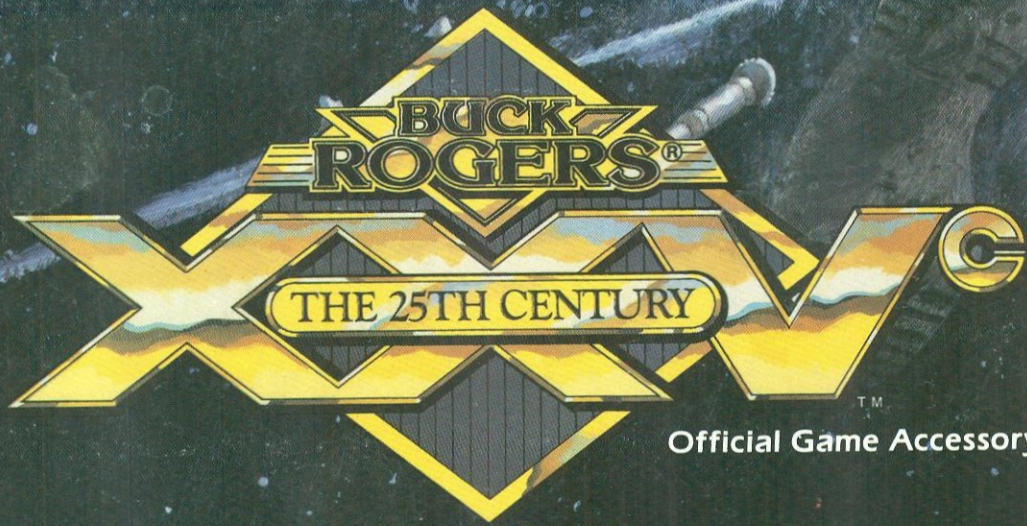


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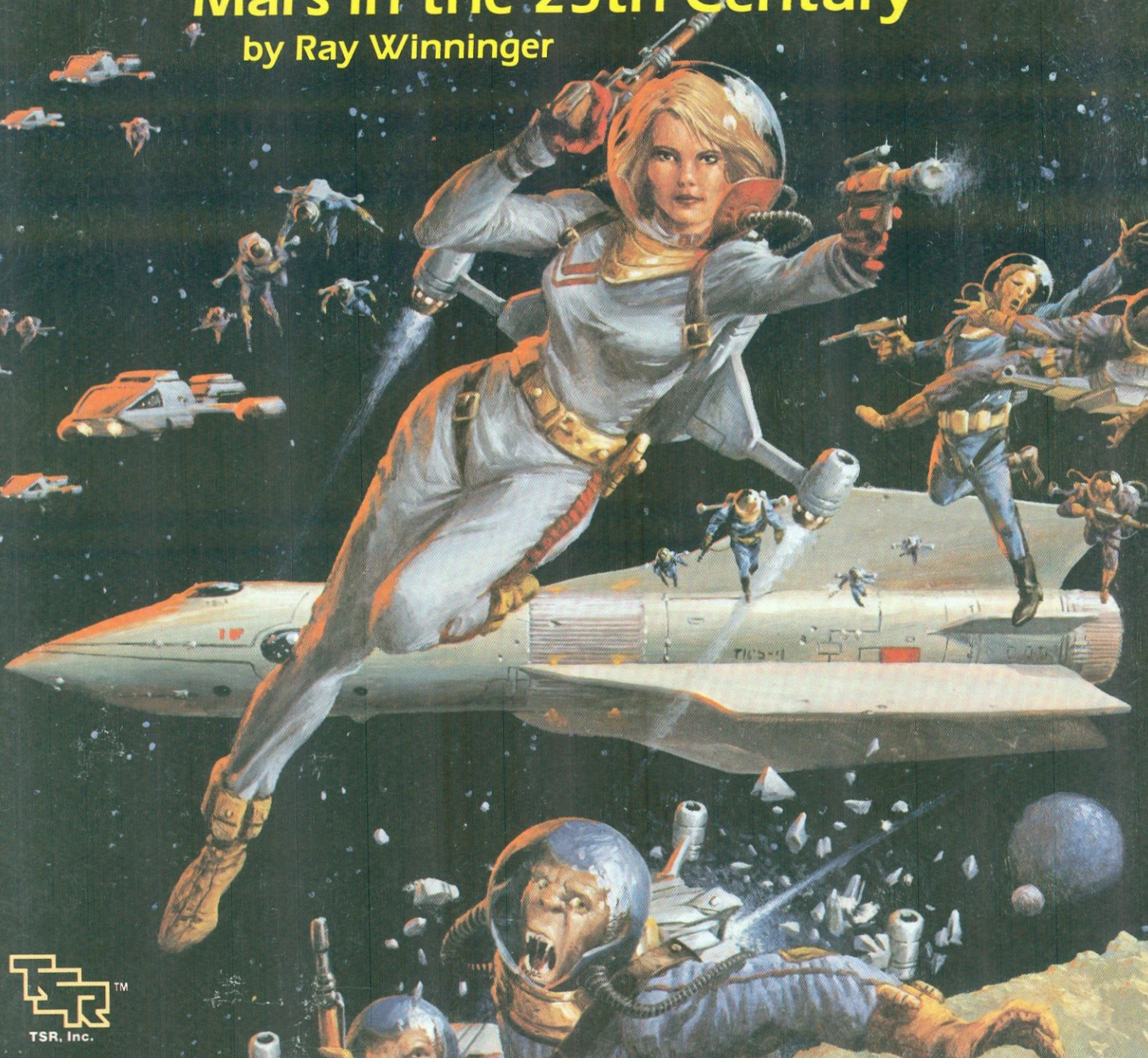
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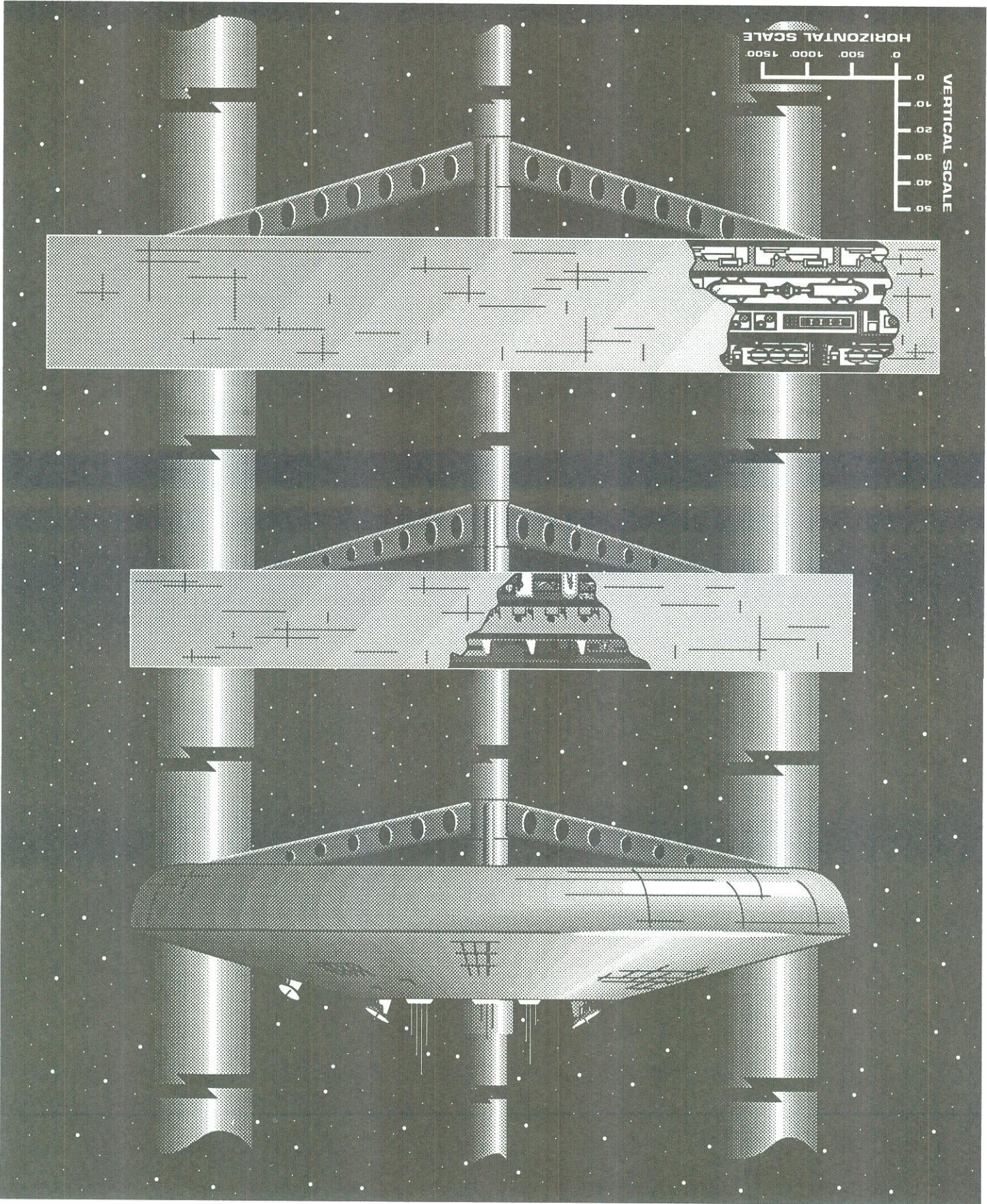


Official Game Accessory

Mars in the 25th Century

by Ray Winninger





The Pavonis Space Elevator

Mars in the 25th Century is a world full of technological splendor, but no achievement is quite as striking as the Pavonis Space Elevator. Pages 47 and 48 of this book contain information about the elevator. The illustration on the inside front cover shows cross-sections of three typical levels among the hundreds that make up the structure.

Top: This circular platform is designed as a defense outpost. In addition to the radar dishes and antennae that are used for communication and sensor operation, the upper surface of this level also contains retractable turrets in which are mounted heavy weapons. In a non-emergency situation, these weapons are kept out of sight, and this level presents a benign appearance. But if the safety or security of the elevator is threatened, they can be raised at a moment's notice. As massive as the elevator is, it is also a very fragile structure, and nothing is more important than preventing it from being severely damaged by enemy artillery. (Pavonis has never been attacked, but the Martians aren't taking any chances.)

Center: A typical residential level such as this contains from three to five floors, mostly filled with modest apartments and suites that are occupied by members of the manager caste (the "middle class" of Mars citizenry). One of the floors might contain a shopping center, and another could be the site of various small service industries, enabling the residents of this level to live, work, and provide for their needs without ever having to travel to an adjacent level.

Bottom: The most massive sections of the elevator are devoted to manufacturing plants, forges, and other forms of heavy industry. A level of this sort could contain several floors (such as the one shown), or it could be one single, enormous industrial facility—for instance, a shipbuilding plant that specializes in battlers.

The cylinder running through the center of the elevator is the main shaft that provides transportation all the way from the surface of Mars to the spaceport on Phobos, located thousands of miles out in space. The larger cylinders on either side are representations of the gigantic cables, each 1,000 feet thick, that hold the elevator in place.

Mars in the 25th Century

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A One-Way Ticket!

"Ardala!" Mark Romanov was positively beside himself. "Ardala, thank the clusters I've found you!"

"What's wrong, dear?"

"Ardala, you've . . . you've got to help me. Do you remember when we were in the dataplex this morning? Just after we left, somebody poisoned the tech sentry and accessed the Privynet! Ardala, I was the last one logged into the plex. They think I did it! The watch is already after me!"

"Oh, I'm sorry, Mark. What can I do?"

"You've got to tell them that it's all a mistake. You've got to tell them that the sentry was still alive when we left the plex!"

"Calm down, Mark. Everything will work itself out."

"Then you'll tell them?"

"Of course. You just relax and leave it all to me."

Before the smile had even snaked its way out of Ardala's lips, the sound of heavy magnetic boots began echoing throughout the cold steel corridor. The ominous snuffling and sniffing that intermittently accompanied the boot-clack confirmed that the approaching feet belonged to the soldiers of the watch. The sniffing noises came from the soldiers' sandhounds.

"H-here they come. Ardala, you've got to tell them."

"I told you, Mark. Just *relax!*"

The guard leader turned the corner and marched toward the alcove where Mark and Ardala were standing. Another group of guards appeared at the opposite end of the corridor. Trying to escape was not only pointless; now it was impossible.

"Mark Romanov," the guard began, "we have an edict for your arrest. You are wanted for illegal entry into a classified data structure, data piracy, illegal transmission of pirated data, possession of an illegal toxicant, unlawful flight from justice, and, uh . . . the murder of the dataplex tech sentry.

"Yes, yes, officer, I know. But you see, there's been . . . a mistake. Tell him, Ardala."

All eyes shot to the Princess of Mars as she slid her hand up to her forehead and began to draw deeper and more rhythmic breaths. "Oh, officer, thank the clusters you found us!" she sighed, flinging her arms around the watchman's broad shoulders.

In the last three or four seconds, Ardala's face had undergone a sudden and dramatic transformation. Her carefully applied makeup was now washing down her cheeks due to a stream of tears that unexpectedly burst from her eyes. Her hair, immaculately arranged but a moment ago, now seemed tousled and out of place. Her brow was furrowed and flushed.

"He's dangerous!" she screamed. "He grabbed me in E Block and dragged me all the way down here. He . . . he thought he could keep you away from him by using me as a hostage."

"Number two, add kidnapping to the charge list in Romanov's docket. C'mon, pal, you're coming with us."

"But wait! . . . Ar-Ardala! Officer, I . . . I didn't kidnap her! She was at the plex with me this morning and . . . Ardala, you can't let them do this!"

"I said, let's go, pal! If it's execution that worries you, you can relax. You look like a pretty strong guy. You'll probably be a serious contender for the duel pit."

"Please, Ardala . . . I'm begging you! Don't . . ." Romanov's words trailed off as the watchmen dragged him away down the seemingly endless corridor.

After she was sure the soldiers were safely out of range, Ardala attended to a couple of urgent business matters of her own. She drew out her hand mirror and carefully reapplied her makeup. She fixed her hair, and she discreetly disposed of the poisoned false fingernail she had placed on her right index finger earlier in the morning.

"Now all I've got to do is get you down to M Block," she said as she trotted off down the corridor, playfully addressing the tiny data disk in her handbag. . . .

Welcome to Mars in the 25th Century

NOTE:

The contents of this book are meant primarily to be seen by the referee of a XXVc™ game campaign—not by players. If you are a player, knowing all about what's inside this book could spoil the enjoyment of the game not only for yourself but for other players in the group. Your referee will tell you certain facts about Mars when he thinks that you (and your character) are entitled to know them; he may even allow you to read portions of this book, so that you can become familiar with some of the general information. But until he does so, please set this book aside and resist the temptation to read any farther.

The year is 2456. Mars, once a forbidding alien waste, has been terraformed into a living, breathing world that now supports some two hundred fifty million people and dominates the entire solar system.

Mars is a world of high technology and low treachery—home to exotic evil princesses, fearsome mad scientists, near-mad computer-generated kings, and potent megacorporations. Mars is also the home world of the former Russo-American Mercantile organization, nowadays known simply as RAM: a sinister mixture of dictatorial socialism and capitalistic greed that is first and foremost concerned with maintaining its position as the most powerful economic force in the solar system. To do this, the corporation also has to be militarily strong—and that's why RAM has the biggest fleet of warships and the largest horde of soldiers.

At present, RAM has an economic stranglehold on Earth, a grip that is loosened only slightly by the rebellious activities of NEO (the New Earth Organization). A state of open warfare does not exist between RAM and NEO, primarily because the rebels are insignificant in comparison to RAM's might, and it simply wouldn't be cost-effective for RAM to ferret out every pocket of resistance at the cost of billions of credits and millions of man-hours. So NEO is allowed to exist, for the same basic reason that RAM puts up with small groups of opposition on Mars itself: The "cure" would be more costly and more time-consuming than simply letting the "disease" run its course, as long as it does not pose a major threat to RAM's status.

In this sourcebook, you will find a complete description of Mars and its people that should enable you to design your own adventures set on the cold

Martian sands, from the stunning space elevator at Pavonis to the glittering corporate pyramids of Coprates Chasm. With this book and a copy of the XXVc™ science fiction role-playing game, the fate of Buck and his friends as they lock horns with the forces of RAM is now in your hands.

What's a Sourcebook?

A sourcebook is a background reference work that contains valuable information enabling you to design adventures of your own. It is not a fully detailed adventure in itself, such as the booklet titled *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, which was published shortly after the XXVc™ game boxed set was released.

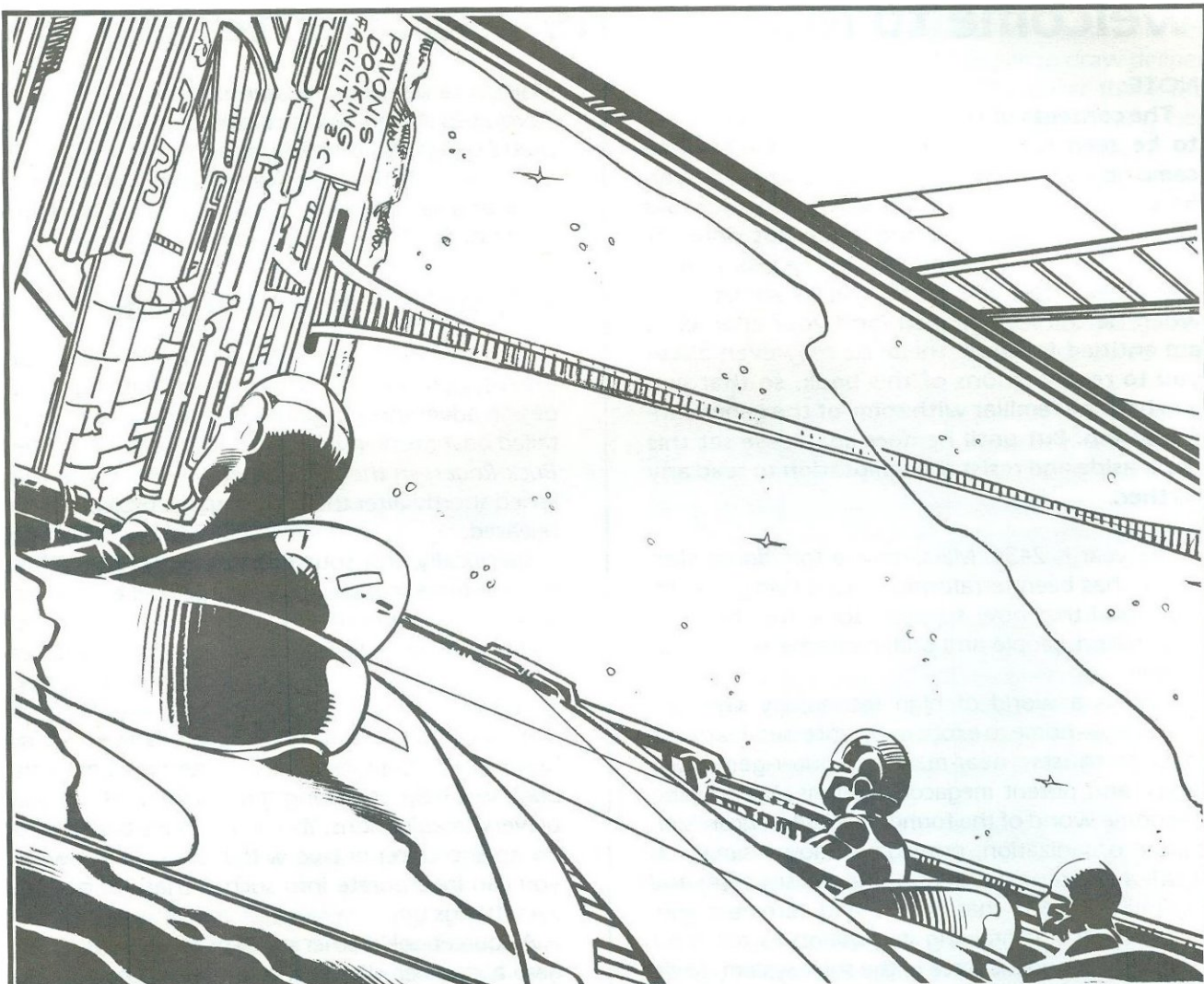
Specifically, this sourcebook will aid the XXVc™ game referee in two ways. First, it will enable you to add interesting details to any adventure which takes the player-character heroes to Mars and its environs. Suppose, for example, that your players' characters become locked in a chase with RAM soldiers that takes them in and out of the corporate pyramids of Coprates Chasm. The material in this book will help you bring the chasm to life in your players' imaginations. You're also likely to find ideas for an encounter or two within these pages which you can incorporate into such a chase in order to liven things up.

A sourcebook's other primary function is to suggest a number of plots around which complete Mars-based adventures can be constructed. After reading some of the information in Chapter 5, for example, you might decide to run an entire adventure in which the PCs are accused of a serious crime and subsequently sentenced to the Coprates Duelpit to fight as gladiators.

In addition to accomplishing the above goals, this sourcebook has also been designed to provide you with new rules supplementing those found in the XXVc™ basic game, providing your players with new challenges. In this book, you'll find rules for gladiatorial combat, rules for interacting with the mundane residents of the 25th century, new equipment, new ships, and several new creatures.

Here is a quick breakdown of the contents:

Chapter 1 contains an overview of Mars, presented in the format of an encyclopedia entry. This portion of the book is general knowledge of the sort that would be available to any citizen in the 25th Century. As such, it would be appropriate to allow your players to read this chapter.



The first view of Mars many travelers get: The Pavonis Space Elevator

Chapter 2 is a profile of RAM and the Martian government. Here is where you will find out exactly how the RAM bureaucracy works, who the major players are in the Martian political arena, how the RAM government affects the average Martian citizen, and what long-term goals RAM has drafted for the solar system.

The topic of Chapter 3 is the Martian war machine, otherwise known as the Security Division. In these pages, you will find profiles of the branches of that division, descriptions of typical soldiers and special equipment they have at their disposal, and a brief treatment of the military installation on the tiny satellite of Deimos.

Chapter 4 is a catalog of "Places of Interest" likely to play prominent roles in XXVc™ game adventures: the wondrous city of Coprates, the technological masterpiece known as the Pavonis Space Elevator,

the dangerous and deadly Claritas Wildlands, and many more.

In Chapter 5 you will find profiles of important NPCs (non-player characters) a group of adventurers is likely to encounter on Mars.

And finally, in Chapter 6, you'll find a group of creature profiles—a few of the many special animals that inhabit the planet.

If you're new to role-playing games, you might want to go back and reread the information on adventure design found on pages 52–55 of *The World Book* (in the boxed set) before progressing through these pages.

Well, with all of that said, make sure your rocket belt's firmly fastened, check the ammo clip in your laser pistol, and jump right into . . .

Chapter 1: Mars, an Overview

Mars is the solar system's fourth planet from the sun. Although it is naturally uninhabitable by humans, portions of the planet have been terraformed into a terrestrial environment by the Russo-American Mercantile organization (RAM). Today, Mars serves as RAM's base of operations and governmental capital.

In the 25th Century, Mars has without a doubt evolved into the most important planet in the solar system. Its population is approximately 250 million, and the vast majority of the natives are employees of RAM. Most of these residents are clustered in large cities scattered about the Martian equator. In general, the farther one strays from the equator, the less hospitable the environment, although some settlements and even some spaceports are located relatively close to the poles.

Facts

Capital: Coprates

Form of Government: Despotic corporate socialism

Surface Area: 12,070,725,000 square miles

Orbital radius: 141,710,000 miles (1.52 AU) on the average

Difference between nearest and farthest points from the sun: 25,792,000 miles

Average distance from Earth: 132,928,000 miles

Gravity: 38% Earth normal

Day/Year: A Martian day is exactly 24 hours, 37 minutes, and 23 seconds of standard Terran time. A Martian year is 687 days long.

Natural satellites: 2, Phobos and Deimos

Elevations: Highest, peak of Olympus Mons, 15.5 miles above Martian sea level. Lowest, floor of Coprates Chasm, 364 feet below Martian sea level.

Population: 253,000,000. Density: .02 persons per square mile. Distribution: urban 62%, rural 38%

Chief Products: agricultural goods, computers, spacecraft, weaponry, communications equipment, entertainment technologies, survey equipment, terraforming technology

Imports: Luxury items, gems, rare metals, wines

Spaceports: One class A in orbit above Pavonis; two class B at Coprates and Marineris; two class C at Utopia and Hellas; one deserted class C at the base of the Mars-Pavonis Space Elevator.

Currency: Newruble (equivalent to 10 credits), dolarube (1cr), and penny (1/10cr).

The Land and Its Resources

Mars's current geography is based around two vast but shallow oceans: the northern Boreal Sea and the Southern Sea (also known as the Sea of Hellas). The Boreal Sea was one of the first features evolved by terrestrial terraformers in the 23rd century. The Southern Sea is a relatively new addition to the Martian landscape and has yet to be completely stocked with marine life forms. Between these seas, for the most part, are vast flatlands broken by occasional mountain ranges. The largest land feature is an enormous fissure, the Valles Marineris, which winds its way for hundreds of miles along and around the equator. Coprates Chasm, which houses the Martian capital city, is one small section of the Valles Marineris.

Large Cities

The planet's two largest cities are Coprates, with a population of about 40,000,000, and Pavonis (specifically, the many levels of the Mars-Pavonis Space Elevator), which houses around 30,000,000 people.

Coprates, the Martian capital, is the home of the ruling class and the headquarters of RAM. It is built on the bottom and along the sides of Coprates Chasm, a natural trench 300 miles long and more than 300 feet deep along most of its length. The skyline of Coprates is dominated by large monolithic pyramids cut from sandstone and trimmed in glass and metal. On the average, each of these pyramids has a resident population of 1,500.

Pavonis, at the other extreme, is a city that has been built above the Martian surface. Its residents live and work in the levels comprising the Mars-Pavonis Space Elevator, a technological marvel even by 25th-Century standards. (Chapter 4 of this book contains more information on the Space Elevator.)

In addition to its two largest cities, Mars has several other population centers. Prominent among these are Marineris (15,000,000), a smaller "chasm city" located several hundred miles east of Coprates; Chryse (6,000,000) and Utopia (7,500,000), agricultural centers on the coast of the Boreal Sea; Olympia (12,000,000), a domed metropolis located on the crest and along the slopes of Olympus Mons; and Phytus (4,000,000), Solis (4,500,000), Argyre (5,500,000), and Hellas (6,000,000), the major outposts in the southern hemisphere.

Coastal Areas

Most of the seafront areas are dominated by soft sandy beaches and agricultural communities. Exceptions are the area west of Chryse and a smaller area north of Olympia, where the water of the sea is held in place by sharply rising cliffs.

Except for those cliffs, most of the terrain within 100 miles of the Martian seas is crisscrossed by a complex system of canals and waterways. The canals enrich the Martian soil with much needed water out through the agricultural communities and provide a simple and reliable transportation network for hauling harvested crops and equipment between agricultural terminals. Major canal shipping terminals are scattered all along the sea coasts.

Plains

Much of Mars's surface consists of vast, rolling plains. More than 20% of the planet's surface area is taken up by the vast plains known as Solis and Elysium, two sprawling grasslands inhabited by a motley collection of wildlife. For the most part, civilization on Mars does not yet extend into these areas except for the occasional research station or trading colony, though a few Martians, known as grasslanders, live alone in the plains and make their livings by trading in pelts. Vacations or safaris to the plains are popular among members of the Martian middle class.

Forests

A few forested areas dot the landscape on the western fringe of Coprates Chasm. The largest, the Forest of Pavonis, measures nearly 500 miles across its longest dimension and skirts the edge of the planetside terminus of the Space Elevator.

The bulk of the forests is dominated by tall conifers known as sandwoods, though exportable varieties of traditional Terran evergreens are also present. The conifer-dominated forests, of course, remain green year round. There are very few deciduous trees on Mars.

One of the most impressive sights on the entire planet is the small Royal Forest that stands just on the edge of the Coprates Chasm. A traditional holding of the RAM Chairman, the Royal Forest has been specially crafted by botanical engineers to please the eye. Its beauty is recognized all over the solar system.

Lakes

A number of artificial lakes have been created in the Martian soil in order to serve as water reservoirs and to contribute to the burgeoning Martian ecosystem. Most of these lakes are only one or two square miles in size, though some are considerably larger than that. The largest of the lakes are collected in the Marineris chain located in the Valles Marineris Basin. The chain stretches out for more than 70 miles and some of the "links" in the chain have a maximum depth of more than 1,000 feet, far deeper than either of the Martian seas. A wide canal connects the Marineris chain with the coastal farming areas around both of the seas.

Wildlands

To the west of the Plains of Solis lies an area of more than 200,000 square miles of marsh and mudlands. Originally created by a terraforming accident that occurred almost two hundred years ago, this area, known as the Claritas Wildlands, is the closest thing to a tropical region that can be found anywhere on the Martian surface. Because the wildlands lie so close to the Martian equator, the climate in the region is hot and humid. The wildlands are literally teeming with wild lifeforms.

Deserts

By far, most of the Martian landscape is dominated by sprawling arid deserts. Much of the north and south are covered by desert, as is nearly the entire half of the Martian globe that lies opposite Coprates and Pavonis. Most of these areas have never been terraformed. In all, roughly 60% of the surface is desert. In addition to a variety of wildlife, the deserts are home to various tribes of nomads. One of Mars's largest cities, Argyre, lies in the midst of the desert to the south.

Within the last twenty years, RAM has begun a massive program known as the Desert Reclamation Authority (DRA) aimed at terraforming some of the planet's inhospitable regions and expanding the size of the planet's tenable terrain. At present, the desert is being reclaimed at a rate of a rate of about 10,000 square miles per year.

Polar Regions

Both the northern and southern polar regions are blanketed by large ice caps. To this day, much of these areas remain largely unexplored and are completely unused by the Martian settlers.

