

3rd Draft



" C O L O N I S T S "

by

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TITLES OVER

WHITE - UNFOCUSSED TO:

HIBERNATION RECOVERY ROOM (MARS) OP.THEATRE
LIGHTS

Various COLOURED BLOBS appear out of focus,
around a large white SURGICAL THEATRE LIGHT.
Out of focus PEOPLE in green moving in
background. DOCTOR JOE PINE mature, forty, is
reviving STEVEN JOHNSON, about twelve, thin,
sensitive. Steven's P.O.V. as Joe works on him.

DR. JOE PINE
Can you hear me?

His hand in silhouette approaches and touches
gently

Can you hear me?
What's your name?

EXT. LANDING ZONE NIGHT

The gigantic mantis shaped Space-Mars shuttle,
glowing red and yellow, hisses downwards, its
retro rockets blazing at full landing thrust,
slowing the lander down.

JOE (V.O.)
Wake up, Wake up.

Dust whirls up as the Shuttle lands, and there are MARS SUITED figures running out to tie it down.

JOE (V.O.)
Can you hear me?
What's your name?

What's your name?

INT. RECOVERY ROOM WHITE

STEVEN
Steven - Steven Johnson.

Things come more closely into focus. Steven looks up at the medical team that has supervised his awakening from hibernation.

There is background noise of doors opening, pipes humming, and general background conversation. Everything becomes crystal clear.

JOE
Welcome to Mars, Steven.
Nurse Margaret will continue with your recovery procedures.

JOE scans Steven with a Sony Mediscanner, then passes it over to MARGARET, a nurse and moves onto the next recovering colonist. She beams the information to the bedside COMPUTER.

MARGARET
Hi, Steven. We're still warming you up, so you'll feel a little cold and groggy for a while. You must stay in bed until we give you the O.K. to move around in a wheel chair. Do you understand?

STEVEN
They briefed us before launch. Said we'd feel like shit for a week or so. Where's Mum and Dad?

MARGARET

They're attending to Karla
now.
She's over there.

She points across the room. Observer's WIDE
P.O.V. as Steven manages to get up on one elbow
and look briefly at the recovery team working
on Karla. He groans and lies back on the
GURNEY. There are about forty other gurneys,
mobile hospital trolleys, in the section, all
have recoverees on them - colonists from Earth
being revived from hibernation after the
journey to Mars.

MARGARET

Don't try to get up.

You've been in hibernation for
nine months, young man.
You've lost bone and muscle
mass, so it's physiotherapy
for a week before you're
allowed on your own feet.

Joe comes back over and looks down on Steven,
checks the computer.

JOE

He's O.K. Move him into
general observation now.

to Steven

You've come out of hibernation
very well, Steven.
You should be in a wheelchair
by tomorrow.
There'll be no stopping you
then.

to wardsmen - meaningfully.

Put him with the others.

Steven's P.O.V. of a long passage and overhead
strip lights as he is wheeled to POST RECOVERY
area. He is hoisted onto a hospital bed.
Other children are in the ward.

INT

COUNSELLING ROOM

DAY

Steven, Karla, and nine other youngsters: Anthony(10), Simon (11), Harry (11), Patricia (8), Henrietta (8), Garry (8), Pierre (14), Barry (10), AND Chris (10). are sitting in their wheelchairs facing LAUREN - young, attractive, late twenties, as she counsels them regarding the deaths of their parents. Some of the children are in tears. Others look very upset.

LAUREN

Everyone is very shocked at what happened to your parents. There is an investigation going on right now to try to uncover the cause of the contamination.

INSIDE SPACE LINER "MAYFLOWER"
BEFORE

MONTHS

Inside the SPACE LINER "Mayflower", line upon line of hibernation CAPSULES are awaiting transfer. Two TECHNICIANS in SPACE SUITS drive down the rows in a SMALL FORKLIFT type vehicle, inspecting their human cargo for faults. They detect something wrong and leave their vehicle to visually inspect a faulty capsule. KEVIN MACLEAN balding late thirties, rubs his gloved hand over the crystal cover of one capsule, revealing a corpse in latter stages of decay.

His companion, GORDON ROGERS, mid twenties, joins him, and inspects its neighbor. The plates on the capsules say "ANDREA JOHNSON" and "MARTIN JOHNSON"

GORDON

Another two. Looks like we've lost Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. What caused this?

KEVIN

Contamination of some sort. We've lost about ten percent. Bacteria in the Adult Sustenance Lines.

COUNSELLING ROOM

FOLLOWS ON

Karla is more than upset.

KARLA

They really fucked up!

LAUREN

I'd have to agree with that, Karla. It should never have happened. Feel free to express your anger and grief. I don't mind if you swear, or cry.

Her VOICE OVER continues over the next scene of the memorial service for the victims of the "First Fleet Disaster" as the incident has become known.

MARS CHAPEL MEMORIAL SERVICE

2 days later

LAUREN'S VOICE

The Mars Authority has prepared a compensation package for all of you, which will be administered until you're eighteen years old.

Close up of Commander NEIL GORDSCHSKY's face as he remembers docking.

SPACE - APPROACHING MARS

DARK

The planet MARS with its two attendant moons, Demos and Phobos, is being approached by the colonists' FLEET of various space-ships. Orbiting the red planet, is a very large SPACE STATION attached to PHOBOS the inner moon.

LAUREN (V.O.)

We'd like to return any of you to Earth if you have relatives there,

but it isn't possible to do that. Hibernation is a once in ten years process.

We see other colonists, Kevin Maclean and Gordon Rogers.

INSIDE SPACE LINER "MAYFLOWER" B&W REPRISE

Inside the SPACE LINER "Mayflower", line upon line of hibernation CAPSULES are awaiting revival.

Kevin and Gordon make their grim discovery.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

We see GEORGE PETERS, eighteen years old, Junior pilot

CONTROL DECK OF "MAYFLOWER" Flashback

Captain Gordschsky sits in the Front Left seat of a crowded cockpit, "Mayflower" is in docking mode as it approaches Mars Station PHOBOS. The young pilot, George PETERS (nervously confident) is at the controls.

NEIL GORDSCHSKY
Put us in manually, Mr. Peters.

GEORGE PETERS
Still hate computers, Commander?

NEIL
I wouldn't trust this one to add two and two.

GEORGE
On the button, Sir.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOLLOWS ON

The orphans, seated in the front row, now use walking frames for mobility, as do many of the other colonists taking part in the memorial service.

Father SEAN O'NEIL takes the service from the front. He is young, well built, keen.

FATHER SEAN O'NEIL
Space is an unforgiving place,
and there is always the chance
of the unexpected. Its
exploration and settlement
will always entail great risk.

Our hearts go out to these
young people, and to their
carers, who now have the added
responsibility of rearing
them, as well as their other
work duties.

We ask the Lord that it be
made a pleasurable and
thankful task.
Nothing is more important to
us, than the raising of these
fine young colonists. Just as
the welfare of this jewel of a
planet will rest in their
hands.

Depart in peace.
In the name of the Father, The
Son, and the Holy Spirit,

ALL

Amen.

He raises his hand in the benediction. Organ
Music swells as he leaves through a side door,
and the service breaks up as people leave, some
talking to the young survivors.

MARS ORPHANS' DORMITORY

A WEEK LATER

Karla is helping eight year old PATRICIA
CARTER get ready for school. They are wearing
the Navy Blue COVERALLS known as MARS RIG.
Patricia's are slightly too big for her, and
she is having difficulty getting her plastic
backpack on. Finally, she manages. Karla is
all praise:

KARLA

That's right. Have you made sure your survival pod is inside?

PATRICIA

I'd rather have a Mars Suit.

KARLA

In an emergency, I'd go for the pod every time. It's quicker.

Steven sounds the courtesy chime - even though the door is open. He looks in on them.

STEVEN

Everyone's waiting for you two.

KARLA

Have you still got lead underwear on or something?

STEVEN

I only said ...

KARLA

This ... is the Girls' room.

PATRICIA

Yeah. This is the girls' room.
Keep out.

STEVEN

You'll be late.
Don't say I didn't warn you.

He shrugs and leaves in a hurry.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM TRAINING AREA. WELL LIT.

NOT Like a normal classroom. This area is for training in safety and is more like an industrial workshop. Joe is taking a class in Atmospheric Safety. There are about twenty colonial children in his class, including the Mayflower orphans. Joe PINE asks Anthony:

JOE

So, Anthony, What does "G"
stand for?

ANTHONY

"G" stands for gasses. There
are lots of them, including
Oxygen, Nitrogen, and Carbon
Dioxide.

JOE

"C" Steven?

STEVEN

"C" is for Carbon Dioxide. It
is toxic above ten percent.
The atmosphere of Mars is
mainly CO2.

Joe takes a RED CYLINDER off his belt. It is
about the size of a large hand torch. On its
end is a mouthpiece. Karla and Patricia enter
- late.

KARLA

Sorry we're late, everyone.

JOE

These are your Safety
Cylinders. They contain
enough airmix for twenty
minutes. Carry them with you
at all times. You can even
sleep with them if you want.

He hands out cylinders as he speaks, and the
kids put them into their belt POUCHES. Joe
shows them how to re-charge them from RED
NOZZLES on the wall next to the LIGHT SWITCHES.

To recharge it, place the base
onto the nozzle. Push in
hard. You can't overcharge
them - they've got safety
valves.

If you ever enter an area and
see people fainting or
collapsed onto the floor, use
it as you've been shown. Any

problems with the unit, get it replaced.

PATRICIA

What if you forget it?

JOE

You would get the strap.
Anyone over ten gets the cane
- four strokes. Believe me -
we hate doing it.

Karla, do you know what
happens to an unsuited child
who accidentally opens an
outer airlock door?

KARLA

It would suffocate. I suppose

JOE

Swell up and explode.

I told all of you that when
you came in.

KARLA

(Annoyed)

But we were late, remember?

JOE

And for that, You will have
four strokes of the cane,
young lady, and I swear to you
- you will never forget that
you got them for being late.
And you will never forget that
you gave me a half smart back-
answer.

KARLA

You can't do that.
I'm over sixteen.

STEVEN

Touch my sister, and ...

JOE

Oh,
I won't do it.

The counselor will.

They are astonished at his harshness. The youngsters look at him with very mixed feelings.

You see, Karla, Steven, Patricia, and all of you others:

Mars doesn't care.

It's just a small, cold, red planet with not much atmosphere.

He pats his left shoulder.

The spirit of Mars sits on your shoulder, just there, in a black cloak - faceless.

If you make one mistake, it will kill you.

INT. COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE DAY

Karla, Steven, and Patricia, all in Mars Rig, are lined up facing their counselor. She stands with the long cane, tapping it into her left hand. Karla's eyes are wet, and she clenches her fists and mouth.

LAUREN

Because this is your first offence, it won't be recorded on your record.

She puts the cane away in a cupboard.

On my advice, your work period will be reduced to one week cleaning in the Mess hall and Cargo bays. It's an important job, and I expect it to be done well.

STEVEN

Are you going to cane all of us?

LAUREN

No, of course not. Caning is my most unpleasant duty.

We used to counsel naughty children.

We learnt the hard way they didn't always get a second chance.

Tell me, Steven - what are the symptoms of Carbon Dioxide poisoning, and how does it differ from Nitrogen suffocation?

STEVEN

Carbon dioxide poisoning comes on slower. The casualty becomes disoriented and struggles for air before collapsing.

Nitrogen suffocation happens without warning. The casualty becomes unconscious and drops onto the ground.

LAUREN

And?

STEVEN

I ... er ... I

Patricia pulls out her survival cylinder and puts it to her mouth to take a breath.

PATRICIA

If in doubt, pull it out. See, I listened.

KARLA

(In tears)
I hate Mars and everything about it. I wish I'd never come!

LAUREN

If I was you, I'd probably feel the same way. You've had a hard beginning. But you're here. You have to make the best of it.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

FOLLOWING WEEKS

Scenes of all the children being taught aspects of safety. How to put on a Space Suit, Checking helmet locking rings, How to put on MARSUITS These are a lot lighter than space suits, more like a gold covered skin diver's wet suit, surmounted by a color-coded bubble shaped helmet with clear faceplate window, and backpack. How to check rooms before entering, how to check airlocks. How to get into a survival pod.

DEEP INSIDE VERY LARGE TUNNEL - ROCK FACE

LATER

GORDON Rogers, KEVIN Maclean, and SEAN O'Neil are busy drilling the huge rock face with a large mechanical TUNNEL DIGGER. Watching with interest, are STEVEN, ANTHONY ten years old, and SIMON, Thirteen, - all in Marsuits. They talk (filtered) via radio. Sean hands a rock drill to Steven. On Mars, the drill is quite light, but when he activates it, the noise is deafening.

STEVEN

(Shouting)

This is the strangest bit of school work I've ever done.

ANTHONY

Don't shout. You're hurting our ears.

STEVEN

It's a lot more fun. drilling by hand.

SIMON

What's holding them up?

GORDON

Their drill bit's hit
something hard.

Sean takes the drill off Steven and puts it to
one side.

SIMON

I thought they were diamond
bits.

KEVIN

The tunnel digger may have hit
a large bit of diamond.

ANTHONY

Are we rich?

SEAN

No such luck, kid. Mars is
full of low grade industrial
diamond muck - No value there.

You see - there was large
scale volcanic activity.
That's where the Carbon
dioxide came from. Volcanoes
and carbon equals diamonds,
but nobody on Mars has ever
found a decent gemstone.

KEVIN

I hope you little guys are
enjoying this excursion.

STEVEN

Beats the hell out of algebra.

An alarm begins to sound.

GORDON

Meteor Storm. You boys know
the drill. Under the tractor
until it dies down.

Everyone complies, and the three boys and three
men find themselves sheltering under the great
tractor while the ground shakes around them.
Dust flies as rocks fall from the ceiling. It

is a nightmare of flashing yellow lights,
crashing boulders, and dust everywhere.

GORDON

This happens every now and
then.

It's why we want to bury
Olympus City deep underground.

SIMON

I always used to think that
Terraforming Mars would be
like planting trees and grass
on the surface

SEAN

Right now, we're in Stage One.
Digging in like Moles.
It makes sense in terms of
costs and protection.

Olympus Mons is a huge
volcano. It's also very old
and stable, with a granite
core, so we can dig a pretty
big hunk of solid real estate
under here.

GORDON

Your Dad worked it all out,
Steven.
He was a terrific geologist.
- Sorry, Marsologist.

STEVEN

You knew my Dad?

He moves over to sit next to Gordon.

GORDON

Sure did, Steven.
He was here in the early days.
Didn't you ever read his
diaries?

STEVEN

No.

I didn't even know he had
diaries.

KEVIN

We thought he might have brought them back with him. Maybe on mem-cube, disk - or something?

STEVEN

Not that I know of. I'll ask Karla. If anyone knows, she will. It may be in his estate stuff.

We don't get that until we're eighteen.

Karla gets hers first, and I get my share in six years time.

I'd rather have my Dad and Mum.

The three men look at each other knowingly.

LARGE CARGO BAY

same time

Armed with BUCKETS and MOPS, Karla and Patricia front up to the job of cleaning the LARGE CARGO BAY. They stand at the entrance, the INNER PRESSURE DOOR. It is a large cavernous room containing several VEHICLES which have to be airbrushed, then washed down. At one end is a huge external PRESSURE DOOR.

KARLA

We have to put our safety tags into the inner door lock first.

PATRICIA

Stay open.

KARLA

I don't think the door computers talk. The main thing is that the outer door stays shut. Got your pod?

PATRICIA

Course.

She displays the black carryall that contains her survival pod.

Got yours?

Karla pulls her carryall out of the backpack. They take their backpacks off and place them on the floor near the huge outer pressure door that leads outside to the surface of Mars. They both look out through the large glass window that shows the surface outside.

Dust is blowing across the surface.

KARLA

We have about twenty thousand litres of water in that tank.

She indicates a LARGE TANK on the wall. It has LADDER access to a PRESSURE DOOR, and a narrow vertical WINDOW in the side of the tank to indicate water level. It is about two thirds full of water.

PATRICIA

Why's the tank got a pressure door?

KARLA

So people can get in and clean it. When we've emptied it, that's on our job list.

They fill their buckets with water from a Down Pipe, and start spraying the dust off the nearest vehicle with a pressure jet of air. Then they have to wash it down with a sponge. As they work, they talk about Mars.

PATRICIA

Won't an ordinary door do?

KARLA

They'd lose all the water every time the outer door opened. Water boils away in Mars' low pressure atmosphere.

PATRICIA

It gets hot?

KARLA

No. It boils at the normal
room temperature. I'll
explain it all later.

The vehicle clean, they move onto the next one.

INT TRUCK CABIN ON WAY TO MARS BASE RED
SKY

Sean, Gordon and Kevin with the three boys,
Anthony, Steven and Simon are returning from
the Tunnel Project. In a large enclosed PRIME
MOVER. The TRACK back to base is a well worn
road, but wind-blown. On each side are huge
granite BOULDERS and occasional red or white
poles.

SEAN

just a few Klicks more, and
we'll be home.

SIMON

Then we can go to the Mess
Hall.
I'm starving.

GORDON

Do you now what a Martian kid
looks like, Simon?

SIMON

Nope.

KEVIN

A stomach on two legs.

General laughter. They pass a RADIO BEACON
pole.

It shows up on their RADAR as a flashing dot.

STEVEN

Yeah. That's because ... We're
the Young Martians.

Right, Father?

SEAN

Couldn't be righter. And not so much of the Father business. Leave that for Church. When I'm drilling rocks, everyone calls me Sean.

Shipshape and lively, lads. Looks like we're having company. See that cloud of dust over there?

SIMON

It's another Tractor.

KEVIN

It's the Commander.

We travel back to Base in honoured company.

Talks on videophone channel to E.V. One.

intercut

One - Niner to E.V. one.

Courtesy of the road,
Commander.

NEIL

Affirmative, Kevin.

I reckon ...
with this wind, we'll be free
of dust on a North South
heading.
Glad of your company.

STEVEN

Why does he get to go first?

SEAN

He's the commander of Mars Base. His E.V. doesn't have to eat our dust.

NEIL

I take it that's the work experience group, Neil? Well you can tell them from me, that the Captain has the privilege of falling into any big pot-holes on the way.

The Captain's E.V. forms up in front of them, and they convoy their way towards Mars Base which can just be seen on the horizon.

CARGO BAY

LIT

Karla and Patricia are mopping the floor. They have finished cleaning the vehicles in the bay.

KARLA

Nearly finished. I'll be glad to get out of here and change into something decent for a change.

PATRICIA

How do we get out if the inner door's closed?

KARLA

It cant cl ...

She looks in astonishment at the inner pressure door which has slid shut. She goes to it, to try to open, but finds it stuck.

We put our safety tags in the lock. It shouldn't close.

PATRICIA

Well our safety tags are still there, but the door is shut.

They turn and look as there is a loud "KLANG!" from the exterior pressure door.

A loud hissing noise is heard as the air in the Cargo Bay is being sucked into storage tanks.

Get into our survival pods,
Quick!

KARLA

There's No time. They'll be sucked out onto the surface when the outer door opens.

She looks about frantically.

PATRICIA

What are we going to do. We'll explode when the door opens?

KARLA

(looking upwards)

Pressure. Yes! We can shelter in the water tank. Quick! Up the ladder !

They waste no time heading up towards the Tank's pressure door. Lights begin to flash as the outer door begins to open, sweeping their carryalls out as it begins to rise.

