

**The First and Last Man on Mars**  
*(Chapter 1)*

I have always been fascinated with the possibility of man living on Mars. I hope I can live long enough to see that happen. Elon Musk might make that happen in my lifetime.

So, along with that thought, I decided to make a story about the first man to travel and live on Mars.

In 2034, there was a request sent out for possible men who might be capable to be the first man to travel to Mars. The technology for Mars exploration was already in its 60th year. The first landing on Mars took place on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1976, when NASA's Viking 1 lander touched down in Chryse Planitia (The Plains of Golf).

I applied on a whim. I was 56 years old, but still in good shape. I had combat experience and had a Silver Star pinned upon my chest. I had accomplished everything I wanted to do on Earth, which was not much, but I had some experience with space travel and I thought what the heck, why not? I wasn't selected for the first, second, or third candidate, but at least I was on the backup list. When they asked why I wanted to travel and live on Mars, I told them that I felt I didn't have that long to live and I just wanted to get it over with. They took that as humor, but maybe I was really telling myself the truth.

When evaluating man's possible existence alone on Mars, the physiologists stepped in and said that it is likely a man alone will go crazy. He needs some stimulation and distraction. What would be more stimulating and distracting than a woman to accompany him. So the request went out to females too. Sonya Romanoff, a Russian, was chosen as the best candidate. She was in her mid-thirties, attractive, and independent. She was a good choice to match up with the #1 American candidate Derrick.

I had studied up on all the parameters associated with life on Mars. Temperatures on Mars range from -220 degrees F (in the wintertime at the

poles), to 70 degrees F. Mars is about half the size of Earth, but the gravity is only about 1/3 that of Earth. If you weighed 100 lbs on Earth, you would only weigh 38 lbs on Mars. This was another reason I wanted to go to Mars. My attempts to lose weight, as I age, haven't worked out too well. This was a good way to lose 100 lbs in one shot. This is better than weight loss surgery. The Martian day is about 40 minutes longer than Earth's day, but the Martian year is more than twice as long. So living on Mars, I would age much slower. Not really, but the concept was appealing. I could celebrate my birthday every other year. Mars is 120 million miles from Earth. At the closest point to Earth, it takes 9 months to travel by space ship to Mars.

NASA picked a landing site in a good location. Elon Musk had previously sent gigantic rocket cargo ships with robot workers on board and had constructed a habitat suitable for two persons to survive on Mars. The site was near some caves. It was thought that if the astronauts were out exploring, and get caught in one of Mar's frequent violent storms, they could seek shelter in those caves.

The launch was scheduled for next month. I was pretty sure I would not be traveling, since they already had three better candidates in front of me. I still enjoyed the notoriety of being on the list. All of us were subjected to TV interviews and attained a kind of minor celebrity status.

The scientist decided that it was a good idea to put us in suspended animation for the long fight. That way, we would be well rested and also would not use up vital resources like food. I don't even like to travel by plane on Earth. It takes 11 hours to fly from LA to Beijing. So this seems like the astronauts would be traveling in first class.

The day before the launch, three events took place that I would call lucky or unlucky, depending on your point of view. The #1 candidate was scrubbed. He failed to tell NASA, that he had a fiancée. She had tried to commit suicide knowing that her future husband was going to run off to Mars with an attractive Russian. The second candidate came down with COVID and was scratched too. There was nothing wrong with the third candidate, but when he discovered it was him going to Mars, he chickened out. He told them he

just wanted the notoriety of being a candidate, but really was afraid to go. The launch window was very short. Sonya had already been put in suspended animation. There was no time to find someone else.