Climate

Like Earth, Mars has four seasons roughly corresponding to spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Since a Martian year is almost twice as long as a Terrestrial year, each season lasts for nearly six months instead of three.

Before terraforming, the temperature extremes on Mars ranged from about -190°F (winter in the polar regions) to 50°F (summer at the equator). The first terraforming efforts brought the extremes closer together, to between -20°F and 65°F . Impacting "icestroids" in the south polar region liberated huge quantities of heat, turning frozen carbon dioxide and ice into their gaseous forms. The atmosphere was thickened as a result of the release of these gases, and much of the heat was retained on or near the planet surface.

Since the termination of this first barrage of icestroids, the temperatures in the polar regions have drifted back down toward their previous level, but the average temperatures in the temperate and equatorial zones of the planet have stabilized at their new, higher levels. In some places (notably depressed areas near the equator), the summertime temperature is tropical even by Earth standards—often reaching 80°F .

The temperatures just south of the equator in the Claritas Wildlands and on the Plains of Solis remain almost constant year round. The temperatures elsewhere vary with the season, depending upon the distance from the equator. Those areas close to the equator, such as Coprates and Pavonis, have relatively little temperature deviation (average summer temperature of these areas is around 65°F and the average winter temperature is 40°F) while temperatures in the areas farther from the equator can vary by as much as 70 degrees with the season.

Almost all of the precipitation on Mars falls in the low-lying areas, where the atmosphere is thickest and where most of the vegetation is grown. The average yearly rainfall across the planet is approximately 12 inches, but the total varies widely from place to place. The tops of mountains and desert plateaus receive almost no rain, while many of the valleys and plains receive three or four times the planetary average.

Out on the deserts, the Martian winds are far fiercer than those found on Earth, sometimes peaking at speeds of up to 150 miles per hour. Brutal sandstorms are almost a daily fact of life for the gene-altered Desert Runners and other hardy souls who inhabit these forsaken places.

Soil

Raw Martian soil is far too deficient in basic nutrients to support plant life. Soil in the terraformed areas has been augmented and supplemented with nutrients, making it ideal for growing the crops produced along the coastal shorelines. The soil on the plains and in the forested areas west of Coprates are rich in nutrients, but have been specially tailored to handle specific plant life. In recent years, the relative scarcity of suitable agricultural soil has been one of the biggest problems facing the Martian economy. The DRA is a reaction to this problem.

Minerals

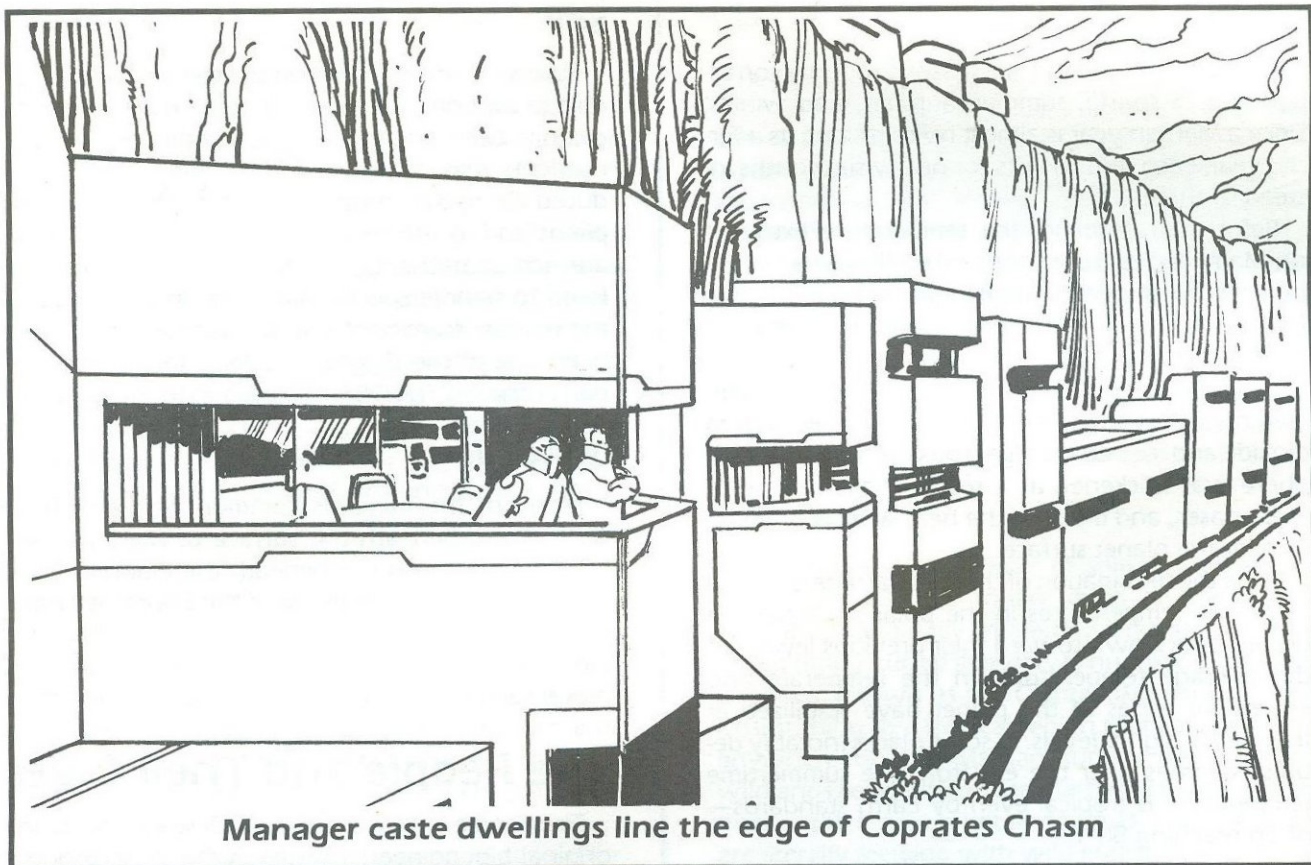
Many of the minerals common on Earth have been found beneath the surface of Mars as well. Deep veins of iron run beneath the Plains of Solis. The mountains on the fringe of the Coprates Chasm contain rich deposits of bauxite and antimony. Abundant supplies of iron, lead, zinc, copper, and nickel can be found beneath the Martian deserts.

The People and Their Lives

The people of Mars are mostly descendants of the original bioengineered settlers who were brought to the planet shortly after its initial terraforming. Martians tend to be slender and thin-boned, with large, deep chests and long legs. Their ears have been tailored to better capture sounds in the thin Martian atmosphere, while their eyes are slightly larger than those of a normal human and are more sensitive in conditions of dim illumination. Many of the upper-class Martians indulge in esthetic gene-tailoring, resulting in some stunningly beautiful and powerful specimens.

For the most part, RAM is Martian society and Martian society is RAM. Employees of the corporation are grouped into three rigid castes: the executives, the managers, and the workers.

Executives hold all the positions of power within society and live almost exclusively in and around the Coprates Chasm. The executives' power within the society stems from their positions of leadership within the powerful megacorporations that make up RAM. While they comprise only about 1% or 2% of the population, the executives control more than 90% of the planet's financial resources and have more than 95% of the major decision-making power. Very little goes on at the lower levels of Martian society that is not approved of, or at least known about in advance, by the members of the executive class.



Manager caste dwellings line the edge of Coprates Chasm

The managers live on the rim of Coprates and in the Pavonis Space Elevator. Managers are the mid-level workhorses of Martian society: the people who fill positions as store clerks, overseers, surveyors, and all other mid-level occupations. They make up approximately 15% of the population.

The Martian workers are of two basic types. Roughly two-thirds of them are normal Martians that just happen to be members of the lowest social and economic stratum. The rest are specially tailored products of biogenetic engineering that have been specifically created to labor in the Martian mines and crop fields. These gennies are called Workers (with the term capitalized to distinguish them from other members of the worker class). Most Workers have been biologically designed for low intelligence in favor of great physical capabilities. Nearly all of the Martian gene-altered soldiers, or Terrines, are members of the worker class as well.

In Martian society, workers have almost no rights or privileges. This doesn't especially bother them, since they are taught from birth to accept their lot in life. Every society, so far as the workers know, is made up of haves and have-nots, and it's quite apparent to which group they belong. The workers make up roughly 85% of the Martian population.

Way of Life

In many ways, Martian customs are very similar to those of Earth, the major differences being those that result because of the caste system. Most manager and worker Martians pride themselves on the fact that they have accepted their lot in life and wish only to serve their superiors.

At the center of Martian society is the family, made up of a pair of mated adults and their children. All three castes group themselves into families in this fashion. Martians expect strict loyalty from the members of their own immediate family and almost always get it. Unlike Earth families, however, family bonds seldom stretch outside the immediate family, particularly among members of the manager and worker classes. It is partially for this reason that manager-class Martians prefer large immediate families with six or seven children per couple.

Worker families are not permitted to have more than two children, so that the parents are able to devote most of their time to their jobs. Worker children are viewed as nothing more than replacements for the labor pool; when the parents grow too old or too infirm to work, the children step in to do their jobs (if they haven't already been given

jobs of their own).

Manager dwellings are mostly cold, antiseptic apartments located in giant prefabricated multiplexes. Executives live in opulent mansion-suites located within the Coprates pyramids. The most prominent and wealthy Martians have pyramids all their own in addition to seasonal dwellings on the plains of Solis. Most workers are happy to live in simple, crude dwellings close to their work places.

Food

The chief natural food staples on Mars are crustaceans and bottom dwellers fished out of the Boreal Sea. Although a great deal of farmland has been established on Mars, fruits and vegetables remain relatively rare, and are infrequently eaten by anyone outside the executive class. The same can be said of meat and poultry.

Despite these limitations, the Martians take a great deal of pride in their eating, and Martian cooking has developed into something of an art form. Even members of the manager class concoct elaborate dishes and occasionally hold formal, multi-course banquets.

Particularly favored delicacies of the manager class include stuyken (a tangy, striped "crab"), waschtew (a seaweed and "sole" stew), and creseout (roast "sea otter"), though most manager meals consist of synthetic staples pumped out of large "food vats." Executives favor those things that are rarest on Mars: terrestrial fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy products, and Earth delicacies. Workers are happy to eat anything anyone will give them.

Recreation

Like almost everything else on Mars, recreational activities vary by caste. Members of the executive class are fond of elaborate parties featuring live music and exquisite catering. The opulence of these affairs (some executive parties cost as much as 500,000 credits to coordinate) is well known all across the solar system. Other executive entertainments include theater, film, and a sport known as ice yachting.

Most of the activities enjoyed by executives are unavailable to managers. There are no theaters, fine restaurants, or parks in the manager cities on the Coprates rim and in the Pavonis Space Elevator. Instead, managers spend their time watching three-dimensional television (the tri-dee) and gathering with friends.

One form of recreation enjoyed by both executives and managers is the gladiatorial combat held



Worker

in the infamous Martian duelpit in Coprates. Most of the gladiators who participate in these duels are criminals who have been convicted of very violent crimes, though there are a few Martians who simply earn their living as professional warriors. Members of the executive class usually come to the duelpits to watch the combats in person, while managers must settle for viewing the festivities on the tri-dee.

With their thirteen-and fourteen-hour work days, workers have little time for recreation of any sort. And even when they do manage to find the time, the need for recreation is not uppermost in their minds; time and tradition have altered their thought and behavior patterns to the extent that they are satisfied to simply work, eat, and rest—arising on the next day to start the cycle all over again.

Holidays and Festivals

Unlike the people of Old Earth, the Martians have very few formal holidays that are celebrated throughout the civilization. Each of the members of the executive caste frequently declares his or her own holidays, which are observed by his or her family and friends. Holidays declared by particularly powerful or influential executives are frequently observed by entire cities.

The only real holiday of note that affects the manager caste is the two-day Maydai festival which always begins on the 344th day of the Martian year. During Maydai, managers are not required to work and temporarily gain certain benefits usually held only by members of the executive caste (such as the right to attend the duelpit combats, the right to eat certain foods, etc.). The fact that Maydai actually evolved out of an old Earth holiday honoring the common laborer is particularly ironic considering the fact that members of the worker caste are not allowed to participate in the affair at all.

Education

Children of the manager and executive castes attend schools from the age of 6 to (at most) the age of 23. Executive schools are divided into three classifications: primary schools (for children ages 6–13), secondary schools (ages 14–19), and Coprates University.

The function of the primary school is to indoctrinate the student into Martian society and instruct him or her in the elementary academic disciplines—reading, writing, basic science, and so forth. All ex-

ecutive and manager children are required to attend primary school.

The function of secondary school is to begin focusing upon students as individuals and to help each student discover his or her future role in the society. Secondary school is compulsory for executive-class children and is open to manager-class children who demonstrate academic ability that places them in the top 25% of their primary school class.

Continuing education at Coprates University is open only to executive-class students. Attendance is optional, but because of the status attached to university education, most executive parents require their children to attend and are easily able to pay the tuition fees. At the university, students receive specific instruction in a chosen discipline that prepares them to take a role in executive society.

Although there are more than 2,000 primary schools and 1,000 secondary schools, Coprates University is a single large institution located in the heart of the chasm. Currently, the university is the largest institution of higher learning in the entire solar system. It frequently attracts non-Martian scholars who come to study or lecture.

As stated above, children of the manager caste attend only primary and (perhaps) secondary school. At the end of their first year of secondary school, those manager children who have progressed this far in their education must take a specialized aptitude test that is scored by RAM's Ministry of Education. These tests form the basis of the occupational assignments doled out to the students by the government. Assignments made at this point in the student's life are more or less permanent and he or she is essentially locked into the assigned occupation by law. A bureaucratic procedure for changing assigned occupations does exist, but is rarely seen through to completion.

The only education workers receive is basic instruction in their assigned tasks. Educating a worker any further is prohibited by law.

The Arts

Martian accomplishments in almost all artistic fields of endeavor are renowned all across the solar system.

Architecture

Some of the more elaborate pyramids in Coprates Chasm are widely considered to be among the solar system's most valuable architectural treasures. The clean-cut, sharp-angled Martian style has been

widely imitated all over the solar system for more than two hundred years.

Literature

Most Martian contributions to the literary arts lie in the realms of formal drama and the essay. Over the centuries, noteworthy Martian authors have included DeRomzy, Ullilovich, Kortorevsky, and Kabrinin.

Music

Martian music is noted for its deep, brooding chord progressions and swirling electronic crescendos. Famous Martian composers have included Toktonovich, Dusseney, Langtree, and Semprinin.

In addition to these "classical" composers, who were all members of the executive class, the Martian musical canon is also noted for the expressive forms of folk music pioneered by the members of the manager class. Although the composition and performance of such music is periodically declared illegal for a decade or two, it has continued to flourish over the last two hundred years with a great deal of support from offworld. When foreign dignitaries visit Mars, they are often said to be more interested in hearing some of the noted manager musicians perform than they are in attending concerts held by Mars's most renowned classical symphonists.

The Visual Arts

Painting, sculpture, and holography are all practiced on Mars as well. Notable contributions in these areas have come from DeKreuzen, DeVille, Labronenko, and the famous "three R's": Raymond, Rivornadze, and Rasputarsky.

The largest gallery of visual and holographic art works in the solar system is a part of the Coprates University on Mars. Over 80,000 pieces are on display in the museum, including many of the works of ancient Earth masters such as Picasso, Rembrandt, da Vinci, and Rauschenberg, which were transferred to Mars for "safekeeping" when Earth's civilization began to drastically deteriorate three centuries ago. Martian law prohibits managers and workers from entering the gallery, except that managers are allowed entrance during the Maydai festival.

Government

Among its many other roles in the planet's culture, society, and economy, RAM is also the body that conducts the affairs of the Martian government, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy. There is a distinction, however; although RAM establishes diplomatic relations with other planets, signs treaties, and drafts domestic policy, it is technically a "corporation" and not a formal government.

When it serves a purpose, RAM officials make use of this distinction to justify the actions of the organization. We're just fulfilling the role of a government, say the leaders, because no other group of people on the planet has the desire and the resources to conduct the affairs of the planet and provide for the general welfare. If our methods sometimes seem harsh and arbitrary, that's because we are not primarily political people—we are businessmen who, naturally, have the best interests of our corporation at heart. And, as everyone knows, successful businesses are not operated under a democratic system. . . .

In truth, RAM fully intends to keep governing Mars for as long as the corporation remains in existence; its governmental policies and its business policies are so intertwined that no one could separate them even if the opportunity to do so arose. By controlling every aspect of Martian life, RAM is making sure that its position as the ultimate power on the planet will never be threatened—at least, not from within.

At the top of RAM sits an essentially all-powerful Board of Directors. Traditionally, this board is controlled by a single Martian family and one or two allied families. Presiding over the board is a Chairman. At present, the Chairman of the Board is a man named Simund Holzerhein, and Holzerhein's family controls the entire board. Basically, the board members' only official function is to serve as advisors to the Chairman, who has absolute power over every facet of Martian government, though the Chairman will frequently grant temporary power to one or more of the board members, allowing them to oversee a particular RAM project directly.

Beneath the board in the RAM hierarchy are a number of bureaucratic divisions. Among these divisions are the High Tech Division, the Atomic Division, the Consumer Products Division, the Transportation Division, the BioSci Division, and the Marketing Division. By far, the largest of the divisions is the Security Division which includes all of RAM's military forces as well as its internal security agencies and espionage operatives. Each of the divi-

sions reports to a Director, who passes reports on to the Chairman. Most official policy decisions are made by the Chairman himself and passed on to the appropriate division through its director.

The complex Martian bylaws provide plenty of provisions for ousting the Chairman of the Board and replacing him, but all of these methods are very difficult to implement in actual practice. The Chairman's direct control over the Security Division puts him in a position of extreme political power and allows him to act as a sort of dictator.

The Martian economy is clearly based around RAM's political structure. In theory, the whole of the planet is one large corporation. In fact, Martian citizens frequently refer to themselves as "shareholders." If the corporation, meaning the RAM government, shows a profit (i.e., the government earns more money through taxation and production than it pays out in the way of social services and planetary maintenance), each of the shareholders is theoretically entitled to dividends, or portions of the earnings. Since the distribution of dividends is governed by a complex set of laws favoring the members of the executive caste, however, most Martian citizens rarely see much of this money, even though RAM consistently does turn a small profit. In order for the size of the profits to increase, of course, RAM must eventually turn its attention ofworld and expand the trade it carries on with the other planets in the solar system, a necessity which in the past has led to some of the government's expansionist foreign policies.

The ideal that RAM is supposedly working toward is the day when RAM sells all the residents of the solar system everything they need to survive in return for natural resources and riches, which are then divvied up among all the Martian citizens, making sure that everyone is happy and prosperous. In actual practice, however, the RAM government often shows little interest in any of the citizens outside of the executive caste. Each year, more and more modifications favoring the wealthy are made to the dividend dispersal bylaws, and social expenditures in the worker and manager areas are reduced to boost RAM's profit margin. Unfortunately, many members of the lower castes are too uneducated to understand the full impact of any changes made in the maddeningly complex Martian laws. Or, if they do understand them, they are too wise and too afraid to raise a fuss.

Titles

Outside political observers who are not accustomed to the workings of the RAM government are frequently confused by the proliferation of feudal "titles" given to members of the executive castes. At present, just about all of the titles used by Earth's western-style feudal monarchies (prince, princess, baron, duke, earl, etc.) are in use on Mars. Unlike their predecessors on ancient Earth, however, the titled Martian "nobles" have no real power or authority accompanying their posts. Terms like "princess" and "duke" are doled out on a purely honorary basis.

When the practice of granting titles began in the late 24th Century, there were no restrictions on the titling whatsoever. After the situation got out of hand, though (at one point there were more than thirty thousand princesses, a situation which inspired Ullilovich's famous play *The 30,000 Princesses*), the current Chairman of the Board issued an edict regulating all titling. As things presently stand, only the Chairman can name a Prince or a Princess of Mars; only the Chairman or a Director can name a Baron; and only the Chairman, the Director, or a Baron can name a Duke or an Earl. Martian law allows the Chairman and the Directors to veto any title bestowed by a lower authority.

Although titles carry no real power, in recent years they have begun to carry certain privileges. Any titles an executive might hold are factored into the dividend dispersal equations when it comes time to compute his or her share of RAM's take. In addition, certain titles exempt their holders from prosecution for certain crimes and allow those individuals access to various restricted locales. Perhaps the most valuable benefit of a Martian title is the position of respect and honor it earns its holder in the eyes of the other citizens.

Local Governing Agencies

Overseeing the day-to-day operations of each of the Martian cities and other installations is a Governor appointed directly by the Chairman. Each of the Governors reports to an appropriate Director. The Governors of Coprates, Pavonis, and all other large Martian cities (the places mentioned earlier in this chapter) report to the Director of the Urban Affairs Division, for example, while the governor of the Deimos Academy (the Martian military training school) reports to the Director of the Security Division. Without exception, each Governor holds the title of Baron or a higher one.

Technically, the Governors have no real authority

to make decisions; they are simply instruments of their superiors. In practice, however, it is obviously impossible for the Chairman and his Directors to oversee all the activities on the planet themselves, so the Governors are typically given a great deal of leeway in making and enforcing policies, though any edicts issued by a Governor are obviously subject to veto by the Chairman and Directors.

Each of the Governors generally sits atop a bureaucracy of his or her own creation. The Governor of Coprates, for instance, oversees an Office of Finance, an Office of Maintenance and City Services, an Office of Recreation, and several other subdivisions. These infrastructures vary widely from installation to installation and from Governor to Governor.

Martian Free States

Although it controls a vast majority of the civilized surface of Mars, RAM does not completely dominate the planet. A number of completely independent political organizations have sprung up out on the cold desert steppes away from the RAM-dominated zone. As a group, these bodies are known as the Martian Free States. At present there are more than eighteen separate countries comprising the free states.

Most of the Free States are little more than collections of pirates or smugglers who have decided to demonstrate their arrogance by declaring their independence. The forces of RAM do not interfere with most of the Free States because the tiny "nations" pose almost no threat to the Martian well-being. When any of the states becomes particularly vociferous, it is quickly and efficiently dispersed by the Security Division, though RAM officials are usually disturbed to find another new Free State immediately springing up in its place.

Sandhaven, the largest of the free states, has long been rumored to be an ally of the New Earth Organization, a group that has been formally outlawed on Mars ever since its foundation. RAM frequently scraps with Sandhaven but has so far failed to eliminate it altogether, perhaps due to the state's troubling tendency to simply pack up and move elsewhere.

History in Brief

In the early 21st Century, officials of the United States and the Soviet Union of Old Earth penned an accord to form an economic partnership. This organization, the Russo-American Mercantile, became

the most powerful political and economic entity on Earth, second in influence only to the System States Alliance.

The SSA, an outgrowth of the old United Nations organization, served as a world government. As conditions on Earth grew more and more oppressive because of pollution, overpopulation, and the ravages of war, the SSA turned its attention to colonization of other worlds of the solar system. Charters to develop other planets were granted by the SSA to each of Earth's major power blocs. RAM, being the largest and most powerful of those groups, got first choice and opted to claim Mars.

Approximately two hundred years later, RAM began pressing against the boundaries of its SSA charter. In the intervening years, the System States Alliance had evolved into a despotic collection of dictators who resented those organizations technologically capable of moving offworld and attempted to extort payments in the form of wealth and resources from them. When these practices became particularly severe, RAM rebelled in 2275 and declared its independence from Earth, eventually toppling the SSA in the ensuing conflict, known as the Ten Year War.

As part of the spoils of victory, RAM took over stewardship of Earth—or, more accurately, what was left of the ravaged planet when the war ended. Although technically Earth is governed by a descendant of the SSA called the Solar Alliance Protectorate, in reality the SAP is nothing more than a puppet government controlled by RAM. This arrangement allows the corporation to keep up the thinly veiled pretense that it is really only interested in the welfare of Mars. RAM's presence on Earth, according to the official line, is only necessary because Earth is not capable of watching out for its own interests and must be protected against possible intrusion from other civilizations in the solar system.

In the years that followed the end of the war, RAM slowly evolved into the organization in place today. At present, RAM officials are trying to expand their economic domination of the solar system, ostensibly to bring prosperity to their people.

Adventuring on Mars: Gravity

In the XXVc™ game boxed set and in the list of facts given earlier in this chapter, you will notice that gravity on Mars is listed as 38% of Earth normal. What exactly does this mean?

Well, the lower the gravity of the world you are adventuring on, the less everything weighs. In this case, the difference means that an object weighing

100 lbs. on Earth weighs only 38 lbs. on Mars. As far as the XXVc™ game is concerned, this difference in weight has a couple of significant effects on game play.

First of all, we should point out that the Weight and Max. Lift figures on Table 1 (page 9 of the *Characters & Combat* book) are all given in Earth weights. For equivalent figures on Mars, you should factor in the Weight Multiplier for Mars as given in Table 16 (page 58 of the *Characters & Combat* book; also printed on the Reference Screen in the XXVc™ game boxed set). The multiplier is 2.5 (rounded down slightly, to make all the calculations easier). Adjusting the figures on Table 1 to take into account the lower gravity of Mars results in the following changes to those figures:

Table 1M: Strength in Mars Gravity

	Weight	Max. Lift
1	2.5	7
2	5	12.5
3	12.5	25
4	25	62.5
5	37.5	100
6	50	137.5
7	62.5	175
8	75	225
9	87.5	250
10	100	287.5
11	112.5	312.5
12	125	350
13	137.5	387.5
14	150	425
15	162.5	450
16	175	487.5
17	212.5	550
18	275	637.5
19	500	1000
20	750	1250
21	1125	1625
22	1500	2000

Also, lower gravity allows characters to move faster when running or climbing. (Since a character's body is lighter in weight, but his arms and legs don't lose any of their strength, his body becomes easier to propel from place to place.) The movement rates given on Table 19 (page 63, *Characters & Combat*, and also on the Reference Screen) are related to an Earth environment. In the lighter gravity of Mars, movement rates for running and climbing are doubled, resulting in the following figures:

Table 19M: Movement in Mars Gravity

	Run	Climb
Human	1200	300
Tinker	960	240
Worker	720	180
Terrine	1440	360
Delph	960	240
Lowlander	960	240
Runner	1680	420
Stormrider	720	180
Spacer	1200	300

Note that movement rates for swimming are *not* changed in Mars gravity, since swimming speed is not directly dependent on arm/leg strength and body weight. For game purposes, moving through water is just as difficult in Mars gravity as it is in Earth gravity. Also, flying movement rates are not changed for the two races (stormriders and spacers) that are capable of independent flight.

Note also that these adjustments only affect the ground movement rates of creatures and characters. The speeds of ground vehicles and air vehicles are unaffected.

Other than the adjustments listed above, assume that the low Martian gravity has no other effect on game play.

Well, there you have it. By now you should have a pretty good idea of exactly what Mars is all about, allowing you to move on to the more detailed chapters that follow.

And by the way, this is a good place to re-emphasize that the rest of the material in this book is meant for the referee's eyes only. Players can be allowed to read the information in Chapter 1, since this represents what the average inhabitants of the 25th Century would know about the planet and its workings. Most of the information that follows, however, is privileged, and players should be forced to discover it on their own during the course of their adventures.

Chapter 2: RAM's Organization

In order to truly understand Mars and its place in the 25th Century, one must first understand RAM. The corporation dominates a vast chunk of the Martian surface and, if it has its way, may soon dominate most of the solar system as well.

In this chapter, you will find quite a bit of information about what RAM is and does: a breakdown of its power structure, a catalog of the major players in Martian politics, notes on how RAM interacts with the common Martian citizens, and details on RAM's relationship with the other colonized worlds of the solar system.

Basic Structure

The fundamental fact that one must understand about RAM is that—as pointed out in the previous chapter—it is technically considered not really a government at all, but a giant corporation. Thus, most of the citizens of Mars don't really view themselves as being "ruled." Instead, they prefer to think of themselves as just a part of the giant RAM business operation. Unlike the citizens of (for example) Earth, Martians rarely speak of "rights." Instead, they speak of "privileges." And to a Martian, the greatest privilege of all is the opportunity to live on Mars and participate in RAM. In other words, Martians view their citizenship as a benefit of their job situation.

Despite the tyranny and despotism which have come to dominate Martian politics over the years, it isn't as difficult to understand this point of view as it might seem at first. Although the lower-class citizens of Mars are clearly repressed, they still enjoy quite a few amenities that are not available elsewhere in the solar system: Almost every Martian is employed, every Martian has food on his or her table and a place to live, Mars is a relatively hospitable world, and so on. In short, the life of an average Martian is not all that disagreeable when judged against the standards that exist elsewhere in the solar system, providing that he or she stays quiet, follows orders, and doesn't pry into others' affairs.

All of this explains why full-scale citizen uprisings against even the most repressive aspects of the RAM regime are extremely rare. Of course, the fact that the RAM elite is in control of a gigantic, fanatically loyal army that has been especially bred for following orders and is incapable of comprehending that they themselves are being exploited probably has something to do with this fact as well.

Although it controls virtually every facet of life

on Mars, technically RAM is not the only Martian corporation. There are hundreds of other companies which operate much like the corporations of old Earth—manufacturing products, performing services, and so forth. Every single business venture on Mars is controlled by one corporation or another. However (and here's where the word "technically" ceases to apply), according to Martian law, each of these smaller corporations is actually a RAM subsidiary. Martian law empowers the RAM Board of Directors with the right to dictate policies to the heads of these subsidiary corporations, though in practice this power is invoked only when truly necessary. Most of the time, the corporations are allowed to run themselves in order to reduce the work load of the already overburdened Directors.