A blast of air as it starts to vent out. Karla gets the tank's pressure door open after a struggle. There is a sudden Pop! as it flies outward, smashing her against the railing. Patricia holds the door open, and Karla struggles to push her into the tank.

PATRICIA

I can't swim!

KARLA

Use your safety cylinder! Got it?

Patricia unhooks it from her belt, sucks on the mouthpiece, and dives into the tank - followed by Karla, who steps inside and shuts the door after her. The water seems to be boiling. as she jumps in with the safety cylinder in one hand.

The Cargo Bay door opens fully, and EV1 and EV2 enter the huge airlock. The pressure door shuts, and both vehicles grind to a noisy stop. Engines cut out quickly to prevent CO

contamination of the atmosphere. Air is pumped back into the cargo bay.

For a few moments, there is silence. Then the Mars-suited figures alight from their vehicles. Commander Neil Gordschsky checks the air with a scanner, removes his helmet and moves towards the inner airlock door. His eyes immediately notice the two safety tags in the Lock Control.

He is joined by the other men, and the boys, all of them have their helmets off. They see the two empty buckets on the floor, and the mops. The buckets have boiled off their water, and are now dry, except for a dry muddy residue. The water on the floor has also boiled away, leaving dusky streaks of dry dirt where the mopping was not completed.

NEIL

What the hell has happened here.

GEORGE

The computer signaled an empty Bay, Captain, I'm sure of that. Remember, I checked it with you.

NEIL

You certainly did. It signaled the Bay was unoccupied. There's no way it should have opened with these tags in the lock.

SEAN

No sign of anyone, Captain. If anyone was in here, they didn't depressurize. There'd be blood everywhere.

There is a sudden banging from the water tank. Two faces are looking out from the vertical window. Both are using their safety cylinders underwater.

KEVIN

Well - What do you know, Captain, our first Martian Mermaids.

Neil Gordschsky looks up at the tank and shakes his head slowly. He is not amused.

NEIL

Get them out of there, Mr. Maclean.
I want a full investigation into what happened here.

That's the second computer stuff up on this project. This one nearly cost more lives.

STEVEN

Computer stuff up?

NEIL

Who is this boy?

While they are talking, Kevin and George sprint up the water tank steps and open the pressure door. It flies open, but Kevin is ready for it.

SEAN

Steven Johnson. One of the "Mayflower" orphans. His father ...

NEIL

Of course. I saw you at the service. Your father was a fine Marsologist, and one of my best friends. We used to call him Martin the Martian because he was such an expert on this planet.

The two girls - very bedraggled - step onto the platform, dripping wet. George sees Karla for the first time. He is impressed.

STEVEN

You said ... "Computer error".

The Captain puts his hand on Steven's shoulder as he talks to him.

NEIL

We're still working on it,
Steven.

He includes Anthony and Simon as he explains things to them.

NEIL

Off the record - It seems that the contamination which killed your parents wasn't detected because of a program fault in the hibernation system.

But - we're not sure.

SIMON

A program fault.?

ANTHONY

How did that bug get into the system in the first place?

Karla and Patricia, dripping wet, are walking towards the group near the door. George is making sure Karla is all right.

SEAN

Call the Commander "Sir" when you talk to him, Boys.

NEIL

That's all right, Sean.

This is all off the record.

He puts his hand to his mouth and draws an imaginary Zipper across it.

Until we know for sure, right?

Steven, Simon, and Anthony repeat the gesture as Karla and Patricia join them.

KEVIN

They seem all right, Sir. The young lady has a bruised arm. Nothing more.

NEIL

A very lucky escape.

to Karla

NEIL

Well done, Karla. I was reading your file yesterday and wondering how you'd handle a real emergency.

He pats his shoulder.

Always remember. Death sits here and watches every move we make.

Study hard. Do your safety drills, and don't forget what happened today. You did well.

He opens the inner door, hands the girls their safety tags, and walks off with the men, looking back over his shoulder to say:

And get out of those wet clothes before you catch a cold.

INSIDE BOYS' DORMITORY

LIT

Steven, with Anthony, Simon, Harry, Pierre, Garry, Barry and Chris are waiting for Sean and Kevin to check out their SPACE SUITS for an outdoor excursion. They are standing at ease, holding their HELMETS in their hands and paying careful attention as DOROTHY TEAL explains the working of their back-packs with a spare DEMO MODEL.

DOROTHY

Space suits - for a long stay outside, and very high altitudes. They carry food, water, and the funny plastic underpants thing is your personal toilet.

Because it's going to be warm outside, you may be tempted to get a bit frisky.

Just remember that if you're stupid, you can hurt yourselves.

SIMON

Toilets? You mean ...

SEAN

If you have to go, go. Suit takes care of it.

Some of the boys make wry faces. It is a source of some amusement.

To check the backpack, press the green button.

demonstrates

The on board computer does all the work for you, and the little light turns green to show that it's all O.K.

Dorothy demonstrates helmet controls:

DOROTHY

Helmet controls. Microphone. water. food pellets - low residue. Computer Screen reflects into faceplate. keypad is on your left forearm, but the beast is voice activated. The gold cockscomb on your helmet is your suit antennae array and external video camera.

The most important thing is -

Kevin uses Anthony to demonstrate as she talks.

Locking it properly onto your shoulder plate.
Fit it on, rotate the locking ring, and snap the catches.
Buddy-Check your friends.
The little Green LED Light signals all is O.K. Do it.

It is totally interchangeable
with your Marsuits Bubble
helmet.

The boys put their helmets on and buddy check.

But they don't let you eat,
drink, scratch your nose,
phone home, or watch TV.

KEVIN

Because there have been some
computer glitches lately,
we've double checked them for
you.

STEVEN

Found out about -
you know what - yet?

SEAN

(Rehearsed and off pat)
Solar storms. A couple of
very nasty ones went by during
both incidents. Mars has no
magnetosphere to deflect them.
E.M.P. static interfered with
the data busses.

KEVIN

They're upgrading the cable
shielding as we speak.

STEVEN

I wish Karla was coming.

DOROTHY

Karla will be doing a tutorial
on cargo handling. The girls
are doing a medical course.

HARRY

Sex education. We know.
Female plumbing problems.

Dorothy bangs him on the top of his helmet with
her hand.

DOROTHY

You all have a good time out there. I'd love to come with you, but I've got a lot of other duties.

inside olympus Base Operations room red
lighting

The pentagonal shaped CONTROL ROOM is at the heart of Olympus Base. It is two stories high, and pressure glass WINDOWS look out across the landscape.

On the three levels, operators sit at computer and communications CONSOLES running all sections of MARS BASE OPERATIONS. The ground floor is the hub of five tunnels running out like spokes of the wheel to the various MODULES on the concentric circles of buildings shaped like semi-cylinders. Seen from Above, the base looks a bit like a wagon wheel made of gigantic sausages lying on the ground.

Commander Neil's office is on the first floor. From here, he can direct all operations personally.

Gordon Rogers, George Peters and Lauren Carlisle are in conference with him as he shows them something on his personal computer screen.

NEIL

It's been hacked. No doubt about that.
The check bits didn't tally during our audit.

GORDON

You don't think the kids might do it?

LAUREN

Gordon. I know about childish pranks, but that's a Lulu.

NEIL

Pretty sophisticated - Whoever did it intended to remove the patch, but I got in first with a command dump of core memory.

The patch has gone now, but
I've got this copy of it.

Turns to George

I want you to keep an eye on
the Johnson girl. Hang about.
Develop a friendship. Keep it
ethical, boyo!

LAUREN

I'm not sure that's wise,
commander. If the friendship
develops, and she finds out
it's only a duty, she could
feel badly let down.

NEIL

See your point. You got a
girlfriend, George?

GEORGE

Not on Mars, Sir.

Neil smiles at Lauren, then looks at Gordon.

NEIL

As I see it, son, she's in
your age range and available.
Permission to court. That
means, it's no longer a duty.
Lauren?

LAUREN

Don't expect me to do any
match making. The girl hates
my guts.

NEIL

I've discussed the situation
with the Mars Authority back
on Earth.
We have to handle this
investigation ourselves.
They can't send a team of
agents in.
We're just too far away.
Best they can do is give us
advice.
We are the three investigating
officers - just like I'm

sheriff, and you two are my deputies.

GORDON

You ever investigated anything before, Sir?

NEIL

No. We're all amateurs. I don't want some psycho destroying Mars Base because he was dropped on the head during infancy. So go lightly on this one. Absolute confidentiality. Nobody is to know there's an investigation. Don't let the bastard feel cornered. Lauren, you check out all the kids. Gordon, you check on the families. I'll check out the unattached staff. This office is secure so we'll only discuss things in here. Right?

INT. ATMOSPHERIC GAS EXTRACTION PLANT DAY

Looking like a miniature Petroleum Refinery, the GAS PLANT pumps Mars Atmosphere into great TANKS where it is pressurized. Liquid Oxygen and Nitrogen are extracted after the CO2 is "Burst" with great ELECTRIC ARCS. Carbon is excreted in the form of large black BRICKS. Kevin is explaining the workings to his young students. They stand in a line as he talks (filtered) to them.

KEVIN

Right. Schools in. Pay attention.

KIDS

Yes, SIR!

KEVIN

Don't deafen me. This is the main atmospheric plant. It gets our oxygen, Nitrogen,

Some Carbon Dioxide and Argon,
and puts them all together
into "Airmix" for the base.

It also makes Rocket Fuel -
methane from Carbon Dioxide
and Hydrogen. Ammonia from
Nitrogen and Hydrogen. That
is the big plant, run by a
small Nuclear Reactor.

PIERRE

Is that safe?

KEVIN

Safe as we can make it, Hand
up to ask, Pierre.

JEFFREY

(Hand up)
Why not use Solar Energy?

KEVIN

We need a lot of power,
Jeffrey. This process chews
up lots of power.

He points to a large prime mover with a huge
container attached. As Kevin explains, The
party moves towards and into the container. It
is a mobile habitat.

We are going into that, and
because there's twelve of us,
We're depressurizing the whole
container.
Both inner and outer airlock
doors will be open.
That is dangerous, but it gets
us all inside in one group.

The boys walk up the ladder into the container.

STEVEN

I thought you couldn't do
that?

SEAN

That is so - usually.

We've opened it manually.

INT MOBILE HABITAT LIT

The outer door shuts, then the inner door.
There is the hiss of re-pressurization. Kevin
scans the atmosphere.

KEVIN

Right - Helmets can come off.
Buddy system - buddy system.

The boys partner up and remove each other's
helmets, rotating the collar seals and
unlocking carefully. There is relief at being
out of them. Carefully, they arrange their
helmets onto shelves.

STEVEN

Wow. This is huge.

SEAN

This is part of a train of
containers, five in all, that
go into making a mobile Mars
Base. Four people can live in
here for three months - with
supplies, of course. It has
its own Gas Plant, and
provides its own fuel and air.
All it needs is water. That's
what it looks for. It
explores for water.

SIMON

That would be fun.

KEVIN

I hope you think like that,
Simon, because you boys are
going to be doing some of the
exploring.

STEVEN

You're joking. We're not ...

KEVIN

Not ready, not old enough?

This is Mars, Steven. School is work, and work is school. We have to combine the two things. Today, you are all going to learn to drive this beast.

The boys look at each other in astonishment.

MARS CAR DRIVERS' PRACTISE AREA DAY

Briefly, we see the boys driving the great prime mover under Kevin's direction

KEVIN (V.O)

On Earth, kids learn to drive cars when they're about sixteen. On Mars, most twelve year olds drive - these. They're just like cars, but a few tons heavier.

INSIDE TRAINING AREA, MARS BASE SAME DAY

George and Karla, wearing Mars-suits are working together in the training area with a ROBOTIC LOADER - a gigantic exoskeleton used by a pilot who sits inside and works the claw arms. Karla is in the control seat, and George instructs her from outside.

GEORGE

Just lift your left foot, Karla. Don't worry - the computer stabilizes it.

KARLA

It feels as if it will topple over.

GEORGE

I know. But it won't. Step forward and it will move forward too.

She tries it, and it works. Using the hand and foot controls, she begins to walk around the large cargo bay.

KARLA

Hey, this is fun. Look, I'm
Godzilla.

She moves it towards George, who backs away,
suddenly becoming anxious as Karla bears down
on him. He backs up against the wall, but the
machine comes to a halt inches from his face.

GEORGE

What the hell. Hey these
things aren't toys.

Karla laughs. She moves back and then turns
off and jumps out of the machine.

KARLA

Had you worried, didn't I?

She comes closer, and he feels a little
uncomfortable.

GEORGE

Actually, you're not bad.

At operating ...

KARLA

You're not that bad yourself.
When do I graduate to flying
shuttles?

GEORGE

Ah ...

Indicates the walker.

You have to learn to walk
before you fly.

KARLA

So ... Where do we go from
here?

George takes an egg from his pocket and holds
it up.

GEORGE

We play basketball with this.

KARLA

An egg.
Where did you get an egg on
Mars?

George places the egg on the floor in the
centre of the cargo bay. He smiles as he walks
back to Karla.

GEORGE
See. You don't know
everything. Try to pick it up
- without breaking it.

She gets into the walker and moves it over
towards the egg. Her use of the large claws is
clumsy, but she perseveres and succeeds in
breaking it.

KARLA
So how is it done?

George places another egg on the floor and gets
into the walker. He waltzes it around the
floor and then speeds towards the egg, pulling
up inches from it.
Then he gets out of the walker, picks the egg
up with his hand and gives it to her.

GEORGE
Don't use a sledge-hammer to
crack a nut.

KARLA
You're full of shit.

GEORGE
It can be done.

He replaces it on the floor a few feet in front
and gets back into the walker. Gently, he
moves the controls to the claws and picks the
egg up. He hands it to Karla, who opens her
hands under the claw as it releases the egg to
her. She looks at it. He gets out of the
walker and moves to have a look at the egg in
her hand.

KARLA
What now - do we cook it, or
hatch it?

GEORGE

(Grins)

I could show you where we keep
the chooks.

EXT. LANDING FIELD

DAY

Pink sky in daylight with a small bright sun overlooking a pebble-strewn plain that stretches featureless to the horizon. CARGO DROP - several GIGANTIC SOCCER-BALL like devices that will fall in from orbit, bounce and roll across the plain, and open to reveal cargo - lots of it. A dozen PRIME MOVERS are waiting, as are teams in WALKERS: Karla, Steven, and Simon. Amongst the truck drivers are Harry and Pierre. This group is being supervised by George and Kevin both of whom are sitting in an open Jeep. All present are dressed in Mars-suits. They are listening to the approach traffic on their suit radios.

CONTROLLER (O.S. Filtered)

Cargo pods are entering
atmosphere now.

'Chutes will deploy for
braking within three minutes.

There is a sudden bright flash of light on the far horizon, which grows steadily larger. Then the crack of the sound barrier and the light breaks up into smaller brilliant dots, all getting larger as they descend.

KEVIN

Drop Zone to Controller. On
the button as usual Stanley.

He looks at George.

Isn't it a beautiful sight,
lad?

GEORGE

I'm waiting to see how the
kids handle the pickup.

KEVIN

Stop fretting. They'll be fine. You'll have your economic units, Captain. The little orphans will work for their keep.

In the far distance, the huge cargo balls touch down, bouncing and rolling towards them.

GEORGE

It's not like that. If their parents were here, they'd be factored into the task sharing. I don't like kids working any more than you do.

KEVIN

This is a colony, George. Everyone has to work. Nobody promised anyone a free ride.

He thumbs a switch to talk to the drop controller.

Controller - start deflation process.

The balls start to lose their shape and wallow towards them. One fails to deflate, and continues inexorably forward.

KEVIN

Watch out everyone! A runaway!

The ball rolls onward, getting bigger and bigger as it moves toward the workers. Two prime movers start up and move slowly, then accelerate very quickly towards the ball. They turn in unison and ram into it on one side. It is deflected, and bounces, just clearing the jeep.

GEORGE

And Argentina scores an own goal.

KEVIN

Glad you see the funny side.
I've got a Marsuit to clean.

HARRY

Do we make a beautiful team or
what?

GEORGE

Who's that?

KEVIN

Harry and Pierre. I was
telling them the other day
about formation driving. Now
If they can handle that, they
can handle whatever they come
across on Pavonis Base.

The balls split open, revealing an assortment
of cargo - mostly packed in containers, but
there is some heavy earth-moving equipment
amongst the drop items.

Kevin looks behind them to where the runaway
ball has finally come to a halt and deflated.
It's a gigantic bulldozer, kited out for Mars
work with a pressurised cabin.

KEVIN

I was just about to say that
ball could roll over us and we
wouldn't feel a thing, but
I've changed my mind. Look at
the monster. How the hell did
they ever launch it?

GEORGE

Ford's Lunar division, if you
believe the badge.

KEVIN

Run over by a bloody bulldozer
built by the man in the moon.
Give me strength.

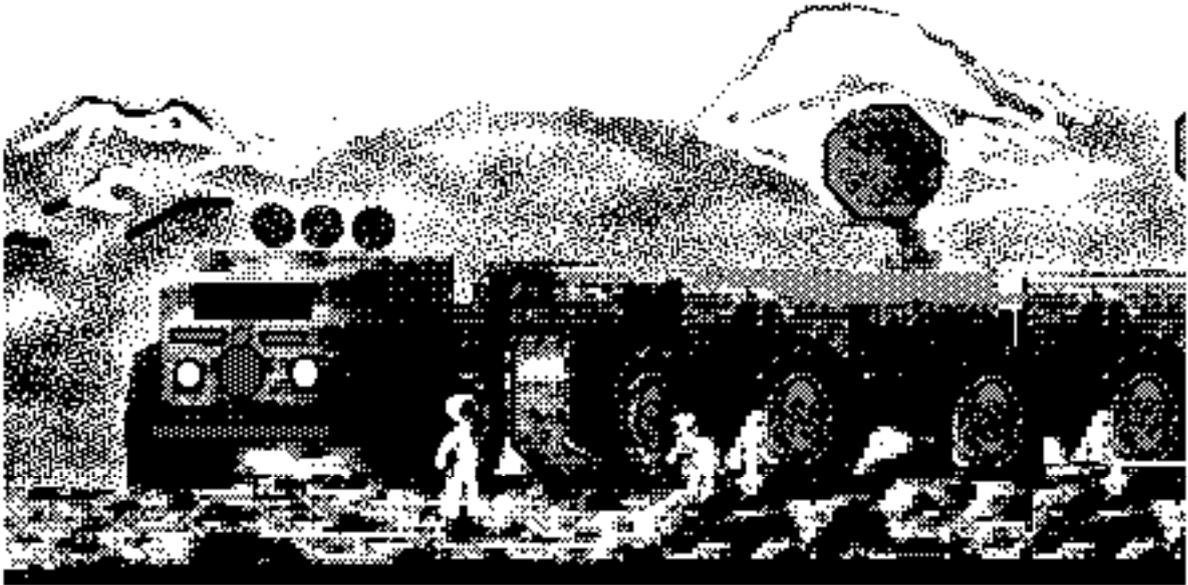
GEORGE

That's cutting the road to
Pavonis. Our second base.

A MONTH LATER

CONVOY ON ROAD TO PAVONIS

DAYLIGHT



Four prime MOVERS in convoy travel the long DUSTY ROAD across the featureless landscape heading South across the plain from Olympus Mons to Pavonis Mons.

Each Mover pulls a train of five TRAILERS heavily loaded with all the supplies for the new Pavonis Base. The sun is low on the horizon, and lengthening shadows bring on the truck headlights. The convoy moves to a stop. Two people get out of each pressurised cab: Dorothy and Simon, Karla and Harry, Kevin and Steven, George and Pierre.