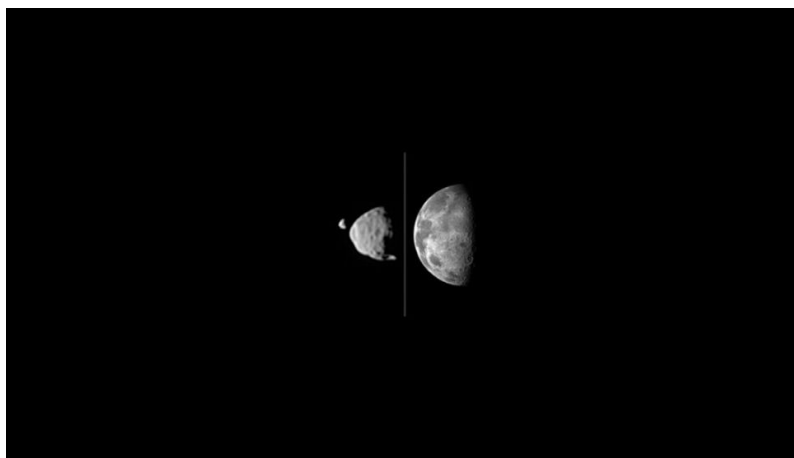
I can't believe this is happening. With no time to think about it, I was rushed into the space ship, placed in a pod, and connected up to the life support system. The last thing I heard was, "Good night Commander Travis".

It seemed just like an instant, but nine months had past.

Sonya woke up first. When I finally came around and she opened my pod, she said, "Who the hell are you, and where is Derick? I said, Derick couldn't make it, something about a girlfriend who wanted to commit suicide. Then she said, man, I am really screwed. Trying to lighten the moment, I said, I am hoping for that in the future. She said, don't hold you breath. I said, holding my breath on the limited Mars atmosphere is not in my plans. Mar's atmosphere was mostly carbon dioxide with only 1% oxygen. If you were the last man on earth, I wouldn't be with you. How about the last man on Mars? So began our happy association. At my age, abstinence was not that big of a deal. I was hoping that she would break down long before me.

Perhaps I can take her on a romantic moonlight stroll. Mars has two moons and no known moon orbits closer to its planet. Phobus whips around Mars three times a day and is drawing six feet closer every 100 years. Someday, it will crash into Mars and be destroyed. Deimos takes 30 hours for each orbit. Both are visible from the surface.

Phobus and Deimos vs. our Moon



Well, enough thinking about man's desires. We have a landing to accomplish, before any worries about companionship.

### The Red Planet



MARS

### *The First and Last Man on Mars* (Chapter 2)

Our landing went off without incident. After so many Mars landings, the technology was so refined, this was less dangerous than driving on LA freeways. When we stepped off the ramp, I was tempted to speak the words of Neil Armstrong when he first set foot on the Moon. **"That's one small step for man. One giant leap for mankind."**<sup>21 July, 1969</sup>

Instead, I was just in awe of the scene before me. I had seen many HD footage of Mars, but just like viewing the Grand Canyon, nothing beats the real thing. We both had on our personal oxygen generators. That technology had been improved too. It extracted what little oxygen was present in the Martian atmosphere and allowed us to walk around for hours. This was an advanced model of the first device known as MOXIE. Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization.

Our first task was to walk to the habitat that was assembled years before.

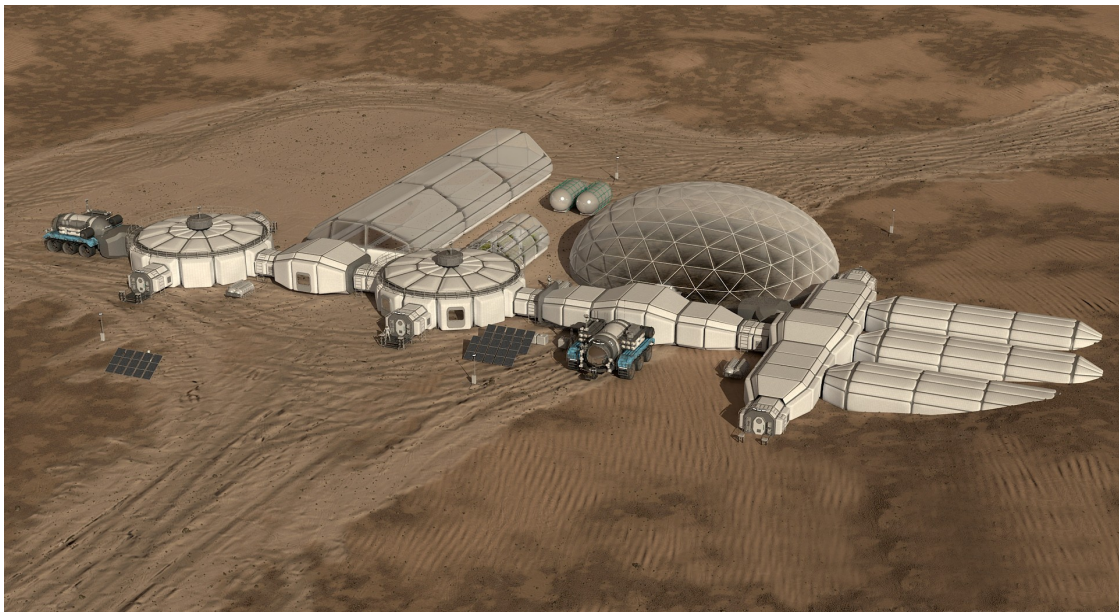
Even after 9 months of not using our muscles, the Martian reduced gravity made our walk easy.