Instead of paying taxes, the subsidiary corporations simply turn their profits over to RAM. The RAM government takes the money it collects and uses it to pay maintenance on all of its installations and to cover the costs of all the civil services it must provide. Once per year, RAM takes all of the excess profits it has collected and distributes them to the Martian citizens in the form of dividends. Exactly how much wealth a citizen collects at this time is based upon a number of factors: his or her caste, whether or not he or she has a title, how well he or she performed in the work place over the course of the last year, and how much "stock" he or she owns in RAM's various corporations (see below), and how well those corporations performed. For this last reason, there is still a great deal of competition between many of the smaller Martian corporations, even though they are all ultimately a part of RAM. The heads of these corporations know that if they are able to outperform their competitors, they and their employees will be rewarded with a higher share of the RAM dividends. This system is highly inefficient, but it remains in place because it ultimately favors the executives who head up RAM. With the smaller corporations frequently squabbling among themselves, it's much harder for an outside corporate head to launch an offensive aimed at ousting the top RAM officials.

With all of this in mind, it's not too difficult to understand why the citizens of Mars don't really pay taxes either. Since the RAM government is ultimately the employer of every Martian, it would make little sense to pay the citizens wages which are only given right back to the government in the form of taxes. Instead, RAM simply keeps the money that would otherwise be paid back as taxes

and lowers wages accordingly. (The system is similar to the way taxes are withheld from wages in 20th-Century United States society, except that in this case RAM doesn't even bother to do the arithmetic of "giving" the money to wage-earners before taking it back. Since RAM is both the employer and the agency to which taxes are paid, it makes no sense to go through this extra step. RAM also saves millions of man-hours every year by eliminating the need for citizens to file tax returns.)

Thus, in an economic sense, RAM's function reduces down to identifying the resources that are at its disposal on Mars and elsewhere in the solar system, refining and isolating those resources, and deciding which citizens are entitled to them. In general, the first function is performed by the RAM leadership, which sets corporate and social policy. The second function is performed by the smaller subsidiary corporations which actually manufacture items and provide services. And the third function is performed by both the RAM leaders and the subsidiary corporate heads, each of whom have some say when it comes to establishing the procedures for doling out wages and divvying up RAM dividends.

Because the executive caste has all the power in Martian society and makes all financial decisions, the executives end up with a vastly disproportionate amount of the available resources. In fact, the executive caste comprising as little as 2% of the total Martian population usually ends up receiving as much as 90% of the available resources, while the manager and worker classes struggle for the rest. At present even the oppressed managers, however, get enough out of the system to make their lives comfortable. Only the workers actually lose out by having virtually all of their efforts "absorbed" by the Martian economy, though due to their general lack of awareness and passive psychological nature, few realize it.

The RAM Hierarchy

At the top of RAM above all else sits the Board of Directors. Basically, all the power on Mars rests in the hands of these eighteen individuals.

Presiding over the board is an all-powerful Chairman. Theoretically, the Chairman has dictatorial control over everything on Mars, though in practice he or she often delegates a great deal of authority to the individual Directors. Legally, the Directors oversee the activities of the various smaller RAM subsidiaries and RAM divisions and report back to the Chairman. A Director has the power to change

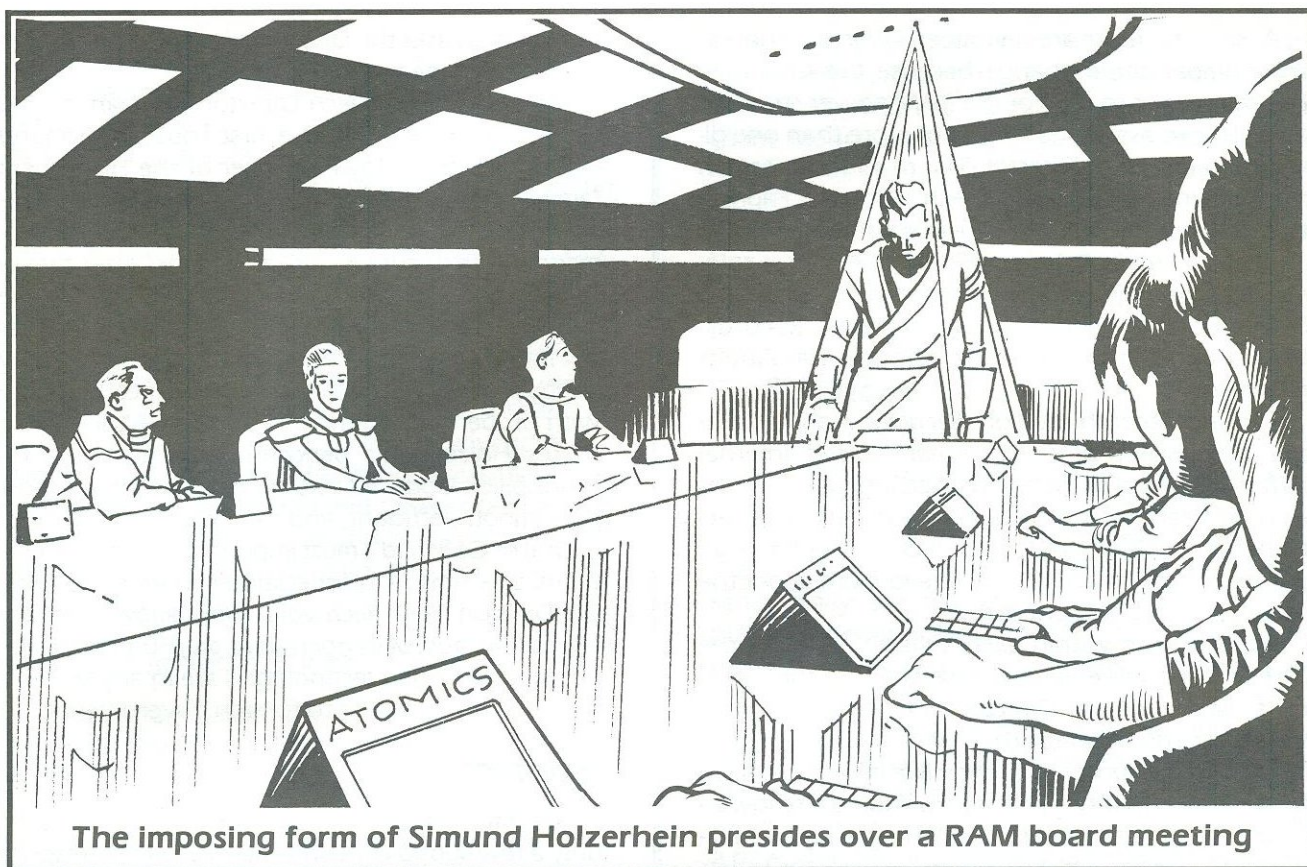
any decision made by the head of a subsidiary under his or her jurisdiction, but the Chairman has the power to change any decision made by one of the Directors. From this, it follows that the Chairman literally has the power to make almost every important decision of interest on Mars.

The Chairman is chosen by a process known as "factioning." Whenever a Chairman dies or leaves office, all members of the executive caste who hope to succeed him or her try to put together "factions" endorsing them for leadership. A faction consists of a group of executives endorsing the candidate's bid. Whichever candidate assembles the strongest faction automatically becomes the new Chairman.

The strength of a faction is only loosely based on the number of executives comprising it. What is truly important is the power those executives wield in Martian society. The process used to determine the strength of a faction is very similar to that used to allocate dividends: Executives who are more productive, or who hold higher offices or titles, are worth far more than their economic and political inferiors. In fact, the most powerful executive on Mars is probably worth about twenty-five times as much to a potential faction as the least powerful executive. All the equations and tabulations necessary for determining the strength of all the vying factions are carried out by computers, a precaution that is supposed to insure that all such contests are decided promptly and fairly, though there is a precedent for occasionally tampering with the factioning computers that runs throughout the last century of Martian history.

Although factioning has quite a bit in common with an old-style free election, characterizing it as such would be grossly inappropriate. While a candidate running for office in a free election must campaign, getting factioned into the Chairmanship calls for a candidate to negotiate. Typically, deals must be struck with all sorts of unlikely allies in order to secure the elusive office. These deals frequently involve promised appointments to positions of power, the bestowal of titles, and all sorts of other perks.

At present, the Chairman of RAM's Board of Directors is a man named Simund Holzerhein (see the NPC Profile Card included in the XXVc™ game boxed set). Holzerhein has now been RAM Chairman for over one hundred years. Within the last twenty years, Holzerhein has uploaded his personality into the RAM computer matrix and become a digital personality. This odd union of man and machine has dramatically increased Holzerhein's already formidable leadership abilities. Although he



was long-lived in the physical sense, Holzerhein is now effectively immortal. And even more to his benefit is the fact that the complex RAM computer system is now at his complete beck and call. Holzerhein's digital personality can probe into every nook and cranny of RAM's digital databases. On today's Mars, very few secrets are kept from Simund Holzerhein.

Holzerhein operates quite a bit differently from the people who preceded him in the role of Chairman. At present, Holzerhein prefers to delegate almost all of his authority to his subordinate Directors, stepping in to take an active role only when necessary. In fact, Holzerhein becomes overtly involved in RAM affairs so infrequently that many Martians believe that he is little more than a figurehead and that the real power rests in the Directors, who are somehow "pulling his strings." The truth is that Holzerhein stays out of the public spotlight and gives his subordinates a great deal of freedom to act simply because it amuses him to do so. With these sort of operating parameters in place, there are frequent power struggles and minor political wars waged between the various Directors and the subsidiary corporate heads. Holzerhein finds these struggles very satisfying.

The Directors

Each Director oversees a RAM division. The Directors are responsible for setting policy within their divisions and reporting any appropriate developments back to the Chairman. Again, keep in mind that the Chairman has a legal right to overturn the decision of any Director at any time, though Simund Holzerhein rarely invokes this right.

According to Martian law, the Directors gain their posts via direct appointment from the Chairman. The Chairman also has the right to remove and replace a Director at any time. Within the last couple of decades, Simund Holzerhein has instituted an interesting interpretation of the first of these rights. Instead of directly appointing Directors, Holzerhein has been inventing his own procedures for deciding who should ascend to the Board. The last time there was a Board opening, for instance, Holzerhein issued an edict stating that instead of appointing the Director himself he would allow the remaining Directors to freely elect their new comrade. The time before that, Holzerhein declared that the new Director would have to be factioned into office. Again, Holzerhein takes these steps only because they amuse him.

At present, there are seventeen Directors, though the number could change because the Chairman has the power to retailor the RAM power structure at will, or to assign leadership of more than one division to the same Director. The divisions overseen by the Directors are: High Tech, Atomics, Fabrication, Consumer Products, Transportation, BioSci, Marketing, Public Relations, External Affairs, Exploration, Economic Affairs, Entertainment, Ecological Management, Ground Development, Records, Health and Martian Services, and Internal Affairs (see below).

The seventeenth division, Security, is always under the direction of the Chairman himself. Internal Affairs, a special section of the Security division, has its own head (a person equal in status to the Directors and who is, like all the other Directors, subservient to the Chairman). You will read more about the Security Division in Chapter 3.

The structure within each division, beneath the Director, is a lower-level bureaucracy of the Director's own creation. Directors are free to appoint whatever subordinates they wish and delegate as much of their authority as they like in order to keep their divisions running smoothly. Thus, these lower-level bureaucratic hierarchies differ greatly from division to division, and whenever a Director leaves his or her post, it is very likely that the new Director will completely revise the old system, eliminating old posts and creating new ones as he or she goes along.

Here is a brief description of each of the sixteen RAM divisions (not including Security):

High Tech

The High Tech Division oversees all of the corporations involved in the design and construction of such items as computers, satellites, advanced weaponry, and advanced technological devices. Across Mars, more than 1,000 small corporations are involved in these endeavors.

In their day-to-day functioning, the Director of the High Tech Division and his subordinates fix wages and prices, ensure that all competition within the High Tech industry is beneficial to Mars (in other words, the Division personnel see to it that competition between two corporations in the industry is actually spurring those corporations on to create better products), and assign top corporations priority projects necessary for the greater Martian welfare, as dictated by one or more of the other divisions. (For example, if Security decides that RAM needs a more powerful ship-vs.-ship laser weapon,

that division asks the Director of the High Tech Division to set someone to work on it.)

The current High Tech Director is a man named Georges Gottfried. He is a first cousin to Simund Holzerhein and a loyal member of the Holzerhein family political power bloc. Like his cousin, Gottfried likes to delegate his authority. His subcommand infrastructure is one of the most extensive in all of RAM. What makes Gottfried truly remarkable is that he is one of the few RAM Directors who does not have higher political aspirations. He is perfectly happy as High Tech Director and is concerned only with properly performing his duties. Although he shares Holzerhein's penchant for delegating responsibility, Gottfried's bureaucracy is for the most part smooth, efficient, and carefully designed.

One of Gottfried's most important subordinates is Cameron Crimson, his special liaison with the Security Division. High Tech voluntarily allows Security to observe most of its operations to insure that none of Mars's classified technologies are in any way released to the public or to foreign governments.

Atomics

The Atomics Division oversees the activities of only a few subsidiary corporations. Its chief responsibility is to operate and maintain the colossal grid of nuclear reactors that provides Mars with a sizable portion of its energy. Atomics is the only division not headquartered in the Coprates Chasm. Instead, its headquarters are located just outside the main atomic power plant at the base of the Pavonis Space Elevator.

Just a few years ago, Holzerhein dissolved the Utility Services Division and added its responsibilities to Atomics, giving the division authority over the water and communication lines stretching across the planet as well.

The Director of the Atomics Division is a young, ambitious man named Gordon Zetzen. He is one of the most powerful members of the Zetzen political syndicate. His record is completely unblemished in the public eye, and under his directorship, the efficiency of Atomics has improved more than 45%. When the Zetzens finally get around to making their move on Holzerhein (see below), Gordon will probably be at the forefront.

Atomics too is subject to close scrutiny from the Security Division, ostensibly because the planetary power grid is vital to national security. In actuality, though, Holzerhein has Atomics closely monitored because of his distrust of the Zetzens.

Fabrication

The name of the Fabrication Division is quite misleading. Instead of actually manufacturing products, Fabrication oversees all of the subsidiary corporations that are responsible for providing manufacturers with raw materials. Mining companies, steel and alloy producers, and stone cutters are all examples of corporations that fall under the jurisdiction of Fabrication.

Fabrication is headed up by Sabrina Charnevsky, the only Director not affiliated with one of Mars's four major political families. Sabrina is a shrewd political insider. Although she doesn't really aspire to a higher position in the Martian political hierarchy, she knows that her power and services can be quite valuable to those who do. By properly brokering this power, she is able to maintain a very luxurious standard of living.

Consumer Products

Corporations under the sway of the Consumer Products Division include those that provide all types of goods and services commonly used by the average Martian citizen. Tri-dee and electro-blender manufacturers, wardrobers, and waste removal services all fit into this category.

Although its responsibilities are centered in a less than earthshaking arena, Consumer Products is a lot more powerful than many people realize. Its balance sheet always shows a higher profit than any of the other divisions, and because of the mere fact that its policies have a great deal of impact upon RAM's overall income, Consumer Products is certainly a political force to be reckoned with.

The CPD's director is Darred Valmar, a cousin to the infamous Princess Ardala. Darred achieved his position when he married one of Simund Holzerhein's nieces. Unlike his noteworthy cousin, Darred is basically an honorable, though somewhat greedy man.

Transportation

Under the sway of the Transportation Division fall all of Mars's important rocket manufacturing firms, as well as the corporations which maintain and control the transtube rapid-transit system which has been laid down all the way across Mars. Transportation also oversees the shipment of goods, both between sites on Mars and from Mars to offworld locations.

In the political scheme of things, the Transportation Division is extremely important for two rea-

sons. First, it controls most of the long-distance movement on Mars through its stewardship of the transtubes. And second, it controls the RAM Merchant Marine, the only important Martian space fleet outside of the military armada operated by the Security Division.

The current Director of Transportation is Zygurd Holzerhein, Simund's nephew. Zygurd is something of an ambitious coward. He was put into power by his uncle because of his easy pliability.

BioSciences

The BioSciences Division oversees all of the biogenetic engineering firms operating on Mars. Most of these firms fall into one of two categories: cosmetics and worker tailoring. Cosmetic firms perform esthetic biogenetic alterations on the wealthy; in essence, they are the 25th-Century equivalent of plastic surgeons. Worker tailoring firms specialize in the design and development of gennies for specialized labor situations. A mining corporation might come to a worker tailoring firm, for instance, citing a problem with extracting ores from a certain vein due to a high subterranean radiation count. The worker tailors would use their resources to develop a new set of mining gennies that were naturally resistant to radiation. One of the most important projects that many of the BioScience firms work on is the continuing effort to upgrade the effectiveness of the already fearsome Terrine.

The BioSciences Division is also controlled by a member of the Valmar family, Princess Ardala's sister Durella. She is every bit as skilled in the sciences as her sister is skilled in treachery. The two sisters share the same self-interested goals, but Durella most likely lacks the ingenuity and ruthlessness to ever actually accomplish any of them.

Marketing

The Marketing Division oversees the corporations that market the various Martian products, both domestically and on other worlds. Recently, top officials in Marketing, Entertainment, and Internal Affairs have formed a "triple conspiracy" to introduce subliminal advertising messages into Tri-dee programming, though none of the subsidiary corporations in either Marketing or Entertainment, nor anyone outside of the three cooperating divisions, is aware of the program. The ultimate aim of the cooperating Directors is to secretly boost the efficiency and profitability of their divisions. Entertainment provides the mass media and the audience which marketing can use to get across its

message. In return, the Marketing Division heads are using the special subliminal technology and their own skills to promote some of Entertainment's products.

Internal Affairs entered into the equation when a couple of IAD operatives accidentally discovered the program's existence shortly after it was drafted by Marketing and Entertainment Division heads. The IAD cut itself in on the program and is now secretly supporting the venture because IAD division heads are intrigued by the possibility of using the subliminal techniques being developed by Marketing and Entertainment for "educating" the public.

The Marketing Division Director is Fordham Kitzarenko, the head of the Kitzarenko political syndicate. Fordham is a shrewd politico who definitely has his eyes on a higher seat in the RAM hierarchy. He trusts his potent marketing skills to help him get it.

Public Relations

Public Relations has no associated subsidiary corporations. It is the job of the Public Relations Division to boost the public morale and to see that the RAM government is aware of the concerns of the average Martian citizen. Basically, the very existence of the Public Relations Division is itself a public relations move. As you've no doubt guessed by now, the top RAM leaders don't really care about the lower-caste citizens and their complaints, but the PRD gives them a convenient bureaucracy in which to smoothly lose any complaints that are filed.

Of all the RAM divisions, Public Relations wields the least political power. It too is controlled by a member of the Kitzarenko political syndicate: Regina Kitzarenko, Fordham's daughter. Regina is basically an extension of her father and his policies. She is under his complete control.

External Affairs

Like Public Relations, External Affairs also has no subsidiary corporations under its control. But unlike the PRD, External Affairs is one of the most powerful divisions in the entire RAM hierarchy. The EAD is responsible for negotiating with foreign worlds and carrying out RAM's foreign policy throughout the solar system.

Overseeing Foreign Affairs is Travis Gottfried, the brother of Georges and another cousin to Simund Holzerhein. Unlike his brother, Travis secretly hopes to one day capture his cousin's position as RAM Chairman. In order to accomplish this goal, he has

begun secret negotiations with some of Holzerhein's political rivals. As of now, not even Simund Holzerhein is aware of Gottfried's secret treachery.

Exploration

The Exploration Division oversees the Martian corporations that attempt to explore and colonize the Asteroid Belt and outer planets. Although this division is not particularly lucrative at the moment, it represents a great deal of RAM's future. Top RAM officials are counting on the Exploration Division to provide a steady stream of new areas to exploit.

Exploration is overseen by Kurtiz Valmar, Princess Ardala's cousin. Although he is still quite young, Kurtiz is a skilled political manipulator. One day his treachery may grow to rival that of his sister.

Economic Affairs

The chief responsibility of the Economic Affairs Division is to advise the Chairman on matters of internal economic policy. Economic Affairs calculates the annual dividend distribution, proposes proper wage and price guidelines to all of the other divisions, and handles all of the administrative duties associated with the stock market. Economic Affairs has no attached subsidiary corporations.

From the responsibilities delineated above, it is not too difficult to guess that Economic Affairs is one of the most politically powerful divisions in the RAM government. For this reason, Simund Holzerhein has placed a member of his own family, his grandson Werner, in charge. Werner may possess his grandfather's intelligence, but he lacks the elder Holzerhein's cunning. For now, Werner knows that his political future rests in the strength of the Holzerhein family, a knowledge that guarantees his loyalty to his grandfather's policies.

Entertainment

The Entertainment Division is the body that regulates all of the Martian corporations dealing in the arts and entertainment industries. Tri-dee networks, theater troupes, film companies, and publishers all fall under the jurisdiction of Entertainment. One of entertainment's largest and most important subsidiaries is Mediabloc, the RAM-owned and operated news and information service. The Martian citizens get all their information about Martian and interplanetary events through Mediabloc, a situation which the RAM government frequently and happily exploits to its own advantage.

The Entertainment Division is under the aegis of Ludmilla Zetzen, the sister of Gordon. Ludmilla is a fierce supporter of her brother, and has been actively campaigning to increase his political prominence. Sometimes, in fact, she pushes Gordon's future faster than he himself would like. As a way of helping to ensure that Gordon will persevere when the big political conflict with the Holzerhein family comes to a head, Ludmilla has done some secret "manipulation" of the Justice Division; see the description of that division (below) for details.

Ecological Management

The Division of Ecological Management oversees the various RAM-affiliated terraforming conglomerates that operate on Mars and abroad. Its responsibilities include drafting new terraforming schemes for the Martian holdings scattered across the solar system, and monitoring the Martian environment itself in order to prevent ecological disasters.

At present, Ecological Management is under the leadership of Friedrich Tishenko, a cousin to Gordon Zetzen. Friedrich is somewhat dimwitted and easy to manipulate. With Friedrich sitting on the Board of Directors, it's almost as though Gordon holds two places.

Ground Development

Ground Development regulates the corporations that construct buildings, canals, transportation lines, and other landscape features. The GDD plans and carries out new construction projects, maintains the Martian parks and recreational areas, and maintains the Martian canal network.

The Director of the GDD is Simon Zetzen, Gordon's uncle. After more than forty years in RAM politics, Simon has become disillusioned with the system. He tends to think of his nephew (and almost all of the other RAM Directors, for that matter) as overly ambitious fools who will only end up suffering for their greed.

Justice

The Justice Division is responsible for interpreting RAM's charter and bylaws. Its officials act as judges at criminal trials, monitor all RAM proceedings to check for their legality, and approve all the interplanetary agreements negotiated by the External Affairs Division. This obviously indicates that the Justice Division is far and away one of the most powerful entities within the entire RAM power structure.

Simund Holzerhein has one of his most trusted advisors in the role of Justice Division Director—or so he thinks. The appointed head of the Justice Division is Holzerhein's son-in-law Marko Andropov. In actuality, though, the real Andropov was captured a couple of years ago by agents of Ludmilla Zetzen. In his place, Ludmilla substituted a bioengineered duplicate that has all of Andropov's personality traits and memories in addition to being externally identical to him. For the time being, "Andropov" is being allowed to function just as if he were the *real* Director, but when she feels that the time is right for an uprising by the Zetzen faction against Holzerhein's leadership, she will use a special code phrase to turn the impostor into an individual who will do the bidding of either herself or (preferably) her brother Gordon. One stumbling block in her plan is the fact that Gordon is not yet aware of Ludmilla's plot, and his sister is reluctant to reveal it to him because she still isn't sure that he will go along with it.

Health and Martian Services

This division oversees the administration of medical care across Mars. It has no associated subsidiary corporations. Martian doctors and medical professionals all work directly for RAM.

The HMSD is led by Natalia Holzerhein, Simund's niece. Natalia is a dedicated medical professional first, and a politician second. When she does enter the political arena, it is almost always as a firmly entrenched ally of her uncle.

RAM Directors in the Game

For the most part, RAM Directors are greedy, self-interested politicians who are more than willing to risk whatever power and position they have for a big payoff whenever the opportunity arises. In other words, they are perfect villains for use in the XXVc™ game. Here are some brief notes that might help you build an adventure around a Director:

You can assume that the typical RAM Director has between fifty and two thousand lackeys under his or her direct control, depending upon the prominence of his or her Division. Most of these underlings are noncombat administrative types, but almost all of the Directors keep a small squad of "enforcers" to discreetly take care of any head-bashing that needs to be done for the good of the Division.

Also, each RAM Division has its own pyramid in Coprates Chasm which serves as its headquarters and as the residence of its Director. Security in and

around these pyramids is usually very tight.

Some of the RAM Directors are described in detail in Chapter 5 of this book. For the others, you can use the following statistics.

Note: In the lists of skills given with all character descriptions in this book, the numbers refer to the character's basic ratings, and do not take into account the attribute bonus. Remember to add the appropriate attribute score to a skill rating before rolling dice to see if a Skill Check succeeds.

Typical RAM Director (6th level Martian rogue): hp 25; AC 10; THACO 18; Str 9, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 15, Tech 13.

Career skills: Bypass Security 30, Climb 5, Fast Talk/Convince 90, Hide in Shadows 30, Move Silently 15, Notice 60, Open Lock 5, Pick Pocket 5.

Each Director also has several general skills related to his or her division specialty, with all skill ratings adding up to 120 (20 points per level × 6 levels).

The Family Structure

You'll notice that most of the RAM division heads are connected with one of a small number of Martian families. This "family" structure is extremely important in Martian politics.

Within the Martian executive caste, families function like the political parties of 20th-Century Earth. Most members of a single family have the same political ambitions and outlook, and are almost always political allies. Although there are hundreds of executive families, there are only about fifteen or twenty that have any real political import. The largest and most prominent Martian families are vastly powerful political syndicates capable of exercising earthshaking power.

The impact of the family on the RAM political scene grew out of the "facts of life" established by the RAM charter. The charter's emphasis on profiteering and individual performance ensured that all of the top political leaders would be in constant competition. Not too surprisingly, it didn't take very long for this competition to quickly get out of hand and become unbelievably ruthless, leaving the major Martian political figures with only the members of their immediate families to trust. At the same time, the RAM political structure is set up to encourage outright nepotism, with officials on all levels making constant appointments not subject to even cursory review.

At present, most of the political power on Mars is in the hands of only four relatively small families. These are:

The Holzerheins: Not too surprisingly, Simund Holzerhein heads up the most powerful family syndicate on Mars. Together with their close political allies, the Valmars, the Holzerheins have a large enough power bloc to control virtually all activity on Mars. Even if something were to happen to Simund Holzerhein tomorrow, the Holzerhein family could easily see a candidate of their choice factored into the Chairmanship.

The Valmars: For years, the Valmars were the wild card on the Martian political scene, but within the last forty years they have formed a close political alliance with the Holzerheins.

The Valmars have a reputation for trickery and deceit that is more than upheld by the two most prominent members of the family, the princesses Ardala and Durella. Although they are still far too weak to make a move on the Holzerheins, many political observers feel that the Valmars are slowly gathering their strength for just such an attempt. Although there is no direct evidence to confirm such a fear, anyone who doubts its possibility is foolish.

The Zetzens: The Zetzens are the Holzerheins' strongest overt political enemies. At the time he was putting his Chairmanship together, Simund Holzerhein was forced to grant the Zetzens a few Directorships in order to avoid a lengthy and pointless political struggle, but there is certainly no bond of cooperation between the two factions. To this day, Simund has his closest advisors and family members carefully observe the workings of the Zetzen-backed RAM Divisions so that he can step in with a quick Chairman veto whenever necessary. (To date, this scrutiny has failed to uncover the truth about Ludmilla Zetzen's success in supplanting Holzerhein's son-in-law with an impostor atop the Justice Division.)

The Kitzarenkos: The Kitzarenkos, too, are more or less enemies of the Holzerheins. At the time Simund seized power, the Kitzarenkos were among his staunchest allies. Eventually, though, the Kitzarenkos began to grow powerful in their own right thanks to their special relationship with the Chairman. When he began to perceive the Kitzarenkos as a potential threat, Simund Holzerhein severed his alliance with their family and took up with the Valmars instead.

If the Kitzarenkos could somehow forge an alliance with the Zetzens, the two families could build

a faction almost equaling the Holzerhein/Valmar syndicate. So far, however, neither family has been willing to take this step, due mostly to mutual mistrust.

One thing that each of these four major families has in common is that each is allied with a number of smaller, less important families. The Holzerhein family, for example, is closely tied to as many as sixty minor executive families. The heads of most of these smaller families are in control of RAM subsidiaries.

On Mars, political alliances between families are negotiated and enforced in much the same way that the family alliances of feudal Europe operated. Two families that are looking to cement an alliance might intermarry their children, for example, or set aside huge ransoms to be paid to the side that breaks the alliance.

Removing the Chairman

Why doesn't Simund Holzerhein simply fill all the RAM Board of Director positions with members of his own immediate family? Why does he feel compelled to share his power at all?

The answer to both of these questions lies in the fact that the RAM charter is not totally without its checks and balances. Built into the charter are two different methods that members of the executive caste may use to unseat the current Chairman. The first and least tenable method gives the Board of Directors the power to unseat the Chairman with a unanimous vote. Since the Chairman appoints each of the Board members himself, this is not very likely to happen under almost any circumstances.

The second and more interesting method allows any single executive or group of executives to in effect "buy" the Chairman out of office. If such a faction contributes directly to the RAM coffers a sum equal to no less than 5% of the GMP (Gross Martian Product) over the last Martian year, the Chairman is instantly unseated and a new Chairman is factored in. Any money that is contributed in this fashion, of course, is added to RAM's balance sheet and ultimately ends up being redistributed as dividends.