Dorothy walks to the trailer behind her lead vehicle and touches a control. It is the habitat trailer, linked by flexible tube to the trailer behind - the workstations and mobile gas plant container. The airlock opens, and a ramp slides down making access easy.

DOROTHY

Simon and Harry can do the cooking tonight. I'm not going to be stereotyped as the canteen lady.

STEVEN

But you do such a good job, Mrs. Teale.

GEORGE

And your job, don't forget, is to check the Gas Plant.

Steven sighs

STEVEN

Right. The gas plant. No methane, no fuel, long walk. No airmix, we suffocate. Right. One gas plant check coming up.

He begins to walk up the ramp.

GEORGE

And where do you think you're going?

STEVEN

To check out the gas plant on the computer.

GEORGE

Oh no you don't. You climb up there and go over every joint and valve one by one and check all the hoses manually. Computer indeed.

STEVEN

That'll take ages, and it's getting dark.

GEORGE

I'd hate to be out on a night like this changing hoses in sixty below.

do it now while it's warm and light enough to see.

He puts his hand on Steven's shoulder

GEORGE

It's our lives I'm trusting you with, Steven. Do it properly. If I didn't trust you, I'd do it myself.

MOBILE HABITAT KITCHEN DINING AREA EVENING

Dorothy hands out the microwaved plastic meal plates and sits down with her own.

DOROTHY

Coffee's on in the pressure cooker. Don't scald yourselves.

STEVEN

Great cooking, Mrs. Teale. You're a real whiz with the microwave oven.

HARRY

you've got to know how to enter the time.

STEVEN

It's automatic. Scans the label. Just put it in and close the door.

DOROTHY

Thanks, Stevie. And I'm looking forward to see how well you can clean the inside of this habitat with a bowl of soapy water and a few old rags if it doesn't work. Always check.

PIERRE

Apart from building the base, what are we doing here?

KEVIN

Long term?

GEORGE

We're going to do some intensive geological surveys. I mean - Marsological. Satellites confirm the presence of Magnesium and copper. We've a processing plant among the crates that can refine any ore bodies we find.

SIMON

Where do we get the energy to run that?

GEORGE

Nuclear reactor. We get heat by breaking down the CO2 and burning the carbon and oxygen. The heat runs a thermal power station, this complex, and produces metal ingots all in the one hit. Neat, eh?

STEVEN

There's an energy loss somewhere. Why not just melt the ore in an electric arc furnace.

HARRY

We've got to find the ore first.

KEVIN

There, you're looking at a major industrial complex. Takes up acres, weighs millions of tons.

DOROTHY

We'll get there one day, Steve.
Don't worry.
Meanwhile, its all small scale - backyard stuff. Leapfrog technology.

As they eat, George tells them the task that lies ahead.

GEORGE

We'll be using this habitat for a few weeks, until the base is built. Dozer digs the trenches and we put the sections in - they're like flat sausages.

PAVONIS BASE CONSTRUCTION SITE

DAY

As George speaks, we see the base being built - everyone at various tasks - digging the trenches with machines, laying out the long

deflated cylinders of plastic, inflating them, etc.

GEORGE (V.O.)

We inflate the sections, then ballast them with rammed mud floors - a mix of regolith and water. That steams a bit when it's made. The walls are filled with plastic foam. It sets in a day to rock hard. Then when that's all done, we bury it. The hard part starts after that.

A VIEW OF PAVONIS BASE FROM THE SUMMIT OF PAVONIS MONS

The construction is close to completion as more Prime movers arrive with new colonists.

PAVONIS BASE ASSEMBLY HALL

NIGHT

The base has been completed, and the colonists who are to run it have assembled for a celebration party. There is a band made up of the most motley group of instruments one could imagine. The colonists have decided to wear Western clothing - some of it locally made.

Karla and George are heavily involved in the dances. Steven, Simon, Harry, and the others dance with new young colonists.

EXIT ROAD PAVONIS BASE

DAY

The base stands in the background, finished.

The Pavonis Crew are seeing Dorothy off on her way to return the bulk of the vehicles to Olympus. The Prime Movers and trailers are hitched together to make one huge road train. She is to control it all from the front cab.

She gives Steven a quick hug across his shoulders, then embraces Karla.

DOROTHY

You look out for each other now. I'll be thinking of you all the time when I'm back at

Olympus. Keep the place clean, Stevie boy.

STEVEN

I'm going to miss your cooking, Auntie Dorothy.

KARLA

You take care now, Auntie.

Dorothy mounts the truck cabin and starts up. The massive convoy begins its long journey North to Olympus Mons. As the dust settles, Simon picks up a piece of the regolith, lying on the ground.

SIMON

Hey, guys, look at this. Lichen.

The boys look at the rock in his hand. Then Steven spots another piece.

STEVEN

You're right, Simon. We haven't been here long enough to grow this. How did it happen?

HARRY

It's probably a mutation from spores floating about in the atmosphere. We've been using water. It must have helped germinate the stuff.

INT CONTROL ROOM - PAVONIS BASE

This is a much smaller control room. The Base takes the form of two large squares, each 1ha square, the walls of which are huge cylinders buried in the regolith. A large plastic dome has been inflated over the square to form a covered and pressurised quadrangle. This area is used as a hydroponics farm and for recreation. It contains a grassed park with small trees, gardens, a fountain, and basketball court.

The control room on the corner of the square, overlooks this area. The team is working on various tasks. Steven is auto-controlling the

LARGE BULLDOZER carving a road to the top of Pavonis. Karla is checking weather statistics. George is analyzing plans for extensions to the base, and Simon and Harry are checking a yellow staining on the leaves of their strawberry plants. Pierre is sorting out a problem with his face-mask.

Kevin, in his gold Marsuit is waiting for him to kit up.

PIERRE

Hey George, do we have any rubber O rings for face masks?

GEORGE

I think they're still packed away. Hang on.

He checks on the computer.

Container 37B. We haven't got to that yet.

PIERRE

I guess our trip up the crater is off, Kevin. Unless you want us to wear space suits.

KEVIN

Can't delay it Pierre. We need to see if there are any more lichen growths on Pavonis. Olympus wants samples.

KARLA

Borrow my helmet, Pierre. I won't be using it today.

PIERRE

Thanks.

He grabs Karla's backpack and helmet from the wall hook. He looks at the colour scheme and shrugs.

I hate purple. Yeah, well ...

He puts it on. Kevin checks the seal. Pierre waves his prospector's pick at them as he leaves with Kevin.

See you later, guys.

SIMON

Bring some gold back with you.

HARRY

What good's that, Simon?

SIMON

It's a useful industrial metal.

STEVEN

Makes good electrical wire.

GEORGE

Oh, get out of here, you two.

Pierre and Kevin leave through the airlock.

KARLA

What's this "Gold" thing?

STEVEN

Well. It costs more to ship it back to Earth than it's worth. So it's used for useful stuff like circuits.

SIMON

or coating Marsuits to stop radiation.

Not for wealth or money.

HARRY

So when we say someone's "Gold digging", we mean they're doing something that might be useful on Earth, but it's a waste of time on Mars.

ON PAVONIS MONS' UPPER CALDERA RIM.

MID DAY

Kevin and Pierre ride their motorcycles (Modified with LOX tanks for Mars) up to the rim of the crater. The floor of the crater is thousands of feet below them. Sixty Kilometers away, the other side of the crater rim stands as a gigantic cliff wall. It is crystal clear - not dimmed by atmospheric haze. They dismount and stand looking across in awe.

PIERRE

It's beautiful. Mars.

KEVIN (Joking)

No place on Earth like it.

(Quieter)

I know what you mean. Takes your breath away.

PIERRE

We put the rotating cafe here, Bus Park over there.

Donkey rides into the crater

...

Over there.

KEVIN

and stuff it up completely.

PIERRE

You think they will - ever?

KEVIN

It'll happen one day. We know Mars can support an earthlike atmosphere. It's not hard to get to. We can launch from here easily - 18,000 klicks escape velocity. Less to orbit.

PIERRE

So what's the problem?

KEVIN

One: Cost. Earth funds everything. They've got

massive problems and hate
spending the money.

Two: Politics. We have to
use nuclear power. A lot of
people hate that idea.

Three: Resistance. A lot of
people don't want Mars
terraformed. They want it
kept, as it is - an object of
pristine beauty in space.

PIERRE

Looking over this crater, I
can see why.

There is a muffled sharp cracking noise in the
distance. Pierre's facemask disintegrates.

PIERRE

AAaaargh!

His face swells outwards, blood pours from his
eyes, ears, and mouth. His head starts to
swell and eyes protrude.

KEVIN

Shit!

Kevin grabs his survival pod and zips it open.
He wraps Pierre in it, and climbs in with him,
closes the zipper and inflates it. It swells
to the size of a two metre sphere bulging
tightly with pressure. Kevin begins to work
frantically on Pierre.

He reaches inside his pack and pulls out the
red and orange emergency transponder, pulling
out the antennae to activate it.

INT PAVONIS CONTROL ROOM DAY

Alarms go off on Karla's control board. Karla
moves swiftly to her chair and monitors the
trouble.

KARLA

Emergency! We have an ACTUAL!
They're in trouble up there.

KEVIN (FILTERED)
Pavonis control, come in,
Pavonis control.

GEORGE
Your signal is clear, Kevin.
Report.

NEIL (FILTERED)
Olympus on standby.

KEVIN
Sudden de-pressurization on
Pierre's helmet. I think he's
been shot, over.

GEORGE
The hell. Shot?

KEVIN
I had to get into the survival
pod with him. That means I'm
trapped in here.

GEORGE
That's ten minutes of air.

KEVIN
Air's no problem. We've got
our backpacks.

George looks across to Steven and the others.

GEORGE
Steven, get the jeep fully
fuelled and ready. Simon and
Harry, get a spare helmet out
of storage...

Looks it up on his computer terminal

Container 24 A

ON OLYMPUS BASE AIRFIELD

DAY

Neil and Joe are fully space-suited, A crew is
helping them climb into a modified HARRIER-TYPE
JUMP JET. There is a blast of rocket power as

it lifts off vertically, moves into translation, and hurtles Southwards towards Pavonis.

PAVONIS CRATER RIM LATER SAME DAY

The jeep with George, Steven, Simon, and Harry comes to a stop next to the motorcycles. They jump out and race towards the Survival Pod. Steven carries a spare helmet.

GEORGE

We're here, Kevin. We'll have to depressurize the pod to get Pierre out. Steve's got a spare helmet for him.

KEVIN

No way, George. He won't take two depressurizations. It'll kill him.

I'll put my helmet on him. Just be fast getting the spare one onto me.

GEORGE

I don't want two casualties.

it's not on, Kevin!

KEVIN

If we don't do it my way, you're going to have two casualties. We don't have enough air in here to get back to Pavonis.

Just get that helmet onto me fast.

GEORGE

Hand it here, Steve. I'll do it.

They get ready. Steve holds the zipper fastener on the survival pod. Simon and Harry hold the backpack, and George has the helmet ready.

GEORGE

On the count of three, Kev.
Breathe right out - mouth
shut. Hold your nose.
Fingers on your eyeballs. Let
go when we start to put the
helmet on.
Ready.
One! Two! Three!

The zipper is released, and there is a puff of compressed air as the contents blow out. Kev's head bursts through the opening, swelling as it comes. Blood starts to pour from the eyes and other orifices, as George puts the helmet on him, seals it, and turns on the pressure. Kevin collapses onto the ground. George squats beside him and goes through stabilisation with the back pack.

STEVEN

How is he?

KEVIN

(Gasping)
I'm right. I'll be all right.
See to Pierre.

See to him.

INSIDE THE OLYMPUS BASE HOSPITAL SECTION DAY

Neil looks in on Kevin who is lying in bed with his eyes bandaged.

NEIL

So when are the bandages
coming off?

KEVIN

Two days. Joe says the eyes
are fine - nothing to worry
about. How's Pierre?

NEIL

Very sick. We thought we
might lose him for a while,
but he pulled through.

long break

He's lost his eyes.

KEVIN

Oh, shit.
The poor little bastard.

Kevin puts his hand on Neil's arm.

Find out who shot him?

NEIL

He wasn't shot.
It was a tiny meteorite.

We recovered fragments from
the face-plate.

That sound you heard was the
rock breaking the sound
barrier as it came in.

KEVIN

You're pulling my chain. The
odds are ...

NEIL

Astronomical? Mars is being
bombarded all the time.
Atmosphere's too thin to burn
them all up. You're both
lucky it was such a small one.

He presses a tiny stone into Kevin's hand.

I was always concerned about
the concept of having children
in space. On Mars. It's so
dangerous.

KEVIN

We colonists always take our
children with us. It's what
makes us whole people.

Mars is a colony - not just an
experiment.

We knew it would be dangerous.
We were even prepared to lose
some along the way.

That's the price of progress.

NEIL

Well it ... It hurts badly
when it's someone you know.

INT PAVONIS CONTROL NIGHT

George is in his private office. He is
examining Pierre's helmet, marveling at the
damage done to it. He imagines Pierre's voice:

memory flash

Pierre is looking at the purple colored helmet
before putting it on.

PIERRE

(V.O. flashback)

I hate purple.
Yeah well...

See you later guys.

GEORGE'S WORKSTATION IN PAVONIS BASE

The workstation is a marvel of development.
Mars has come a long way. Leapfrog technology
is hard at work. Robots work at a lathe turning
out small Gas Compressors. A small assembly
line is busy producing compressed food blocks.

In one corner, George works carefully on the
helmet, and with a pair of tweezers, picks up a
small metallic object - the remains of a
bullet. He is so intent on the object, that he
hasn't noticed Karla entering behind him.
She places her hands on his shoulders and looks
at the bullet.

KARLA

It was meant for me, wasn't
it?

He puts the bullet down and holds onto her
hands, leaning back to look up at her face.

GEORGE

We think so. I was wondering.
Do you know of any reason why
someone would want to kill
you?

KARLA

No.
I'm scared, George.

Surely they could check on who
was where at the time.

GEORGE

There are up to two hundred
people scattered about Mars at
the moment. Prospecting,
surveying, Not all of them are
on official business.

Not all of them are being
monitored. They keep their
claims secret until they've
been registered.

KARLA

And you can't monitor them?

GEORGE

Blame privacy legislation.
There's big money to be made
here, Karla. And I mean -
Billions. Successful
colonization of Mars is the
Key to the Solar System.

Besides, Mars Authority is
doing a lot of surveying at
the moment.
They're not sitting on their
hands.

KARLA

I know all that. Low Gravity
means we can build space ships
here and launch them cheaply.

We can build massive
structures that wouldn't stand
up on Earth.

Karla hands George a food biscuit, and takes one for herself. She nibbles on it tentatively, then chews it and swallows.

We can even make our own food and rocket fuel from Carbon dioxide and hydrogen. Mars has everything we need.

GEORGE

It just has to be converted. We build small things, and these are used to build larger units, and so on.

We're putting in the infrastructure for the future.

They've started the railway from Olympus to Pavonis and across to Gusev Crater. It's a ceramic track - made from Martian soil.

We melt it, form it, and lay it in one operation. Have you been to Gusev yet?

KARLA

No.

GEORGE

They've organized a student excursion. I reckon we can hitch a ride with them.

EXT. GUSEV CRATER (SW OF OLYMPUS MONS)

A huge WINDMILL farm provides power for GUSEV TOWN, built on the old lakebed of Gusev Crater. Its main purpose is to pump water from Gusev to Pavonis and Olympus. The PIPES are heated by wind-powered electricity turbines which march off into the distance. A MONORAIL atop the pipes brings a tube train to a monorail station. A huge geodesic DOME encloses part of Gusev, soon to be an industrial town South of the Power Farm. At the moment, it is empty - a huge dome of white plastic enclosing acres of red sand.

PATRICIA, WALTER, CLARE, SAMUEL, BENJAMIN, MARIA, HENRIETTA, BARRY, and CHRIS, are in a school party visiting the site of the proposed industrial city. They are accompanied by AIDA and STANLEY Walters, LAUREN, and SEAN. They are all in Marsuits, some are covered with copper or silver instead of gold. GEORGE and KARLA are the last out, and they move off to do their own thing.

LAUREN

I want all of the children to
line up here

she organizes everyone

while Mr. Walters tells you
what is happening here in
Gusev.

STANLEY

Thanks, Lauren.

He points around the dome.

This is the largest
pressurized dome in the solar
system, and will let one
thousand people live nearly
normal lives on Mars.

All the people here will be
working to produce food for
the colonies, and some will be
running the steel mills and
factories.

PATRICIA

Why is it here?

LAUREN

Put your hand up if you want
to ask a question, Patricia.

STANLEY

Good idea.
Well, Patricia, there's lots
of underground water here.
Mars has lots of everything
else we need, but water is
pretty scarce.

HENRIETTA

Why don't...

He remembers and puts up his hand.

Why don't we get it from the
North Pole?

LAUREN

Does anyone know the answer?

Patricia

PATRICIA

Because it's too cold and too
far away.

STANLEY

We're working on it though.
Once we can get that water,
there'll be nothing stopping
us.

MARIA

Will we all be Martians then?

Oops! I forgot to put my hand
up.

Stanley smiles indulgently.

STANLEY

I think we're all Martians
now.

GUSEV AGRICULTURAL STATION

SAME TIME

George and Karla are strolling through a large
field of vegetables within a large white
plastic dome tent. They are holding hands.

GEORGE

Well, what do you think?

They stop and face each other, then embrace
each other, silhouetted against the soft
background of white plastic and waving crops.

Could you live in a place like
this?

KARLA

And grow cabbages and other
little things?

GEORGE

Didn't your parents ever tell
you that the cabbage story is
a myth?

KARLA

Do you want to tell me the
real story? Hmmm?

GEORGE

We could get an apartment
here, and tell each other
stories and grow cabbages and
things.

KARLA

I'd love nothing more than
that. What about Steven?

GEORGE

He's a young man now. Old
enough to begin to look after
himself. He's sweet on Clare.

KARLA

And Maria, and Jennifer,
and...

I don't really think we need
to talk about them. Let's
just talk about us.

EXT. SAND AND ROCK PLAIN SOUTH OF GUSEV CRATER DAY

A large prime mover is crawling slowly over the
plain. As it comes closer we see it is being
driven by Steven, with Harry and Simon as
passengers. On the trailer is a habitat
module, drilling rig, and pumping station.

INTERIOR PRIME MOVER

The boys are in Marsuits. Harry and Simon are
looking at a map that is folded in front of

them. Simon looks at the MPS unit and hits it gently.

STEVEN
Don't do that.

SIMON
It hasn't changed much for the last few minutes.

STEVEN
Guys, I'm driving slowly - or hadn't you noticed?

HARRY
I think we have noticed that, Stevie the Wonder boy. You are driving very slowly.

SIMON
It's a flat plain, for Mars sake. I mean - it's not as if we're going to stake a tire or anything.

STEVEN
It's the "Or anything" that worries me.
O.K. I'll give it the herbs.

EXTERIOR SHOT OF PRIME MOVER

It accelerates across the plain, hurling a dust cloud behind it.

SIMON
Now we're going somewhere.

There is a loud protesting noise from the engine, and suddenly, severe vibration. Steven slams the clutch home and the Prime Mover coasts to a stop.

STEVEN
And now we're not.

Going anywhere, I mean.
Simon,

Where are we, anyway?

HARRY

(Consults the MPS.)
Fifteen point 12 South and One
hundred and Eighty-five point
two degrees west
by courtesy of the Mars
Positioning Satellites.