As we entered our habitat, I had to marvel on the ingenuity of NASA. This place was better than any Marriott I ever stayed at.

The rover Perseverance took our picture as we walked toward our Martian home.



Our Home Away From Home



As we became familiar with our new habitat, we were anxious to start our

journey. After we did an inventory and a safety check of our life support systems, we entered the hydro phonic garden. This had been set up in advance. Seeds had been planted and a watering system had been installed. Technology allowed our water extraction devices to suck water from the Martian soil. When we entered the garden structure, we were happy to see a flourishing herb and vegetable garden. This would make our daily meals so much more tasty. The cupboards had been stocked with all kinds of freeze dried foods. I had never thought that I would become a vegetarian, but they wouldn't let us bring and livestock, chickens, or live fish with us. I wonder why?

For the first several weeks, we settled into a routine. Check the garden, check the safety systems, take short walks out away from the habitat. Conduct experiments. Our solar panels provided us with adequate electricity and we had each downloaded some music and videos on our maxi-gig thumb drives. This was enough to keep us entertained for a long time. Sonya managed to keep a professional distance from me and we were getting along OK. This was not my choice, but I am a scientist in addition to being an astronaut. I took it in stride. We didn't have much time for watching movies or listening to music though. After our assigned tasks for the day, conducting experiments and venturing out farther and farther, we were pretty wiped out each evening. Our only interaction, besides our spacesuit walks, was evening meals. We both tried to make some different dinners with the abundant vegetables and spices available, but the freeze dried foods were our only source of protein. That didn't leave much room for culinary delight. My only objection was, why did Sonya have to run around inside the habitat in those short shorts and halter top? I remember reading about a list of hardships that I might have to endure, but I don't remember the list mentioning mental torture.

To make things worse, each week we had to be interviewed by the physiologists. They were always asking us about our sex life.

So Travis, how is your relationship with Sonya? Oh, it is just great. We are getting along just like an old married couple. No sex and we barely talk. It is very peaceful and relaxing. Ha, Travis, we know you are a joker and we like

your humorous side, but Sonya has already reported that you two have sex two to three times a week.

Sonya had told me that we must report normal relations, or they will start to worry. I think she must have been dreaming about me, because somehow I missed those particular encounters. I told her that I think they have installed cameras in our bedroom and that we can't hide from them anymore. We must get together so as to not lie to them. Nice try Trav, she said, I know that was not done. Oh well, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

One day I decided to be direct. I just flat out asked Sonya, don't you miss having sex? She said, yes I do, I really miss my girlfriend Helga. I am thinking, how could they have matched me up with a Russian lesbian? Why not a nymphomaniac? As she left the dinning room, I saw her smile. I am guessing the joke is on me. That was the first time I saw her smile. Maybe there is hope for me after all. Still it made me think. Why couldn't they have matched me up with Helga. A mere 250 lbs and the body of a weight lifter or wrestler. She probably would have attacked me herself by now. They said, a man alone might eventually commit suicide. How about a man within reach of a beautiful woman, but no can touch? This is worse than being alone. Maybe I should just give up. Luckily, outside events elevated my status in Sonya's eyes.

On one of our ventures away from the habitat, we got caught in a violent wind storm. These sometimes formed up quickly and could reach hurricane force. Luckily we were close enough to the caves to seek shelter. This was the first time we entered the caves. It was on one of our task lists, so we might as well take advantage while the storm abated.