A financial maneuver on this scale may sound next to impossible, but the enormous power wielded by the major Martian family syndicates always makes a buyout a distinct possibility. This is why Holzerhein was forced to cut the other families in on the government. Although only the Holzerhein family was strong enough to faction in its own Chairman, many of the other major Martian

families are strong enough to engineer a buyout. After such a maneuver, of course, Simund Holzerhein would probably be factioned right back into the Chairmanship after being ousted, but some of the larger families could keep using the buyout tactic over and over, preventing any governmental decisions from being made and essentially tying up the whole of RAM. Since a tied-up RAM is incapable of overseeing production, and no one makes any money when nothing is being produced, no one in the country really wanted to see this happen. In order to avoid the implementation of this "buyout filibuster," Holzerhein was forced to negotiate with all of the families large enough to implement the tactic, each of which demanded seats in the new government.

Right now, then, each of Holzerhein's political rivals is trying to slowly chip away at the Holzerhein political family, hoping to one day take enough clout away from Holzerhein's faction in order to prevent him from being refactioned into office. Such a rival could then oust Holzerhein through a buyout and faction in its own candidate. After such a maneuver, the Holzerheins would slip back into the political pack, and the new Chairman would be forced to negotiate with the Holzerheins and give them some power in the new government just like any other family capable of implementing a filibuster.

Martian Political Intrigue

The previous paragraphs bring up an important question. How can the RAM Chairman have any rivals? Since almost all governmental power rests squarely in his hands, can't he simply overturn any decisions made by his rivals to constantly favor himself?

The answer, of course, is yes, theoretically. But in actual practice, the RAM bureaucracy is far too unwieldy and complex for the Chairman to actually make day-to-day decisions himself and to review every decision made by his subordinates, looking to overturn those that damage his position. At some point, any Chairman—even one far more interested in flexing his muscles than Simund Holzerhein seems to be—must trust his underlings.

Basically, the Chairman does his best to oversee what is going on and to take an active role in the government when strictly necessary, but it is still easy for a rival Director to slip quite a bit by the chair.

Stock

Confusing Martian politics even further is the Martians' tendency to trade in stocks. You've already read about the dividend policy and how it works. Actually, the dividend payments are based upon the number of "shares" held by each of the Martian citizens. All citizens hold shares in the corporation which employs them. The number of shares held by each employee is determined by the corporation's charter. A RAM subsidiary, for example, might give each of its lowest-level employees five shares, its mid-level managers eleven shares, and so on, all the way up to the top executives who receive more than fifty shares. When dividends are paid, RAM calculates the amount of dividend money due the corporation, and that corporation is then split up according to the number of shares owned by each of the corporation's employees. RAM itself even issues stock to its direct employees and upper-level officials.

There is nothing in Martian law that prevents the citizens from trading or dealing in the shares they own. In fact, such transactions are quite common. A common laborer, for example, might sell one of his shares to a finance corporation for a value that is slightly less than the corporation expects the share to be worth at the end of the year when dividends are paid. The finance corporation makes a profit on the transaction, but the laborer gets his money right now and needn't wait for dividend dispersal.

Stock trades are also commonly used by executives to pay for favors and cement deals. A Director (who typically owns stock in all of his division's subsidiary corporations) might sign some of his division's stock over to another Director in return for a favor, or even sell that stock on the open market to speculators who are trying to buy the stock for less than it will be worth during dividend disposal.

The only difference between the Martian stocks and the stocks traded by the residents of 20th-Century Earth is that Martian stocks always have a time value associated with them. On Mars, you cannot simply buy stock and keep it forever. You buy stock for a single dividend year. Usually, new stock is issued to employees and all concerned at the end of the year, just after dividends are paid. Under most circumstances, trading in stock you do not actually own is strictly forbidden. In other words, it is illegal to make a deal like, "I'll give you three shares of Marketing Division stock for the next three years for two shares of Atomics Division stock right now." This is forbidden because you do not actually own stock for the next three years—you only own

stock for *this* year. By the time next year's stock is issued, you might lose your job (and thus your right to the stock), or render the deal inoperative in some other way.

The Legal System

The RAM government has a remarkably simple set of criminal and civil laws, considering the staggering complexity of its bureaucracy. These laws are made by either the Chairman or whichever subordinate he assigns to the task when the creation of a new law is necessary (usually the the Director of Economic Affairs or the Director of Justice), enforced by the Security Division (which you will read about in the next chapter), and interpreted by the Justice Division. On Mars, criminal laws prohibit all of the activities one would expect: murder, theft, kidnapping, and so forth. There are relatively few surprises in the penal code; a summary of its distinctive aspects follows.

Information Theft: Tapping into a data bank without the proper authorization is one of the most serious crimes on Mars.

Weapon Possession: Members of the manager and worker classes (except for Terrines and other soldiers) are not allowed to own or possess firearms or other types of weaponry. The prohibition does not extend to simple tools such as knives, hammers, and pry bars—which could be used as weapons, but are not expressly designed as such. There are no weaponry restrictions on executives; many execs openly carry firearms and other weapons in the streets of Coprates.

Class Penalties: The sentences for all crimes are much steeper when those crimes are committed by members of the manager or worker castes than the penalties incurred by members of the executive caste committing the same crimes.

Slacking on the Job: Failing to live up to one's duties in the work place is itself a crime on Mars. Loafers cost RAM money, and money is a very serious matter to most Martians.

A Martian citizen who is charged with a crime is usually brought to trial within twelve hours of his or her arrest. A Martian trial consists of a single judge (representing the Justice Division) hearing evidence presented by a Justice Division prosecutor, allowing the defendant to make a statement, and deciding upon a verdict and sentence. The whole affair usually lasts no longer than an hour. Since all Martian judges represent the Justice Division, the Director of the Justice Division has the legal right to



The judge has the last word

overturn any verdict reached by a judge at any time, as does the RAM Chairman.

Ever since the first colony was established on Mars, Martian law has provided for three different penalties that may be visited upon convicted criminals: fines, incarceration, and death.

Fines range from 200 to 200,000 credits. This form of punishment is usually assessed to those who fail to live up to their duties in the work place. Fines are payable immediately; if the criminal doesn't have the money, his personal possessions will be confiscated to pay the fine. If this still doesn't raise the necessary funds, the criminal will be imprisoned.

Incarceration can last from one month to life. Those with sentences of less than two years spend their terms in the detention block on the Pavonis Space Elevator. Criminals with longer sentences are shipped to the prison on Deimos. Incarceration is usually assessed to those committing dangerous or violent crimes. Since speaking out against RAM is considered one of the most dangerous of all crimes on Mars, many of the prisoners on Deimos are political dissidents.

The death sentence is normally given only to extremely dangerous violent criminals and traitors. Execution is by firing squad. In keeping with the expediency inherent in other aspects of the Martian legal system, execution usually follows the subject's conviction by no more than twenty-four hours.

Note that Martian law does not establish certain penalties for specific crimes. Sentencing is entirely up to the judge, as long as the sentence can somehow be interpreted as a fine, incarceration, or death. Theoretically, a Martian judge can give some-

RAM at a Glance

On the following two pages is a schematic diagram that summarizes how RAM is organized—identifying each division and its head, and also describing the alliances that currently exist within the RAM power structure.

Initially, this chart is meant only for your information, to make it a little easier to keep track of who's in charge of what. However, as your campaign develops, the player characters will learn more and more about the workings of RAM. Eventually they may reach such a level of familiarity that you can show them this chart and allow them to copy the information onto a separate sheet of paper. (It sure beats having to keep answering questions like, "Is that 'Kitzarenko' with one 't' or two?")

RAM at a glance

Organizational structure and political alliances within the corporation

**Holzerhein
Allies**
(family
members)

Transportation

Zygurd
Holzerhein

Economic Affairs

Werner
Holzerhein

**Health and
Martian Services**

Natalia
Holzerhein

**The
Valmar
Family**

**Consumer
Products**

Darred Valmar

BioSciences

Durella Valmar

**Opposition
Faction**

Atomics

Gordon Zetzen

**Ecological
Management**

Friedrich Fallberg

Marketing

Fordham
Kitzarenko

**Neutral,
unpredictable,
or unreliable**

Fabrication

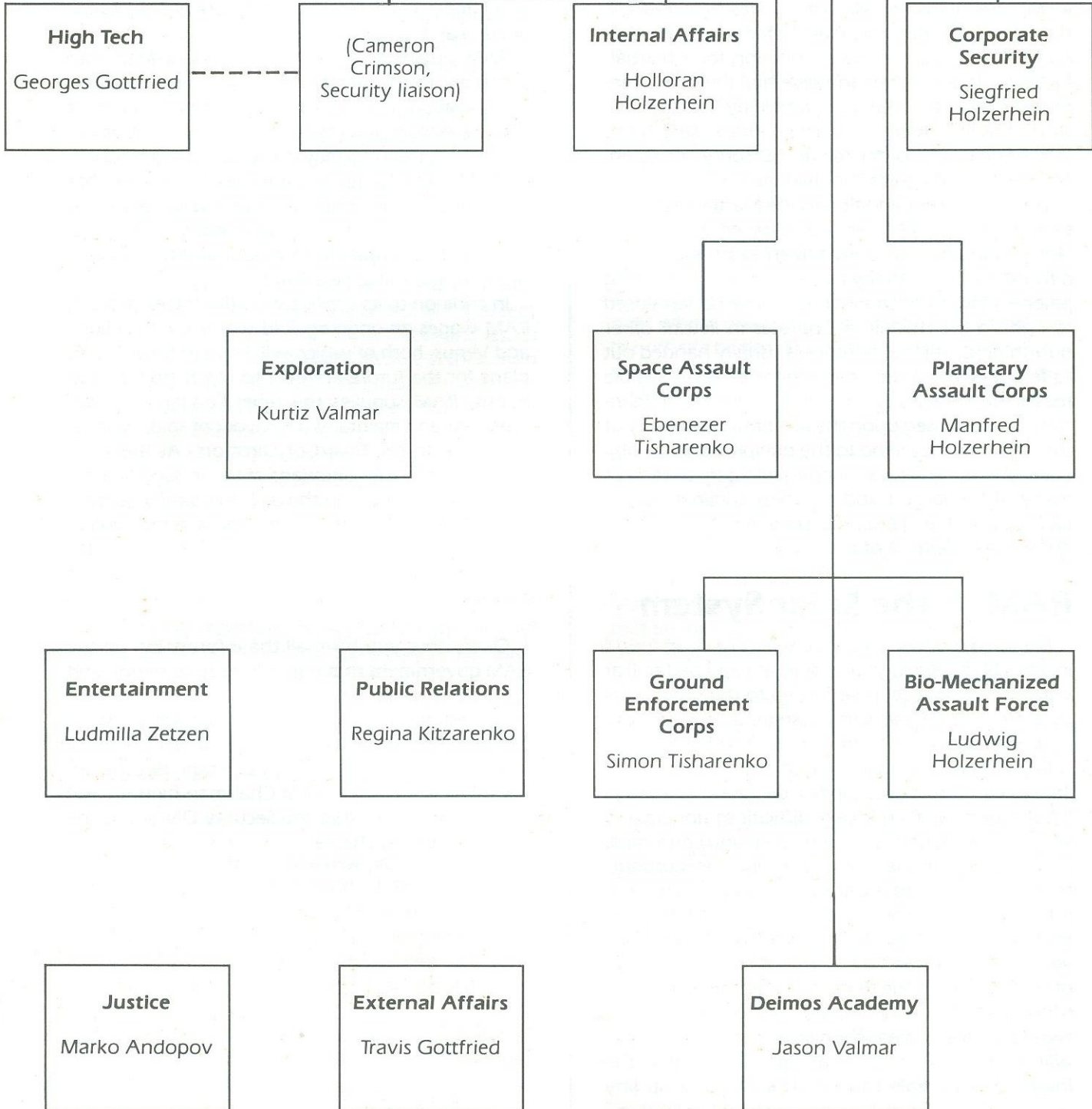
Sabrina
Charnevsky

**Ground
Development**

Simon Zetzen

Chairman Simund Holzerhein

Security
(under Chairman's control)



one the death sentence for petty theft, though even the harshest Martian judges are not this extreme under ordinary circumstances. However, if someone convicted of petty theft showed his disagreement by spitting in the judge's face, no one would blame the judge for sending the offender to the firing squad.

Around the time Simund Holzerhein seized the RAM Chairmanship, Martian judges acquired the right to try certain criminals before they are captured. Today, it's not too uncommon for a Martian judge to try a criminal and give him the death sentence before he or she is brought in by Security Division forces. Such a verdict then serves as "shoot-on-sight" order for any Security forces encountering the "guilty" individual.

The most recent addition to the Martian legal system, however, was an edict issued by Simund Holzerhein approximately fifteen years ago adding a fourth type of penalty to each judge's sentencing palette. Convicted criminals can now be sentenced to fight in the duelpit in Coprates in lieu of other punishment. Such a sentence is usually handed out to felons who would have otherwise been eligible for the death penalty. Since judges are given financial rewards based upon the performance quality of the criminals they send to the duelpit (as judged by audience ratings and spot polls), most try to send as many of the largest and toughest criminals to the pits as possible. (You will read more about the duelpit in Chapter 4 of this book.)

RAM in the Solar System

If you've read the background information found in *The World Book*, you should already be familiar with RAM's political relationship to the other colonized worlds in the solar system. Just to refresh your memory, a brief summary is included here.

RAM ultimately hopes to dominate the entire solar system, and based upon the workings of the RAM economy, it's not very difficult to understand why. On Mars, goods are produced and consumed, and all of the money earned through this production is distributed to the Martian populace. The largest problem confronting this economy is the fact that no new money is entering the system. Each year, the executives take more and more money out of the pockets of the managers and the workers to support their lavish lifestyles. Unless a new, of-world source of wealth is discovered, the economy will eventually hit a breaking point where the lower castes simply cannot afford to give up any more wealth and still maintain their productivity.

Although this breaking point is still several decades away, the top RAM officials have noticed the crisis and are working to relieve it.

One source of new wealth that immediately comes to mind is Earth. Although the Martians have been exploiting Earth for years now, there is still quite a bit of room for economic expansion on the Earth surface. Geopolitically, Earth is also important as a jumping-off point for any future attacks aimed at Luna and Venus.

RAM's plans for Earth have brought Mars into conflict with the members of NEO, the New Earth Organization. The NEO freedom fighters and their capable leaders (such as Buck Rogers and his compatriot Wilma Deering) may in the long run turn out to be RAM's most dangerous enemies. So far, NEO has been successful in opposing RAM and its operations on a small scale, but the organization lacks the resources and manpower to mount anything closely resembling a full-scale assault.

In addition to its conflict with the forces of NEO, RAM wages an ongoing cold war with both Luna and Venus, both of which will have to fall if RAM's plans for the future are ever to reach fruition. On Venus, RAM supplies the rebel Lowlanders with weapons and maintains a network of spies who report back to the Board of Directors. At the same time, however, the Ishtarrians of Venus supply armaments to the rebels on the technologically quarantined Earth. RAM's efforts directed against Luna in this area have been much less successful, but the Directors occasionally discover a way to inflict subtle damage upon the Lunar government.

Okay, now you have all the information on the RAM government that you will need to design and run XXVc™ game adventures set on Mars. The only real question that remains to be answered is "Who enforces all of these laws and regulations?" The answer, of course, is the Security Division, directly under the control of the RAM Chairman himself, and it's no coincidence that the Security Division is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: RAM Security

The Security Division is far and away the largest substructure within the RAM hierarchy. In its entirety, RAM Security comprises the Martian police force, army, and space fleet, as well as the dreaded Internal Affairs Division—not technically a division in itself, but an agency that has more power and more resources than many divisions. The following discussion covers all parts of the division other than Internal Affairs; the IAD is described in a separate section of text.

Unlike each of the other RAM divisions, Security is always under the leadership and direct supervision of the RAM Chairman himself. It is this close tie to the Martian military that allows the Chairman to enforce his broad range of formidable political powers.

RAM Security is divided into six subdivisions known as Corps. Heading up each Corps is an officer called a Grand Marshal. The Grand Marshal sees to the day-to-day operation of his forces and issues them their orders. Grand Marshals accept their own orders only from the RAM Chairman. Because the Security Division is plugged into the RAM economy just like any other division, there tends to be quite a bit of competition between the Grand Marshals. When it comes time to distribute dividends at the end of each year, the performance of each of the Corps is evaluated and profits are allocated accordingly. For this reason, each of the Marshals wants to be in a position to score big military victories, even if these victories come at the expense of other Marshals. During important military campaigns, Simund Holzerhein has been known to intervene and force the Grand Marshals to cooperate.

At present, five of the Grand Marshals are members of the Holzerhein political syndicate. The sixth is a member of the Valmar family. Each of these Grand Marshals have roughly the same game statistics:

RAM Security Grand Marshal (9th level Martian warrior): hp 55; AC 4; THAC0 12; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 15, Tech 9.

Career skills: Battle Tactics 90, Demolitions 20, Leadership 80, Maneuver in Zero G 40, Move Silently 20, Notice 60, Repair Weapon 10, Use Rocket Belt 40.

General skills: Fast Talk/Convince 55, Planetary Survival 25, and ten other skills with an average rating of 10 in each.

The six Grand Marshals and the sections of Security they oversee are as follows:

Siegfried Holzerhein, Corporate Security Corps: One of Simund Holzerhein's many cousins, Siegfried heads the section of RAM Security that has the responsibility of keeping the peace in the Martian cities and enforcing the Chairman's will at home.

Siegfried is a stern and somewhat bitter man. A highly decorated veteran soldier, he believes that his cousin should have secured him a more prestigious place in the Martian military hierarchy. So far, however, his grumbling has accomplished little outside of amusing Simund.

In Coprates, Siegfried is known for his constant battles with the Internal Affairs Division. Both the IAD and the Corporate Security Corps constantly lodge complaints against each other and bicker over where one organization's authority ends and the other's begins. Even the low-level personnel in the two organizations generally distrust each other and refuse to cooperate.

Ebenezer Tisharenko, Space Assault Corps: Ebenezer is another of Holzerhein's cousins, though he is not as closely related to the Chairman as either Manfred (see below) or Siegfried Holzerhein. A famous war hero and the idol of many Martian children, Ebenezer was hand-picked by Holzerhein to head up the prestigious Space Assault Corps, the Martian space fleet. Recently, however, the rumors that Ebenezer is soon to be dismissed due to his recent failures in scuffles with NEO have been flying through RAM circles in and about Coprates.

His recent defeats notwithstanding, Ebenezer Tisharenko truly is one of the great military minds on Mars. It is difficult to imagine RAM vanquishing NEO once and for all without his participation. His greatest liability as a RAM commander is the fact that he has few allies in the RAM political structure. Tisharenko takes his soldiering very seriously and is not fond of playing the sorts of political games one must observe to thrive in Martian politics.

Manfred Holzerhein, Planetary Assault Corps: Yet another cousin of Simund Holzerhein, Manfred commands the so-called "jump marines" that make up the Planetary Assault Corps. The PAC is essentially the Martian rapid deployment force. Its troopers can be sent anywhere in the solar system at a moment's notice and dropped down to a planet surface from orbit.

Because he insists upon personally accompanying his troops on almost every single mission they are called upon to perform, Manfred Holzerhein has earned the fanatical loyalty of the jump marines. In fact, Manfred presents his cousin a bit of a political problem. Although he is a close family member, Manfred has still accumulated just a bit too much political power for cousin Simund's peace of mind. Simund would like to remove his cousin from his Grand Marshalship, but can't due to his fear of a massive rebellion by Manfred's extremely loyal troops. Manfred is well aware of the dilemma he poses his cousin and enjoys watching the Chairman squirm. Manfred hopes to be Chairman himself someday, though he would only launch an overt attack on his cousin's position if an absolutely ideal opportunity presented itself.

Simon Tisharenko, Ground Enforcement

Corps: The brother of Ebenezer, Simon heads up RAM's ground army. Simon rose to his position after his brother personally recommended him to Simund Holzerhein.

Like his brother, Simon is cast in the no-nonsense, tough-talking soldier mode. He too has an inbuilt distrust of politicians and their bureaucracies.

Ludwig Holzerhein, Bio-Mechanized Assault

Force: Ludwig is one of Simund's nephews. He heads up the section of RAM Security that controls the operation of the feared Martian Terrines.

Unlike most of his fellow Grand Marshals, Ludwig enjoys the political aspects of his position. He loves socializing with the Martian elite and carrying on high-powered political negotiations at elegant cocktail parties. The single characteristic for which Ludwig is most noted, however, is his unrivaled cruelty. Ludwig is an old-fashioned sadist who takes extreme pleasure in carrying out the duties of his office. In fact, Ludwig loves his position so much that he has no further political ambitions whatsoever. He is perfectly content to remain where he is. A cynic might label Ludwig "the perfect RAM zombie."

Jason Valmar, Deimos Academy: Valmar heads up the Training Corps which operates out of the Deimos Academy and trains new officers for the RAM military elite.

As one might expect from the cousin of Ardala and Durella, Jason is a shifty insider with a flair for subterfuge and deception. He takes his job as the master of the Deimos Academy very seriously, but only because it furthers his political ambitions to do so. Like many of his family members, Jason is more

interested in wealth than power, and is perfectly willing to traffic in classified information, compromise his military responsibilities, or do almost anything else necessary to get it.

Once per Martian month, Simund Holzerhein's digital personality communes with a meeting of all six of these Grand Marshals to discuss strategy and matters of military importance. In fact, at present these are the only regular meetings of top RAM officials. Holzerhein put an end to the practice of holding monthly "board meetings" attended by all of the Directors about five years ago because he began to find such meetings uninformative and tiresome. As things currently stand, it is up to the Directors to gather on their own initiative if they wish to meet, though Holzerhein will sometimes call a meeting in order to discuss a particularly sensitive topic that may have just come up.

Internal Affairs

The Internal Affairs Division is without a doubt the most feared division in the RAM Government, because it affects the lives not only of non-Martians but also every native on the planet who is part of the RAM machine. Essentially, the IAD is RAM's "secret police" force. IAD operatives weed out and eliminate dissidents, search for political subversion, attempt to maintain the loyalty of the common Martian citizen, and defend the Chairmanship of Simund Holzerhein. Of course, none of these activities are actually publicly acknowledged. Officially (in case anyone asks, which hardly ever happens), the IAD is merely responsible for preventing corruption within the RAM government.

Sitting atop the IAD is Holloran Holzerhein, Simund's aging and fanatically loyal son. Due to the sensitive nature of much of the work carried out by Internal Affairs, Holloran has designed his own supporting infrastructure to be as simple as possible. Beneath him are four "area chiefs" he himself appointed: one to oversee Coprates, one for Pavonis, one for the outer cities, and one to keep track of the Martian Free States. Each of these area chiefs monitors the activities of between fifty and two hundred IAD operatives. It is the responsibility of the chiefs to screen out potential trouble spots in their districts and allocate the appropriate forces to relieving them. Holloran and his personal staff monitor the RAM hierarchy and affairs affecting the entire planet, and dispatch whatever IAD operatives are necessary to deal with any problem that arises.

Internal Affairs operatives are notoriously shifty, underhanded, and vicious. They are also remarkably well informed. Most IAD agents have built up their own extensive networks of secret observers and informants. Anyone arriving on Mars who appears to pose any sort of threat to RAM is bound to pick up an IAD tail almost immediately. If, after scrutiny, the offending individual or individuals continue to look suspicious, more IAD agents will be assigned to the case and various technological surveillance traps will be put into place (bugs, listening devices, wire taps, etc.).

Once IAD has determined that an individual is clearly a threat to RAM or any of its operations, its operatives usually react in one of three fashions:

For minor threats, the operatives resort to intimidation; typically, they'll visit the individual in the middle of the night and demand that he cease his offending activities, using a little bit of force just to make themselves a bit more persuasive. In more serious cases, individuals are removed from society and placed in prison on trumped-up charges. And in extreme situations, of course, the IAD simply sees to it that the offender disappears forever. More than one mysterious corpse has been found beneath the shifting sands of the Martian desert.

The truly frightening powers of the IAD stem from an edict issued approximately fifteen years ago by the Chairman himself that basically gives the IAD Director the right to temporarily impose his commands upon any of the other Directors. This means, for instance, that it is a simple matter for the IAD to have someone found guilty of just about any charge one can imagine by temporarily "commandeering" the powers of the Justice Division. Another favorite IAD tactic is to manipulate stock accounts and bank balances through the Economic Affairs Division.

IAD Agents in the Game

The operatives of the Internal Affairs Division are quite likely to play a major role in many XXVc™ game scenarios. By their nature, PCs are often very suspicious and mysterious individuals who are bound to pique the IAD's interest.

Whenever a band of PCs arrives on Mars with the intention of opposing any aspect of the RAM Government (stealing information, foiling a RAM plot, interfering with the operation of a RAM division or subsidiary, etc.), they will most likely attract the attention of the Internal Affairs Division within three days of their arrival. The fact that IAD takes some sort of notice of the PCs is almost automatic.

Even if the PCs are being particularly careful not to betray their true intentions to anyone they encounter, the IAD will probably notice them anyway. The networks of informants and surveillance devices under the control of most IAD agents is so efficient that even a particularly careful group is bound to be noticed and branded with suspicion. The only way to avoid notice altogether is to take extraordinary precautions (i.e. holing up in a basement somewhere and not coming out at all until it is time to perform whatever mission the PCs have in mind; the PCs disguising themselves as specific average Martian citizens and not deviating from their daily routines, etc.).

Once the PCs have attracted the attention of the IAD, they will become subject to the procedures outlined above: surveillance at first, with things getting more and more heavy-handed depending upon what the first investigating operatives discover. Basically, this means that IAD agents will figure into a typical XXVc™ game scenario in one of two ways. The agents can operate on the periphery of the adventure and serve as a limiting factor which constrains the PCs' activities, or they can become major players in the affair and actually contribute to the plot.

Let's look at an example. Suppose the PCs are NEO operatives working undercover who have come to Mars to destroy a new antipersonnel weapon that the Martian space fleet is rumored to be building, with the intent of installing it aboard one of its larger rocket ships. As soon as the PCs arrive on Mars and begin their investigation to figure out exactly where the weapon is being constructed, they will attract the attention of the IAD.

From this point on, the referee has two choices. The IAD agents can serve as a simple constraint on the player characters, making all of the obstacles they must overcome to find and destroy the weapon that much more difficult to deal with. (In other words, now that they are being watched, the PCs cannot make inquiries as openly or as deeply as they might like, and they may have to come up with some sort of plan to divert the attention of the IAD agents just before they make their attempt to actually destroy the weapon.) Or, the agents can actually become a part of the plot of the adventure itself; the agents might decide to bring the PCs in for questioning, making it necessary for the PCs to escape from the IAD before they can even hope to accomplish their mission.

Note that you shouldn't really try to conceal the fact that the PCs are being investigated or watched. Intimidation is one of the IAD's favorite tactics. IAD



Internal Affairs agents have a unique way of greeting visitors to Mars

agents usually try to make sure that their targets realize they are being watched and followed.

Typical IAD Agent (3rd level Martian rogue): hp 12; AC 7; THACO 19; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 12, Tech 10.

Career skills: Bypass Security 5, Climb 5, Fast Talk/Convince 20, Hide in Shadows 30, Move Silently 40, Notice 10, Open Lock 5, Pick Pocket 5.

General skills: Battle Tactics 10, Disguise 10, four others with an average rating of 10 in each.

All IAD agents wear light body armor (AC 7). They are equipped with a variety of hand weapons, depending on the task at hand and the adversary they're dealing with.

Military Hierarchy

Like most armies, the Security Division is built around a somewhat complex hierarchy of command and control. In the most general sense, all six branches of the Security Division are organized in a somewhat similar fashion.

Within each branch there are three levels of per-

sonnel roughly corresponding to the three Martian castes. Officers plan and oversee military operations and are drawn from the executive caste. Sub-officers are drawn from the manager caste and act as liaisons between the officers and the regular troops. And the troopers who are drawn from the worker caste form the backbone of the Martian military. Officers make up approximately 2% of the personnel of any branch, subofficers 13 to 15%, and troopers the remainder.

In addition, each of these three groups has its own internal hierarchy to establish command control. A higher-ranking soldier has authority over all those below him, but even the lowest-ranking members of a higher caste automatically outrank everyone in the caste or castes below.

The breakdown of officer ranks is as follows: Grand Marshal, Marshal, Field Colonel, Colonel, Grand Lieutenant, and Lieutenant. All Martian officers wear a star pattern somewhere on their uniforms. An officer's rank is identified by the number of stars in the pattern; a Lieutenant has one star, a Grand Lieutenant two stars, and so forth, all the way up to six stars for a Grand Marshal.

There are fewer gradations on the subofficer level. The highest-ranking subofficers are Sergeants,

followed by Undersergeants and Overseers. Subofficers wear stripes to distinguish rank (one for Overseers, two for Undersergeants, three for Sergeants).

Troopers come in still fewer varieties. The only two ranks on this level are Trooper and Overtrooper. Troopers wear red circles on their uniforms to distinguish rank (one for Troopers, two for Overtroopers).

Although the command hierarchies do not differ between the various branches of the Security Division, the actual organization of the troops within each branch varies a great deal. Here is a detailed breakdown of each Corps as well as a description of its activities.

Corporate Security

As stated above, the job of a Corporate Security trooper is to keep the peace and enforce the law. As such, the Corporate Security "grunts," as they are called, are by far the most lightly armed and armored troopers in the Security Division.

Typical Corporate Security Trooper (1st level Martian warrior): hp 6; AC 7; THACO 20; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11, Tech 9.

Weapon: Rocket pistol: Dmg 1d10, ROF 2, Max Range 400

Career skills: Battle Tactics 10, Demolitions 0, Leadership 0, Maneuver in Zero G 0, Move Silently 10, Notice 15, Repair Weapon 0, Use Rocket Belt 5.

General skills: Fast Talk/Convince 5, Intimidate 5, two others rated at 5 each.

Typical Corporate Security Sergeant (2nd level Martian warrior): hp 12; AC 7; THACO 19; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11, Tech 9.