SIMON

Does that mean anything to
you?

HARRY

No, but it sounds good.

STEVEN

South South West of Gusev
Crater. And a bloody long
walk home. In fact, it's out
of walking range.

Start up the generator, Harry.
We'll let them know we've
stopped.

Harry fiddles with the controls. There is a
grinding sound, then nothing.

HARRY

Uh, oh.

STEVEN

Suits checked. Let's take a
look.

They open the cabin door and exit the cab,
landing softly onto the Martian surface.

OUTSIDE THE PRIME MOVER

DAY

A large steaming puddle of what looks to be
blue water is spreading over the floor of the
desert around the prime mover and trailers.
There is a sudden "klunk" and a spray of liquid
oxygen fountains from a tank. The boys move
quickly away from the Prime Mover as the spray
covers the cabin and the habitat.

SIMON

Did you check the connections
to the Lox tank, Harry?

HARRY
(Defensively)
Yes I did, Simple Simon.

STEVEN
Cut it out, you two.
And don't step in that stuff.
It'll freeze you solid.

Now we can't get into the
cabin or the habitat.

HARRY
I know. I know

SIMON
We know.

HARRY
But there's one thing we don't
know.

How are we going to get out of
this mess?

STEVEN
We can't do anything until the
LOX evaporates. That'll take
about an hour. Maybe more. I
say we have a look around
while we're waiting.

We're supposed to be
surveying, anyway.

They check out their backpacks and move off
together, leaving the Prime Mover stranded in
the desert behind them.

We see the silhouette of the Prime Mover as the
sky darkens in the West, High blowing dust, and
high, thin, frosty clouds, give Mars a
beautiful red sunset.

intercut:

PAVONIS CONTROL AND OLYMPUS CONTROL NIGHT

Karla is on the phone to Neil at Olympus.

She is a bit worried that Steven has missed his check call.

KARLA

I know.

We're supposed to give them two missed check-calls before we start a Search And Rescue.

That's my brother out there.

NEIL

Those boys are experienced, Karla.

There isn't much we can do until morning, anyway. What's the weather doing down there?

KARLA

Blowing dust - and that's another thing. We could be in for a large dust storm,

NEIL

That could be interfering with their radio traffic. You know how hard it is when there's a large dust storm. I'll do a satellite check of their area.

And I'll get Gordon onto preparing some vehicles, just in case they miss their midnight call.

KARLA

Thanks, Neil. Over and out.

She hangs up the phone.

IN OLYMPUS BASE CONTROL ROOM

NIGHT

Pierre turns from his chair at the communications console. He wears dark sunglasses to cover his scarred eyes, more for cosmetic purposes than anything else.

Beside his chair is his white folding cane.

He turns to give Neil his report - not so much to see him, but so that Neil can hear him better.

PIERRE

No movement on that frequency, commander. It's not that they're trying to get through - there is no signal at all.

NEIL

Keep listening, Pierre.
Record anything you get.

We can filter it later.

PIERRE

It's quarter past twelve, Sir.

NEIL

I know. Give it until
midnight at Twelve thirty -
eight.

They watch the clock. We see the digital numbers move to twelve thirty eight, (Midnight on Mars) then zero.

Neil purses his lips tightly. They sit waiting for a while, and the phone rings. Neil picks it up.

NEIL

No contact?

PIERRE

I've got nothing as well, sir.

NEIL

(Puts the phone down in
resignation.)
Pierre. Log the time for
commencement of Search and
Rescue efforts at Zero hundred

hours, 25th of Ganymede, Year
M twelve.

Wake the team up, Gordon.
We're going to Gusev.
Our arrival Ten a.m. local
time.

INSIDE A DEEP CAVE IN VALLEY WALL. NIGHT

The walls of the cavern are lit by a glowing
plastic ball, a FIELD SURVIVAL POD, about two
metres in diameter. It is frosted over inside,
but a hand wipes the condensation away and
Simon looks out through the window he has made.

A sandstorm rages outside, but the cave is
fairly good protection.

INSIDE THE SURVIVAL POD NIGHT

Steven, Harry, and Simon are shivering with
cold. They have curled up together in a tight
ball to share warmth.

HARRY

Whoever designed these suits
didn't have nighttime in mind.

SIMON

They're daywear, stupid.

STEVEN

It's a hundred below, outside,
and we haven't turned into
Popsicles yet,
So ... Stop complaining.

HARRY

If you're happy and you know
it, clap your hands...

SIMON

Stop it!

STEVEN

Hey, guys. Give us a break.
Try to get some sleep.

Harry is playing with a large clear cubic rock crystal about 6cm across

HARRY

I bet we could invent some kind of dice game with this. How's our air supply, Steven?

STEVEN

It's working fine. We've got at least twelve hours. Stop worrying. The truck's not going to move over night.

SIMON

Not without oxygen, it's not.

parked prime mover with trailers. night

The cabin lights have come on with the darkening of night, to reveal windswept sand has already climbed halfway up the windows. The large dune is moving, and the Prime mover and trailers are rapidly disappearing beneath the sand.

SANDY PLAIN WHERE PRIME MOVER IS BURRIED
MORNING

The boys are standing on the top of a sand dune, looking for the prime mover and trailers. They are completely bamboozled by the changed appearance of the marrain and the fact that the vehicle has vanished.

STEVEN

I'm sure we parked it here

SIMON

We've come to the wrong place, Steven. The truck is South of here.

HARRY

This doesn't even look like where we parked it.

SIMON

I think we're lost.

Lost in Space.

STEVEN

Simon, I'm not in the mood.

The M.P.S. says ... this is where we were yesterday.

SIMON

Somebody stole it?

HARRY

I can see where the truck is. But nobody move. Do Not go towards it.

The sand several metres in front of them is being disturbed by an uprush of air. The liquid oxygen, is bubbling towards the surface.

It's like quicksand.

If you step on it, you'll sink.

STEVEN

Shit. The storm buried it. That must be gas from the tank. Now what will we do?

SIMON

I think this is as good a time as any to call for help. Use the emergency beacon.

He pulls it from his pack and deploys the antennae.

STEVEN

They won't be able to get here in one hour.

NEIL (FILTERED)

We have contact, Explorer Five. This is Search and Rescue One, Over.

At the sound of this contact, the boys cheer loudly and dance about on the sand.

STEVEN

Contact confirmed SAR One.
Contact confirmed. We are in
need of assistance. What is
your position? Over.

SIMON

If you'd bother to look behind
you, Oh Great Leader, He's
coming in right up your tail.

They turn around and see the jump jet rocketing
in silently towards their position

It doesn't seem loud, because Sound doesn't
travel well in the thin air of Mars.

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE OLYMPUS BASE LATER

George and Neil are having a thundering row
across his desk. It is their first real
argument,

GEORGE

There is no way I'm having any
charges brought against those
boys.

What happened could have
happened to anyone, and you
know it.

NEIL

No.
I don't know it.

What the hell were they doing
down there in the first place?
And where were you? Not with
them.

GEORGE

It was a routine geological
survey. They've done four
similar patrols before -
without incident.

NEIL

This couldn't have come at a worse time. The publicity on Earth over this one incident...

Three young boys lost on a hostile planet. While doing adult's work.

You've got no idea of the sort of pressure being put on us.

Senator Jones wants to close Mars down. Reduce it to a research base.

GEORGE

That's your worry, isn't it? Senator Jones and his Mars Watchdog Committee

They know nothing about Mars. Everything here is different.

NEIL

They don't see it that way. To them, Mars is an outpost of Earth.

Kids should be in school. We should have duty of care. And on, and on, and on.

GEORGE

They had a malfunction, got out of the truck to inspect it, couldn't get at the problem right away so went to do a bit of surveying and got caught in a sandstorm.

So they took shelter and waited it out - thereby missing two call-ins, which triggered Search and Rescue.

Hey!
The system worked.
They were retrieved in perfect health.
The truck has been recovered.

There is no need for all this drama. We have nearly a hundred children on Mars. Most of the older ones do useful work. It's necessary.

As for Senator Jones. Tell him that Mars really is a frontier. Earth rules don't apply here. Children have to work alongside their parents as well as go to school and learn how to stay alive.

INSIDE STEVEN'S ROOM ON OLYMPUS BASE LATER

It's very roomy, bright and cheerful, with posters on the wall, photographs, some models he has made out of metal. It has a certain regimented quality about it, but on Mars, tidiness is a way of life. Outside, we see the Red Desert fade into the distance through a thick glass window. On the wall hangs a collection of helmets, and a space suit in an open cupboard next to a yellow evacuation notice. Marsuits hang on hooks in a tallboy. Controls on the wall contain light switches, air-conditioning, airmix nozzle, and survival pod bag, recharging backpack. It's a teenager's room, but Mars is always present. Steven is morosely watching his video-screen - an old comedy. Kevin looks in on him.

KEVIN

Mind if I pay a visit?

STEVEN

(Shrugs)

Come in if you want.

KEVIN

Just thought you'd like to know we've finished the repairs on your survey vehicle.

We got all the sand out of the Airplant then threw it away anyhow. You've got a new one.

STEVEN

What caused the breakdown?

KEVIN

Faulty connecting ring. If you were in space suits, you could have replaced it.

STEVEN

Well we weren't, were we!

We were in Marsuits and you can't handle liquid oxygen in Marsuits. We couldn't even get back into the truck.

We went for a walk.
What were we supposed to do?

Frack!

KEVIN

Hey. Cool down, little buddy. It's me you're talking to.

STEVEN

It's so unfair.

Nobody cares about what we did out there.

We found an aquifer. We found chromium traces. I brought back samples and positions for everything.

He waves his hand towards his desk where samples are set out neatly in rows, each sitting on a label.

Kevin looks over the samples. Suddenly, he does a double take and picks up the red cubic rock crystal from among its clear companions.

KEVIN

Ah. Steven.
Do you know what this is?

STEVEN

Some kind of rock crystal. I picked it up because it's got

a funny cubic shape. Clear, isn't it. I thought it might be flourite, but it's too hard. It isn't a dog's tooth like quartz. I've never seen anything like that before - not even in Dad's samples.

Kevin picks it up and holds it to the light. It is quite large. He picks up a loupe from Steven's toolkit and examines the stone.

KEVIN

I'd be very surprised if your Dad would have one of these specimens lying about in his rock collection, Steve. He might have a small rough one, but not a perfect cube like this.

Steven gets up from his armchair and walks over to Kevin, interested.

STEVEN

There are lots more where this one came from. That's why we went into the cave - to have a better look. I thought it might be a smashed helmet or something.

He peers at the rock as Kevin looks at him and gives him a funny little smile.

Do you know what it is?

KEVIN

(Almost whispers)

About a billion dollars worth of diamond, Steven, my lad. They take different forms. Hardly ever ever found as a perfect cube, but that's the structure of carbon crystals. And this one is so big, it's beyond belief.

STEVEN

Am I rich?

KEVIN

Not if you found it on company time.
But if you put it away, and don't say anything ...

I'll keep mum and some time in the near future, we can both go out there and look for some more.

STEVEN

Oh - there's plenty more. Not all cubes.
I brought back a bag full of them.

KEVIN

I can see I'm going to have to educate you about the diamond trade, Steve.

He moves over to the door and closes it so they can't be overheard. It hisses shut, and we hear his voice continue:

We don't want plenty more. We want a few good ones, and the rest crushed down into useful grinding paste. You see - what makes diamonds so precious, is - their rarity.

INT. THE COMMANDER'S OFFICE OLYMPUS BASE
DAY

Steven stands at alert in front of Neil's desk. He is wearing formal khaki dress uniform - shirt with epaulettes, trousers, black shoes, and some insignia. Neil is quizzing him about the breakdown.

NEIL

After you found the aquifer, you moved across the plain in a Southerly direction?

STEVEN

Yes, sir.

NEIL

And the truck suddenly stalled.

STEVEN

Well - not really. You see, I opened it up a bit - to give it a bit of a workout. Simon and Harry were becoming irritated at the slow rate of travel. So was I.

NEIL

Across terrain that hadn't been reconnoitered, and that might have had large rocks or hidden gutters.

STEVEN

Visibility was very good, and we started to move across sand at the base of some dunes.

I thought it was safe.

NEIL

Are you easily led, Steven?

STEVEN

Led?

I'm not sure what you mean, Sir.

NEIL

Yes. Led into doing silly things by the taunts of others.

STEVEN

Not usually. But

maybe this once.

Neil reaches under his desk and pulls out a "Black Box" recorder.

NEIL

I'm glad you admitted fault. It saved me having to squeeze

the truth out of you like
toothpaste from a tube.

As it happens, the mechanical
failure was due to a faulty
seal - and not your speed. So
you can ease up on the guilt.
Just remember - it was a
stupid thing to do.

STEVEN

Yes, Sir.

NEIL

Six strokes for stupidity,
Steven. It won't go on your
record. This is just between
us, and when it's all over, we
won't refer to the matter
again.

He takes his cane from the cupboard.

That set of pips on your
epaulette makes you an
officer. You have rank.
Don't hesitate to use it next
time some snot nose tries to
manipulate you.

Touch your toes.

INT. CONTROL CABIN GUSEV CRATER STEEL MILL DAY

A huge bucket of molten metal pours into a long
mould.

Karla is operating the automated controls from
inside her control cabin.

George is supervising.

GEORGE

We need to keep the pour
smooth so it doesn't create
bubbles or inconsistencies.
Just imagine you're pouring
custard into a mould.

KARLA

That's sexist, George.

GEORGE

I meant it to be. I was hoping to turn this conversation around to more domestic matters. Including sex.

KARLA

I'll put the ladle in its cradle, and we can be as domestic as you like.

The pour has finished, and Karla returns the giant ladle to its resting position. The metal ingots steam and glow a brilliant golden hue as they lie cooling in their beds of sand.

As it happens, I make very good custard. Even if Martian eggs come from giant worms, and milk comes from plants.

The custard tastes just fine.

Saturday night, seven p.m.
You'll have to share it with Steven.

GEORGE

Dam. I thought we'd be alone.

He moves in behind her and takes her hands, gets comfortable, and puts his chin over her shoulder. She is enjoying it.

KARLA

You wish.
He's at a lose end now they've stopped anyone under fifteen from working adult jobs.
Monday he starts high schooling back at Olympus.

GEORGE

Well.
At least he won't be trashing trucks all over the surface of Mars.

Karla turns around, and they kiss lightly as they talk.

KARLA

He enjoyed it.

It wasn't work to him.
It was a glorious game.

GEORGE

Work can be very pleasurable.
Hmm. So he's going to be one
bored little brat now.

KARLA

No. He's taken up a new
hobby.

Lapidary.

He collects rocks.

Takes after his father.

IN STEVEN'S WORKROOM, SOMEWHERE ON OLYMPUS BASE.

Kevin is admiring a computer graphic of the cuts required for a perfect Brilliant. Steven works steadily at the keyboard. They are wearing work overalls over their Marsuits.

KEVIN

Now you're sure you've got all
the sequences right? Double
check.

STEVEN

I have double checked.

O.K. I'll triple check.

Satisfied?

KEVIN

Let's give it a whirl.

The faceting machine begins to work, and a robotic machine is cutting the diamond. Lasers and grinding wheels get to work, and they stand watching through dark glasses, their faces

being lit by brilliant shafts of color emanating from the machine.

STEVEN

Just imagine doing this by hand.

KEVIN

No other way in times past.

The machine finally stops. There is a tiny tinkling sound, and the robotic hand places a perfect large brilliant onto a cushioned surface.

STEVEN

Wow. Look at that sparkle.

KEVIN

Now that is the product we send to Earth. Value adding, Steve.

There's no point in sending raw stones - they've got plenty of them. But this ... is something else.

PHOBOS STATION IN ORBIT ROUND MARS LATER

The latest interplanetary ferry, the "ORION" docks with Phobos station. Because it is a fast ship, many of the passengers are not under hibernation. Among them are ADMINISTRATOR HARDING, Fortyish, authoritarian, arrogant. His Wife ALISSA, wannabe, thirty something, blue rinse, and his son ORMONDE, sixteen, overweight and overbearing. The party, in space suits, moves down the access tunnel to where they are being met by Gordon Rogers.

INT. LOUNGE PHOBOS STATION. LATER

Harding's family, still in space suits, but without helmets or backpacks, is being officially greeted by the Mars Delegates.

Gordon fusses about, introducing various people.

GORDON

You'll soon get used to these magnetic boots, Mr. Harding. There's no gravity to speak of up here. This is your landing shuttle pilot, George Peters.

HARDING

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Peters. I hope you'll give us a smooth ride down.

GEORGE

Always do my best, Sir.

It's going to be a bit different having a civilian governor on Mars.

HARDING

I'm sure things will be very different from now on.

I understand that Mr. Gordschsky is going mining in his retirement.

GORDON

And this is our chaplain,

Father Sean O'Neil.

ALISSA

I didn't know our budget went as far as providing ministers of the cloth, Mr. O'Neil. Or do you work for God for nothing?

SEAN

Most of the time, I'm an engineer. I work for the church on Sundays for ninety five weeks a year.

ORMONDE

Yeah. I've heard there's a really weird calendar up here.

SEAN

Oh it's not that bad. Days are a bit longer, but with electronic clocks, it's no problem. Just remember that at Twelve thirty-nine, it's midnight and the clock returns to zero. Ten extra months are named after the outer moons and Copernicus. They're thirty days each. The extra twenty-one days are the three weeks of Perihelion. Happens nearly every two Earth Years - at Perihelion.

HARDING

Got all that, Son?

ORMONDE

I think so, Father.
In fact, we were briefed, remember?

He catches Gordon's eye and the major makes hand signals pointing to his watch.

GEORGE

Oh, I've just been reminded. We embark in about half an hour, ladies and gentlemen, so if you don't mind, I'd like to get everyone prepped for descent.

INT. MONORAIL FROM OLYMPUS TO GUSEV NIGHT

The windows are blackened - there is nothing to see at night. The ride is smooth enough, along a concrete track. Steven is returning from the Canteen car, when he spots Neil gazing vacantly into the darkness. His startled reflection is noticed, and Neil turns his head.

NEIL

Ah. Young Master Jones. Quo vadis?

STEVEN

Ad Gusev.

NEIL

You're very quick tonight.

STEVEN

Yes, commander. I try to be.

Neil smiles.

NEIL

Have a seat, my young friend.
And not so much of the
"commander" business. I have
retired.

STEVEN

Was that my fault?

NEIL

No. That was a storm in a
teacup, Steven. No, they
retired me because the bean
counters on Earth want Mars to
make money. They're not
content with settlement,
growth, and eventual
terraforming. It's all too
slow for them. They want it
all now. Yesterday if
possible.

Steven sits gingerly next to Neil.

I see you remember our last
conversation.

STEVEN

Oh that. No. I've just got a
lumpy pack. I'm staying with
my Sister for the weekend.

Neil opens his carryall and hands Steven a pack
of sandwiches.

NEIL

Eat up. We've a long way to
go.

STEVEN

Sir, nobody likes what's
happened to you. The Mars
Authority didn't even have the
decency to tell you until
Harding was three days out of
planetfall.

NEIL

A lot of people on Mars were happy to see me go, Steven. I told the Authority that I'd be happy to retire on Mars.

They don't have to pay for my return, so they're happy.

Your father and I used to go prospecting. Somewhere out there, is the richest diamond mine in the Solar System. He was going to tell me where it was. Wanted to keep it a surprise for when he returned.

STEVEN

So that's why Kevin and Sean wanted the diary. They wanted to see where he'd been, so they could find the diamond mine.

NEIL

They quizzed you?

