *template*, 98.
 Psionics, 65; *skills*, 101; *Superscience Mars*, 93.
 Pyramids, 43, 45.
 "Pyramids, The," 24.
 Radiation, 20.
 Ray guns, 96.
 Really Weird Martians, 92.
 Red Harmony" colony, 55.
 Red star, 6.
 Reputation advantage, 65.
 Resources, 17.
 Retrograde motion, 14.
 Riding skill, 122.
 Riding-Lizards, 118.
 Robinson, Kim Stanley, 12, 39.
 Robots, 61.
 Rocket engines, 33.
 Rockets, 37; *nuclear*, 33.
 Roman mythology, 41.
 Ruins, 112.
 Sagan, Carl, 9.
 Sammael, 44.
 Sanctity advantage, 121.
 Sand Martians, 110.
 Sand, 20.
 Sand-Boats, 115.
Sands of Mars, The, 11.
 Sand-Sailor, *template*, 119.
 Sand-Sharks, 117.
 Saucer Pilot, *template*, 99.
 Saucer, *attack*, 96; *battle*, 96; *transport*, 97.
 Schiaparelli, Giovanni, 6.
 School, 53.
 Science fiction, 10.
 Science Lord, *template*, 99.
 Science Lords of Mars, 95.
 Science Priest, *template*, 119.
 Science Priests, 109.
 Science! skill, 67, 101.
 Scorpio, 42.
 "Sea level," 16.
 Seas, 76.
 Secret colonies, 48, 58.
 Secret masters, 49.
 Semi-Literacy advantage, 121.
 Semi-Literacy disadvantage, 87, 121.
 Sex Appeal skill, 101, 122.
 Silly Mars, 40.
 Skills, *Domed Mars*, 67; *Terraformed Mars*, 87; *Superscience Mars*, 101; *Dying Mars*, 122.
 Skyhook, 82.
 Skyhook Company, The, 83.
 "Slingshot" maneuver, 32.
 Social Stigma disadvantage, 121.
 Society, *Superscience Mars*, 93; *Terraformed Mars*, 80.
 Soil, 16, 18.
 Solar day, 15.
 Solar Federation, The, 104.
 Solar power, 18.
 Solar-electric ion propulsion, 33.
 Soldier, *template*, 99.
 Soldiers, *Superscience Mars*, 94.
 Sound, speed of, 19.
 Southern highlands, 14.
 Space Gods from Mars, 43.
 Spacesuits, 15.
 Speed of sound, 19.
 Spell colleges, 43.
 Spiritualist Mars, 48.
 Status advantage, 65, 121.
 Status table, Martian, *Dying Mars*, 120.
 Submarines, 37.
 Superscience Mars, 91.
 Surface area, 14.
 Surface, 14.
 Survival skill, 67, 87, 122.
 Swedenborg, Emanuel, 9.
 Technology, 58; *new*, 33; *Superscience Mars*, 96.
 Teeth advantage, 100.
 Temperature, 20, 73; *surface*, 16.
 Templates, *Dying Mars*, 118; *Superscience Mars*, 98, 99.
 Temple of the Divine Visage, 113.
 Tentacled Martians, 92.
 Terraformed Mars, 71; *economy*, 81; *map*, 77; *society*, 80.
 Terraforming Consortium, The, 80, 81, 83.
 Terraforming, 30, 72; *Phase One*, 75; *Phase Three*, 76; *Phase Two*, 76; *time scale*, 78.
 Terrain, chaotic, 24.
 Territorial map, *Dying Mars*, 108.
 Tesla, Nikola, 45.
 Teutonic mythology, 42.
 Tharsis Tholus, 26.
 Tharsis, 14, 21, 26.
Three Little Men From Mars Are We, 40.
 Time, 15.
 Titans, 41.
 Tithonium, 111.
 Topographic map, *equatorial regions*, 23; *Mercator projection*, 22.
 Trajectories, 32; "free-return," 32.
Transhuman Space, 88.
 Transport Saucer, 96, 97.
 Trilateral Martians, 92.
 Tripod Expeditionary Force, 97.
 U.S. Naval Observatory, 6, 28.
 Unaging advantage, 121.
 Underground Empire, 112.
 Upland Martians, 109, 114.
 Uplands, 21.
 Vacc Suit skill, 67, 87.
 Valles Marineris, 27.
 Valleys, 26.
 VASIMR, 33.
 Vehicle statistics, 59.
 Vehicles, ground, 37.
 Velikovskian Mars, 47.
 Velikovskiy, Immanuel, 8, 47.
 Velocity, orbital, 37.
 Versatile advantage, 101.
 Viking, 12.
 Volcanoes, 26.
 Voltaire, 8.
 Von Braun, Wernher, 37, 48.
 Von Madler, Johann, 6.
 Vow disadvantage, 87.
 Wallace, Alfred Russell, 9.
War of the Worlds, The, 9.
 Warmth, 73.
 Warrior, *template*, 119.
 Water, 16, 17, 73, 76.
 Weak Immune System disadvantage, 101.
 Weakness disadvantage, 101.
 Wealth advantage, 65.
 Weapons, 63; *Martian*, 116.
 Weather, 76.
 Weird Mars, 45.
 Welles, Orson, 9.
 Wells, H.G., 9, 39.
 Wind, 16, 20, 78; *power*, 19.
 Windmills, 19.
 Xenophilia disadvantage, 122.
 Xenophobia disadvantage, 122.
 Year, 15.
 Zeroed advantage, 66.
 Zigel, F., 46.

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