Weapon: Rocket pistol: Dmg 1d10, ROF 2, Max Range 400

Career skills: Battle Tactics 25, Demolitions 0, Leadership 10, Maneuver in Zero G 5, Move Silently 10, Notice 20, Repair Weapon 5, Use Rocket Belt 5.

General skills: Fast Talk/Convince 15, Intimidate 15, two others rated at 5 each.

Corporate Security Troopers are organized into regiments. Each regiment consists of eleven batteries of twelve troopers each. One of these eleven batteries is a special heavy weapons unit. Troopers in the heavy weapons battery are armed with laser rifles (Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Max Range 3000) and wear heavy body armor (AC 2). Most heavy weap-

ons batteries have one or more armored vehicles at their disposal as well. The vehicles are quite useful for quelling urban riots and other forms of widespread civil disorder.

Each of a regiment's batteries is further subdivided into six patrols of two troopers each. The patrol is the basic unit of the Corporate Security Corps. CS troopers always operate in pairs, never alone. Most CS patrols are issued vehicles appropriate to their locale.

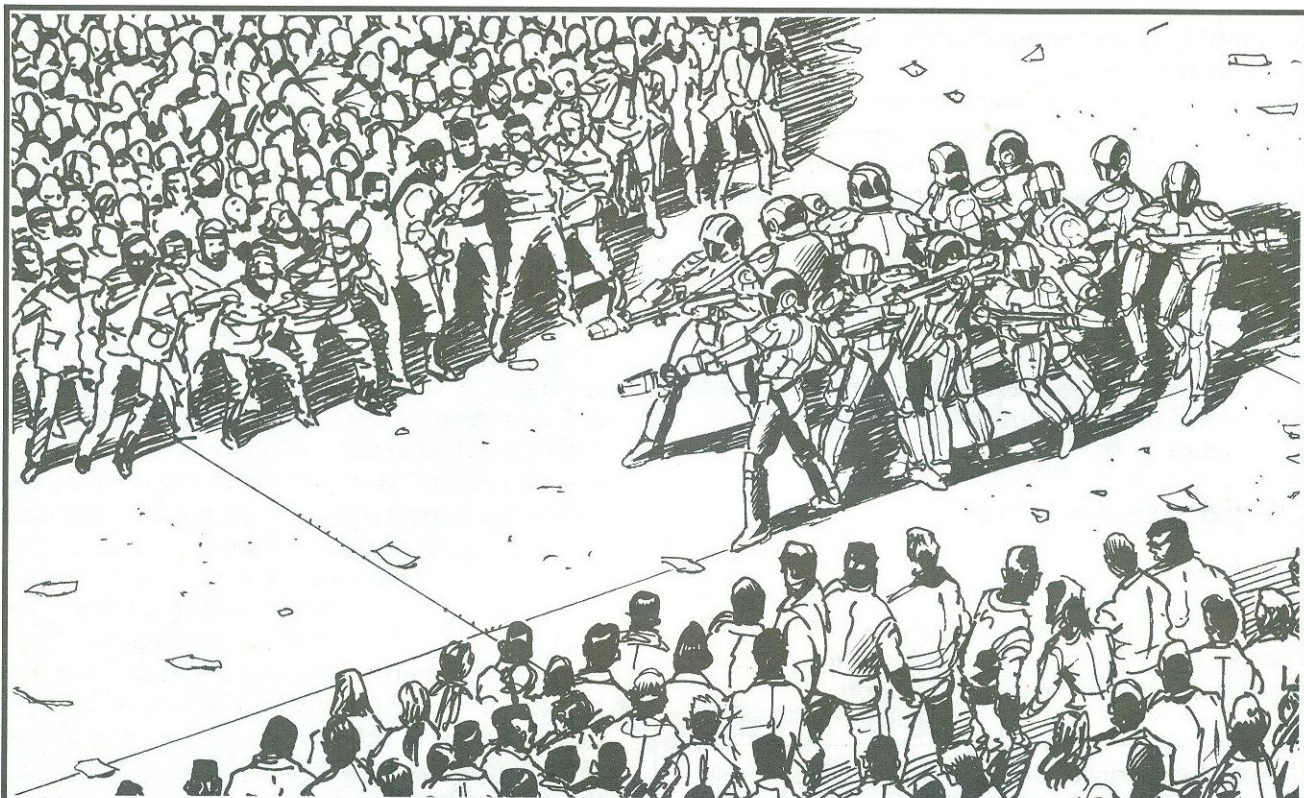
An entire regiment of CS soldiers is under the command of a Grand Lieutenant, while each battery is under the command of a normal Lieutenant. Each Corporate Security officer has two Sergeants assigned as staff. Most of the corporate security personnel are Troopers, though one patrol in each battery (called the command patrol) consists of two Overtroopers (1st level warriors with slightly higher ability scores than ordinary Troopers).

On Mars, each Corporate Security regiment operates out of its own headquarters in a region known as a precinct. The regiment is responsible for handling all criminal activity occurring within its precinct. Precinct boundaries are drawn up based upon the crime rates of the area in question. Areas of heavy crime, such as the outlying cities located near the Martian Free States, have very small precincts (and thus more security troopers in a given area), while low crime areas such as Coprates have larger precincts and fewer troopers.

In addition to the regular CS regiment, each precinct also houses a squad of ten detectives, all of whom are Lieutenants (3rd-4th level warriors). The detectives conduct inquiries and investigations into crimes and conspiracies, leaving the relatively untrained troopers to handle the legwork and patrol duty.

Above the precinct level, command officers are assigned to the Corporate Security Corps as needed. Each major city, for example, has a Field Colonel overseeing all of its precincts. It is the job of the Field Colonel and his staff to decide which precinct has jurisdiction in disturbances spanning more than one precinct and to coordinate the efforts of all the precincts when necessary.

In the XXVc™ game, player characters adventuring on Mars are likely to become familiar with the Corporate Security Troopers very quickly. The CS is omnipresent in and about the Martian cities, and CS troopers are the first to protect most Martian installations from illegal access.



When a GEC unit performs crowd control, nobody stands in the way

Ground Enforcement Corps

As its name suggests, the Ground Enforcement Corps provides RAM with its land-based army. The GEC is divided into three sections: armor, infantry, and artillery, each with its own internal structure.

The organizational unit of choice in the GEC is the legion, consisting of approximately 10,000 soldiers in the infantry section, 100 vehicles in the armor section, or 100 gun batteries in the artillery section. Each legion is divided into five battalions, each battalion into four companies, each company into ten platoons and each platoon into four squads. The ten-man squad is the basic GEC operating unit.

On the command level, each GEC legion is under the command of a Marshal, each battalion is under the command of a Field Colonel, each company is under the command of a Colonel, and each platoon is under the command of either a Grand Lieutenant or a Lieutenant. There is generally one Sergeant and one Undersergeant assigned to each platoon, and each squad is commanded by an Overseer. The vast majority of soldiers in the GEC are either Troopers or Overtroopers; however, all personnel serving in the armor section are of Overseer rank or higher.

At present, the GEC consists of approximately

600 infantry legions, 300 armor legions, and 400 artillery legions. Most of these legions are bivouaced on Mars awaiting action, though there are a number of legions stationed on Earth, in the asteroid belt, and on both Martian moons.

Each GEC legion has a special function which it is specially trained and equipped to perform. Most of these functions are terrain-specific (one legion might be an "ice legion," another a "jungle legion," and so on), though there are also specially trained antiterrorism forces, rapid deployment forces, and many other types of specialized troops.

Typical GEC Trooper (1st level Martian warrior):
hp 8; AC 2; THACO 20; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 11, Tech 8.

Weapons: Laser rifle: Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Max Range 3000. Grenades (3): Dmg 4d10, ROF 1, Max Range thrown, Blast Radius 10 ft.

Career skills: Battle Tactics 5, Demolitions 5, Leadership 0, Maneuver in Zero G 5, Move Silently 5, Notice 10, Repair Weapon 5, Use Rocket Belt 5.

General skills: Climb 5, Drive Groundcar 5, two others each rated at 5.

Since the activities of the Ground Enforcement Corps are usually confined to full-scale wars and planetary invasions, player characters in the XXVc™ game are most likely to encounter GEC forces in their role as peacekeepers and police forces in some of RAM's offworld holdings.

Planetary Assault Corps

The Planetary Assault Corps is made up of jump marines—specialty troops equipped with battlesuits that allow them to leap out of airborne (or spaceborne) vessels as high as five miles above a planet's surface and then descend and immediately engage in combat. A combat unit of this sort has two tactical benefits. The first is the speed with which it can be deployed to a trouble spot; the second is its ability to land on a planet surface without the necessity of RAM's having a previously captured spaceport on the planet being assaulted. Standard Martian invasion tactics call for the Space Assault Corps to occupy the enemy fleet in orbital and suborbital combat over the target planet while the jump marines drop down to the planet surface and capture a spaceport, after which regular GEC troops can be landed and deployed.

Even though the Planetary Assault troopers are among the most well trained in the entire Security Division, the PAC suffers a higher ratio of casualties than any other Corps. This is because PAC soldiers are frequently called upon to enter areas which are very heavily defended and fortified.

Organizationally, the PAC is set up similar to the Ground Enforcement Corps, except that each Planetary Assault legion consists of only 1,000 soldiers. Each legion is divided into five battalions, each battalion into four companies, and each company into ten platoons consisting of five soldiers apiece. The command structure is the same used in the GEC.

For details about the jump marines' battlesuit, see the section below on "Trooper Equipment."

Typical Jump Marine (3rd level Martian warrior): hp 21; AC 0; THAC0 18; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11, Tech 11.

Weapon: Special heavy heat gun: Dmg 3d6, ROF 1, Max Range 60.

Career skills: Battle Tactics 30, Demolitions 0, Leadership 5, Maneuver in Zero G 20, Move Silently 10, Notice 15, Repair Weapon 10, Use Rocket Belt 30.

General skills: Planetary Survival 20, Tracking 20, four others each rated at 5.

Bio-Mechanized Assault Forces

The Bio-Mechanized Assault Forces, also known as the Terrines, are the Martian combat elite. Genetically engineered for superior performance in a conflict situation, the Terrines are the ultimate killing machines. Their prowess in battle is legendary all across the solar system.

Fortunately for those who would have to face them in combat, Terrines are very difficult to create. This fact, combined with the enormous casualties suffered during the rigorous Terrine training program, tends to keep their numbers down. At present, there are approximately 1,000 Terrines organized into a single legion. This legion is divided into four 250-member battalions. Each battalion is made up of five companies of fifty soldiers apiece, and each company is divided into ten squads of five. Martian military doctrine holds that a single squad of Terrines is more than the equivalent of an entire platoon of enemies—a bit overstated, perhaps, but not very far from the truth in practice.

Typical Terrine Soldier (5th level Terrine warrior): hp 52; AC 0; THAC0 16; Str 19, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 5, Cha 8, Tech 6.

Weapons: Rocket rifle: Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Max Range 2000. Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Career skills: Battle Tactics 75, Demolitions 0, Leadership 10, Maneuver in Zero G 40, Move Silently 0, Notice 15, Repair Weapon 20, Use Rocket Belt 40.

General skills: Drive Groundcar 15, Repair Mechanical 15, Planetary Survival 15, five others each rated at 10.

Lately, Simund Holzerhein has been ordering the Terrines into action against the forces of NEO, so it's not too unlikely that the PCs will eventually come across them in the course of their adventures. The Terrines' formidable weaponry and armor and their prowess in battle are partially offset by their renowned stupidity. Those NEO operatives who come across Terrines and do not quickly learn to exploit this weakness usually don't live to describe their encounter.

Before he became a digital personality, Simund Holzerhein used one special squad of five Terrines, known as the Vanguard, to serve as his personal bodyguards. Although he still maintains such a unit, Holzerhein's Vanguard now serves more as his own personal team of assassins and enforcers. The Vanguard answers only to the Chairman.

Space Assault Corps

In many ways, the Space Assault Corps is the Security Division's most important branch. Essentially, the SAC is the Martian space fleet. Without a strong space fleet to secure the space lanes so that supplies and equipment can be transported through them, it would be impossible for any of the other Corps to operate offworld effectively.

As one might expect, the SAC is organized quite a bit differently from the Martian ground forces. The maneuvering unit of choice in the SAC is the battlefleet. A single battlefleet usually consists of between three and seven battlers and ten to thirty cruisers. One battler in the fleet is always fitted to carry twenty-five or more fighters. Usually a Marshal presides over each battlefleet, while a Field Major captains each capital ship. Lower-level officers, underofficers, and troopers are allocated as needed to crew the fleet's various vessels. At present, RAM has fifteen battlefleets.

One subdivision of the SAC, the Atmospheric Defense Section, is charged with the responsibility of defending Mars from an enemy attack. In the ADS, terminology is a bit different. Spacecraft are grouped into defense squadrons consisting of between twenty and twenty-five fighters or between four and eight cruisers. Three battlers are allocated to the ADS and are permanently stationed in orbit around Mars.

The typical Martian pilot is versatile, highly trained and well disciplined.

Typical Space Assault Corps Pilot (3rd level Martian rocketjock): hp 12; AC 7; THACO 19; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 12, Tech 13.

Weapon: Bolt gun: Dmg 1d4, ROF 2, Max Range 400.

Career skills: Drive Jetcar 20, Drive Groundcar 15, Maneuver in Zero G 20, Notice 15, Pilot Fixed Wing Craft 20, Pilot Rocket 35, Pilot Rotorwing Craft 15, Use Rocket Belt 40.

General skills: Astrogation 10, First Aid 10, four others each rated at 10.



Terrine

Trooper Equipment

As you have already seen in the preceding descriptions, most of the soldiers of the RAM Security Division are armed with weapons from the basic roster described in *Characters & Combat* and *The Technology Book*. In addition to these items, however, there are a few pieces of special equipment that are unique to the Martian army.

Jump Marine Battlesuit

Cost: 5,000cr (7,000cr)
Size: same as body; can't be compressed or stowed
Weight: 100 (130)
Armor Class: 0

The battlesuit worn by members of the Planetary Assault Corps is a modified version of battle armor. It contains built-in propulsion units—a rocket belt and a space belt—that enable the marine to control his "jump" to the surface of the planet and also give him a way of getting quickly from place to place once he's there. The suit also contains a parachute pack that can be employed as a backup in case something goes wrong with the propulsion system. (Obviously, the parachute can only be used in an atmosphere environment.)

The effect of all these attachments is to make the battlesuit much bulkier than standard battle armor; as a result, the running and climbing movement rates for a jump marine in his suit are halved. If circumstances permit, troopers can remove their suits once they have made planetfall. Light body armor (AC 7) can be worn inside a battlesuit to provide some protection once the suit is taken off.

In addition to its propulsion and protection features, one battlesuit in five (one per platoon) is equipped with a built-in rocket launcher and a belt containing three projectiles for use with that weapon (Dmg 5d10, ROF 1/2, Max Range 1000). The cost and weight figures given above in parentheses apply to this special version of the battlesuit.

Targeting Helmet

Cost: 300cr
Size: approx. 12" diameter sphere (head-sized)
Weight: 3 lbs.

The targeting helmet is used by every branch of the Security Division but Corporate Security. Generally, you can assume that one out of every ten Martian soldiers is equipped with it. The helmet throws up a laser-automated targeting grid on a visor before the user's eyes that greatly increases personal

marksmanship. In game terms, any soldier equipped with a targeting helmet receives a +1 bonus to his attack roll when firing a ranged weapon.

Sniper Rifle

Cost: 900cr
Size: Muzzle 36" long
Weight: 5 lbs.
Range: 4000
Damage: 1d10
ROF: 1
Shots: 14

Used by all branches of the Security Division but particularly in the GEC, the sniper rifle is essentially an ordinary laser rifle that has been specially modified for accuracy. A soldier using a sniper rifle receives a +1 bonus to his attack roll. Within the Ground Enforcement Corps, approximately one soldier in twenty is armed with a sniper rifle (such soldiers are called "sharpshooters").

Battle Computer

Cost: 600cr
Size: 9" × 6" × 3"
Weight: 3

Most Martian officers carry one of these handy complex-sized accessories. The battle computer is capable of analyzing an opponent's battle tactics and suggesting suitable countertactics. Martian soldiers commanded by an officer equipped with a battle computer receive a -1 modifier to their initiative rolls.

RAM Communicator

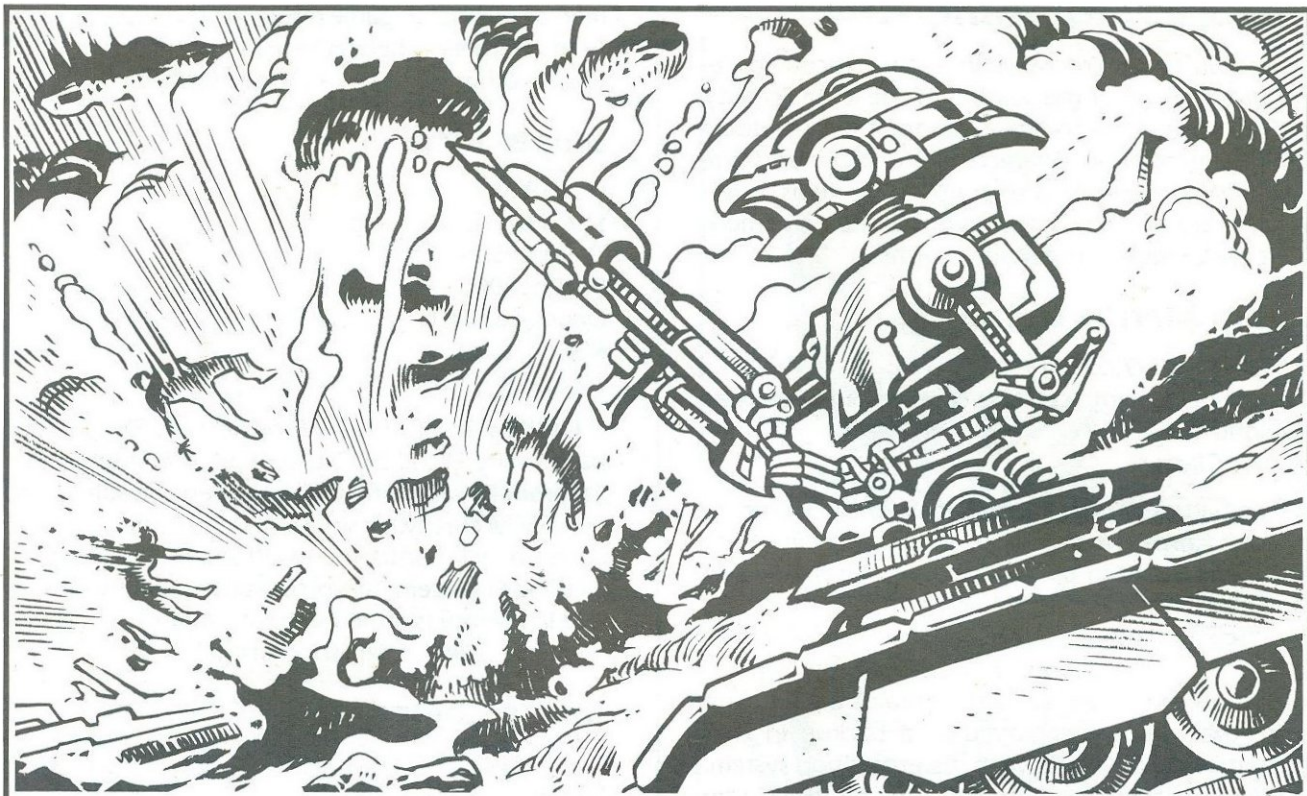
Cost: 100cr
Size: 1" diameter cylinder, 6" long
Weight: 1/2 lb.

The RAM communicator is a short rod-shaped radio transceiver capable of sending and receiving messages at a range of up to 50 miles. Communicators are commonly carried by all Security Division personnel of officer or subofficer class.

Survival Pack

Cost: 400cr
Size: 3' × 2' × 1'
Weight: 8 lbs.

Survival packs are issued to GEC troops who will be operating in the field for extended periods. Each pack contains three days' rations, a bedroll, a one-



While one bombot does its job (background), another moves into position

man pressure tent, a datamap (see below), and a three-gallon supply of aquanol capsules. Aquanol capsules are concentrated tablets of liquid hydrogen and oxygen, surrounded by a protecting and insulating coating, that when mashed together with a catalyst capsule (also provided) form a bubbly chemical reaction which results in the creation of fresh water.

Datamap

Cost: 50cr
Size: 6" × 3" × 1/2"
Weight: 1 lb.

Datamaps are pocket-sized computers that contain detailed terrain-map databases. The datamap is capable of displaying its maps at a variety of magnifications on a video unit built into the console. The memory built into the map unit typically enables it to hold a highly detailed map for an area covering as much as 200 square miles, or a less detailed map for a much larger area.

Bombot

Cost: 500cr (1000cr)
Size: 2' × 2' × 1' tall (2' × 2' × 3')
Weight: 40 lbs. (60 lbs.)

These small, heavily armored robots move on treads (like those of a tank) and are laden with powerful explosives. In combat, a bombot is programmed with a destination and sent off to explode when it reaches that destination, damaging nearby enemy personnel and installations. Once the device is given a destination, the bombot's armor makes it nearly unstoppable. A more sophisticated version (statistics given in parentheses above) has a human-like "torso" that extends out the top and is capable of wielding a weapon to defend itself (THACO 20).

In game terms, the bombot is AC -1 and has 30 hit points. Once a bombot is programmed (a process which takes three rounds) and begins moving toward its destination, it will only stop if it is reduced to 0 hp (at which point it simply comes to a halt without exploding). The bombot moves at a rate of 240 feet per round. Once it reaches its destination it will halt and then explode at the start of the following round (automatically winning initiative for that round). An exploding bombot inflicts 8d10 points of

damage to everyone and everything within 40 feet of its location (characters making a save vs. explosions suffer half damage).

Special Grenades

Cost: 75cr each

Size: 4" diameter sphere

Weight: 1 lb.

Range: see below

Damage: see below

ROF: 1

Shots: not applicable

In addition to the standard grenades described on page 69 of *Characters & Combat*, Martian military personnel make use of four types of special grenades as well. In all cases, the maximum range of these grenades is determined as for other grenades (see the rules on page 68 of *Characters & Combat*.)

Pyropack: This is an incendiary grenade. When thrown, a pyropack causes burn damage to all characters, creatures, and flammable objects within its 10-foot blast radius that fail to save vs. explosion. For the purpose of this saving throw, assume that all flammable inanimate objects (wood, plastic, cloth, paper, etc.) need a roll of 18 to save. Objects made of metal, stone, and other inflammable materials are not affected. A character in battle armor can't be hurt by a pyropack, but all other weaker forms of armor will not protect against the flame.

A target hit by a pyropack takes 2d6 points of damage immediately. Sometimes the flame goes out right away, but most of the time there is a chance of further damage; for 0-3 rounds thereafter (1d4 - 1, rolled separately for each target), the fire will do an additional 1d6 points of damage unless steps are taken to extinguish it. A pyropack will not ignite except in an atmosphere breathable by humans (in other words, one containing oxygen).

Smokepack: This grenade is used to hamper an enemy's vision. Detonating a smokepack lays down a thick blanket of foggy smoke that covers a 15-foot radius around the grenade. A character firing a ranged weapon against any target in the smoke or obscured by the smoke must take a -5 penalty to his attack roll. (Of course, the penalty also applies to someone firing from within the smoke cloud.) The smokescreen lasts for 5 rounds in calm air, 2 rounds in a vacuum, or only 1 round (the one in which the grenade was detonated) in moving air.

Screechpack: This grenade emits a harsh sonic "wail" that can stun all living targets within a 30-

foot radius of where it goes off. Each character or creature within that area must make a saving throw vs. stun or be knocked unconscious for at least 1d4 rounds (roll separately for each victim). At the end of that time, the victim must attempt another saving throw; if this one also fails, the unconsciousness persists for an additional 1d4 rounds. (The sonic screech only lasts for a couple of seconds, but its effects can have a much longer duration.)

A screechpack can only be effective in an atmosphere environment (since sound is not transmitted through a vacuum). The grenade is not hampered by armor of any type (in fact, the screechpack was developed for use against heavily armored troops that are impervious to more conventional weapons).

Empack: "Emp" stands for electromagnetic pulse. When detonated, an empack grenade sends out a signal that can interfere with the functioning of all electronic equipment within a 60-foot radius. Each such piece of equipment is allowed a saving throw to determine if it is affected. (Common electronic items need a roll of 15 to save, while items specially built to resist such attacks need a roll of 6. Values between these extremes may be assigned at the referee's discretion.) Items that fail to save cease functioning until repaired. Laser weapons, communicators, computers, macroglasses, and tech scanners are examples of common devices that can be affected by empack grenades.

All of these special grenade types are only used by specially equipped Martian units, though almost all Martian soldiers have access to the standard explosive grenades described in *Characters & Combat* (as noted above, the typical GEC soldier carries three grenades).

Security Division Vehicles

An army without mobility is almost as bad as no army at all. Of course, RAM has developed several types of vessels and vehicles whose primary purposes are to spread its military influence and move troops from place to place.

Some of RAM's typical rocket ships—the battler *RMS Tharsis*, the heavy cruiser *RMS Chryse*, the transport *RMS Efficient Commerce*, the light cruiser *RMS Maximus Argyre*, and the X-23A *Krait* fighter—are illustrated and described on the Ship Data Cards in the XXVc™ game boxed set. Another ship type, the *RMS Scorpion* fighter designed especially for use in Earth's atmosphere, is shown on the foldout panel attached to the back cover of this book. Fol-

lowing are statistics and brief descriptions of some of the other vehicles in RAM's arsenal.

Spacecraft

Battlers: Most of the battlers in the Martian fleet fall into one of three different classes: Tharsis class (see the card for the *RMS Tharsis*), Hellas class, or Nereidum class.

RMS Hellas

Type: RAM Battler

Attributes

Tonnage: 5,000
Length: 10,000 feet
Width: 2,500 feet
Cargo: 2,500 tons
Hit Points:
Hull 20,000
Sensors/Commo 5,000
Controls 5,000
Life Support 10,000
Fuel 15,000
Engine 15,000

Armor Class: 0 (Battler)

Weapons: 100 Pumped Lasers
50 Heavy Missile Mounts
50 Gyrocannons
20 Missile Mounts

Crew: 1,700
Speed: 1
Reaction Bonus: +2
AC Defense Bonus: +5

Hellas class battlers are simply Tharsis class ships that have been stripped of their K-Cannon batteries to make room for a complement of 20 fighters (either Kraits or Scorpions, depending on where the battler is stationed or where it is headed). There is usually at least one Hellas class ship serving in each battlefleet.

As noted on page 76 of *Characters & Combat*, battlers are capable of carrying fighters, as a means of transporting these vessels across the depths of space. When designing a ship capable of carrying fighters, subtract five available weapon spaces for each 10-ton fighter carried, or ten spaces for each fighter of more than 10 tons. (As you'll see below, RAM has also developed a heavy cruiser that can transport a smaller ship.) The fighters themselves, of course, are not included in the ship's final calculated cost and must be purchased separately.

RMS Nereidum

Type: RAM Battler

Attributes

Tonnage: 7,000
Length: 14,000 feet
Width: 3,500 feet
Cargo: 3,500 tons
Hit Points:
Hull 28,000
Sensors/Commo 7,000
Controls 7,000
Life Support 14,000
Fuel 21,000
Engine 21,000

Armor Class: 0 (Battler)

Weapons: 100 Heavy Missile Mounts
75 Pumped Lasers
50 Heavy Acceleration Guns
50 Gyrocannons
40 K-Cannons

Crew: 1,900
Speed: 1
Reaction Bonus: +2
AC Defense Bonus: +6

The newer Nereidum class battlers are the largest ships in the Martian fleet, and some of the largest ships on active military duty anywhere in the solar system. The designers of the Nereidum were trying to build a ship that could inflict at least as much damage upon an entire planet as it could upon another battler. The object is to terrorize potential enemies of Mars with the threat of a powerful assault from the skies. So far, the Nereidum has performed rather well in action. Top officials in the Space Assault Corps hope to eventually phase out the older Tharsis model and completely replace those ships with Nereidum class vessels, though the high cost of the Nereidum will ensure that this process is a lengthy one.

Cruisers: Martian cruisers generally come in one of four varieties: the Chryse class or the Alba Patera class for heavy cruisers, and the Maximus Argyre class or the Arsia Mons class for lighter vessels (medium and scout cruisers, respectively).

RMS Alba Patera

Type: RAM Heavy Cruiser

Attributes

Tonnage: 450
Length: 900 feet
Width: 225 feet

Cargo: 225 tons
 Hit Points:
 Hull 1,800
 Sensors/Commo 450
 Controls 450
 Life Support 900
 Fuel 1,350
 Engine 1,350

Armor Class: 4 (Maximum Military)
 Weapons: 10 Heavy Missile Mounts
 5 Pumped Lasers
 5 Light Acceleration Guns
 5 Gyrocannons
 5 Beam Lasers

Crew: 350
 Speed: 1
 Reaction Bonus: +1
 AC Defense Bonus: +2

The Patera class is another design that, like the Nereidum battler, is relatively new to the Martian fleet. Each Patera cruiser carries a single fighter that is used as an exploration or surface transport vehicle.

RMS Arsia Mons
Type: RAM Scout Cruiser

Attributes
 Tonnage: 40
 Length: 80 feet
 Width: 20 feet
 Cargo: 20 tons
 Hit Points:
 Hull 160
 Sensors/Commo 40
 Controls 40
 Life Support 80
 Fuel 120
 Engine 120

Armor Class: 6 (Military)
 Weapons: 2 Pumped Lasers
 Crew: 10
 Speed: 5
 Reaction Bonus: -2
 AC Defense Bonus: -4

Arsia Mons class vessels are small, fast, and deadly. The SAC's tactic of overwhelming larger ships with tiny swarms of Arsia vessels as though they were giant fighters has so far proven very successful.