As we walked along, we noticed some strange things. There were multiple tracks of some kind in the loose sand. Since there was no wind inside to erase them, they were easy to see. I guess they could have been made eons ago. Farther into the cave we came across something that astounded us. There were carvings on the stone walls, just like you would see in Indian petroglyphs. We had just discovered that there was some kind of life on Mars at some point.

I was in the lead, but as I stepped forward, I heard Sonya scream. As I turned around, she was being attacked by some giant insect crab like spider. Without thinking, I raised my pointed walking stick and stabbed the creature right between its beady eyes.

I saved her by spearing it with my walking stick. She ran to me and I embraced her as she shook with fear. Deja Vu. Why do I feel like I have lived this moment before? I might have dreamed about killing giant crabs somewhere on a remote radioactive island.

As my adrenaline spiraled down toward normal, it spiked up again when I spotted more life forms. Several bodies came out of the crevasses. Too bad Steven Spielberg could not see this. He did not know how close he came with his ET character. They had thin limbs and big heads. The most amazing thing about them, is some of them spoke English. How could this be? The one who first spoke to me, said his name was Radar. He told me that their civilization had been fairly advanced, but due to atmospheric changes, they were driven underground. At one time, they had communication devices, but eventually, they all broke down. The only ones left were short range communication like walkie talkies and electronic receivers. So they had started receiving our TV broadcasts on a regular basis in the 1950's. They had been listening for over 80 years. So they knew all about us. We are all fans of Gilligan's Island, and I got my nickname by watching MASH. We are also afraid of your species. It seems like you all are always warring with each other. Please don't tell your leaders about our existence. I will keep that a secret for now. We must talk more about this later. Our oxygen boxes are running low. We must return to our habitat now that the storm has abated.

The ET's, as I called them, had evolved just like humans on Earth. Except Mar's period occurred 1 million years before Earth's. Before all the surface water dried up, Mars was just like Earth back in its primordial time. What ever life carrying meteorites that had landed on Earth, had also arrived on Mars. Eventually, almost all life on Mars disappeared due to Global warming. Don't mention this to the "Climate Change" fanatics. These crab



like arachnids were all that was left of their Jurassic period.

After saving Sonya's life, she commented, I guess you have some usefulness after all. Did you think they recruited me just on my looks? I was sure that was not the reason. Oh that hurt. I mimicked an arrow piercing my heart.

Later that evening, I decided to go all out. When each of us left earth, we were granted one personal item to bring with us, that was not part of the scientific experiments. When they told me that my traveling companion was Russian, I decided to bring a bottle of Vodka. Also, our garden was flourishing.



I told her we need to celebrate our survival and the amazing discovery we found. I also told her not to tell NASA about what we saw for now. Write

something in your personal journal, in case something happens to us. I had harvested some beets and managed to concoct a reasonable facsimile of borscht. So I presented Sonya with this romantic meal. Her eyes lit up when she saw the borscht. And after a couple shots of Vodka, she was glowing. Maybe this is my lucky night. After dinner, we listened to some music and actually danced. Much of the vodka was consumed. Nothing like saving someone's life to bring them closer. This actually did the trick. The next morning, she gave me an off handed compliment. She said, you were not bad for an old guy. Maybe we will do this again in six months from now. God, I hope she was joking.

**First and Last Man on Mars**  
(Chapter 3)

Sonya and I settled into a more comfortable routine. At least we did not have to lie about our relationship anymore. We continued experiments and outside explorations. We also met with the ETs on a regular basis. One of the containers that accompanied us on the space ship contained fertilized chicken embryos. Put them under warm lighting, as instructed, and after a few weeks, little chicks started popping up. We created our own little barnyard for them to roam around. I hope we don't get too attached to them, because I eyed them as future KFC prospects. We were both getting tired of processed dried protein. We were informed by Earth command that another spaceship was being prepared to bring two more astronauts to join us. I was both overjoyed and worried. We needed to tell the ETs about this.

We informed them that another manned spaceship was scheduled to arrive in about a year and that will double our Martian community.