STEVEN

Yes. I was able to tell them - there is no diary. Lauren got access to his stuff. Karla and I went through everything he owned. No diary. Sorry.

NEIL

Oh, no worries, Steven. There are lots of other things on Mars. After all, there's industrial diamond by the ton. No, what I want to discover is a decent copper mine, or a large Nitrate deposit. Near an Aquifer, if possible.

STEVEN

You're sure about that, Sir?

NEIL

I'm sure. How old are you now?

STEVEN

Nearly fifteen. I've been on Mars for two years. Earth Years. Doesn't seem that long.

NEIL

Would you consider yourself to be - from Earth, or from Mars.

I'll put it another way, Steven. Are you an Earthling or a Martian?

STEVEN

I guess I'm a Martian, Commander. If it ever comes to a choice. Oh, by the way ... Try Ravi Valis for Nitrates.

Neil throws his head back and laughs heartily.

NEIL

You're sharp, boy. You're like your father.

STEVEN

You don't really want to find a diamond mine, do you, Sir?

Sean says it would ruin everything. There'd be a diamond rush. Mars would be polluted and overcrowded in no time.

He also says that if Earth is anything to go by, the last thing Mars needs is to be terraformed.

Right?

NEIL

Sean and his friends are very passionate in their views.

STEVEN

May I ask you ...

Who tried to kill Karla?

NEIL

I think someone saw her as a threat. I had to stop that perception.

I had to prove to everyone that there was no diary.

No diary, no diamonds, no problem for the colony.

STEVEN

Earth wants to change things. Do you have some sort of resistance group. or what?

NEIL

No. There's nothing formal. No group. Just a general feeling among the colonists, especially the miners and farmers. They don't want to hand Mars over to the Multi-nationals.

Drink? It's coffee.

Neil takes a plastic cup and a thermos bottle from the carryall. He pours it full for Steven and drinks from the bottle cap. Steven drinks.

STEVEN

Thank you. What about Harding?
He's a multi-national.
Is he a problem for the colonists?

NEIL

You know Harding brought his own police force with him? They came in hibernation capsules.

STEVEN

They're a long way away, The
Mars Authority.

ON TRAIN TO GUSEV.

DAY LATER

Steven stands looking through the window at the level stony plain flashing past. He hears Neil's voice.

NEIL'S VOICE

People are going to die.
They're going to die of
stupidity. I ran a tight
ship. He's going to loosen it
all up. Democracy, red tape,
committees, reasonableness.

Promise me one thing, Steven.
Stick to the old ways. Keep
you pod close and your
survival cylinder full.

IN CHALLENGER MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL OLYMPUS MONS
DAY

Wearing Marsuits, Simon, Harry, Barry and Chris are walking down a corridor towards their classroom. They pass Ormonde and his older cronies, BILLY, MIKE, and NORMAN (All older teens) who are in casual clothes, without Marsuits, helmets, pods or cylinders.

ORMONDE

Well, look at the little
Martians. Hey, guys, what are
those for? Condoms?

He indicates the survival pods - small pouches on the boys' belts, next to their cylinders.

SIMON

Get out of our face, Ormonde.
You know what these are for.

He pulls his helmet clear as one of the boys tries to grab it.

ORMONDE

Oh, so tough.

He reaches forward quickly and flips Simon's pod pouch open. The plastic pod flies out and inflates automatically to its ready position, just as Mrs. Janice Frost (Thirtyish school maam) comes past with students in tow.

JANICE

What's going on here?
Ormonde, are you pushing your weight around?

ORMONDE

No, Mrs. Frost.

We're just helping this kid put his condom back into his pants.

She walks off in disgust. Simon deflates the bag, and with Harry, Barry and Chris, walks off, leaving Ormonde, Billy, Mike and Norman and other friends to laugh among themselves.

SIMON

That's typical. We get four strokes if we don't carry these. Where do they think they are?

HARRY

We don't get strokes. Not any more. Mrs. Teale said they're thinking of banning Marsuits at school.

She says it causes too many differences. Martians and others. She also told me to always keep it with me - just in case.

They enter their classroom - a bright, airy room with a magnificent view down the flank of Olympus. Miss Frost is waiting for them.

MRS. FROST

I want everyone to sit down and pay attention, please. We have some new policies to

explain to you, so settle down.

The older boys move in to the back of the classroom. Ormonde is still very much in charge of his group. He listens with some cynicism to her, as she introduces JACK GARDINER, their new school principal, balding, approaching mid forties. Officious, but efficient.

MRS FROST

Mr. Gardiner is our new principal.

The Mars Authority wants all children to attend school, instead of adhering to the old Work - School policy. Mr. Gardiner?

JACK

Just in case the boys down the back don't understand, we do have discipline here. Do you understand, Master Harding?

ORMONDE

Sure thing. Carry on, teach.

JACK

But because we're such a small school, we don't need oppressive formality. We've decided to introduce a progressive discipline policy. The barbaric use of the cane is a thing of the past. However, if you do not behave, we will put you through the school's disciplinary process.

As he speaks on, Ormond gives a mischievous nod to his friends. He produces a small plastic bottle, and puts something in it, then rolls it along the floor into a corner.

Now this school building has a fine safety record, so we

don't think it's necessary to wear those cumbersome Marsuits at school. It causes too much feeling of division, and those metal cylinders are totally unnecessary.

There is a whiff of something unpleasant in the air.

There is more of a danger that someone might mis-use one in solving personal conflict, or
.... sniff ... sniff

Rotten egg gas? Is someone being stupid?

The students start coughing and spluttering as the gas permeates the room. Simon, Harry, and the other Marsuited students take their safety cylinders out and breathe through them. The gas intensifies, and a couple of students collapse, choking.

SIMON

They don't know what to do.
GAS DRILL!

HARRY

SUITUP!

The more experienced Mars kids deploy their face-masks and attach their survival cylinders. Chris hits the emergency wall button, punching in the glass face and pressing the red alert siren.

Pandemonium breaks loose as the H₂S gas over-reacts in the thinner air pressure. Normally, on Earth, it would be a harmless prank. Harry picks up one girl and stuffs her into his Survival Pod. Chris packs Jack Gardiner and Janice Frost into pods that the other Marsuited children have deployed. The room is rapidly filled with pods. Chris rescues Ormonde, who is going blue. His joke has backfired badly.

BARRY

All secure, Simon?

SIMON

They're all packed up safe and sound.

BARRY

Depressurizing classroom now!

There is a hiss of escaping gas, and the classroom window swings up. The rotten egg gas disperses. Simon notices the bottle on the floor and grabs hold of it. The boys are examining it as the adult rescue team burst into the room. One of the men grabs the bottle from Simon's hand.

RESCUER

What's this?

The bottle fizzes furiously in his hand.

You'd better have a very good explanation, boy.

OLYMPUS CONTROL ROOMS HARDINGS OFFICE NEXT DAY

Simon and the other boys are "on the mat". Harding is trying to contain his fury. Lauren and Dorothy are in the room as responsible adults while the boys are admonished.

HARDING

I am mindful of the fact, that this stunt was meant as a joke, and you did retrieve the situation by your rescue efforts.

Now we can't prove you did it. And none of you is man enough to confess. So be it. But don't expect any thanks. You merely made the best of a bad situation

A situation that you caused.

I am sure of that. And I won't forget it.

SIMON

Please, Sir. We honestly didn't do it.

CHRIS

No, Sir.

Harding turns his back on them.

HARDING

Get them out of here.
From now on, Children are not
to wear Marsuits inside the
pressurized buildings. It's
bad for morale. And they can
restrict their movements to
public areas like the canteen,
recreation hall, dormitories,
and schoolrooms.

Lauren and Dorothy, who have been sitting in
the background, rise and signal the boys to
leave with them.

CANTEEN AREA - OLYMPUS BASE

LATER

Simon, Harry, Chris, and Barry are in their
favorite cubicle with Patricia, Garry, and
Anthony. They are indulging in their favorite
snacks. Ormonde and his gang: Billy, Mike, and
Norman enter the canteen and saunter past.
There is no gratitude in Ormonde's manner
whatsoever.

ORMONDE

Well. Look where the rats
pack.

It's all a bit much for Simon, who jumps up,
fists at the ready.

SIMON

You want a go then?

DOROTHY

Hey! None of that in here!
I'll have security onto the
lot of you.

She fronts up to Ormonde, hands on hips.

Listen, young man.
Mars is still a very small
place.

There's no room for anything but getting along with each other.
You may be relying on him one day.

Ormonde changes his attitude with a false display of friendliness. He puts his fists down, and backs away, brushing his hair out of his eyes.

ORMONDE
You're right, Mrs. Teale. Actually, I was going to suggest that we bury the hatchet and try to make friends. We'll just sit in this cubicle here next to them and talk over our future good relationships.

Simon sits back in his seat.

Dorothy looks a bit suspicious, but as they aren't really fighting, she goes back behind the counter to attend to the chores.

ORMONDE (SOFTLY)
So it's you or me, Simple Simon?

What do you say? Five rounds and may the best man win?

Of course, I'm older, bigger and heavier, but I'll bet you're quite handy.

SIMON
Fighting is strictly against regulations.

ORMONDE
But a moment ago...

SIMON
That was a mistake. A flash of temper.

ORMONDE

I should have known. Chook,
chook chook chook chook chook
...

SIMON

But seeing, as you're so keen.

Name the time and place.

HARRY

Don't, Simon.

PATRICIA

Go on, Simon. You'll beat
him.
He hasn't even got his Mars
Legs yet.

SIMON

Time and place.

ORMONDE

The big cargo bay in one hour.

It shuts down after Five
O'clock. We'll have it all to
ourselves.

INSIDE THE LARGE CARGO BAY

QUARTER TO FIVE

Ormonde, Billy, Mike, and Norman enter the huge cargo bay. They are impressed by the huge outer pressure door that looms like a great guardian to one end of the bay. Billy goes to put his safety tag into the inner airlock door, but Ormonde stops him.

ORMONDE

They'll see we're in here,
Stupid. Here. Grab these
paint sprays - one each. Boy
are they in for a surprise.
This stuff won't come off for
days. Now. Where can we
hide.

BILLY

There's a tractor over there.
They're putting new windows
into the pressure cabin.

MIKE

We can call them over, and
when they get here, Kaboom!

SECURITY TUNNEL ON WAY TO CARGO BAY FIVE O'CLOCK

Simon, Harry, Anthony, Henrietta, Garry, Barry,
Chris and Patricia start to walk down the
tunnel. They are sneaking past the men's'
staffroom, when one of the workers spots them.

An off duty policeman, still in uniform, calls
out.

MARS COP

And where do you all think
you're going?

SIMON

Ah. Just taking a walk.

HARRY

Yeah. There aren't many
places to go around here.

MARS COP

Well this area is strictly off
limits to any kids.
Are any of your friends
thinking of coming down here?

ANTHONY

We were going to meet Ormonde
and his friends in the Cargo
Bay. For a ball game.

WATCHMAN

You're supposed to use the
recreation hall for that sort
of thing.

I'll go and check the airlock
to see if any kids are hanging
about down there.

We've got a road train coming
in from Pavonis in a few
minutes.

INNER DOOR AREA OF CARGO BAY

WATCHMAN CHECKS

He looks at the door controls, which are clear of safety tags, touches a switch and closes it. It shuts with a hiss.

WATCHMAN

No tags. All clear.

MARS COP

Right, you lot. Hop it. Buzz off. Get lost.

If I see you hanging about down here, you'll all be in heaps of trouble. You might have had the run of the place before now, but times have changed. We're all safety conscious. There will be no accidents to children under this administration.

FLASH OF INTERIOR CARGO BAY

Saxons and sirens sound as outer cargo door opens to admit the huge road train.

There are explosions of paint over the tractor - green, yellow, and blue, as the spray cans explode. Also, a liquid red that sprays on then bubbles away.

KARLA'S APPARTMENT, GUSEV BASE.

DAYS LATER

Karla has prepared a sumptuous meal for George and her young guests, Simon and Harry. She is cutting Steven's hair. Steven looks at the table with surprise as Karla snips away with Vacuum shears.

In the background, the NEWS is being broadcast. Steven pays some attention to it, and some to Karla.

NEWSREADER

The board of the Mars Authority today voted overwhelmingly to sell all Martian Mining Concessions to an International Consortium of

Earth Based Companies.
Privatization of all of Mars'
resources will be in the long
term interest of the planet,
Senator Thorman said.

KARLA

That the way you like it?
Short?

STEVEN

Yes. It doesn't itch in the
helmet.

Is that a real chicken, or
plastic?

KARLA

Real. And it cost a mint.
You'd better enjoy it, because
I can't afford another for a
long while.

STEVEN

(INDICATING TV SET)

There goes my dream of owning
a mining company.

George enters from the kitchen with another
tray of food. He puts it on the table.

HARRY

Exile. I think I can wear it.
What do you say, Simon

SIMON

Oh definitely. I'll take
exile any day.

Steven gets up from the chair and inspects
himself in a mirror. He looks approvingly,
then joins the others at the table.

They settle down to eat and talk.

NEWSREADER

Up to now, prospectors and
fossickers have been able to
peg deposits and claim them
locally.

All such mining operations will be illegal under the terms of the new agreement between Mars Civilian Administration, and the Mars Authority.

Outside, the Sun sets brilliantly in the West giving a magnificent view through the main window.

The new agreement is the result of the Harding Report prepared by the current Mars Administrator, Gallant Harding.

STEVEN

The miners will never allow that.

(to Simon)

So, I missed the excitement.

Pity about Ormonde, though. Even if he was a first class dick head.

It's what Neil said on the monorail. "There'll be deaths."

I didn't believe him - thought it was a lot of hot air from an angry old man.

HARRY

They had a nice service. All of us school kids went.

SIMON

We wore our Marsuits.

KARLA

You didn't. Oh, that was cruel.

STEVEN

No it wasn't. It was ... a pointed gesture.

If they'd been wearing them,
or had safety pods, they'd
have been all right.

GEORGE

Actually, it's very sad.
Their family came all this
way, only to have their oldest
boy killed in a silly
accident.

KARLA

I used to hate Lauren and
Neil. They were so severe.
Remember? She caned me for
being late to a safety lesson.

You don't get a second chance
on Mars. You can't send a
corpse to its room, or counsel
it, or sit it on the naughty
chair.

HARRY

Hey! We're being morbid.

SIMON

Yes. Let's have a bit of
cheerful.

The outer door chime rings. Steven waves his
video remote at the TV and looks at the video
for a surveillance picture. It's Kevin and
Neil.

STEVEN (MUTTERS)

What an unlikely pair.

He waves the remote at the door, and it slides
open.

Enter. I know you're not good
looking.

Kevin and Neil enter. The door slides closed
behind them.

KEVIN

Is this an awkward time?

NEIL

We could come back later, but we've got something very important to tell you all.

KARLA

(Getting up to meet them)
No, that's fine. Sit here and join us. Can I get you gentlemen a drink?

KEVIN

That would be great.
We came to welcome the boys to Gusev.
Heard they were with you.

Kevin takes a scanner out of his pocket and scans the walls and ceiling, putting his finger to his mouth as he does so. They watch his antics in surprise as he moves around the room.

NEIL

You know how word travels fast in the colony.

Kevin puts the scanner away.

KEVIN

All clear. I didn't think they'd bother bugging you, There hasn't been time.

KARLA

You're both spooking us. Sit down and come clean.

She sets steaming cups of coffee on the table,

So. What's the problem?

KEVIN

Gallant Harding. Since the death of his son, he's begun to act... irrationally.

STEVEN

Like selling out all the miners was rational?

NEIL

That too. His senior police officer, an honest man, handed in a report on Ormonde's death.

That report said that Ormonde and his friends entered the Docking Bay on their own, with pressurized paint cans they had stolen from the Q. Store.

Their prints were everywhere.

KEVIN

Also, that they found bottles in Ormonde's room containing iron sulfide. The bottles matched the one used in gassing the classroom.

HARRY

So it proves the gassing wasn't us. It was Ormonde.

GEORGE

Ormonde was an arrogant thug. They should never have allowed him on Mars.

SIMON

Didn't they do personality tests on him?

NEIL

Harding accepted the report. Or seemed to at first. He knows his son was no angel. The problem is, it takes a great man to admit when he's been wrong.

STEVEN

Don't tell me. I'll guess. Harding isn't a great man.

NEIL

Patricia, Anthony, Chris, Henrietta, Pierre, Garry, and Barry have been arrested.

A group of Harding's police is on its way here for Simon, Harry, Steve, and Karla.

KARLA

Us? But we haven't been at Olympus for weeks.

Why would he want to arrest us?

NEIL

He's following a much nastier agenda. He wants to create trouble, so Earth can put in enforcers. Subdue the colony while it's still weak. You're the fall guys.

SIMON

How? And why does it involve us?

NEIL

You're just orphans. He thinks you don't have family ties, so won't be supported by the colonists.

He can lie about you, Monster you, Bastardize you. Whatever he wants.

KARLA

Go on. Tell us the lies.

NEIL

Well, it seems you're all part of a gigantic conspiracy to wreck the Mars Terraforming Project.

You're all supposed to be mad with rage over what happened to your parents on the "Mayflower". A group of young Psychotics, deranged by trauma.

We can't protect you if you're in custody. We want you to disappear for a while, until

this nonsense blows over.
Fortunately, we have a few
hours of leeway. There's a
problem with the train.

He pats his nose knowingly.

Finish your meal, guys, and
then pack whatever you need
for a long holiday in the
desert. We'll help you.

They finish eating, and get up from the table
to start packing their gear into haversacks as
the conversation continues. Karla puts the
dishes into the sink, but doesn't wash them.
She grabs some tins of food from the cupboard.

GEORGE

That's horseshit.
He's totally crazy.

Simon and Harry go to their room and get into
their Marsuits. Their luggage hasn't really
been unpacked, so their job is easy. They help
Steve and Karla get their gear ready.

KEVIN

Of course he is. But he's
constructed the case. In his
grief over the loss of his
son, he's targeting anyone
who's given him affront.

Indicates the food.

That's all we need. We've got
a cache of food. And some
outside help.

NEIL

And that's a lot of people.
When I was retired, there was
a lot of resentment against
the Hardings. Mrs Harding had
dreams of being the First Lady
of Mars.

KEVIN

Mrs. Harding's been snubbed very gently ever since she arrived.
All their social life has been spent closed in among themselves, with the police families and a few of the late arrivals.
It's become a closed society of them against us.
It's no wonder they're all paranoid.

NEIL

Sean's waiting below with a truck.
He's setting out to visit outlying miners' camps.
He'll take you to one of the mining colonies where you can all lie low.

OUTSIDE THE CRATER COMPOUND

DARK NIGHT

The four children are helped into the trailer habitat behind the well-worn Prime Mover that's become such a familiar part of their lives on Mars. Sean makes sure they are all secure and comfortable.

KARLA

The church has its uses.

NEIL

More than you'll ever know.

They'll all be right with you, Sean.

SEAN

We have these little talks in Latin over a secure satellite network that not many people know about.
You've scrambled the MPS, Neil?

NEIL

As the doctor ordered.
There'll be no satellite
surveillance or overflights
for forty-eight hours.
I couldn't do more than that.

KEVIN

And as it happens, the Jump
Jets are all undergoing major
maintenance - sand problems.
(He grins) It's a bloody
nuisance, all this sand.

Sean closes the habitat door and starts the
Prime Mover. He drives slowly out of Gusev and
into the desert night. Neil waves briefly,
then looks at Kevin and George.

NEIL

The irony of it all is that
the conspiracy that Gallant
Harding only imagined, is
coming to life all around him.