Fighters: There are two types of fighters in wide-

spread use in the Martian fleet: the X23-A Krait, designed to operate on Mars; and the XE-7 Scorpion, designed to operate on Earth. (Both are detailed elsewhere in the game materials, as mentioned above.) At present, Martian research scientists are working on an entirely new design for a fighter capable of operating effectively on Venus.

Ground Vehicles

Two types of ground vehicles commonly see service with the Ground Enforcement Corps: the Vecu, the mainstay of the armor section; and the XX7Z armored personnel carrier. In addition, statistics for the typical Corporate Security Corps Cruiser are provided below.

Vecu
Type: RAM Armored Fighting Vehicle

Weight: 75 tons
 Crew: 6
 Passengers: n/a
 Armament: 1 Rocket Launcher (Dmg 5d10)
 3 Heavy Laser Rifles (Dmg 2d12)
 Armor Class: -1
 Hit Points: 150 plus 150 (see below)
 Top Speed: 70 mph (6,160 ft. per round)

The Vecu (Variable Environment Combat Unit) is the 25th-Century version of a 20th-century tank. It is an airtight, electronically guided, tracked vehicle capable of operating in almost any terrain. It can ascend or descend inclines of as much as 60 degrees, is powerful enough (at top speed) to knock down and run over a tree or other heavy obstacle of up to 24 inches in thickness, and can travel over jagged rocks, swampland, mud, or sand as easily as it negotiates solid ground.

Fully loaded with ammunition, the Vecu carries 50 rounds for its rocket launcher and 30 capacitor clips for its laser rifles (each clip is good for 5 shots). The vehicle has enough cargo space to hold food, water, and other supplies to last its crew for as long as 10 days. Its propulsion comes from a nuclear generator that is essentially inexhaustible.

The vehicle can absorb up to 150 points of damage before being affected. It is impervious to attacks from the following weapons: needle gun, bolt gun, Desert Runner crossbow, microwave gun, sonic stunner, and any melee weapon other than a mono knife or mono sword. When a weapon hit brings cumulative damage to 150 points or more, the Vecu has been immobilized—but it still serves as an effective fortress for those inside. In order to destroy the

vehicle, an attacker must inflict an additional 150 points of damage, up to a total of 300. If this occurs, the Vecu will explode (due to an overload in its power plant). Each occupant must save vs. explosion or suffer 5d10 points of damage.

XX7Z

Type: RAM Armored Personnel Carrier

Weight: 50 tons

Crew: 3

Passengers: 20

Armament: 2 Heavy Laser Rifles (Dmg 2d12)

Armor Class: 1

Hit Points: 100 plus 50 (see below)

Top Speed: 90 mph (7,920 ft. per round)

The XX7Z is a versatile troop carrier that is frequently used by just about every branch of the Security Division. Although its primary purpose is to get soldiers and their gear from one place to another, it is also a decently powerful attack vehicle in its own right. When fully loaded, it carries 20 capacitor clips for its laser rifles (5 shots per clip). In addition, every passenger has access to a small porthole that can be opened to allow the firing of a hand-held ranged weapon from inside the vehicle.

The vehicle has two modes of movement. When traveling on its tracks, it has a top speed of 50 mph (4,400 ft. per round) and the same basic capabilities as the Vecu (see above). In an emergency, or in a combat situation, the driver can activate small rocket engines that raise it four feet off the ground and give it a top speed of 90 mph (as given above).

After it takes 100 points of damage, the XX7Z is immobilized. (It is impervious to certain weapons, just as the Vecu; see above.) When cumulative damage reaches 125, the hatch that allows the passengers to get out will automatically open, and two soldiers will exit the vehicle in each round thereafter. If the vehicle takes a total of 150 points of damage, it will explode, and anyone left inside must save vs. explosion or suffer 3d10 points of damage.

Manta

Type: RAM Corporate Security Cruiser

Weight: 3 tons

Crew: 1

Passengers: 3

Armament: Sonic stunner

2 Laser Rifles (Dmg 1d12)

AC: 5

Hit Points: 60

Top Speed: 120 mph (10,560 ft. per round)

The Manta is a jetcar that has been specially modified to serve as a police vehicle. The modifications include built-in weaponry, high-speed turbine engines, and powerful communications gear. Mantas are a common sight in every Martian city. However, in Pavonis, Mantas—and all other forms of transportation—are engineered to have a top speed of only 40 mph (3,520 feet per round) because of the enclosed nature of the city.

The Deimos Academy

All future Martian military officers come here at the age of 19 (when their secondary school education is over) and graduate four years later. While attending the academy they are instructed in combat strategy and tactics, leadership, and the use of standard military equipment.

Enrollment in the academy is by appointment, not by choice. Only those young adults who have shown an aptitude for military leadership are considered for admission. Each new group of incoming students numbers at least 500 and no more than 1,000, so that at any given time the total enrollment is between 2,000 and 4,000.

Like the Security Division, the Deimos Academy program is divided into several distinct Corps. Officers who will one day serve in the Space Assault Corps, for instance, enter the SAC program at the academy. The academy instructors are generally older officers who have retired from active duty. In addition to tutoring the future cadets in the arts of war, the instructors try to maintain their students as a combat-ready fighting unit throughout the duration of their stay at the academy. Martian military doctrine calls for the academy cadets to participate in the defense of Mars in the event of an off-world invasion.

The nucleus of this defense force is a small cadre of soldiers (300 to 500) manning a permanent military outpost on Deimos. Although this base is not technically part of the academy, most students visit the installation for special instruction at some point during their period of enrollment.

Deimos is also the site of a high-security military prison, built entirely inside the satellite beneath the base. Personnel from the base serve as guards and caretakers of the inmates. The prison has a capacity of 300, but is generally only two-thirds full at any given time. The inmates are a diverse group, ranging from incorrigible repeat offenders to political dissidents whose only "crime" was speaking about RAM in less than complimentary terms.

Chapter 4: Places of Interest

As noted in the introduction, one of the functions of this sourcebook is to help you design and run XX-Vc™ game adventures set on Mars. One basic element that every adventure needs is a good setting, and in this chapter you will find details and descriptions of a number of distinctly Martian settings that can be incorporated into role-playing adventures. Along with these descriptions, you'll find any new rules or game information necessary to bring the settings to life.

Coprates

Coprates is a vast, glittering "city of gold" that is built deep inside Coprates Chasm, a fissure that stretches from the Plains of Solis up to the Forest of Pavonis. For the most part, the streets of Coprates are lined with giant, gleaming pyramids. The largest of these pyramids are 15 stories tall and more than 300 feet wide along one side of the base. A residential structure of this size can hold as many as 300 families, or roughly 1,500 people.

Most of the pyramids are arranged in triangular patterns and connected to one another by translucent, enclosed walkways. While those used for residences are clean and well kept, the pyramids that contain business offices are even more majestic and impressive; each one has etched into its front the logo or symbol of the corporation or subsidiary headquartered inside.

In the open areas between the pyramids is a complex array of fountains surrounded by porcelain sculptures. Overall, the city's appearance is both opulent and striking. Equally beautiful are the vast "hanging gardens" which are suspended in the sky on translucent platforms that extend off the walkways.

Throughout all of Coprates, vehicle traffic is scarce. The only vehicles that are officially allowed to traverse the ground paths running between the pyramids are those that belong directly to RAM (such as the Mantas used by Corporate Security) or small vehicles that are the personal possessions of high-ranking corporate officials. The average citizen gets around the city by making use of the automated walkways (which are essentially giant conveyor belts), or by means of a public monorail which runs on a track that parallels the walkways and constantly darts in and out of the various pyramids.

Most of the pedestrians and travelers found on the streets of Coprates are of the executive caste.

Foreigners, managers, and workers who are unaccompanied by executives definitely look out of place and will most likely be stopped and questioned by one of the frequent Corporate Security patrols that cruise the streets as well as the pyramid interiors. It is not illegal for such visitors to wander about the city, but any who do will certainly attract notice and will be watched very carefully.

Inside the pyramids, one can find all of the shops, residences, night clubs, and other amenities that are part of Martian executive life. Not every structure is devoted to a single purpose; one pyramid might contain the residences of several dozen Martian families, the headquarters of a couple of small RAM subsidiaries, a couple of restaurants, and more than a dozen shops. Each RAM division as well as several of RAM's major subsidiary corporations have entire pyramids to themselves, as do some of the more important Martian families (the Holzerheins, the Valmars, the Zetzens, etc.).

The interior layout of the pyramids may differ widely from one to the next. One feature common to all of the structures, however, is an open center atrium on each floor. In other words, a person standing on the pyramid's top story can look all the way down to the pyramid's ground floor through a series of these openings. In most cases, the pyramid's shops and offices are built in a series of concentric rings that follows the shape of the pyramid's outer walls, leaving the center open. It is the actual arrangement of the offices, apartments, and shops within these rings that varies.

The shops found in the Coprates pyramids are famous all across the solar system for the wretched excess inherent in their wares. It is impossible to simply buy a plastic cup in Coprates, for example; one must buy a fine crystal goblet. (Any item the PCs try to buy in Coprates will cost five times its standard price—but the merchandise will always be of high quality.) A meal at a typical Coprates restaurant (also famous for their opulence) might cost as much as 200 credits per person.

One type of consumer service available only in the pyramids of Coprates is genetic appearance alteration—essentially the 25th-Century equivalent of plastic surgery. Alteration is something of a fad among the members of the Martian executive caste, who generally owe their unusually beautiful and exotic appearances to their genetic specialists. Being altered by the top corporations in the field is very expensive—costing at least 10,000 credits and as much as 30,000—but well worth it to those execu-

tives who can afford it, since the quality of one's alteration is something of a status symbol in Coprates.

Alteration adds 1d3 points to a character's Charisma score, to a maximum of 22. Note that this option is only available to NPCs (*never* player characters) who are members of the Martian executive caste or extremely wealthy non-Martian foreigners. Martian law prohibits managers and workers from undergoing appearance alteration (even if an executive, for some reason, wants to finance the operation), because to allow otherwise would invite members of these castes to devise schemes for passing themselves off as executives—one of the most horrible things the RAM leadership can imagine.

The Dataplex Network

About the only feature Coprates shares with most other Martian cities is the presence of small dataplex kiosks in almost every city block. Dataplexes are small safehouses containing a number of coin-operated computer terminals that allow a patron to tie into any of the Martian planetary computer networks. It costs 5 credits to use a terminal for one minute. The networks accessed by the dataplexes include the following:

Mediabloc Information: Provides the user with complete, up-to-the-minute news and information gathered by Mediabloc's reporters stationed all over Mars. (Mediabloc is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

Coprates Banking: Users can conduct electronic banking through this branch of the computer system. Typical transactions include credit deposits and withdrawals, and even small loans.

Exnet: This is a computer-operated bulletin board for those who wish to trade stocks. Buyers and sellers both leave messages here proposing deals and later contact each other using Commnet (see below).

Infonet: A general-purpose information service, Infonet in many ways resembles an on-line encyclopedia. It contains data on nearly every conceivable subject.

Commnet: This is a communications service that allows a user to contact another party anywhere on Mars for immediate conversation or leave an addressed message in the system for the party to read at a later time. All executive homes and businesses and many manager residences are wired into Commnet through personal computer terminals.

Privynet: This is a private communications and database network that is used only by top RAM offi-

cials and is strictly off limits to everyone else—illegally accessing the Privynet is one of the most serious crimes on Mars. In most dataplex kiosks, Privynet is only available on special terminals (these terminals are colored red to warn patrons), and the Privynet terminals in the most frequently patronized dataplexes are usually under constant surveillance by Corporate Security personnel. Actual access to the network is governed by complex computer passwords, but it is not unheard of for someone who knows what he or she is doing to break in without a password. (Success requires two Impossible Skill Checks in succession, one for Programming and one for Bypass Security.)

The Duelpit

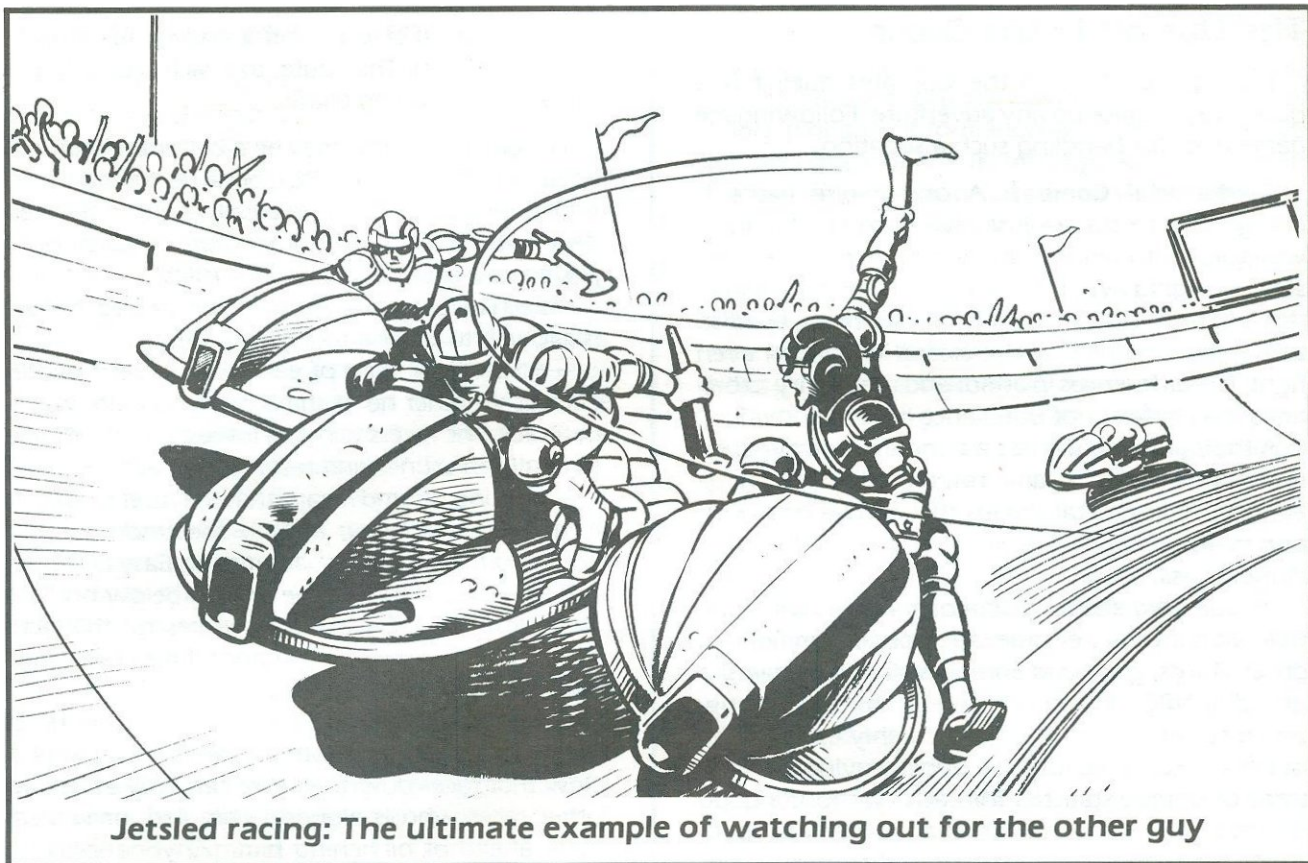
The only large structure in Coprates that is not pyramid-shaped is a gigantic enclosure known simply as The Dome. It is here where gladiatorial combats are held in the famous Martian duelpit.

The Dome is a bowl-shaped auditorium with a capacity of more than 100,000 spectators. High atop the rim of the structure is a huge broadcasting station where Mediabloc "duelcasters" sit and comment upon the matches as they are beamed all over Mars.

The floor of The Dome—the part of the structure called the duelpit—is a squarish oval area 300 yards long and about 250 yards wide, surfaced with sand and fine gravel. At either end of the stadium are huge iron gates that lead to the holding pens in underground tunnels beneath the stadium. There is a complete Corporate Security precinct operating in these tunnels and charged with the responsibility of handling the competitors and quelling the occasional outbreaks of violence that occur among the gladiators waiting to enter the arena.

A card of six to ten contests is scheduled at The Dome once or twice per week. Normally these contests are either straight one-on-one gladiatorial combat or "jetsled" races, but usually one of the contests on a card is of a special sort: a gang battle involving several combatants, a match pitting humans against gennies, or some other distinctive attraction designed to keep spectator interest high—not that such a tactic is really necessary, since the auditorium is filled to overflowing for every session and thousands of latecomers are turned away.

In the one-on-one gladiatorial duels, the rules are simple. Neither combatant is allowed to leave the arena until his or her opponent is dead. If the combat is not vicious enough, the duelmaster who oversees the arena and its events can set a time limit



Jetsled racing: The ultimate example of watching out for the other guy

sometime after the match begins. (The current duelmaster is Korok Vashenko, who is detailed in Chapter 5 of this book.) If neither combatant is dead at the end of this time limit, then Corporate Security guards haul away both fighters . . . never to be seen again.

Gladiators may be supplied with identical weapons and armor, or one may have different equipment from the other, as predetermined by the duelmaster. For instance, one combatant may wear light body armor and wield a dagger, while the other one is unarmored and carries a polearm. Ranged weapons are not used in gladiatorial combat.

Jetsled racing is theoretically less lethal than the gladiatorial duels, but is still a rather bloodthirsty sport. The object of the contest is to complete a number of laps around the arena before your opponents. Each racer rides a small, jet-powered scooter limited to attaining a height of two feet off the arena floor and capable of traveling at approximately 70 mph at full throttle. What makes the sport so rough is the fact that literally anything is legal during the race, and most competitors seem to think that the best way to stop an opponent from winning is to try to kill him. The duelmaster encour-

ages this behavior by issuing all of the racers weapons (usually swords or clubs) before the contest begins.

Although most of the combatants who enter the duelpit are criminals who have been convicted of serious crimes, there are a few Martians who make their livings as professional warriors. These individuals usually have large followings in the public and are regarded as heroes by many members of the manager and worker castes (none of the professional warriors are executives).

There is no reward for a criminal who is victorious in the arena. He or she is not immediately set free in such a case, but put back down below the arena to duel again at a later date. On Mars, the fact that the offender is allowed to remain alive a bit longer is considered reward enough. Occasionally, though, a convicted combatant who is particularly popular with the crowds will be offered an opportunity to become a professional, absolving the convict of the crimes he or she committed, but essentially sentencing him or her to the duelpit for life.

The Duelpit in the Game

Tossing the PCs into the Coprates duelpit is a good way to spice up any adventure. Following are game rules for handling such a situation.

Gladiatorial Combat: A one-on-one battle is pretty easy to stage—just give each combatant a weapon and maybe some armor and have them start swinging away. Remember that the gladiators don't have to be given identical equipment, but also take into account that the crowd enjoys an even fight; use differences in armor and weaponry to balance the contest, not unbalance it.

Although a shield is not a standard item of equipment in the XXVc™ game rules, gladiators may be equipped with metal shields that can be held with one hand. A shield gives a -1 benefit to the user's Armor Class.

As indicated above, gladiatorial battles with multiple opponents per side are not uncommon; in other words, go ahead and pit all the PCs against a group of NPCs. In a mass battle of this sort, the opponents will almost always be highly experienced warriors. For simplicity (to avoid having to keep track of unique statistics for each warrior), a good rule of thumb is to assume that all of the NPC opponents are warriors of a level equal to the lowest-level PC, with Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, and 5 hit points per level.

Once a duel begins, there are only four ways out of the arena: kill your opponent (in which case you are taken back to the holding pen below to fight again another day), be killed, climb out over the wall and into the audience, or somehow escape through the gate from which you entered. The first two possibilities are self-explanatory; the other two should not be suggested to the players, but if they want to try escaping, here's how to deal with it:

Jumping the wall and fleeing into the crowd requires an Impossible Skill Check, using either Acrobatics or Climb. A combatant is only allowed a chance to get over the wall during a round in which he or she was not struck by an opponent's blow (and, of course, he must be near enough to the wall to run to it and make the leap in the same round). Anyone who succeeds in exiting the arena in this fashion will quickly be chased through the crowd by a horde of Corporate Security personnel, but this too can easily be turned into an interesting and exciting encounter.

Exiting through the gates is almost as difficult. Once the competitors enter the arena, the huge plasteel gates are lowered back in place. It takes a successful Strength Feat to raise one of the gates

high enough to crawl under it and escape into the holding tunnels. This route, too, will probably precipitate a harrowing chase.

Jetsled Racing: This may be a better form of combat in which to involve PCs, because it needn't end with a fatality. There are typically eight to ten sledgers involved in a single race. You can play out a jetsled race using the following rules:

—Each racer is issued a sword and a sled. No one is allowed to wear armor of any type.

—At the beginning of each round, each sledder decides whether he or she is going to gain ground or attack. The racers with the lowest modified initiative rolls announce and resolve their actions first.

—Gaining ground means that the racer is concentrating on advancing around the track. Anyone choosing this tactic must attempt an Easy Drive Jetcar Skill Check (but see the section below on "cornering rounds"). If this check is successful, this fact is noted on a piece of scratch paper. If the check is not successful, the racer does nothing.

—A racer who chooses to attack is using his or her weapon against another racer in an attempt to slow that racer down. A racer can only attack another racer who is alongside his sled, or immediately ahead of or behind him. (Anyone with the same number of successful "gain ground" attempts as the attacker, or anyone with either one more or one less, is an eligible target.) All attacks made from a moving sled against a target who is also on a moving sled suffer a -3 penalty to their attack rolls, to reflect the jerky movement of the attacker and his or her target. A racer who suffers damage from such an attack must make an Average Drive Jetcar Skill Check to avoid falling off his or her sled. Characters who fail this check suffer 1d6 points of damage from the fall and have two successful "gain ground" attempts deducted from their total. (The throttle of a sled cuts out automatically when its rider falls, and the vehicle stops until the racer climbs back aboard.)

—Every fourth time a racer makes a "gain ground" attempt, this is a "cornering round" for him or her, as the sled is steered through one of the arena's tight corners. During such a round, the racer's Drive Jetcar Skill Check is of Average difficulty instead of Easy—and failing this check means that the racer has fallen off the sled, with consequences as described above.

—The race ends as soon as one of the racers has successfully completed a total of 16 "gain ground" maneuvers.

Adventuring in the City

One problem that might crop up if your players decide to travel about Coprates or any of the other Martian cities is exactly how you should go about handling shopkeepers, passersby, and any other mundane NPCs the heroes encounter. Imagine, for instance, that the PCs are in an armaments shop in Coprates and that they have decided to attempt to steal a bolt gun. What is the store clerk's chance (on a Notice Skill Check) to determine whether or not the theft is seen? Now, suppose that the clerk does notice the theft and jumps out from behind the counter to stop the PCs before they exit the shop. How would you handle such an NPC in combat?

First of all, store clerks, street sweepers, messengers, waiters, and all other mundane NPCs do not have careers as player characters do. Mundane NPCs have no career or level designation. Such characters have 1d4 hit points and a THACO number of 21.

As for abilities and skills, you can assign whatever numbers seem sensible and reasonable. A common laborer probably has fairly high Strength but probably doesn't have above-average Intelligence or Wisdom; for a store clerk, the opposite might be true. If a mundane NPC has a rating in a certain skill, the skill will be one that is directly related to his or her profession—in the above example, Notice would certainly be a logical skill for a clerk in a weapons store to have. A salesman might have some degree of ability in Fast Talk/Convince; an entertainer would be good at Play Instrument or Sing. A mundane NPC never has more than one skill, and his or her rating in that skill (not counting the attribute bonus) is never higher than 15.

Pavonis

A sharp contrast to Coprates in practically every way imaginable, Pavonis is a utilitarian city. Instead of the gleaming pyramids that characterize the Martian capital, Pavonis is dominated by cold steel walls and oddly antiseptic furnishings. The individuality displayed by members of the Martian executive caste is also missing in Pavonis: Almost all of the managers and workers who live there look identical—the same closely cropped hair style, plain gray jumpsuit, and white plastic work boots. The uniform is the same for both males and females.

One factor that obviously weighs heavily upon the quality of life in Pavonis is the fact that the city is actually a giant space elevator. You can almost think of it as a giant skyscraper that stretches up into

space. In all, it's hundreds of levels tall, with an average of $\frac{1}{3}$ mile between levels. Most of the levels are multistory structures having from three to six floors. (For basic information about the space elevator, see page 6 of *The Technology Book* and the entry for Phobos on page 24 of *The World Book*.)

The residents of Pavonis live their lives in relatively cramped quarters with no large open spaces to roam around in. In fact, some of the workers who labor in the giant production factories located near the top of the elevator are rarely allowed to even glimpse the Martian outdoors.

Pavonis is arranged as a series of levels, with each group of levels having a certain function or purpose (in much the same way that a 20th-Century Earth city is zoned).

Roughly the bottom one-third of the elevator is home to members of the manager caste. On these levels one can find residences, spartan shops, and all sorts of commercial operations where the managers work (typical operations might include simple engineering firms, electronic repair shops, and vehicle maintenance centers).

The upper two-thirds of the elevator is the domain of the worker caste. Here one finds only residences and industrial levels, where the workers labor in enclosed factories.

Access from level to level is provided by a series of high-powered turbolifts of varying sizes and lengths. Some lifts connect only two adjacent levels, and are small in diameter (the size of the shaft in a 20th-Century passenger elevator). Other lifts run through a series of levels and have a much larger carrying capacity. The arrangement is a bit chaotic and takes some getting used to; for instance, one fairly small lift runs from level 1 (on the planet surface) to level 4; another one goes from level 3 to level 6—so to get from level 4 to level 6 you first have to go down one level and then catch the other lift going up.

There are more than forty such lifts connecting various levels throughout the elevator. However, the only direct route from the planet surface to Phobos is through the enormous center shaft, which has a chamber for carrying passengers and cargo that is more than 200 feet in diameter. RAM controls the movement of the citizens within the elevator by requiring them to pay a fee in order to travel in the turbolifts (usually 1 credit per level). Access to the center shaft is heavily restricted; this lift is used primarily for transportation of cargo, people who are arriving or leaving the Pavonis spaceport on Phobos, and prisoners who are being taken to or from the detention cells on the top level.

The higher one gets in the elevator, the more complex the internal layout of each level becomes. By the time one reaches the halfway point, the corridors are generally so mind-numbingly complex that only a native is truly familiar with the layout. Pavonis is a good place for player characters on the run from RAM to lose themselves.

Unlike the typical resident of Coprates, who lives in a lavish suite with all of the amenities one can imagine, the residents of Pavonis live in cramped, relatively uncomfortable housing. Five- or six-member manager families are often forced to live in sparse two-room apartments, while workers generally live in large barracks housing thirty or more individuals. A large percentage of the space elevator is consumed by these dwellings. What few shops that do exist are primarily devoted to the sale of necessities (managers have access to few luxury items, and workers have none at all), and recreation areas are almost completely absent from the entire complex.

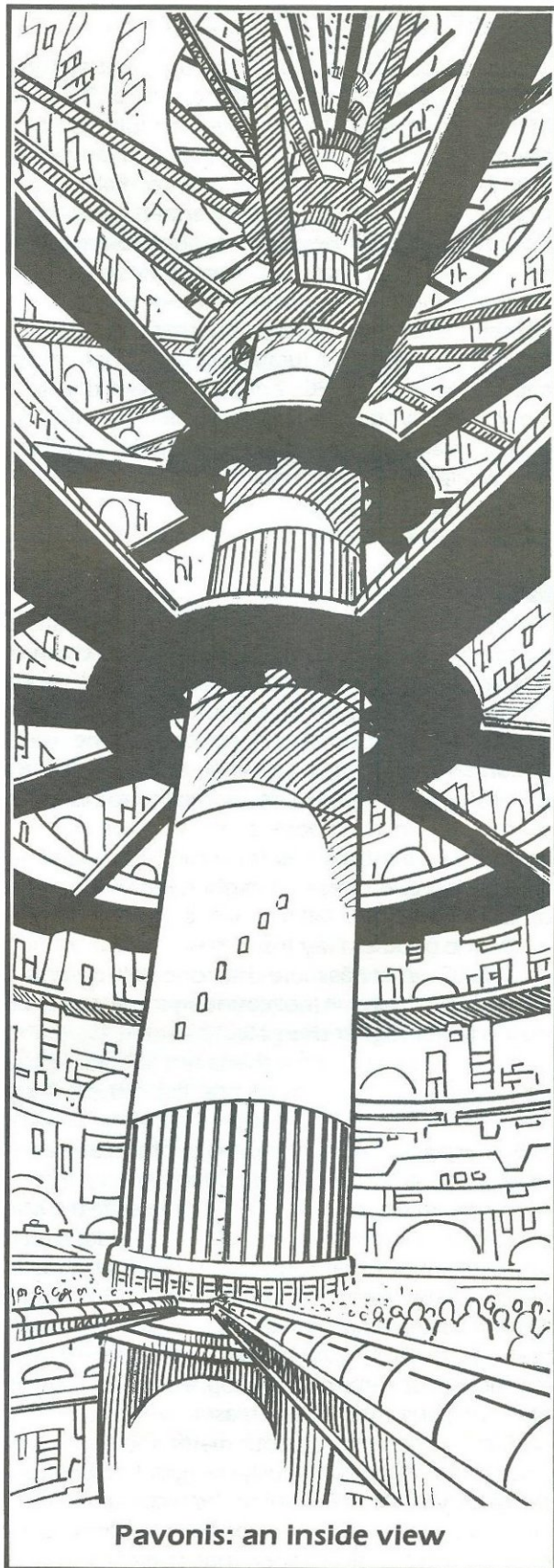
Another sharp contrast between Coprates and Pavonis can be found in the elevator's high crime rate. Even the devotion that most of the Martian citizens feel toward RAM and their government cannot offset the antisocial effects of overcrowding and poor city services. Corporate Security personnel are very common in Pavonis, and most are more heavily armed and armored than their Coprates counterparts. The uppermost level of the elevator, 146 miles above the planet surface, is a large detention complex where minor criminals from all over the elevator are sent to serve out their sentences.

Although the city ends at the prison level, the center shaft of the elevator extends another 3,600 miles out to the spaceport on Phobos. Traveling from the city limits to the satellite is a high-speed, nonstop journey; once the cargo/passenger chamber is out of the populated area, it can be accelerated to a speed of 1,000 mph. The trip from the edge of Pavonis to the surface of Phobos takes four hours (accounting for the time needed to accelerate to top speed and then decelerate at the end of the journey).

Mediabloc Headquarters

Mediabloc is a video news/entertainment service owned and operated by RAM. It beams eleven channels of news (well, "edited" news) and entertainment programming all over Mars. Its most popular program is far and away its broadcast of the battles that take place in the Coprates duelpit.

Mediabloc headquarters occupies all of level 4 in



Pavonis: an inside view

the Pavonis space elevator, approximately 1 1/2 miles off the planet surface. The level is plainly visible and easily identifiable from ground level because of the enormous dish-shaped antennae that ring the structure.

That the service's headquarters are located in Pavonis is only fitting, considering the fact that the vast majority of its audience is made up of members of the manager and worker castes. Executives tend to prefer the theaters and film houses of Coprates to the often sophomoric and simplistic Mediabloc broadcasts. Most openly sneer at the service, though even executives frequently tune in to the broadcasts from the duelpit.

Despite the somewhat dubious nature of much of its programming, however, Mediabloc remains an extremely popular institution all across the planet. Part of this popularity is no doubt due to the three-way conspiracy between the Directors of the Marketing, Entertainment, and Internal Affairs Divisions to implant subliminal messages in the Mediabloc programming (see Chapter 2 of this book).

Although one might expect the Mediabloc headquarters to be well guarded against terrorist attack, security is actually rather lax. This is because RAM officials have an extremely powerful transmitter in Coprates that is capable of completely jamming Mediabloc's signals on a moment's notice.

The Forest of Pavonis

Close to the planetside terminus of the Pavonis Space Elevator is a large coniferous forest, one of the most naturally beautiful terraformed areas on the entire planet. On the eastern end of this forest is the famous "royal grove," a piece of the forest that has been specially laid out and designed by botanical engineers for beauty. Martian law places the grove at the disposal of the RAM chairman. The Holzerheins maintain a large palatial estate at its center, where various members of the family spend a month or two throughout the year. Needless to say, security around the estate is extremely tight.

The rest of the forest is used for recreation and enjoyment by executives, who consider it a mark of status to jet off for a few hours or a day of relaxation among the greenery.

Spaceports and Travel

Most visitors to Mars arrive either at the class A spaceport above Pavonis or at one of the two class B ports in the Valles Marineris (at Coprates and Marineris).

The port at the upper end of the Pavonis Space Elevator handles a large volume of traffic. More than half of the cargo imported to Mars is offloaded here, and it also serves as a docking port for spaceliners. One of the most popular tourist attractions on Mars is this port and the elevator that connects it to the planet surface. Many vacationers are willing to pay through the nose for a ride in the central shaft of the elevator and a brief guided tour of selected levels within the city of Pavonis—and since this is a lucrative source of revenue for RAM, such tours are scheduled several times a week.

The Coprates port is generally reserved for VIPs (this is where Princess Ardala and many other members of the elite executive class dock their vessels, for example); it is "only" a class B port simply because the adjacent city of Coprates is so lavish that the spaceport doesn't have to provide as many amenities and services. The port at Marineris is more modest in size and scope, and is not policed as vigorously as the other two large ports. (This fact makes it a good place for PCs to arrive planetside without attracting an undue amount of attention.)

The Class C ports at Pavonis (planetside), Utopia, and Hellas are used almost exclusively for receiving and shipping cargo, although passenger vehicles are not prohibited from landing at these locations. Early in the days of colonization, the Pavonis port was of class B quality, but it has deteriorated since the class A port started operation; most of the shops and service industries that used to be located at the Pavonis port have relocated or simply disappeared for lack of activity. The ports at Utopia and Hellas are relatively new, and either or both may one day be upgraded to class B status as the "back side" of Mars becomes more extensively terraformed and more heavily populated.

Every visitor who arrives on Mars is required to feed his or her handprint into RAM's central computer complex. This way, Corporate Security has a record of every single person on the planet at all times, though NEO and other anti-RAM resistance groups have developed plastic palm overlays that prevent the computer from picking up their true identities upon arrival.

Once on the planet, transportation from one city to another is available through a high-speed transtube network that connects most of the major metropolitan areas. The transtube passenger cars are propelled by electromagnetic impulses, operating in much the same way as a mass driver. At a top speed of 1,000 mph, a transtube car can traverse the entire planet in a matter of hours; for instance, the journey from Coprates to Solis takes a little more than an

hour, and the longest point-to-point trip, from Utopia to Hesperia, takes less than two and a half hours.

The cost of a transtube journey is 10 credits per 100 miles, and each car holds 50 persons. To maximize profits, RAM does not usually operate a car unless it is at full capacity, so the schedule for trips is somewhat irregular. All travelers using the network must again feed their handprints into the RAM computer; not only is the corporation interested in keeping track of exactly who is on the planet, it also wants to know where everyone is currently located.

The Claritas Wildlands

The Claritas Wildlands are located south of the Forest of Pavonis and west of the Plains of Solis. On Mars, the wildlands are the closest thing there is to tropical terrain. A terrible engineering accident that occurred back when Mars was first being terraformed resulted in their creation.

For the most part, the wildlands are a thick jungle composed of murky swamps and brightly colored red and blue vegetation. The entire region is home to a wide variety of exotic wildlife that has adapted over time to inhabit it. Some of the creatures that dwell in the wildlands are remarkably dangerous.

For the most part, the Martians completely avoid this region. Not only are the swamps and wetlands infested with disease-spreading microorganisms and insects, but Martian legend has it that a race of formidable cannibalistic gennies inhabits the area. These legends are not true, but even the most knowledgeable Martian scientists have yet been unable to completely disprove them. The only settlers in the wildlands are the few workers who are stationed there by adventurous industrial corporations to man processing plants that extract certain rare gases from beneath the marshes.

Surviving in the Wildlands

The Claritas Wildlands are another exotic setting that would be interesting to use in a XXVC™ game adventure. You can use the following guidelines for handling adventures set in the wildlands.

—All overland movement is slowed to one-quarter normal in the marshes. Most standard land vehicles are incapable of traversing the wildlands. Only versatile vehicles such as the Vecu (see Chapter 3) or vehicles that have been specially built for jungle or swamp terrain are of any use.

—The heat in the wildlands forces characters

travelling through them to consume water at twice the normal rate. Usually, a human being needs about a quart of water per day as a bare minimum. In the wildlands, therefore, most characters must consume two quarts per day. This is one of the most dangerous aspects of traveling through the region. Voyagers who are unprepared for the heat inevitably bring too little water and attempt to replenish their supply from the small ponds and streamlets that skirt the marshes, drastically increasing their chances of catching a disease. This danger is heightened by the fact that the microorganisms which cause "blue fever," one of the deadliest diseases associated with the wildlands, do not show up when the pond water is scanned for its purity. A character who succeeds at an Average Planetary Survival Skill Check automatically recognizes the danger of drinking the pond water.

—Even if characters traveling through the swamp avoid the water, there is still a chance that they will contract a disease from an insect bite. Each day, everyone passing through the swamps must make a Constitution check. Those rolling equal to or less than their Constitution are unaffected, but those who roll higher automatically contract an illness. Such characters must make another check each day thereafter at a -10 penalty. Failing this check inflicts 1d4 points of damage upon the character and forces him or her to roll again the next day.

These checks continue until either the character dies, he or she succeeds at one of the checks, or he or she is cured by a medic using the Treat Disease skill (*Characters & Combat*, page 53). However, in order for such treatment to be effective, the medic must have the proper drugs on hand, and unfortunately, the drugs that are effective against most of the rare illnesses contracted in the wildlands are rather rare themselves. Unless the PCs specifically make an effort to acquire these drugs before venturing into the wildlands, you can assume that they do not have access to them; in other words, the drugs are not included in any standard medical kits, and most drug fabricators are also not equipped with the proper ingredients. Generally, the drugs are only available in a large metropolis.

In addition to the daily loss of hit points, characters under the influence of a disease suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls and have the difficulty of all Skill Checks they attempt increased by one level.

Any character who drinks the pond water found in the wildlands has a straight 50% chance of contracting a disease, regardless of his or her Constitution score.

The Outer Cities

Not all life on Mars is concentrated in Pavonis and Coprates. There are a number of fairly large cities in the outlying regions of the planet as well. (Most of these locations were mentioned in Chapter 1 of this book.) These cities all have a great deal more in common with Coprates than with Pavonis, even though they are chiefly inhabited by members of the worker and manager castes. All of the cities are built around the same pyramidal structure found in Coprates, though the pyramids in these places are much smaller and less elegantly decorated.

Besides the lack of opulence and wealthy executives, there are a couple of other characteristics that set the outer cities apart from Coprates. Missing are the elaborate walkways and hanging gardens. And more importantly, as far as most XXVc™ game adventures are concerned, also missing are the huge numbers of Internal Affairs Division operatives stationed in the larger cities. Although there are definitely IAD men stationed in these cities, they are much scarcer than their counterparts in Pavonis and Coprates, and it is correspondingly easier for the PCs to travel around these regions unnoticed and unobserved. You should try to reflect this fact in your adventures. The IAD maintains a smaller presence here simply because they do not feel that there is much to politically threaten RAM in these areas.

Boreal Agri-Villages

And while we're on the subject of a scarce IAD presence, we should also mention the agricultural villages dotted along the shore of the Boreal Sea, where IAD agents are even scarcer. The managers who live in these small farming communities tend huge crop fields, where most of the vegetables harvested on Mars are grown. Each of the forty or so villages is home to approximately 5,000 Martians, and many of the villages are relatively "isolated" from the rest of the planet and technologically unsophisticated. Very few high-technology items are available here.

Of all the Martian citizens, the farmers who live in these communities are probably least happy with the RAM government, and this fact is hardly kept secret from the authorities. Remarkably, though, RAM tolerates the farmers' protests and occasionally even meets their demands. This is because government officials fear the effects of a massive agricultural strike (remember, most of the foods grown here are consumed by the executive class) and feel as though they have nothing to lose by giving in.

The farm communities are isolated enough from the rest of the planet to prevent the occasional government acquiescence from becoming well known among the citizenry and making RAM look weak.

The Martian Desert

As noted in Chapter 1, desert covers the largest portion of the Martian surface. The Martian desert is similar to its Earth counterpart only in that it is dominated by sand and essentially devoid of water. As far as the temperature goes, the Martian desert is actually cooler on the average than most of the civilized areas. On Mars, it is certainly much more difficult to survive in the desert than it is to survive in the civilized areas, but because of the lower temperature, Martian deserts are still more hospitable than those of Earth.

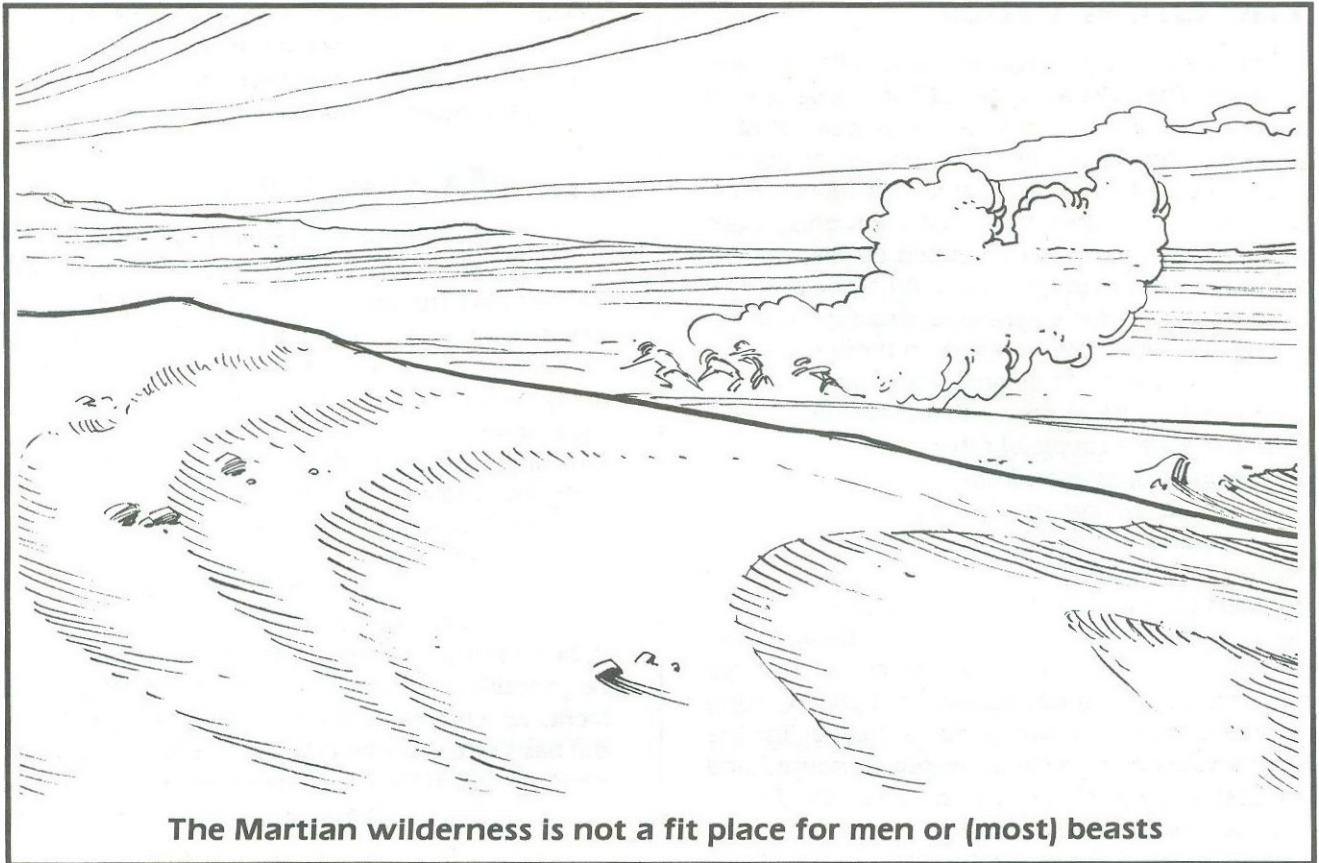
The only civilization of note that one can find in desert is represented by the huge packs of Desert Runners that prowl the sands. Most of these genetically modified humans are loyal to the RAM government, which created the original genotype that is the basis of the present-day Desert Runners. Many RAM officials in the outer cities keep trained groups of Desert Runners to act as special bodyguards and henchmen.

The Desert Runner is described on pages 27–29 of *Characters & Combat*. This race is available for use as a player character, and a PC Desert Runner will have exceptional skills and abilities just as any other player character does. However, the vast majority of Desert Runners (including all of the ones that PCs might meet on their travels through the Martian wilderness) will fall into the category of mundane NPCs. They are primarily interested only in herding the livestock they tend, and in protecting the territory that their pack claims as its own.

Martian Free States

Out in the Martian wilderness lie a number of self-proclaimed kingdoms known as the Martian Free States. These "kingdoms" typically consist of little more than a few prefabricated shacks and tents, though some are a bit larger and more permanent in nature.

Most of the Martian Free States are very transitory in nature, and those few that have survived over the years are often able to pack up their tents and move at a moment's notice. Most of the free states are havens for pirates, smugglers, bandits, and NEO freedom fighters, and these groups don't exactly ingratiate themselves with the RAM govern-



The Martian wilderness is not a fit place for men or (most) beasts

ment. Occasionally the GEC finds itself with nothing better to do and mounts an offensive out into the wilderness aimed at crushing the free state that's been giving RAM the most problems of late.

A couple of the more stable free states are described below.

Sandhaven

This free state is made up chiefly of Martian political dissidents who managed to escape from Coprates or Pavonis. The residents of Sandhaven have a very close alliance with the New Earth Organization, and NEO provides the group with most of its supplies, which are smuggled in and dropped over the desert.

At present there are approximately four hundred people who consider themselves "citizens" of Sandhaven. Constant attacks by RAM forces have caused the freedom fighters to pick up their entire "country" and move it across the desert on eleven separate occasions. (Currently, it is located just west of Galilaei.) The residents of Sandhaven fight back by sabotaging RAM military installations and devising various other ways in which they can make themselves a nuisance.

McGrewvia

In its entirety, McGrewvia consists of a small stone "castle" located about 75 miles south of Phytus. Its master is Zack McGrew, an infamous pirate whose name is known far and wide (at least, among the less respectable elements) throughout the solar system. McGrew's state consists entirely of his crew, their wives, and children (about 150 citizens in all). McGrew maintains his own small-scale spaceport just outside the castle.

McGrewvia is the only free state that is actually recognized and supported by the RAM government. McGrew made a deal with RAM long ago. In return for a place of his own to set up camp, he would exclusively harass Venusian and Lunar shipping. So far, McGrew has made himself such a nuisance to RAM's enemies that the government has begun providing him with basic supplies and sending him modest monthly payments.

Of course, all of RAM's support for McGrew is off the official records and is known only to the Board of Directors and certain top-level political insiders. Officially, he and his men are listed as fugitives so that his operations cannot be traced back to RAM in the event of his capture.

Chapter 5: Personalities

In this chapter, you'll find a few examples of the colorful NPCs who frequent Mars and would make interesting participants in Mars-based adventures. Using these profiles as models, you could come up with similar details to flesh out any of the other personalities mentioned in this book—don't restrict yourself to what's presented here.

Conspicuously absent from this set of descriptions are RAM Chairman Simund Holzerhein and

Korok Vashenko

6th level Martian warrior
Hit points 52
Armor Class 7 (or better)
THACO 15
Str 18, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 8, Tech 13
Career skills: Battle Tactics 60, Demolitions 15, Leadership 50, Maneuver in Zero G 20, Move Silently 20, Notice 35, Repair Weapon 30, Use Rocket Belt 10.
General skills: Drive Heavy Ground Vehicle 15, Drive Jetcar 20, Repair Electrical 10, Repair Mechanical 20, General Knowledge 10, Animal Training 10, Fast Talk/Convince 10, Intimidate 20, Tracking 5.

Vashenko is the master at the Coprates duelpit. He is in charge of training the new convicts that arrive at the pits, devising balanced gladiatorial combats, and making sure everything runs smoothly during the actual battles.

Vashenko is a sadistic ex-army subofficer who truly enjoys his job. In fact, occasionally he enters the duelpit himself in order to teach a lesson to a convict who gave him trouble in training. His highly visible appearances at the beginning and end of each combat have made him quite a popular figure with the general public. In fact, he is one of the few members of the manager caste who is allowed to live in Coprates.

Traits: Loud, swaggering, arrogant; bald, with mustache

Locations: The duelpit, night clubs in Coprates

Trademarks: There is nothing Vashenko enjoys more than a good, fair fight.

the infamous princess Ardala Valmar, both of whom are mentioned at various places in this book. You'll find details on them in the XXVc™ game boxed set. Another of the NPCs from the boxed set who's liable to show up on Mars is Killer Kane, known to spend some of his time in Coprates. And of course, there's always a chance Buck Rogers and some of his allies will be lurking right around the corner of the next pyramid. . . .

Burton Alexeyev

3rd level Martian rogue
Hit points 13
Armor Class 10
THACO 19
Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 17, Tech 6
Career skills: Bypass Security 15, Climb 5, Fast Talk/Convince 45, Hide in Shadows 10, Move Silently 10, Notice 25, Open Lock 5, Pick Pocket 5.
General skills: General Knowledge 20, Mimic 10, Act 5, Distract 15, Etiquette 10.

Burton hosts "Night Track," one of the most popular programs on the Mediabloc network. "Night Track" is ostensibly a talk show, but Burton's schtick is to subtly make fun of his guests and appeal to his audience's sense of irony—sort of the 25th-Century equivalent of David Letterman.

Burton is constantly scouring Mars for a story or a bit which he can play for a good gag. The trials and tribulations of a player character are just the sort of thing that might amuse him.

Traits: Witty, scornful, irreverent.

Locations: Just about anywhere on the planet (most of his broadcasts are remote).

Trademarks: Always accompanied by cameraman; wears smart uniform with Mediabloc logo emblazoned on front.

Gordon Zetzen

Director of RAM Atomics Division
7th level Martian engineer
Hit points 36
Armor Class 4 (smart uniform)
THACO 16
Str 12, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 15,
Tech 16
Career skills: Jury Rig 15, Maneuver in Zero G
10, Notice 50, Repair Electrical 50, Repair Life Support
15, Repair Mechanical 45, Repair Nuclear Engine
85, Repair Rocket Hull 10.
General skills: Repair Computer 5, Repair
Weapon 5, Design Engineering 20, Economics
30, General Knowledge 25, Library Search 5,
Metallurgy 10, Physics 30, Etiquette 5, Fast Talk/
Convince 5.

One of the wisest things Simund Holzerhein has ever done, for the sake of RAM, was to appoint Gordon Zetzen as the head of the corporation's Atomics Division. But viewed from another direction, this may turn out to be one of the Chairman's worst decisions.

Gordon Zetzen is a rarity among RAM Directors. Not only is he extremely good at what he does, he is also a person with uncharacteristic (for RAM) standards of ethics and morals. Under his directorship, which has been marked by new policies of fairness and respect for the workers who maintain the nuclear reactor grid, the efficiency—and profitability—of the division have improved greatly.

Gordon is frequently spoken of, by those who are not allied with Holzerhein, as the best possible replacement for the Chairman. Unfortunately, for the anti-Holzerhein faction, Gordon does not see himself as a political person; so far, he has been more than content to run his Division smoothly, and he trusts in his performance record to ensure him job security. He may yet be persuaded to become more politically active, particularly if he allows his sister Ludmilla (see below) to have more of an effect on his thinking.

Traits: Even-tempered, bland expressions, brisk and efficient manner.

Locations: Headquarters at base of Pavonis Space Elevator, occasionally Coprates.

Trademarks: Compdex attached to belt of smart uniform; plastic sleeve in pocket crammed full of writing implements.

Zygurd Holzerhein

Director of RAM Transportation Division
5th level Martian rogue
Hit points 22
Armor Class 4 (smart uniform)
THACO 18
Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15,
Tech 12
Career skills: Bypass Security 15, Climb 5, Fast
Talk/Convince 60, Hide in Shadows 20, Move Silently
25, Notice 30, Open Lock 20, Pick Pockets
25.
General skills: Drive Groundcar 25, Drive
Heavy Ground Vehicle 15, Drive Jetcar 10, Design
Engineering 10, Memorize 5, Distract 15, Etiquette
10, Leadership 10.

Few of the other Directors care much for Simund Holzerhein's nephew Zygurd, but all of them are careful to conceal these feelings. Of all of the Chairman's appointments, this is the one most open to criticism—even from other members of the Holzerhein family—because, simply put, Zygurd is a misfit.

The only skill Zygurd has developed to any great degree is his ability to talk his way out of a difficult situation. Terribly afraid of conflict or confrontation, he avoids potential trouble much of the time by delegating important decisions to his underlings; then, if something goes wrong, he can always point a finger at the person whom he claims was responsible. He thoroughly enjoys being a figurehead and taking advantage of all the privileges that come along with being a Director, and he wouldn't give up that aspect of his life for anything. But the longer he can keep ducking real responsibility, the happier he'll be.

Traits: Skinny and rather homely (even after appearance alteration); short attention span.

Locations: His own residential pyramid, various entertainment spots, and (when necessary for him to be there) division headquarters in Coprates.

Trademarks: A nervous habit of rolling ball bearings around in his hands.

Durella Valmar

Director of RAM BioSciences Division
8th level Martian scientist
Hit points 18
Armor Class 4 (smart uniform)
THACO 16
Str 7, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 14,
Tech 13
Career skills: Biology 90, Botany 75, Chemistry
40, Gadgeteering 25, General Knowledge 30, Li-
brary Search 30, Memorize 10, Notice 20.
General skills: Bioengineering 80, Repair Com-
puter 5, Repair Electrical 40, History 5, Mathemat-
ics 5, Physics 5, Programming 5, Etiquette 5, Fast
Talk/Convince 5, Leadership 5.

The difference between Durella Valmar and her devious sister Ardala is like the difference between night and day, or at least night and twilight. Although RAM's BioSciences Director is certainly concerned about her own welfare and not reluctant to act in her own self-interest, she will not use vicious or cruel methods unless that is absolutely necessary.

Durella has spent most of her life becoming educated and developing extremely strong qualifications for the job she holds. She is one of the planet's premier scientists, and also has better than average skills as an administrator (although she much prefers using her scientific skills).

An adversary of the Holzerhein family by virtue of her professional skills and ethical standards, Durella has not cared much for political activism since the days of her youth. As long as Holzerhein leaves her alone to pursue her work (which he has done so far), she is content to let the other factions within RAM wrangle among themselves. But if a powerful enough coalition could be formed, needing only Durella's support to swing the balance in its direction, the chances are that she could be convinced to follow that path.

Traits: Attractive but not vain; very well educated, and shows it in speech and mannerisms.

Locations: Her laboratory, office, or residence, all located in the pyramid in Coprates that serves as division headquarters. Seldom seen in public.

Trademarks: White lab coat; always carries small tape recorder for making notes to herself.

Werner Holzerhein

Director of RAM Economic Affairs Division
4th level Martian rogue
Hit points 15
Armor Class 4 (smart uniform)
THACO 19
Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 13,
Tech 9
Career skills: Bypass Security 20, Climb 5, Fast
Talk/Convince 60, Hide in Shadows 10, Move Si-
lently 10, Notice 25, Open Lock 15, Pick Pocket
15.
General skills: Economics 50, Library Search 10,
Memorize 10, Etiquette 5, Leadership 5.

Because of his young age and his last name, Werner Holzerhein more than any other director personifies the new generation of RAM officials. Clearly, the Chairman is grooming his grandson for greater things to come—and just as clearly, Werner fully realizes what is happening.

Werner is the head of a division that wields an enormous amount of political and economic power, but he sees his present position (correctly) as merely a learning experience. Highly intelligent, and learning more all the time, he is also smart enough to know what he *doesn't* know, and he willingly defers to his grandfather for any decisions that he isn't knowledgeable enough, or cunning enough, to handle properly.

Slowly, and apparently unbeknownst to the Chairman, Werner is gaining more confidence and taking more chances. He has been discouraged from developing his leadership skills so far, but is quietly trying to break out of that mold. He has had quite enough of being looked upon as "teacher's pet," and craves the respect of the other Directors almost as much as he wants his to stay in his grandfather's good graces.

Traits: Fluctuates between being indecisive and forceful; wears a stern expression, hoping this makes him look older.

Locations: Division headquarters, his grandfather's residence in Coprates, or the royal estate in the Forest of Pavonis; he has no residence of his own.

Trademarks: Flamboyant, youthful clothing styles; likes to amuse himself with small, hand-held games when he thinks no one's looking.

Ludmilla Zetzen

Director of RAM Entertainment Division
6th level Martian rogue
Hit points 20
Armor Class 4 (smart uniform)
THACO 18
Str 8, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 15,
Tech 10
Career skills: Bypass Security 25, Climb 5, Fast
Talk/Convince 65, Hide in Shadows 25, Move Si-
lently 30, Notice 60, Open Lock 15, Pick Pocket
15.
General skills: Disguise 5, Economics 25, Gen-
eral Knowledge 20, Law 20, Hypnosis 5, Intimi-
date 30, Leadership 10, Shadowing 5.

Although only she is aware of it, Ludmilla Zetzen probably represents the greatest single threat to Simund Holzerhein's leadership of RAM. The problem is that Ludmilla's headstrong nature also has the potential for turning her into her own worst enemy.

As detailed in Chapter 2 of this book, Ludmilla has committed an act of subterfuge that has effectively made the head of the Justice Division (the "Marko Andropov" impostor) into her ally. She is secretly plotting for the day when the Holzerhein faction will be ousted and the Zetzens, led by her brother Gordon (see above), will take over the leadership of RAM.

And now, having taken a giant irrevocable step in that direction, she finds herself in a spot. Ludmilla has not been able to convince Gordon to move to the forefront of the anti-Holzerhein faction, because he is far from sure that an attempted takeover would succeed—and besides, as he gently insists to her, he's not cut out for that sort of work.

Ludmilla doesn't dare tell her brother about the "Andropov incident," because she thinks he would certainly disapprove and might refuse to have anything further to do with her. But the longer she waits, the greater the chance that her crime will be discovered. At this point, she's paying only minimal attention to her job; her life is a constant battle against fear and tension. She exists from day to day, hoping that Gordon will see the light before it's too late.

Traits: Humorless, nervous, irritable, very suspicious of strangers.

Locations: Locked within her residence or her office, except when she makes a secret visit to her brother in Pavonis.

Trademarks: Always carries a mono knife dis-

guised as a personal radio. When at home or office, constantly monitors Mediabloc broadcasts (to keep up appearances for her job).

Chapter 6: Creatures

On the following four pages are descriptions of genetically altered creatures that player characters might encounter during their travels on Mars. They are presented here to be used "as is" in adventures that you create, but should also be considered examples of what you can do in the realm of independent creation.

Pages 44–51 of *The World Book* give advice on how to design your own gennies and creatures; before you start your creative process, it would be a good idea to review those pages.

As for the creatures presented here, you'll notice that they make use of several different environments (city, desert, grassland, aquatic) and represent a number of different members of the animal kingdom, all the way from one-celled organisms to the elephant. This variety is intentional—our way of demonstrating to you that your decisions on creature design are limited only by your imagination!