Well, we've looked after the
children. I suggest we make
ourselves scarce and start to
organize the resistance.

THE WALTERS' APPARTMENT ON OLYMPUS BASE
NIGHT

Walter, Clare, Samuel, Benjamin and Maria, are
dressed in their Marsuits and wrapped in woolen
blankets for extra warmth.

Stanley, Aida, Lauren, and Dorothy, all in
similar suits, shepherd them along a passage
towards an outer airlock.

LAUREN

This is exciting, isn't it.
We're all sneaking out for a
night picnic, and we have to
move quietly.

MARIA (WHISPERS)

We're not stupid, Lauren.

DOROTHY

Then you know why we're moving quietly, don't you. Right. Helmets on. Stan's going to secure this passage.

As they help each other to helmet, Stan goes to a wall control unit and opens it. We see that he is changing the local gas mixture - to pure Nitrogen. He closes the panel and gives the thumbs up signal. They move towards the airlock door.

Suddenly, four of Hardings' guards appear. They are all armed.

1ST GUARD

Right. Hold it right there. You're all under arrest.

The other guards move forward and grab Stan's arms. Suddenly, one of them goes catatonic and falls to the ground.

The others react with surprise, but collapse one after the other.

MARIA

(Holding up her safety cylinder)
If in doubt, pull it out.

WALTER

But they aren't wearing their safety cylinders.

STANLEY

Don't worry about them. I'll trigger the safety alarm when we've left. Then I'll jam the outer airlock door open. That'll buy us half an hour, at least.

They exit the base through the airlock door.

MAIN ROAD TO PAVONIS OUTSIDE OLYMPUS BASE.

LATER

The colonists have assembled a group of pressurized buses to take the children and many of the civilians to safety. Janice Frost and Jack Gardiner are in control of two of the lead

buses. Two armed colonists take position on each bus roof. The busses begin to move off. All that is left is a large group of stern men, all of whom are well armed.

STANLEY

They're out of the way now.
Let's begin to close this base down. Just remember - no permanent damage. Cut communications first.

There is a sharp explosion, and the huge antennae pole explodes, crashing to the ground slowly. Various satellite dishes begin to explode.

Then blow all outer airlock doors.

Another series of explosions erupts around the Olympus Base. The outer airlock doors, big and small, are blasted free.

Stan looks at a large container full of Space Suits and Marsuits complete with helmets. He smiles.

STAN

This is a mighty good collection of bad weather garments, Gentlemen. I might say it's a bit difficult to walk outside without them.

GENERAL LAUGHTER

STAN

Transport, water,

The monorail link and water pipeline explodes with a blast, cutting out at least a hundred metres from the link.

Food,

There is no explosion. We follow his gesture and see that the plastic domes over the hydroponics plant have been removed. Everything is frozen solid.

And Air.

The atmospheric plant's lights die. They flicker for a moment, and then there is a great cloud of vapor that squirts from the main stack.

And as we have all the transport, I suggest that we man these vehicles and depart for Pavonis.

The great convoy of vehicles - all the land transport from the base - moves out along the highway. As they reach the airstrip, the squadron of Jump Jets blasts off and heads South East.

LAST OUT, TURN OFF ALL THE LIGHTS.

Stan holds up a remote control and pushes the red button. The main transformer in the Power Farm blows, and the lights on Olympus Base go out.

INT LIVING QUARTERS COPPER PROSPECT MINE DAY
Steven, Karla, Simon and Harry are sitting in the recreation area with their new found miner friends, IRONSTONE BOB (venerable old miner) and NUGGET (Just as old), watching the TV news from Earth. Others are present, watching the news, or playing eight ball - a strange game in Martian gravity.

NEWS READER

Saboteurs on Mars have made a major attack on the main colony, Olympus Base, destroying essential infrastructure, and taking whole families hostage. At noon today, The C.E.O. of the Mars Authority, Doctor Karansky met with the President and members of the Security Council. A State of Emergency has been announced on the Red Planet. Marines from the Solar Defense Corps are at Olympus Base and

are said to be in control of the situation.

STEVEN

How did Marines get there so fast?

KARANSKY (ON TV)

We are determined not to allow radical elements to gain control of Mars. It is far too important for the development of the Solar System to allow it to fall into other hands.

IRONSTONE

They've been fed all the bullshit that Harding could make up. He's behind all this.

HARRY

Surely the resistance can broadcast the truth from somewhere.

NUGGET

And cop an immediate strike from orbit every time we try. Besides - they're not listening to us. Harding has their ear. If only we could put our side of things fairly, we might have a chance.

KARANSKY

Today, I appealed to any dissatisfied elements on Mars to come forward with their grievances and use negotiation to overcome any difficulties. We can settle problems in a civilized manner.

Sean brings a fresh pot of steaming coffee over to the group watching the telecast. He sits in with them.

NEWS CASTER

We received a more detailed account this morning from a former deputy commander Gordon Rogers.

Gordon appears tired and withdrawn. He speaks woodenly, but as the transmission is broken up, it isn't easy to assess the truth of what he has said.

GORDON

Former commander Neil Gordschsky, who has recruited other malcontents from his former staff, is leading the terrorists. He has influenced older teenage members of a group, known locally as the "Mayflower Orphans".

Picture of Steven, Karla, Simon and Harry.

NEWS CASTER

These children were without support, and very vulnerable. They were kept away from schooling and contact with other base families while they were secretly being indoctrinated into a cult based on conspiracy theories, false patriotism for Mars, and the ridiculous idea that, somehow, Mars could attain independent nation status.

Fortunately, younger members of the "Mayflower Orphans" do not appear to have been indoctrinated.

Picture of Gordon, Patricia, Henrietta, Barry, Garry, Pierre, Anthony, and Chris waving flags and smiling.

STEVEN

That's impossible. There's no way they could all support Harding.

It's all a set - up. It must be.

SEAN

There's no Way Gordon would broadcast like that if he weren't being forced in some way.

INSIDE DETENTION AREA, OLYMPUS BASE. FLASHBACK

Anthony is strapped down on a medical Gurney so he can't move. His head is unsupported, lying off the gurney so it falls backwards. He tries to hold it up to relieve the discomfort of blood rushing into his head, but can only do so for a small while. Major KRONNER (Sinister, in Military uniform,) stands behind his head. He looks over to Gordon and the younger orphans: Henrietta, Garry, Barry, Chris, Patricia, and Pierre.

KRONNER

It is so simple.
Not a mark on him, boys and girls. No beating, no pulling of fingernails. Just a pain in the neck which becomes agonizing after a few hours.

GORDON

I'll see you hanged Kronner.

KRONNER

I believe I'll bury you first. You have the choice, Major Rogers.
Make the broadcast, or

I'll walk out and leave him here.

ANTHONY

Don't do it, Major...

Kronner puts his hand on Anthony's head and pushes it down firmly. Anthony begins to cough and splutter.

GORDON

All right. Just don't pick on the boy. Let him up. I'll do it. We'll all help you make your silly broadcast. Just let him go.

Kronner smiles. He drags a chair over, and supports Anthony's head on it.

KRONNER

So reasonable, Gordon. And I didn't have to torture him at all. Just demonstrate the possibilities. The fact is, you're not even sure what side you're on, are you?

GORDON

You're helping me make up my mind.

GARRY

We're not helping that rotten Harding, and that's final.

Gordon squats down in the cell and gathers the children around him so they can listen.

GORDON

If we don't help, Kronner will hurt Anthony. You don't want that, do you?

PATRICIA

But that will help Earth.

GORDON

Honey, we're not at war with Earth. These are some bad men wanting to hurt Mars and Earth. People on Earth will find out the truth sooner or later.

He gets up and walks to the bars so he can talk to Kronner.

Kronner, leave me alone with the kids for a while, so I can

talk them into helping you.
Give me about half an hour.

Kronner thinks about it.

KRONNER
Very well. I'll just help
things along a bit. While
you're all deciding.

He pulls the chair out from under Anthony's
head, smiles at them, and leaves the room.

ANTHONY
It's starting to hurt like
hell.

GORDON
I know it does, Anthony. Bear
up while I tell the kids what
to do.

INT. MINING CAMP CURRENT TIME

television screen of children waving flags

NEWSCASTER
And we leave you now, with
those brave little Martian
children, cheering on our
forces, as they endeavor to
clean out the nest of
terrorists on Mars.

IRONSTONE
Are we recording this, Nugget?

NUGGET
Sure are. Why?

Another program comes on, and Nugget re-winds
the disc to the segment containing Gordon.

IRONSTONE
No.
Show Gordon and the kids
waving the flags.

What do you see?

NUGGET

They seem spontaneous enough.
All smiles.
Don't seem under pressure.

IRONSTONE
The semaphore, man. Read the
semaphore. Go back.

They all watch as the message comes through.

IRONSTONE
Bullshit. Bullshit Bullshit.

MINERS' LAUGHTER

The boys, Sean, and the miners take up the
chant:

Bullshit! Bullshit!
Bullshit! ...



But with their next message, the miners stop
chanting and become very quiet.



Steven looks up at Sean and Nugget.

STEVEN
What does it say?

IRONSTONE
It says,

"HELP. HELP." They're in
trouble.

INT. CANTEEN COLONIAL DEFENCE FORCE CAMP SAME TIME

Neil, Kevin, and a tough group of Colonial Soldiers are watching the TV as it happens. Some military activity in the background.

KEVIN

Useful thing, semaphore. If you're out of chat range. The miners on Mars are experts. Everyone should learn it.

NEIL

Trouble is, nobody on Earth uses it any more.

Good try, Gordon.

KEVIN

We have to try to rescue him, and the children. We've enough men here to lead a good raid.

NEIL

Take on trained marines? There's no way that could work. It'd be a massacre. Besides, that would be a Declaration of War against Earth. We couldn't win, Kevin.

KEVIN

Then what are we going to do?

NEIL

See if a very small group of us can get inside Olympus Base and carry out a small surgical strike.

INSIDE PHOBOS SPACE STATION

LATER

Gallant Harding is conferring with Major Kronner. They are observing satellite observations of Infrared tracks across Mars.

As well as the monitors they are observing, other Space Marine officers are floating about in the background doing associated tasks.

MORGAN

With this equipment,
I can locate almost anyone on
the surface by their heat
signature, Mr. Harding.

HARDING

Do you have recordings of the
movements of vehicles over the
last few days, commander?

MORGAN

We haven't been recording that
sort of Data, because it
hasn't been necessary until
now.

HARDING

Now - it seems that it is
necessary. Please make the
arrangements, Colonel.
I believe these terrorists
have a large base somewhere on
Mars, and I wish to find it,
and destroy it.

MORGAN

How can you decide who is just
a colonist going about his
lawful business, and who is a
terrorist?

HARDING

All prospecting and mining has
been outlawed. There should be
very little movement on the
surface.
Some around farming areas.
I shall institute a system of
movement permits, coordinated
through this station.
If we don't know about a
movement, then it's probably
the rebels.

MORGAN

Rebels? I thought we were
dealing with Terrorists, Mr.
Harding.

HARDING

Don't split hairs with me,
Colonel. I was promised full
cooperation from you and your
men. You are effectively
under my command.

MORGAN

My orders are that I am to
cooperate with you fully, in
restoring order to Mars, Mr.
Harding.
I don't have carte blanche,
and neither do you. The
safety of civilians is my
primary responsibility. Within
the law,

HARDING

The law. Well, of course, we
must obey the law.
It's those who don't obey it
that worry me.

Those who try to render the
Major Base on Mars inoperable
by sabotaging vital operating
equipment.

Those who hide the fugitives
that murdered my son.

I want them found.
I want them brought to
justice.
And I want them punished.

MINING CAMP WEST OF GUSEV CRATER DAY

Stan Walters has joined the mining camp with
some of the refugees. Walter, Clare, Samuel,
Benjamin and Maria are being bedded down in a
far corner by Aida. Steven, Simon, Harry,
Sean, and the miners are discussing the latest
news.

STANLEY

It didn't take the Marines long to fix Olympus. Just a day's work, really.

SEAN

You held them up for that day. That's the important thing. You say Harding's up on Phobos.

STEVEN

He must be scared.

STANLEY

Took the first available flight up. A chap called Major Kronner is in charge of surface operations. Right nasty bit of work, I can tell you.

There is a disturbance outside of the canteen hall, and two miners enter, escorting two Marsuited figures. The air steams around them as they approach the table. The men take their facemasks off, revealing Neil and Kevin.

There are handshakes and hugs all around as the two men are welcomed.

SEAN

Welcome, Commander, and Kevin. How was your journey?

NEIL

A bit rough towards the end. We had to walk. They're tracing vehicular movements with Infra-red imaging. I didn't want to give the campsite away.

NUGGET

How do you know all this, Commander?

NEIL

Let's just say I have eyes and ears everywhere.

He looks at their somewhat cynical faces

Oh, all right.
I set up the surveillance
network two years ago.
I've always known what's going
on.
That's what commanders do.

IRONSTONE
You're forgiven.
Under the circumstances.

NEIL
We need to coordinate our
efforts. That's why I've
organized a meeting of senior
colonists from all over Mars.
We want to send Earth and the
Mars Authority a clear message
that we didn't come all this
way with our families, in
order to be pushed around.

KEVIN
We're not a slave labor force
for Earth's Industrialists.
What we want, is economic
independence.

NUGGET
They sit in their offices,
sticking pins in the map of
Mars, saying 'This is ours,
this is ours', when it's not.

NEIL
A lot of those companies
invested in Mars. They expect
a fair return.

NUGGET
Nobody's arguing about a fair
return. We're arguing for a
fair slice of the cake.

NEIL
I've invited Colonel Greenway
to meet with the colonists at
Pavonis. We'll set up an
elected administration to

govern the colony. We should have had it from the beginning. Mars shouldn't be run by Government Departments.

IRONSTONE

What about miners' rights?

NEIL

They'll have to be recognized, too.

Mining is the key to developing Mars. The large companies can process the ore once it's been found and mined. That way, everyone saves money.

STEVEN

What about Plan B. If things don't work out?

NEIL

Steven, I want you, Simon, and Harry to prepare somewhere for the colonists to go, in case things go wrong. What about your gigantic cave.

NUGGET

What cave?

STEVEN

We found it in the desert. It used to be an aquifer, but it drained out, wearing away huge caves in the process. It's a natural underground base, if we ever have to use it. How do we get there undetected?

KEVIN

A bit at a time. Sensors will detect one vehicle moving in the area, but won't make much of it. We make up one huge road train with lots of life support systems.

At the drop off point, the prime mover stops for ten minutes to disengage, and then drives on over a false trail.

SIMON

And the next sand storm buries the trailers. Great idea.

NEIL

We need a safe place for our families.

We'll call it The Sanctuary

STEVEN

Why not call it 'Sherwood' - you know, like Robin Hood and his Outlaws. They all hid out in Sherwood Forest.

NEIL

'Sherwood' it is then.

MONORAIL STATION PAVONIS BASE A WEEK
LATER

The monorail, full of marine troops, arrives at Pavonis station to a large welcome by the colonists, all waving Earth Flags. The train is escorted by troops in other vehicles travelling alongside. Colonel Greenway alights from the vehicle to be met by a contingent of colonists.

STANLEY

Welcome to Pavonis, Colonel. I'm Stanley Walters, and this is Doctor Joe Pine, our Medical Superintendent. The colonists have voted for him to be our representative during these talks.

GREENWAY

Talks. I didn't know there was much to talk about, Mr. Walters. I'm here to restore law and order to Mars. We'll mainly talk about that.

He pointedly refuses to acknowledge Joe, who has proffered his hand. Joe shrugs with both hands, and then puts them away. He turns to his officers.

GREENWAY

Secure this base. Make sure nobody tries to leave. Remove any arms you find, also confiscate all space suits and Marsuits.

To Joe and Stan:

Until the situation is clarified, everyone is to consider themselves under house arrest.

To the colonists:

Return to your homes or dormitories. We'll call you when we want to interview you. Until then, anyone outside of their accommodation units will be in breach of curfew and liable to be shot. Understood?

JOE

On behalf of the colonists, I protest. These strong arm tactics ...

GREENWAY

Arrest this man, Captain. In fact, arrest both of them.

Joe and Stan hold their hands up in surrender. It is the signal. There is a distant sharp Hisssss! as a small rocket flies upward, detonating a magnesium flare high overhead.

The marines react quickly, diving for cover, as the colonists also drop to the ground. The monorail towards Olympus disintegrates with a roar. Then the rail towards Gusev. The Atmosphere Mine explodes, taking with it the Greenhouse Complex, Water supply, Power

station, and Communications. Then the buildings explode, one after the other. It is a far more destructive action than the one that temporarily disabled Olympus. Pavonis has been virtually destroyed.

A long silence while the smoke and dust clears.

JOE

We're just a bunch of old fart technicians who stayed behind out of a misguided sense of loyalty, Colonel. Looks like you're king of nothing.

GREENWAY

We have supplies for a hundred days.

JOE

And after that?



I'm sure even your small brain can work out the fact that a thousand

STANLEY

*

The colonists grow their own food

water and air.
They make their own fuel.

You boys have come equipped
for war, not for survival.
Now you can treat us like
shit, Greenway, or you can
talk.
The Ball's in your court.

GREENWAY

Lock all the colonists in the
train. I'll talk to them when
I'm good and ready.

ON LANDING FIELD, OLYMPUS BASE
TIME

SAME

The gigantic mantis-shaped shuttle is being
re-fuelled by space marines. Unseen by the
perimeter guards, Neil, Kevin, Sean,
Nugget, and Ironstone are observing their
movements.

NEIL

The access tunnel to the base is used
to service the Methane and Oxygen
pipes.

It's got crawl space for technicians.
I wasn't expecting them to be
refueling.

KEVIN

We'll just have to wait,
Commander.
Hold on.
Look there.

A bus drives along the Landing strip from
Olympus Base. It stops, and several guards in
Marsuits get out.
They unload a group of prisoners.

Gordon, Patricia, Henrietta, Barry, Garry,
Pierre, Anthony, and Chris are all in space
suits. They walk to the shuttle with their
escorts, carrying their packs with them.

NEIL

They're being transferred to
Phobos.

KEVIN

That means they're being shipped back to Earth.

NEIL

No. They won't. They'll never make it.

In fact, I doubt if they'll even make it to Phobos.

KEVIN

So what do we do?

NEIL

Take them now. When it's least expected.

KEVIN

That means ...

NEIL

We have to shoot the guards.

He sets to work, cutting the security wire fence with hand-snips. The men with him ready their rifles. As they sneak through, Kevin gets Neil's attention:

KEVIN

We've got a wind coming up, Commander.

Neil looks out at the whirling sand storm approaching.

NEIL

We'll move in under cover of the dust. Stand by. Looks like we won't need to take anyone out after all. We'll use tranquilizing darts instead.

They swap weapons - replacing handguns with dart tipped arrows.

NEAR SHUTTLE

Patricia is standing near Roger.

She pokes him in the side and he looks down at her.
She switches off her radio and talks helmet to helmet.

GORDON

What is it?

PATRICIA

Don't look now, but watch my hand.

She points carefully, and Roger turns to see five Marsuited figures in Earth Force colours leaning into the wind approaching them through the dust.

The men fan out and mingle with the guards and Refuellers. There is a brief scuffle, Taken by surprise, the guards go down. However, sirens go off, alerting base security to trouble.

NEIL

We got your message, Major.
Sorry to be late.

GORDON

Well met, Commander.
But how are we getting out of here.

I don't think that little fracas went un-noticed.

NEIL

I was thinking of a bus drive, but I believe that would be too slow. Can you pilot a shuttle, Mr. Rogers?

at main gate olympus base landing strip.
minutes later

A security force in small open vehicles hurtles at top speed through the gate towards the bus where the figures of the re-fuellers and guards are lying on the ground. The dust is blowing harder, and it is not easy to see, until the

gigantic shuttle engines burst into life. The shuttle lifts horizontally, and crabs across the runway, blasting dust furiously towards the oncoming security force. The bus topples over and rolls towards the oncoming cars which have to swerve out of the way. Even on Mars, the noise is thunderous.

There is brilliance and confusion as the shuttle takes off in planetary flight towards the South West. Then the incoming cracking noise of the sound barrier being broken.

The men picking themselves up after the dust storm has passed can only look at the long vapor trail leaving the site.

INT. SHERWOOD STATION TWO WEEKS
LATER

It is a maze of rock and concrete tunnels. The walls are of native rock, but large flat areas of concrete have been poured to make level floors. Steven and Simon are repairing a small compressor on a workbench within the Control Area. To one side, a group of older men monitor outer areas with computer monitors. Neil, Kevin, and Sean stand around a strategic plot table containing a large relief map of Mars.

SEAN

Kronner's still at Olympus Base with the main force of marines. About four hundred men.

Greenwood is at Pavonis with a hundred, and Striker holds Gusev with a hundred men.

NEIL

Four hundred were evacuated to Phobos, but are on ready alert if needed. They don't have the supplies to maintain more than six hundred on the surface, and even then, they're pushing it.

KEVIN

This report has come in from Pavonis. Stanley and Joe are making some headway with Greenway. They're under House arrest, but officially helping with repairs. and free to move about during the day.

Steven comes over to the group.

STEVEN

We're running out of small screws and washers. We'll need to get that lathe on line fairly soon. Also, we need more copper wire, some magnesium ingots, and some steel flats.

SEAN

We can get copper wire in various gauges from the Japanese colony on Syrtis Major.

KEVIN

They're not under the control of the Mars Authority.

Unless they've got orders to the contrary, they'll be willing to trade.

NEIL

What have we got to trade?

Kevin looks at Steven.

KEVIN

We may as well let them know our little secret, Steven. You can't keep it under wraps for ever, you know.

Steven looks at Kevin for a long time. He is reluctant, but eventually he gives way and removes three large brilliant diamonds from his pocket. The largest glows pink. The other two are pure white.

He places them on the table.
Neil and Sean are dumbfounded.
Finally, Neil takes one of the stones and looks
at it in awe.

NEIL

Beautiful Mars.

KEVIN

I think you've just named the
stone, Neil.

NEIL

And you kept it secret all
this time.

Steven shrugs, then smiles. He pockets the
stones.

STEVEN

I'm told there are a lot of
secrets in the diamond trade.

KEVIN

These are too valuable to
trade for copper wire. We'll
offer them some smaller ones.
Standard cut, two, and four
carat brilliants.

STEVEN

We'll have to get a supply of
stones.

I'll take Simon, Harry, and
Anthony. We're a good team.

NEIL

I'm not happy about sending
anyone out on the surface at
the moment.

Our movements can be
monitored.

STEVEN

We'll be careful. If we
travel when Phobos has set
they won't see us. We can
cool the vehicle with a liquid

nitrogen spray to hide its heat signature.

KEVIN

Good idea. I'll get maintenance on to it right away.

INSIDE PAVONIS BASE. GREENWAY'S OFFICE
SAME TIME

Stanley and Joe are standing at ease in front of Greenway's desk. He feels comfortable with them that way. He's reading from a file on his flat desk screen. He looks up at them.

GREENWAY

All the evidence I've uncovered supports your version of events, gentlemen. It seems that Gallant Harding lost it when his son was killed. A terrible accident.

JOE

An unnecessary one, Sir. Ormonde wasn't screened before coming to Mars. He wasn't trained in survival. He treated Mars like Earth.

Everyone here has to cooperate and get on, whether they like each other personally or not.

GREENWAY

I'll send my report directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There will be no political interference. Harding will be recalled.

STANLEY

And Commander Neil?

GREENWAY

That's the unfortunate aspect of this whole business.

Gordschsky, Peters, Rogers and Maclean will have to return to Earth to face an enquiry, and possible prosecution.

In the course of this fracas, government property has been damaged, and lives threatened. Look around you.

He points to the obvious signs of repaired destruction.

Wrongs done on both sides, I'm afraid.

PHOBOS COMMAND CENTRE

LATER

Kronner and Harding are visiting the control room, discussing the latest intelligence from Mars. Morgan is showing Kronner around. One of the observer officers calls him across to a monitor trace.

OBSERVER

Sir, I've got something unusual here.

Could you please take a look at it?

MORGAN

Excuse me a moment,

He moves out of earshot. Kronner talks quietly to Harding.

KRONNER

I wouldn't have told you about Greenway's report if I didn't think it was in our best interests, Mr. Harding.

You've come out of the investigation rather badly.

HARDING

Does Morgan know?

KRONNER

No. And I haven't told him.

HARDING

You know, Major, I've always thought one should know one's friends.

Know who can be relied on. A man in the right position on Mars could become very wealthy.

He taps his nose with his index finger. They move over to where Morgan is watching a strange trace on the monitor.

OBSERVER

It's a black mark on the monitor. It fades very quickly, so it isn't ...

MORGAN

May be a glitch in the monitor.

KRONNER

That could also be an attempt to disguise a heat signal.

In trying to hide, they've attracted our attention.

MORGAN

If they don't want us to see them, it can only be rebels. Hmmm! Keep an eye on it. We'll definitely check it out.

SHUTTLE LAUNCHSITE - PAVONIS.

LATER

Stan, Joe, some colonists, and military observers, all in Marsuits, watch as the large mantis-shaped Mars - Phobos shuttle leaves on its regular trip to the space station. It moves horizontally like a Jump Jet at first, then begins to tilt upwards as its main rocket engines fire, boosting it upwards at 3 km/sec.

STAN

(Filtered)

Reckon he'll sort it all out
with Earth, Doc?

JOE

(Filtered)

We've got to hope so, Stan.
This nightmare must come to an
end some time.

There is an extremely bright flash. The sky
lights up as the shuttle explodes in a
brilliant fireball. The two men stand with
their mouths open in shock. The sound of the
explosion reaches them as a distant thundering
roll, quieted by the thin rare atmosphere.

They are still standing there, when a marine
officer, Captain STRIKER approaches them from
behind with two escorts.

STRIKER

Would you two gentlemen come
with me, please. I have some
questions I'd like to ask you.

DIAMOND CAVE SOUTH WEST OF GUSEV LATER

Steven, Simon, Harry, and Anthony are in Space
Suits collecting diamonds from the floor and
walls of the cave. Their speech is filtered.

STEVEN

Look for clarity.

We don't want to take any
badly flawed stones back to
Sherwood.

ANTHONY

This is like Aladdin's cave.
It's a treasure house.

SIMON

I can see that look in
Anthony's eye. He's got
diamond fever. You're carrying
them back, Ant. You've got the
biggest bike.

HARRY

Don't get carried away.
Remember - it's the rarity of

diamonds that makes them valuable.

We only need a few really good ones to trade for what we need.

APPROACHING THEIR PRIME MOVER

LATER

The boys ride their motorcycles back towards the Prime Mover. Anthony lags behind. His bike has a problem. He stops and gets off.

ANTHONY

Don't wait. I've got a blockage. I'll clear it and catch up. You'll have to wait, anyway. I've got the diamonds.

He lays the specimen bag on the ground and starts to fiddle with the tanks at the back of his machine. Steven gives him a wave, and they ride on towards their Prime Mover, seen in the distance. Anthony gets a good look at what happens next.

As the three boys ride up to their Prime Mover and Habitat, Marines step out from behind the truck and level weapons at them. They have been caught.

From where he observes, Anthony drops his motorcycle on its side amongst some surface rocks and lies behind it. He is not seen.

The three boys surrender. There is some business as they are searched for weapons and marched behind the vehicle. A short time later, a Jump Jet that has been hidden behind the prime mover lifts off with them, leaving Anthony alone in the Martian desert. He rolls over onto his back, watching the vapor trail streak away across the sky. There is a brilliant flash and the soft thud of an explosion as the Prime Mover is destroyed by an explosive charge.

SHERWOOD CONTROL AREA

SAME TIME

Neil's attention is taken by an alarm signal, which turns off suddenly.

Warning lights go on near the board, then turn off.

NEIL

Some kind of glitch at Site D.

Karla enters the area and moves in behind him.

KARLA

Is Steven's group in some kind of trouble?

NEIL

I'm not sure yet. It may be a stray bit of E.M.P.

NEAR WRECKAGE OF PRIME MOVER

SAME TIME

The three motorcycles have been blown clear of the area. Anthony begins to work on removing the Methane and Oxygen tanks from one of them. He places the tanks beside the four he has already salvaged. He checks the Oxygen gauge on his suit and takes a refill from the Motorcycle tank. Then he refills his water supply.

He takes out his emergency transmitter. He considers whether to use it or not, and places it on the seat of his motor cycle. He walks around the hot wreckage which is glowing, but no flames show in the CO2 atmosphere. A small sheet of aluminium plating catches his attention. He drags it to the motorcycle. Using scraps of hosing, he ties the spare tanks onto the sheet and secures it as a drag behind the motorcycle.

Finally, he digs a hole in the sand and triggers his transmitter before burying it. Then he gets onto the motorcycle and drives carefully away towards the North. He has to go carefully so as not to upset his spare tanks.

SHERWOOD CONTROL AREA

SAME TIME

The alarm goes off three times, then continues sounding. Neil knows that things have gone very wrong. He looks over the shoulders of

George and Karla as they work on their monitors.

KARLA

So what is that signal?

NEIL

They've been intercepted.
That transmitter will bring
Greenway's forces right on top
of them.

GEORGE

Not if we get there first.

NEIL

It's too dangerous, George.
Steven would only activate
that transmitter if things
were serious.

KARLA

It's Anthony's transmitter.
Not Steven's.

GEORGE

We've got a jump jet hidden
about twenty klicks from here.
You could be over that
position within an hour.

NEIL

I said it's too dangerous

KARLA

Steven's my kid Brother, Neil.
I'm going out there. Space
suits, George.

NEIL

Whatever you do, don't bring
the jet back here.
It will be a complete give-
away.

GEORGE

We're not stupid, chief.

NEIL

(Mutters)

Sometimes, I wonder.

PAVONIS BASE - PRISON SECTION LATER

Roger and Kevin, both dressed in overalls, have penetrated the prison dressed as maintenance men. They are installing large steel doors, welding the hinges into place in the cell block.

ROGER

Cover up, someone's coming.

They drop their welding masks in place. There is the sound of marching and a guard group of marines brings Steven, Simon, and Harry into the block. The boys are wearing one piece thermal underwear long-john suits, and round their necks are shiny metallic explosive collars. They are taken to a completed cell and ordered inside.

MARINE GUARD

If you attempt to leave this area, or if there is disruption to power caused by a rescue attempt, your collars will detonate.

You are under the control of regular marines. You must obey any orders we give you. If you behave, you will not be harmed. You will receive food, water, and medical attention if it is required. Do you have any questions?

STEVEN

Where's the John?

MARINE GUARD

(Touching control)
recessed in the wall. It comes out if you touch the black panel. Water tap does the same if you touch the blue panel. Red panel calls the guard if you need anything.

HARRY

Regular room service.

The guard smiles at this.
He shrugs.

MARINE GUARD

Major Kronner will be
interviewing you separately
when he returns from Phobos
this evening. He has a
special way with young people.
I'm sure you'll all like him.

HARRY

Kronner.

MARINE GUARD

I see his reputation for
firmness and fairness has
spread far.

Squad - About face! Quick
march!

They march away, leaving the boys standing at
the bars of their cell. The two maintenance
men begin welding the next door in place.

SIMON

What a total mess. Nobody
will know where we are. We'll
never get out of here.

STEVEN

There'll be something we can
do. Anthony's managed to get
away.

Kevin and Roger move quietly out of the cell
they have been working on. The boys react
excitedly when they see who it is. The two men
hold their fingers up to their lips in warning.

STEVEN

Hey, guys. How'd you get in
here?

KEVIN

Contractors. Pretended to be
miners - out of work and
desperate.
Don't give us away.
Pretend we're total strangers.

Let me look at those collars.

He closely examines the one around Steven's
neck.

Micro-fine wiring around the
whole collar, Break the
circuit, Kaboom. Electronic
lock with ten million possible
combinations.
Enough explosive to kill
anyone tampering with it.

As well as you.

HARRY

So how can we get out of here?

KEVIN

You can't.
I'm afraid you'll have to be
released by the marine guard.
He's the only one with the
combination.

HARRY

Can't you get at him?

KEVIN

There are only two of us,
Harry, not enough to take on a
whole marine garrison.
Besides, he's just an honest
soldier doing his job.

We aren't at war with Earth.

SIMON

But Kronner's the one who
tortured Anthony.

He's going to question us.

GORDON

We can't allow that. I saw what he did to Anthony. I mean - well it wasn't much, but it was a hint.

KEVIN

He's supporting Harding?

GORDON

Seems like it. All the way, I think.

KEVIN

Right. Steven, listen up. Here's what you do.

He motions the others away and whispers into Steven's ear. Something is passed between the bars to Steven.

Know what to do with it?

STEVEN

Worth a try.

I'll give it my best shot.

One of the guards enters the corridor. Kevin hastily takes out a tape measure and measures while Gordon holds onto the end. The boys move back.

GUARD

Don't talk to those boys.

KEVIN

We're just taking measurements. You want the doors to be properly aligned, don't you?

EXT. SANDY PLAINS OF ELYSIUM PLANITIA SAME TIME

Anthony removes the two tanks from his motorcycle and does the change-over of the last two gas bottles. He cuts the sheet of aluminium loose, and throws away the rubber hose line cords he has used to tie everything together. It is just him, and his motorbike now. The small pile of discarded rubbish looks

quite pathetic. We see through the visor of his helmet just how exhausted he is. He looks down at his instrumentation. A lot of dials are in the red, and there is a single red diode light flashing warningly.

He gets on, starts up uncertainly, and rides Northward once more. A small white dot trailing a plume of red dust across a vast red landscape.

INSIDE PHOBOS SPACE STATION follows on

The dot also appears on the monitoring equipment in Phobos. The observer passes the information down to Pavonis Base.

PAVONIS BASE CONTROL AREA. FOLLOWS ON

Kronner is handed a message. He looks on his screen - a copy of what Phobos Observer has seen. He looks up to his aide.

KRONNER

Get a jump jet out there to pick it up. I want to know what's happening in that area.

To marine guard standing nearby.

I'll talk to the leader of that group now, sergeant.

And sergeant,

Don't forget to remove his collar before bringing him to interrogation.

MARINE GUARD

Sir.

Kronner rolls his eyes upward in frustration as the soldier leaves.

KRONNER

If there's one thing I hate, it's a messy interrogation room.

EXT. SANDY PLAINS OF ELYSIUM PLANITIA LATER

Anthony's motorbike coughs and stops. He gets off it unsteadily and it falls over. Weaving drunkenly, He walks onwards. He sees an oasis ahead of him. Date palms wave invitingly. He looks puzzled. Everything is blurred. Sand swirls about him. Something loud, white, and out - of - focus swims in his vision.

He gasps for air, with strident noises. For a moment, his vision clarifies and resolves a white Jump Jet in front of him. He swoons into unconsciousness.

Blackness. In the darkness, he hears voices:

GEORGE

Anthony, can you hear me,
Anthony?

KARLA

He's going into shock.

Anthony. Hold on, Anthony.

OVER SHERWOOD BASE

LATER

A jump jet overflies the area, but sees nothing unusual.

It heads off back towards Olympus Base.

PILOT

Nothing to report below,
Colonel. I guess it was just
a whirlwind or dust cloud.

SHERWOOD BASE - CANTEEN AREA.

LATER

A large group of colonists in the canteen are watching the news broadcasts being sent by the satellite TV network. Neil, Sean, George, and Karla are there, along with many of the others. They sit or stand in silence as the broadcast is made.

MARINE NEWSREADER

Our corps will miss the
leadership of Colonel Morgan,

who was found dead in the control area of Phobos Station.

NEIL

Another marine commander lost. What's happening up there?

SEAN

Now it wasn't us, and it wouldn't be them, so my guess is, it's the Good Lord sending them a message.

And talking of the good Lord, I'm here to do his work with the splicing of a very fair Martian wench, to a most handsome Martian pilot.

Forgive me while I have a chat to the bride to be.

He takes Karla aside for a quiet talk.

SEAN

You're sure you want to go through with the wedding?

KARLA

We know that Steven's safe - for now.

They won't do anything to him, he's only a boy.

SEAN

I agree with you.

I don't think Steven's in any immediate danger. They are trained marines. Professional soldiers.

KARLA

It's Mars, Father.

There's never going to be a perfect time.

We could wait for ever.

SEAN

Yes.

Let's do it, then.

WEDDING IN CANTEEN

A SHORT TIME LATER

The colonists sit in rows facing the small stage area.

Karla and George, in white space suits, without back packs and helmets, are married in front of the assembled population of Sherwood.

SHERWOOD - HOSPITAL AREA.

A DAY LATER

Anthony is lying back in bed resting when Sean pays him a visit. The TV plays an Earth channel softly in the background.

NEWS READER

There was an unexplained explosive decompression in the chamber which has been sealed off until the bodies were recovered.

Depressed, Anthony uses the remote to turn the TV off. He rolls over, ignoring Sean.

SEAN

Are they still on about that explosion.

Doesn't the news ever change around here?

Sean gives him a playful backhander across his rump.

I've come all the way from Gusev to marry George and Karla, and to pray for your recovery, and this is all the thanks I get.

ANTHONY

It's not you, Father. It's just - things.

SEAN

Things not going right, you mean? I used to think that there was no justice on Earth. That's one of the reasons I came to Mars - to get away from it all.

Karla enters the ward room quietly. She carries a small flat box in her hand. She listens as Neil talks.

I thought - once - that Mars would be pure.
A pristine world.

A Garden of Eden, where we could start again.

No greed, no corruption, no evil.

A world without wealth or poverty. Everyone equal.

And it can never be that. Evil is everywhere. Where Man goes, Satan accompanies him.

Karla puts her hand on Sean's shoulder. He looks up at her in surprise. She hands the box to Anthony.

KARLA

Kevin and Gordon processed them for you - before they went to Olympus.

They've come out fine.

Anthony opens the box and takes out one of the diamonds.

He looks at it, and spills the others onto the sheet between his legs.

Sean is totally astonished.

SEAN

What in the fires of all Hell
is this!

ANTHONY

Some diamonds - for trade. We
were going to trade with the
Japanese colony for Copper
Wire and micro-tools.

Why?

What's wrong?

Sean is enraged. He grabs the handful of
diamonds and throws them across the room. He
turns on Karla.

SEAN

You knew all the time, didn't
you? Your father told you
where to look. I knew all
along where the diary was.

You carried it in your head
where you thought I couldn't
destroy it!

Anthony is frightened by the reaction.
He pleads for restraint.

ANTHONY

It was Steven who found the
diamond mine, Father. Not
Karla.

She knew nothing.

SEAN

Steven.
Of course.

How could I be so stupid.

Karla is backing out of the room, but she
doesn't want to leave Anthony with Sean.
Anthony slides his hand towards the nurse's
buzzer. Karla tries to distract him.

KARLA

You!