Sandhound

25CR1

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Mars, deserts & cities
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day or night
DIET:	Meat
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal

NO. APPEARING:	1-2 or 2d6
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	840
HIT DICE:	3d8
THACO:	18
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The sandhound is a combination of canine and reptile genes, based on a wolf but having many of the properties of a lizard. Its elongated jaw makes it a greater threat in a combat situation, and the claws on the ends of its flattened feet enable it to move rapidly across the sands of the Martian wilderness.

The creature was specifically bred as a guard animal, and it is in this capacity that player characters are likely to encounter it—on the end of a leash, being controlled by a Corporate Security trooper.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: Body 4 feet long (plus tail), 75 lbs.

External Covering: Tough hide.

Eyes: Canine, no special abilities.

Ears: Canine, sensitive to ultrahigh frequencies.

Mouth: Elongated canine, many sharp teeth.

Nose: Canine, particularly sensitive.

Cultural: The sandhound was created to be a companion and protector of RAM Security forces, particularly the Corporate Security troopers who patrol urban areas. It is trainable to obey simple commands such as "Stay" and "Attack."

A few of the creatures—those that proved to be difficult to train or were considered deficient for some other reason—have been released into the wild, and a few others have managed to escape from their keepers. These "renegades" have adapted well to the wilderness, and can be encountered in family-oriented packs of as many as 12 individuals.

In the recent past, someone hit on the idea of *not* releasing untrainable specimens into the wild. Instead, they are often transported to pens at the Coprates duelpit and used to make some of the gladiatorial contests more interesting, or to punish prisoners who are uncooperative.



Advantages/Disadvantages: The sandhound's acute sense of smell enables it to pick up the scent of its quarry from a location after as many as four hours have passed. Its reptilian hide protects it from weapons, as well as from the abrasive sand of the Martian wilderness.

Offsetting those benefits is its sensitive hearing, which makes the creatures especially vulnerable to the effects of a sonic stunner (against which it needs a roll of 18 to save vs. stun).

Combat: The sandhound's bite is dangerous, but its claws are too small to be of any use in battle, and it does not have enough control of its long tail to use it as a weapon. A trained sandhound is more easily distracted or discouraged from attacking than a wild one; when a sandhound accompanied by a Security trooper is reduced to 5 hit points or fewer, it will attempt to flee. Wild sandhounds will usually fight to the death when they are aroused.

Habitat/Terrain: The sandhound is equally at home on city streets and in the desert, and one variety can quickly adapt to the other environment.

Ecology: Sandhounds are carnivores and natural predators. Whether in captivity or in the wild, they need to eat at least five pounds of meat every day to be satisfied. A trained sandhound will turn on its keepers if it is forced to go without food for too long.

Whitefang

25CR1

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Mars, desert & wildlands
FREQUENCY: Rare
ORGANIZATION: Solitary or mated pair

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Day
DIET: Omnivorous
INTELLIGENCE: Low (4-6)

NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2
ARMOR CLASS: 3
MOVEMENT: 240

HIT DICE: 8d10
THACO: 14
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d12
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES: None

Genotype: The whitefang is based on an elephant genotype, from which it gets its general body size and shape. The cranium and sensory organs are those of a wolf, and the creature is equipped with venom sacs similar to those of a poisonous snake. Originally created as a beast of burden with its own built-in self-defense mechanisms, the use of the whitefang for domestic purposes has all but disappeared because the creature turned out to be very difficult to control.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: 10-12 feet long, 6 feet tall at shoulder, 1000 lbs. or more.

External Covering: Very thick and tough hide.

Eyes: Small, inefficient in dim light or darkness.

Ears: Small holes beneath tufted flaps.

Mouth: Wolflike, set in powerful jaws; poison fangs in front.

Nose: Wolflike, but with no special sensitivity.

Cultural: Whitefangs are solitary predators, instinctively staying away from areas of human habitation. Although they are intelligent enough to be domesticated, their vicious disposition almost always discourages humans from trying to approach them.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Nothing of note, aside from the characteristics described herein.

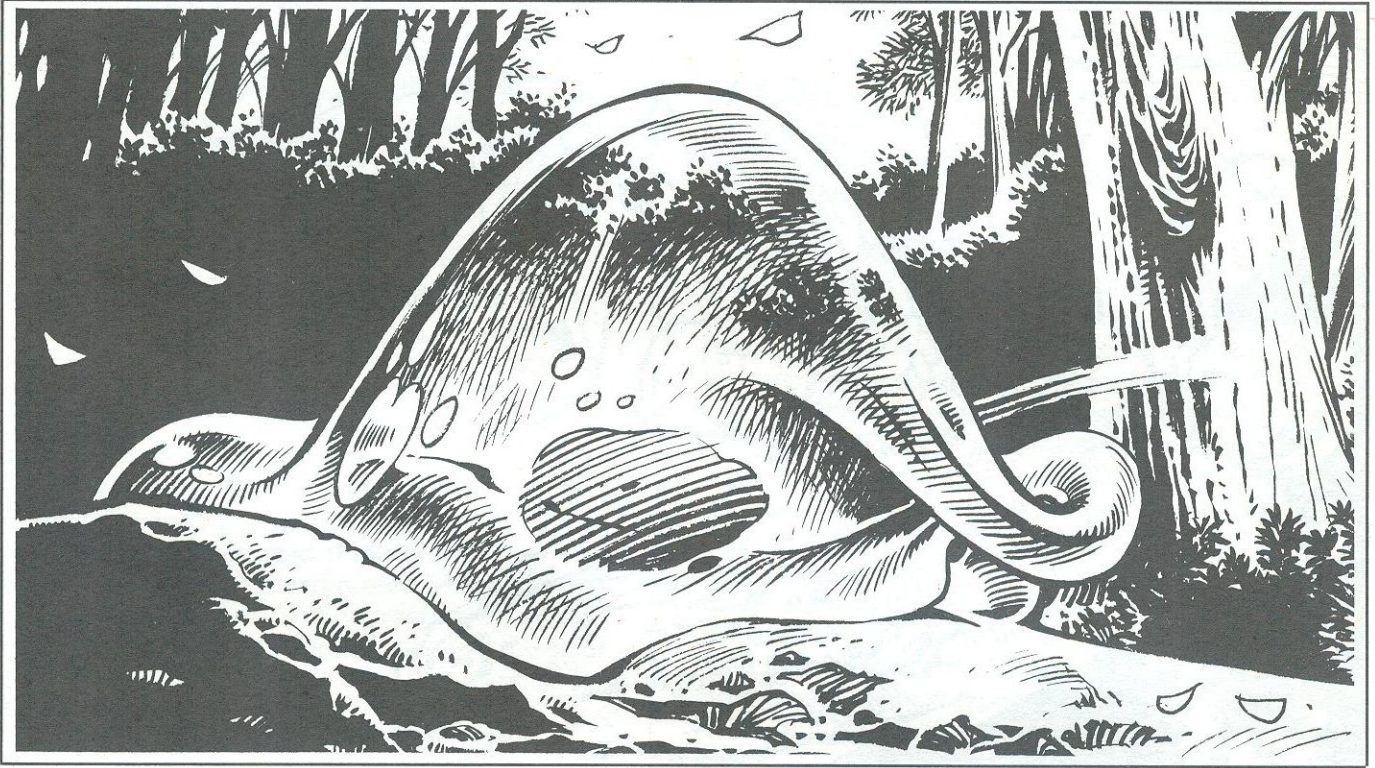
Combat: The whitefang's bite is formidable enough, but adding to it is the threat of poison. On the first four times every day that the creature hits with a bite attack, the fangs in the front of its mouth release a dose of venom. If the victim fails his saving throw, the poison causes him to suffer a -4 penalty on attacks and move at half speed for the next 1d6 hours. (Additional doses absorbed by an already poisoned victim have no effect.) The venom can



be neutralized by any medic who makes an Average Treat Poisoning Skill Check on behalf of the affected character. Typically, a whitefang will poison its prey and then attempt to follow it and hunt it down while the victim is in a weakened condition.

Habitat/Terrain: Whitefangs encountered in the Claritas Wildlands will be relatively nonaggressive, since they can satisfy their hunger by eating vegetation if no animal prey is to be found. In the desert, food is harder to come by, and a whitefang that spots a potential meal will do everything in its power to capture that prey.

Ecology: The whitefang is near the top of the food chain in the Martian wilderness, since no other single creature is a match for it in size or ferocity. Sandhounds, Desert Runners, or other creatures working as a group are often able to bring one of these creatures down, however. Whitefang meat is edible and quite nutritious.



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Mars, wilderness (areas with vegetation)
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Constant
DIET:	Organic matter
INTELLIGENCE:	Non-

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	60
HIT DICE:	6d6 to 8d6
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Suffocation
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The proto is nothing more than an enormous one-celled organism, a laboratory adaptation of the simple amoeba. An enterprising biogeneticist designed the creature as an effortless way (for him) of cleaning up spills, leftover food, and similar refuse. However, he neglected to build in a restriction on the creature's ability to reproduce; eventually, one of them found its way outside of the controlled environment in which it was created, and at the present time uncounted hundreds (possibly thousands) of these creations roam the Martian wilderness.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: Roughly 3 feet in diameter, able to change shape.

External Covering: Porous but tough cellular wall.

Eyes, Ears, Mouth, Nose: Not applicable.

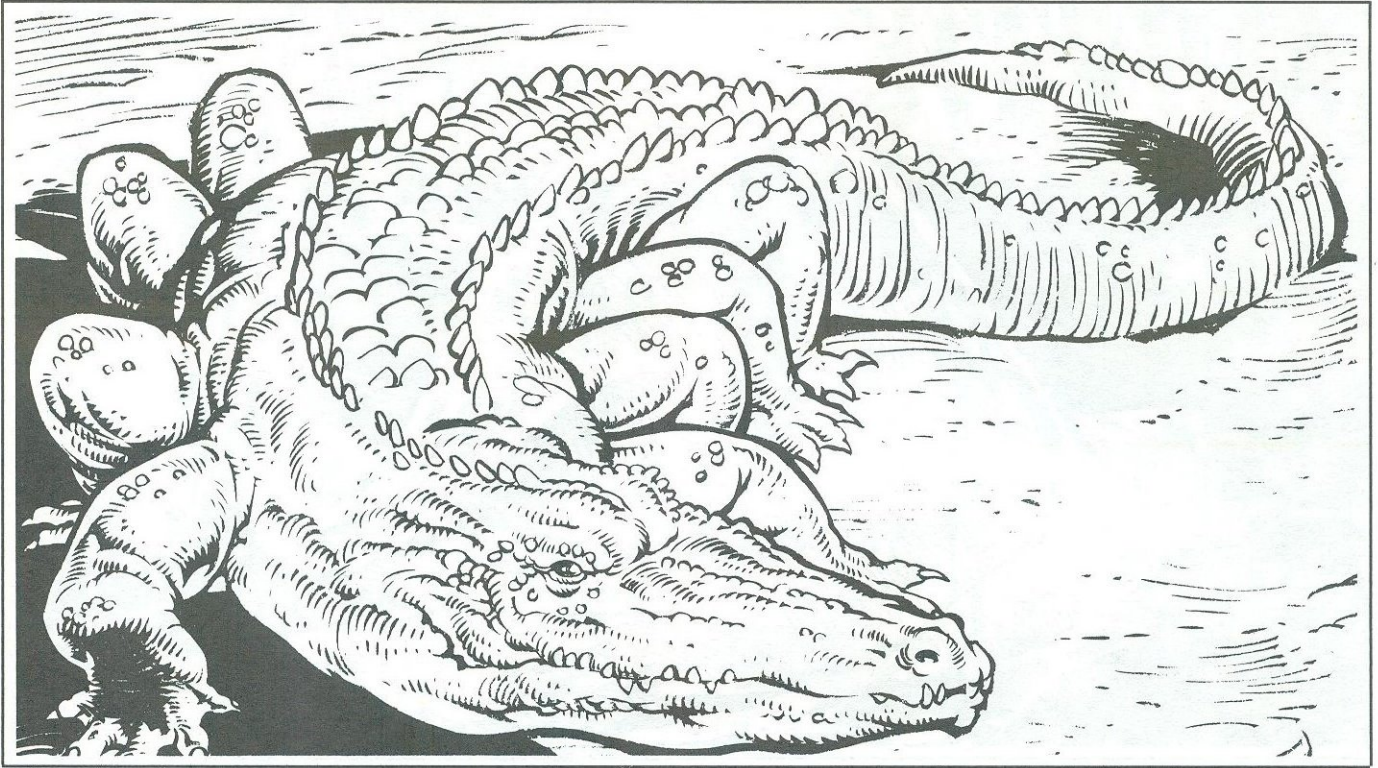
Cultural: The proto is a mindless creature that does nothing more than move and eat.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None, aside from those noted elsewhere.

Combat: Whenever it contacts organic matter (vegetation, human flesh, or whatever), the proto exudes digestive enzymes that begin to work on the "food," breaking it down so that it can be assimilated through the cell wall (causing 1d6 points of damage per round of contact, on a successful hit). If the proto settles down over the upper body of a human or other creature, the victim must make a saving throw to avoid the effects of suffocation.

Habitat/Terrain: The proto will almost never be found on barren land (such as desert), since that terrain contains nothing for it to feed on.

Ecology: The creature is not edible or useful in any other way. Once every few months (1d6 +3), when it has eaten enough to grow to 8 HD size, it reproduces by fission, yielding two creatures of 6 hit dice each.



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Mars, aquatic
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or mated pair
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Dusk and darkness
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal

NO. APPEARING:	1 or 2
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	180, 600 Swim
HIT DICE:	4d10
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The crocospider was developed for use in and around the agricultural farms bordering the Boreal Sea and the Southern Sea, as a way of controlling parasites that would eat or damage the crops. Because of its eight legs, this creature can move much more quickly on land or in water than a normal crocodile could. The original genetic design resulted in a creature about 2 feet long. Since being released into the wild, the creature has developed a variety that grows to about three times that size (the type described here) and is a threat to humans who encounter one.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: 6 feet long (plus tail), 150 lbs.

External Covering: Scales.

Eyes: Small and insensitive, on either side of the head.

Ears: Small holes in skull.

Mouth: Wide and lined with sharp teeth.

Nose: Nostrils at tip of snout, can be closed off during underwater movement.

Cultural: The crocospider prowls singly or in pairs, seeking to consume anything that isn't plant life. It has no other desires or functions.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None, aside from those mentioned herein.

Combat: The crocospider's bite is dangerous, all the more so because the creature is nocturnal and moves very silently (requiring an Impossible Notice Skill Check for someone to hear it coming).

Habitat/Terrain: Crocospiders prefer to skim the surface of the water, but have no reservations about moving onto land or diving underwater. A crocospider can move and fight for as long as four rounds underwater without having to come up for air.

Ecology: In its habitat, the creature has no natural enemies. Its flesh is edible, and its scaly exterior makes a passable substitute for light body armor in a pinch.

Appendix: New Rules and Technology

The last four pages of this booklet are not Mars-specific; rather, they provide expansion material for the XXVc™ game system, to add more detail and more realism to the world of the 25th Century. Feel free to use all, some, or none of these ideas in your campaign and the adventures that take place within it.

Combination Careers

Some players prefer their characters to be versatile, having a mix of abilities and skills drawn from two careers. If you want to use this option as part of the character-creation system, a PC in the XXVc™ game can begin with a combination career—rocketjock + engineer, warrior + scout, or any other two-part mixture—instead of specializing in a single line of work. (The plus sign is used to distinguish a character with a combination career from one who has changed careers, as per the rules on page 40 of *Characters & Combat*; a rogue + medic is quite different from a rogue/medic.)

The only restrictions on a combination career are these: A character must select this option at the start of his adventuring career, and once he's committed to it the only change he can make is to drop one career or the other. Afterward, he must stay in that single career for the rest of his life.

If the two careers in the combination use different dice for hit points, the lower value is used whenever the player rolls for new hit points. A warrior + scout rolls 1d8; an engineer + rocketjock rolls 1d6.

Experience-point requirements are an average of the values for the two careers. A warrior + scout needs 2,125 XP to advance to 2nd level; 4,250 for 3rd level; and so on.

In combat, the character uses the more favorable (lower) THACO number of the two careers. Because the warrior and the scout advance rapidly in this respect, those careers are popular choices for one-half of a combination career.

A combination character has eight career skills, just as any other character, but he fills out his list by choosing four skills from each career in the combination. A rocketjock + engineer, for example, might decide to take Drive Groundcar, Drive Jetcar, Pilot Rocket, and Use Rocket Belt from the first career and Maneuver in Zero G, Notice, Repair Mechanism, and Repair Nuclear Engine from the second career. The character can acquire all other skills as general

skills—with one exception: A medic in combination with any other career can only have the medic skills he chooses for career skills; he can not learn other medic skills as general skills.

The character is entitled to any special abilities of either career. A warrior + rogue has the warrior's advantage of weapon specialization, plus the rogue's 10% bonus on Skill Checks pertaining to the four career skills that he chose from the rogue list.

If a combination character decides later in life to concentrate on one career or the other, he can simply drop the career that no longer interests him. He keeps all the experience points he has earned but becomes a single-career character of the appropriate level. Sometimes (as in the example below) the player may have to subtract hit points to bring the character down to his correct level.

The four career skills belonging to the abandoned career are moved into the character's general skills list and replaced with the four previously unused skills from the career he is retaining. Until the character attains the next experience level in that career, those four new skills remain rated at 0.

Let's make an example of Leanna Pascal again (the same character used to explain the process of changing careers). In this case, she's torn between two choices at the start of her adventuring career, so she decides to start out as a rogue + medic. She uses 1d6 for hit points and has the THACO number of a rogue. The schedule she uses for level advancement looks like this:

Experience Level	Needed to rise from lower level	Total XP when attained
1	0	0
2	1,375	1,375
3	1,375	2,750
4	2,750	5,500
5	5,500	11,000
6	11,000	22,000
7	22,000	44,000
8	39,000	83,000
9	68,000	151,000
10	121,000	272,000
11	222,000	494,000
12	494,000	988,000

After picking four skills from each career's list, she heads out for a life of high adventure, and she accumulates enough experience points (5,700) to get to 4th level in her combination career. So far, so good.

But now Leanna has changed her mind. She's had enough of the dangerous life of a rogue and wants to devote herself to medicine from now on. Just by saying she's doing it, Leanna becomes a medic exclusively. With 5,700 XP, she doesn't have quite enough experience to qualify for 4th level in that career, so she has to forfeit the result of the 1d6 she rolled for hit points when she got to 4th level as a rogue + medic. (The good news is that she only needs 300 more XP before she'll be able to roll for new hit points again.)

Her rogue career skills become general skills, and the four medic skills she didn't take to begin with are added to her list of career skills. She doesn't know the first thing about those four new skills yet, but she'll start improving them as soon as she hits 4th level.

Most importantly, Leanna is now a happier character. Hopefully, she'll stay that way—even after someone (the referee) has to break it to her that she can't change her mind again.

Ship Sensors

Sensors are the eyes and ears of 25th-Century spacecraft. In cruisers and fighters, these are usually mounted in spun-ceramic nose cones in the front of the ship. Battlers usually have their main sensors installed just aft of the main control room, from where they are connected to batteries of microwave dishes, antennae and opticals stationed all over the ship.

The various types of sensors have different ranges and different levels of dependability. In the following specifications, "Reliability" is the percentage chance of successful or correct detection at the given "Range" figure (expressed in miles). If the object being scanned is farther away than the sensor's optimum range, the reliability percentage is decreased by 10% for each "Increment" of additional distance. For example, there is a 60% chance that spectrographic sensors will detect and correctly identify a readable object as far as 1,000 miles from the ship. For every 500 miles of additional distance (or any fraction of that amount), the chance of getting a correct readout drops by 10%. Thus, any object more than 4,000 miles away cannot be detected by spectrographic sensors (0% chance)—or if it can be detected (the referee may wish to allow for this possibility), the sensors will not produce an accurate result.

Any ship can carry all of the sensor subsystems described below, although for reasons of economy

or simple sensibility not every system is installed on every ship. Any one of a ship's sensor systems can be monitored by one crew member at one time. The operator can change from one system to another once per round as often as desired. (If more than one person is monitoring sensors, the need to keep switching from one system to another can be reduced.)

Radiation Sensors

Reliability: 90%

Range: 5,000 (and see below)

Increment: 5,000 (and see below)

These devices can detect and correctly identify the wavelength and general type of any electromagnetic or atomic radiation. For massive emissions of radiation, such as solar flares, the basic range of detection is 50,000,000 miles (roughly half the distance from Earth to the sun) and the increment is 10,000,000 miles. For small and transient emissions of atomic radiation, such as the trail left by the passage of a fusion-powered spaceship, the range is 100 miles and the increment is 50 miles. The 5,000-mile range applies to forms and sources of radiation that lie between these two extremes: for example, interplanetary computer communications, the microwave beam emitted by a Mariposa when it sends energy outward into the solar system, and the electromagnetic shield put up by a big ship (200 tons or larger) when it is in or about to enter combat.

Spectrographic Sensors

Reliability: 60%

Range: 1,000

Increment: 500

Can determine the composition of any metal, gas or liquid. Used for (among other things) identifying the nature of the atmosphere or the surface of a planetary body when the ship approaches or orbits the body.

Radio Sweeping

Reliability: Sensor Operation skill of operator

Range: millions of miles (effectively unlimited)

Increment: not applicable

Can detect and triangulate both strong and weak signals on all known wavelengths. These sensors are not as all-powerful as their unlimited range might suggest, however, since virtually all of the radio signals employed in ship-to-ship or interplanetary communications are sent out only on a very

narrow beam; thus, the ship must be directly in the path of the transmission before its radio-sweeping sensors can detect and identify the signal.

Infrared Pattern Sensors

Reliability: 60%
Range: 100
Increment: 100

Can determine location and general identity of heat-emitting objects such as life forms, main ship components and arcology power plants by matching the object's characteristic emissions to a library database.

Combat Tactical Sensors

Reliability: Sensor Operation skill of operator
Range: see below
Increment: not applicable

Coordinates all of the ship's weapon systems to identify targets, direction and type of incoming fire, and probable enemy approach vectors and interception courses.

The range of combat tac sensors is equal to $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the maximum range of a ship's weaponry. On a fully equipped ship, this distance is almost always 9 hexes ($6 \text{ hexes} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$), since a ship usually contains at least one weapon system capable of striking at long range—either a laser or some kind of missile. At the scale of 1 hex = 50 miles (which is used for ship-vs.-ship combat), this translates to a maximum range of 450 miles. If all of a ship's long-range weaponry is damaged or depleted, the combat tac sensors continue to operate out to 9 hexes. (For full information on how to conduct ship-vs.-ship combat, see *Characters & Combat*.)

FOF (Friend or Foe) Sensors

Reliability: 40%
Range: Twice as far as combat tac sensors (see above)
Increment: not applicable

Reads transponder signals of ships and compares these to a library database to determine size, type and registry of all known ships in the solar system.

FOF sensors and combat tac sensors are an exception to the general rule: One crew member can monitor both of these units at one time, since these sensors are actually two parts of a single system—sharing a lot of the same hardware but performing two different functions.

Life Suspension

The original design for a life suspension device was developed in 1999—just in time to be installed aboard the vessel that Captain Buck Rogers piloted on the fateful mission that ultimately landed him in the 25th Century. In Buck's case, the device was an outer-space version of an escape hatch, and it ended up serving exactly that function.

The system, known as a "dry suspension unit" in 25th-Century parlance, used electrodes for putting the brain into a dream state, while a computer overrode the autonomic nervous system and reduced life functions to the absolute minimum, creating a state of hibernation.

Medical theoreticians in the 20th Century were confident that a human being could survive in such an environment for as much as one year, based on experiments with laboratory animals and the known fact that some creatures—without the benefit of any medical technology whatsoever—lived for several months at a time in such a condition and suffered no ill effects. But they were not willing to suggest that an artificially hibernating man could live for ten years or even five.

How, then, did Buck Rogers stay alive for more than four and a half centuries? In the 20th Century, such an event was inconceivable; in the 25th, it is explainable.

Examination of Buck's ship after he was rescued revealed that the cooling chamber around his laser was ruptured at roughly the same time that the life-suspension device was automatically activated. His cockpit was flooded with the coolant, and possibly the liquid reacted with gases and other substances that were loose inside the cockpit. The solution passed through his skin and permeated his cells. As the cold of space froze his comatose body, the solution acted as a sort of antifreeze, keeping his cells from rupturing. This additional, unforeseen step in the suspension process put a halt to Buck's life functions altogether—but without actually killing him.

The secret of this so-called "wet suspension" is yet to be unlocked, primarily because no one had an opportunity to give Buck Rogers a thorough physical examination immediately after he was revived. Apparently, as soon as he regained consciousness Buck's body began to assimilate or transmute the chemical that had kept him in stasis, and within hours thereafter no trace of the substance remained in his system. It remains for future scientists to reconstruct the elusive formula that helped Buck Rogers beat the unbeatable odds.

By the 25th Century, testing and refinement of

the dry suspension method has made it 100% dependable for preserving life for as long as one year. The chance of surviving decreases by 10% for each year or part of a year thereafter—90% at one year and one month, 80% at three years, 60% at five years, and so on. No recorded case exists of a person being revived after more than ten years in dry suspension. The standard cost for undergoing the process is 2,000cr per month of suspension—payable in advance, of course.

While his body is in life suspension, all of a person's mental and physical processes, including disease and all forms of aging, are slowed to the point where they are detectable only by monitoring devices; to an observer using his physical senses, the patient appears comatose or dead. Typically, a person chooses to undergo life suspension if he is suffering from an incurable, terminal disease (hoping that a cure will be found while he's "in the tank") or if he wants to beat Father Time on a short-term basis for some reason.

Cybergenetics

Microengineering and improved computer technology have advanced the science of cybernetics to a level that was only dreamed about in the 20th Century. The function of nearly any part of the human body can be duplicated—sometimes even improved upon—by an electromechanical device.

In combination with the advancements in gene manipulation, cybernetics becomes cybergenetics: the process of creating organisms that are human, not human, and more than human all at the same time, depending on which part of the creature is under consideration.

Eyes and ears with enhanced abilities can be grown in tanks, then grafted onto computer brains that approach their programmed responsibilities with a single-mindedness that the biological human brain can't match. In a similar fashion, the rest of the organism's body can be composed of a mix of biological and mechanical parts. The result, in the case of this example, might be the world's best security guard—eyes and ears that don't miss a thing, coupled with a brain that concentrates on what it's supposed to do because that's all it knows how to do.

While gene manipulation has been practiced successfully for hundreds of years, cybergenetics is still in its infancy. The cost of creating a cybergenetic organism is so high that only governments and enormously rich business concerns can afford the necessary laboratory equipment, raw materials,

and scientific talent; the process is still very much one of trial and error, so that even after you've paid your money, you still have to take your chances. Player characters in the XXVc™ game universe shouldn't even think about having cybergennies made to order—no matter how much money they have, it won't be enough—but they should be aware that such organisms do exist.

Holographic recorder/viewer

Cost: 180cr

Size: 5" long, 3" wide, 3" deep

Weight: 1

Holocube

Cost: 1cr

Size: 2" cube

Weight: 1 oz.

The descendant of the portable videotape recorder that came into widespread use in the late 20th Century, a holographic recorder stores three-dimensional sight and stereophonic sound images on a holocube. A single cube can hold up to two hours of images and sounds.

To record an image, the user places a holocube inside the device and points it in the desired direction. The recorder can "see" in a field extending 45 degrees to either side of the center of its lens and out to a distance of as far as 200 feet; images beyond that distance are blurred and indistinct. Sound recording is possible out to the range of a normal human ear (but remember that sound doesn't travel through a vacuum).

If the image being recorded is basically stationary (a person giving a speech, performers acting out a stage show), the recorder can be left unattended in a fixed position. If the image is moving, the operator of the recorder must move the device manually to keep track of the target.

To play back the contents of a holocube, the user simply stands the device on end (with the lens facing up) and presses a switch. The holographic image fills a 5-foot-radius hemisphere around the device; the viewing area is adjustable down to a 2-foot radius if desired. The best reproduction is obtained when the viewing area is free of obstructions (except for the recorder itself, which is "masked" by the image it is displaying). If a three-dimensional object is present within the viewing area, the image is cut off so that only the portion occupying open space is visible.

Mars in the 25th Century

The Best and the Worst of Human Civilization

Mars:

The word means different things to different people.

To the executives who run the immense corporation known as RAM, Mars is as close to Paradise as any place in the solar system.

To the people who make up the bulk of RAM's military and civilian work force, Mars means security and opportunity . . . as long as they remain loyal soldiers and employees.

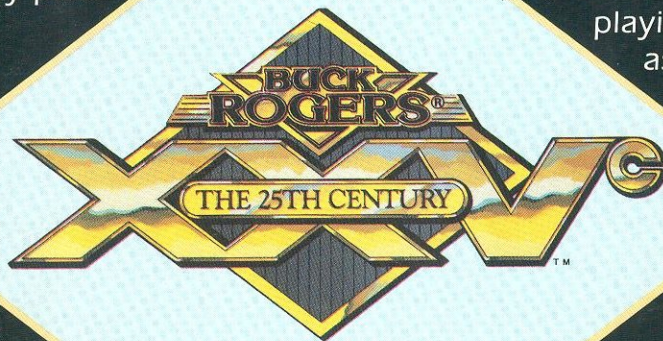
To the loners and strange creatures that prowl the planet's vast deserts, Mars is much as it has always been: a world of wilderness, solitude, and danger.

To the inhabitants of the rest of the solar system, Mars is at worst an enemy and at best a

threat. The Martians run the most powerful—and the most power-hungry—planet in the solar system, and they fully intend to keep things that way.

Mars in the 25th Century is the first product in a line of accessories for the XXVc™ science fiction role-playing game. It describes all aspects of the planet's civilization and culture—information that referees can use to create adventures on the Red Planet.

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