You're the one who tried to
kill me.

You're crazy, Sean.

SEAN

No I am Not Crazy! It's
starting all over again, don't
you see.

The greed. The thousands,
then the millions who will
come - seeking wealth, tearing
up the soil, bringing their
filthy, greedy, grasping evil
with them.

They'll bring hotels - grog
shops. Then brothels.
Fighting and killing.
Speculators. The Mars Stock
Exchange.
Capital and Labour at each
other's throats.
Evil. All evil.

In response to the buzzer, Joe and Margaret
have entered the ward. They move in behind
Sean.

For what?
A few miserable carbon
crystals.

That is why you had to die,
and why both of you will have
to die now.
To save Mars from more Evil.

He produces a revolver from his coat and lifts
it towards Anthony.
Joe moves forward to grab him.

JOE

Oh no you don't, Sean.

Put it down.

Sean spins quickly, jumping upwards while
turning to fire at Joe. Anthony seizes the
moment, picks up his hospital Drip rack with

one hand and bounces it off Sean's head. Sean fires wildly into the air, and drops to the ground.

Anthony bounces the drip rack about in his hand.

ANTHONY

What would we do without low gravity?

JOE

A lot less damage. That rack still has a lot of mass. He's well out to it.

Karla looks about the floor and finds most of the diamonds. She places them carefully into the box. The nurse goes for help. Joe turns Sean into the prone position and clears his airway. Then he takes a syringe from the medical tray, fills it and injects something into Sean. Karla hands the box to Anthony.

KARLA

Still want them - after what he said?

ANTHONY

We still need the copper wire. And the tools. Got any better ideas?

Karla puts her hand out, palm down and balances the stones on the back of her fingers, A gold band is on her ring finger. She looks at them sadly. She closes her hand and catches the stones in the air as they drop. She puts them into the box.

KARLA

Supposed to be a girls' best friend.

No.

Go get your copper wire. It's more valuable than a few old carbon crystals.

I've got the ring I want.

She displays the gold wedding ring on her finger.

ANTHONY

It looks really nice.
By the way, Mrs. Peters,
Congratulations.

And, Thanks. for coming to
get me.

INTERROGATION ROOM IN OLYMPUS BASE FOLLOWING

Steven is cuffed, his hands behind the back of a chair. He looks at Kronner with defiance as the TV news continues.

MARINE NEWSREADER

Mars authority has confirmed that Colonel Kronner will now act as commander of the task force which has been sent to stabilize Mars.

STEVEN

(With heavy sarcasm.)
Congratulations, Colonel.

Are you going to blame us for that as well?

Kronner ignores him, and points to the screen.

MARINE NEWSREADER

This means the gloves are off, and the administration is taking a very tough line with the rebels.

Unless Colonel Gordschsky, Gordon Rogers, George Peters, and Kevin Maclean surrender to the authorities at Olympus Base within forty-eight hours, All rebels currently held at Olympus Base will face summary execution, regardless of their age.

Gallant Harding appears on screen

HARDING

These boys have been tried as adults and convicted of terrorism and murder. If they are old enough to commit such treacherous acts of terrorism, they are old enough to face the death penalty.

Steven is shocked

STEVEN

What terrorism? What murder? We were just driving our motorcycles about on the desert!

Kronner switches the TV off. He moves around to the front of his desk and sits on it, facing Steven. He is very close. Threatening, but slimy. He folds his hands and talks very quietly - very gently.

KRONNER

So? Tell me where this Sherwood of yours is, Steven. I may decide to reduce your sentences as an act of clemency.

STEVEN

Never.

KRONNER

Never?
Never mind.
I'm sure Harry and Simon will be - more cooperative.

STEVEN

How long will you live? If you win, I mean?

Kronner hasn't foreseen this tack in their conversation.

KRONNER

Live?
If we win?

What are you on about?

STEVEN

I'm going to make a guess that you didn't kill Morgan or Greenwood.

I know we didn't.

And if you didn't, then it must have been - Harding.

You're next on the list.

Kronner's face is an iron mask. He hasn't foreseen this development. Perhaps the boy has a point. He listens.

Did he offer you wealth,
Colonel?
Undreamed of wealth?
Did he?

KRONNER

Are you accusing me of accepting bribes - of being corrupt?

STEVEN

I'm sure you're an officer and a gentleman, just as I'm sure nobody's taping this little session.

KRONNER

We're off the record.

STEVEN

Harding's corrupt.
He's working for organized corporate criminals on Earth. They're trying to control all the wealth on Mars.

KRONNER

It's very hard to get away with anything like that.

Steven looks up at Kronner in all earnestness.

STEVEN

Of course it is. He may get away with it for a long time, but sooner or later he'll go down, and you'll go down with him.

But ... If he gets rid of you, he'll survive a lot longer.

KRONNER

(uncertainly)

He won't try anything on me.

STEVEN

Honor? among thieves?

When the truth gets told, as it will, eventually, your name will be shit paper in the history of Mars.

Kronner slaps the boy's face - Very hard.
Steven nearly falls off the chair.

Kronner walks over to the wall cabinet and takes a drink. Steven has him very rattled.

STEVEN

I can make you wealthy beyond your wildest dreams, Kronner. I can make you famous - a hero.

All you have to do, is swap sides.

Join us.

KRONNER

That's enough!

You managed to get at me. That's good. Really good. It's my turn now. to get at you.

He goes to the desk and takes out a syringe full of milky liquid.

Truth serum. You'll tell me everything I want to know.

He brings it round to Steven and prepares it, to plunge it into the boy's arm.

STEVEN

Before you do that, search my left armpit, Colonel. I'm not joking. I'm not trying to get at you. Have a look.

Kronner puts his hand into Steven's clothing and feels his left armpit. He brings out the large pink red - diamond.

I said I'd make you rich.

Its name is: "Beautiful Mars." and it's worth - millions - of dollars.

As the colonel looks at the stone in disbelief, he puts the syringe down onto the desk almost absent mindedly. He looks at the stone, and at Steven, then back to the stone.

We won't kill you.

You'll be wealthy beyond your wildest dreams.

You'll have a medal. A statue.

You'll be famous.

You'll be a hero.

Even candidate for President,

Kronner suddenly seizes Steven by the front of his Grey long-johns and lifts him into the air face to face. He is very angry.

KRONNER

I will not be bought by a fifteen year old boy! My loyalty is not for sale.

When I have finished with you and your little friends, I

will have all the diamonds I
want.

I will destroy the rebels.

I will restore Earth's
authority over Mars.

I will be wealthy

And I will be honored as a
hero.

With no help from you.

PAVONIS BASE - PRISON SECTION. MINUTES LATER

Steven is back in the cell with Simon and
Harry. His neck collar has been restored. The
Marine Guard closes the door on him and
prepares to leave the area

STEVEN

Hey! You forgot to take the
handcuffs off!

MARINE GUARD

I have a terrible memory, kid.
Enjoy them.

The guard detail marches off. Steven slumps
down to a sitting position against the wall.

STEVEN

That could have gone a lot
better.

You know - for a moment, I
really thought I had him.

I did rattle him, though.

He didn't stick me with that
scopolamine.

EXT. SHUTTLE FIELD OLYMPUS BASE LATER.

The base is supremely well guarded. Companies
of Marines with enormous amounts of firepower
await the convoy of vehicles which approaches

from the South West. All vehicles are carrying white flags.

The newsreader faces a TV camera which is recording the surrender.

MARINE NEWSREADER

So this is the end of the rebellion on Mars. Marines are moving into position now, to search the vehicles, in case they carry explosives. If they are cleared, they will drive to the marshalling area where the surrender will take place. We understand that the bulk of the colonists are still hiding out in a secret location they call "Sherwood", but will probably surrender later.

As the four men have been searched, they are placed in an open 4wd pickup under guard. The trucks move towards the marshalling area with Marine drivers. The pickup travels towards the Shuttle Landing Area.

These rebel leaders will be taken directly to Phobos, and from there to Earth under Marine Guard escort.

Three youngsters in white space suits, carrying their space packs, are waiting for the four men. Neil, Gordon, Kevin, and George get out of the truck and are moved over to join them. From a convoy vehicle behind, Karla gets out with Patricia, Henrietta, Garry, and Pierre.

SHERWOOD HOSPITAL SECTION

FOLLOWING

Anthony lies on his bed watching the proceedings on TV.

Joe and Margaret are sitting with him.

intercut

ANTHONY

There's Kronner. I'd recognize him anywhere. I can't see Karla.

MARINE NEWSREADER

Colonel Kronner is travelling with the prisoners, as he is required to give evidence against them back on Earth.

The other civilian passenger, Karla Peters is the older sister of one of the accused young rebels, Steven Jones. Recently, she married another rebel, George Peters. She is not under arrest, but will be a witness for the defendants, along with other orphans from the Mayflower tragedy.

Nobody can claim that the Mars Authority is being unfair in this matter.

There is something happening towards the South. Everyone looks upward.

It seems as if there's an unexpected shuttle landing. Yes, one of the shuttles used by the rebels is being returned to the military.

The second shuttle lands beside the first. Refuellers move quickly towards it, and hoses are run out from the large tanks of Oxygen and Methane.

No. A message to hand, is that there is a small problem with the first shuttle, and that is a backup vehicle from Pavonis Base.

ANTHONY

Of all the luck.

ON SHUTTLE FIELD OLYMPUS BASE FOLLOWING

Neil puts his hand on Steven's shoulder.

NEIL

How are they treating you all?

STEVEN

Very professionally,
Commander.
I'm not allowed to speak to
Karla, but she's over there.

We see Karla with other passengers for Phobos.

You didn't have to come.
They wouldn't have shot us.

I'm sure of it.

NEIL

I had to come.

They were going to make good
on their promise to shoot you.

I couldn't let that happen.

A good commander always looks
after his men, Steven.

Real rebels might have thrown
you to the wolves for
political expediency.

I couldn't.

HARRY

We'd have been martyrs for the
cause.

NEIL

Sorry to spoil your fun,
Harry.

A marine guard comes over to the prisoners.

MARINE GUARD

You are all cleared to board.
Walk up that ramp there. Take
your seats quietly. You will
be shackled for the flight.

STEVEN

That figures.

MARINE GUARD

And gagged - so you can't plan anything stupid.

SHERWOOD CANTEEN AREA

FOLLOWING ON

The colonists watch the broadcast of the take-off in stunned silence. Some of them are visibly upset. The adults stand in family groups with their children. They watch the TV as the shuttle hovers in horizontal mode, then rockets forward, translates into steep climb and finally, vertical lift off.

MARINE NEWSREADER

We have Lift-Off.

Lift off of the military shuttle taking the rebel prisoners back to Earth, to face Justice.

There is a brilliant flash of light, and the TV camera goes dark.

OH what a brilliant flash from the field. There's something wrong down here. A tremendous explosion has occurred. It may be the Methane tank. Wait, some information is coming through.

There has been a major incident. Repeat, there has been a major incident. The shuttle on the launch pad has exploded. Repeating that, the shuttle that was reported as having some sort of problem, has exploded.

The camera clears, and everyone in the canteen can see the carnage on the Olympus Base shuttle field.

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE HEADING TO PHOBOS

FOLLOWING ON

There is a tremendous shuddering as the shuttle hurtles upwards. The prisoners are all helpless, chained securely into their seats by strong security shackles. They wear tube gags in their mouths. Kronner and the Marine Guard are not faring much better in the lift - off. The shuddering stops suddenly, as the shuttle goes into free fall.

Kronner takes his helmet off, reaches for a space bag, and barfs into it. For a while, he is privately very sick. The marine guard is more stoic, but looks a little green. Kronner turns to him.

KRONNER

Works every time.

Your commanding officer hates space travel. Tell anyone, and I'll have you shot.

Now, see to the prisoners. I don't want them choking to death with those gags on.

PHOBOS STATION CONTROL ROOM

LATER THAT NIGHT

The control room shows signs of repairs. Monitors have been patched up, cables drape in all sorts of awkward positions, and a great metal plate has been bolted and sealed across the window with sealing goo that has run slowly into weird formations. A comparatively fresh young observer is on duty. He is about twenty years old, and still keen to impress. Harding is his audience.

YOUNG OBSERVER

I'm surprised the last observers didn't use this old technique, Mr. Harding. All images contain noise, but it's random. Superimpose a lot of images, and the noise filters itself out.

Very weak signals become very strong,

including very small heat signatures.

There you have it, like a beacon in the night.

" Sherwood " .

HARDING
(Gleefully)
Sherwood. Sherwood Forest.
Oh, I love that name ...
"Sherwood."

He bursts into maniacal laughter and floats around the room doing slow cartwheels. The observer looks a bit embarrassed, but Harding claps him on the shoulder.

Never mind me, Son. We all have our moments. You've only just got here, and don't appreciate all the hours we've spent - looking for Sherwood.

INSIDE PHOBOS STATION DOCKING RECEPTION AREA.
NIGHT

Harding greets Kronner and the Guard, as well as the other marines guarding the prisoners. A TV cameraman films the event.

HARDING
Ah. Colonel. We meet again in more happy circumstances. Excellent conclusion to your campaign. Excellent.

KRONNER
You must be delighted, Gallant.

HARDING
Oh, I am. I am. And I have a special surprise for you.

We've detected the terrorists' base.

We've found "Sherwood".

Neil and the other prisoners are security manacled and gagged. They can only stand and watch Kronner and Harding gloat at their find.

HARDING

That camera can go off, now.
I want to discuss something
with you, Colonel.
In private.

The cameraman moves away, putting his camera down as Harding takes Kronner into the observation room.

PHOBOS STATION CONTROL ROOM

MOMENTS LATER

As soon as the door has shut, Kronner places his helmet under his arm and glares with anger at Harding.

KRONNER

What was that bomb for,
Harding?

HARDING

That. That. Now don't hold that against me, Colonel. I had no idea you would be leaving Mars at the same time as the prisoners. I knew the second shuttle was coming from Pavonis. I thought you'd be travelling in it. Not with the prisoners.

KRONNER

Any plans to entertain us on the way to Earth?

HARDING

Of course not. I'll be returning to Mars to organize the mining concessions for the Syndicate. We won't have any resistance from the miners

once we've destroyed their base at Sherwood.

Don't worry. You'll be well taken care of on Earth. You'll be a very wealthy man.

KRONNER

So everything has worked out well in the end.

The leaders of the colonists will be fighting for their freedom in the courts on Earth,

I won't be in the way. Did you plan it all to end like this?

HARDING

As a matter of fact, I did. Not everything went to plan, of course. But most things fell into place.

There's only one thing left.

The destruction of Sherwood.

Phobos contains an impressive armory of nuclear missiles, designed to intercept comets or asteroids which might threaten the planet.

KRONNER

You're going to nuke the colonists' home base?

HARDING

Now don't go squeamish on me, Kronner. Morgan had that problem. A lack of clarity of view.

I want Colonel Gordschky and his companions to witness the destruction. It will be the final straw - the one to break the camel's back.

KRONNER

Why not let everyone on Earth witness it? Bring in the cameraman.

HARDING

There might be some protest. I'm not sure.

KRONNER

After all the destruction the rebels have caused? Well - you, actually, but nobody's to know that.

HARDING

Well. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs.

KRONNER

Mars is worth a black mass, eh? Greenway, Morgan, two shuttles, Phobos Observation crew. What's a nuke down the throat of some inconvenient colonists?

Harding looks a bit cynical at Kronner's comments.

HARDING

You aren't trying to blackmail me, are you?

KRONNER

Of course not. But you over did it - all those killings?

HARDING

I don't have to answer to you. I killed them because it was necessary. Necessary at the time. That's all you need to know. Now bring the prisoners in so they can watch the destruction of their precious Sherwood.

IN CONTROL ROOM

A SHORT TIME LATER

The prisoners line up under guard to watch as Harding prepares for a live telecast of the nuclear destruction of Sherwood.

INTERCUT TV

HARDING

People of Earth and Mars. The prisoners you see assembled here are the leaders of the revolt on Mars. They are the lucky ones. They will survive to live out their miserable lives in prisons on Earth. The other terrorists, who remain in hiding, must be destroyed.

Destroyed, because they will always be a threat to Martian colonization. Mars is so fragile. It is so easy to destroy vital installations on which our very lives depend.

They are pests.

This panel before me controls the means of eradication. I intend to fry the rats in their holes. Even as we speak, we are approaching the target. Yes, we know where their secret base is situated.

They call it "Sherwood". As we overfly it in high orbit, we can remove it from the globe of Mars as easily as picking a pimple.

Neil struggles to try to stop him, but the guards hold him very firmly, as well as the others.

SHERWOOD -

Pandemonium as people in space-suits and Marsuits attempt to flee.

PHOBOS CONTROL CENTRE

HARDING

I now put an end to this rebellion and reclaim Mars for Earth.

He pushes down on the red button on his desk panel.

Nothing happens.

HARDING

Did it fire?

Kronner shakes his head.

KRONNER

No.

Did you get all that on camera?

CAMERAMAN

Earth got a fine bit of entertainment, Sir. Those scenes of you with Mister Harding were excellent. The president asked me to tell you that.

KRONNER

Thank you.

Mister Harding. You are under arrest for the Murders of Colonel Greenway, Colonel Morgan, The crew of Phobos Station, Conspiracy to defraud the Mars authority, and on and on and on. A long list. You don't have to say anything, but anything you do say will be recorded and put with all the other evidence against you.

Sergeant, cuff him and read him all the rights. And get him out of here.

Kronner walks over to Steven and removes the gag from the boy's mouth.

I had you going there, son.
Didn't I?

He personally unlocks Steven's security manacles.

STEVEN

You were on our side all along.

KRONNER

No, boy. I'm a soldier. A public servant. I'm not on anybody's side. I just do my duty. As it happens from time to time.

Neil and the others are being released. They stand around looking confused. Kronner looks at all of them and holds his hands out in a "So what?" gesture.

O.K.
I'm sorry.
I used you all.

I had to. There was no other way to expose Harding. He had too many friends in high places.

He puts his arm around the boy's shoulders.

Steven and I had it planned all along.

But our security was so tight, even he didn't know about it.

Right, Steven?

Steven is still confused, but is getting the picture.

STEVEN

Er.

Right!

Yes, Sir.

We did really well,

I think.

Kronner leads him out of the control room into the passage where there is some privacy.

KRONNER

You're all going to give evidence against Harding. Would you like to say "Goodbye" to beautiful Mars before you see it for the last time?

STEVEN

You had me worried, there for a moment, Colonel. I was beginning to think you were a good guy.

KRONNER

Wealthy beyond my wildest dreams.

I'll be famous, and a hero.

Right?

STEVEN

Right.
It's all taken care of.

He reaches into a seam of his Marsuit - inside his overalls and produces the two other large diamonds.

Yours - to keep, They're named Phobos and Demos. You've got the complete set.

They stand looking through an observation deck window. Kronner takes the big red diamond from his pocket and holds it up to the planet with the other stones. He whistles as he regards the diamonds.

KRONNER

Beautiful Mars. With two moons.
You know - I reckon you guys should stick around. We make a good team.

Steven stands at the window and looks down on the red planet turning beneath them. Demos shines brightly above the rim of Mars.

His friends have left the control room and they crowd around him. Steven looks for Kronner, but the colonel has pocketed the diamonds and gone. The boy looks out of the window.

STEVEN
Beautiful Mars.

Simon, Harry, and Chris push in to get a good view, standing on either side of him. Neil, Kevin, George, Karla and Gordon are behind. They watch the sun-set leaving a stark terminator over the land below.

NEIL
Beautiful Mars.

It sure is.

THE END