The ETs were very worried about this development. We had several conferences with them and I suggested that instead of being discovered accidentally, they should present themselves first. This would insure their presence would look like a peaceful act. They were still reluctant to commit. I told Radar, that eventually we will have ships that can return to Earth. How would you like to go to Disneyland? Was it my imagination, or did his eyes actually light up? For now, we told them to wait and see what the attitude of

the new arrivals would be. Meanwhile, Sonya and I still have a year to ourselves. We were growing closer day by day.

We spent the year continuing our duties and enjoying our new found affection for each other.

When the next ship finally arrived, who do you think was one of the astronauts? You guessed it. Derrick must have figured out how to dump his fiancée without her killing herself. Since he had all the best credentials for space travel, I imagine they granted him another chance.

When the ship arrived, Derrick informed me that he was the senior officer and that he would be taking over control from now on. I could not miss his smirked expression as to mean he would be taking over control of Sonya too. Don't worry, old man, you have done a creditable job and NASA thanks you. But it is time for you to step aside and let the younger generations do their thing.

I have no problem letting you guide the expeditions. As far as personal issues are concerned, you have no authority over anyone else. This did not seem to set well with him. I suspect there will be some friction between us in the days to follow.

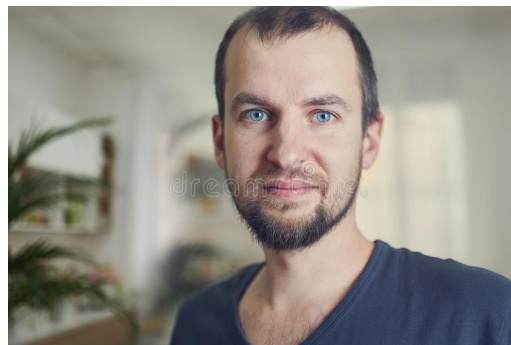
Sonya



Travis



Derrick



The female that accompanied him was my own imaginative Helga.  
Natalia



Her name was Natalia. She had a PHD in Astrophysics and I thought she was quite cute. Besides, here on Mars, she only weighed 90 lbs. I guess NASA thought it was a good idea to have one of Sonya's comrades added to our community. They could talk all the woman talk in Russian, and Derrick and I would be left out in the dark. It doesn't matter what language woman speak. Men are usually in the dark anyway.

Derrick was clearly thinking of partner swapping.

After our new arrivals acclimated themselves to the Martian environment, we all set about accomplishing our duties. For the first couple of weeks, everything went smoothly. I could tell by Natalia's expression though, that she was not entirely happy with being partnered with Derrick. Derrick also treated her with disdain. I guessed their cohabitation was likely the same condition as Sonya and I in the beginning.

I had been waiting for this to come to a head. Derrick approached me and said, I was initially slotted to partner with Sonya. After all, we are the top physical specimens and we should be together. I am an elite athlete and you are, well I am not sure what you are. I think you and Helga should get together. So I say, who says you are the best athlete. There are more to conditioning than just muscles. Experience and brains always win over brawn and stupidity. I knew this would incite anger in this arrogant SOB. Maybe we should have a contest to see who is the king of the jungle. Out here, in Martian no-mans-land, this is just like the wild west of olden days. Only the strong survive. So Derrick takes the bait. We will have a series of contests to see who is the fittest. So Derrick chooses a 100 yard dash. The habitat has a long corridor connecting all the side rooms. Natalia and Sonya are watching and talking in Russian. I imagine their discussion is something like this: Boys will be boys. How immature!

So Derrick counts 1,2,3 and takes off sprinting across the room. I just do a light jog. After he finishes, he says, that is one out of one. I said, you just broke the Martian record for the 100 yard dash. Quick, write this down in our journal.



OK Derrick, it is my turn to select. Have you ever been in a real fight? He said, he was a champion junior boxer in college. I said, good. Then I hope you won't think I have taken advantage of you. Are you sure you want to do this? You are 20 years older than me. I don't want to seriously hurt you. I say, I will take my chances. So we approach each other in the middle of the room. It was set up with a yoga mat for exercise. As he comes within range, I slap him right across the face. My motion was lightning fast. This infuriates him, and he comes at me swinging like a wild monkey. One side step and a hard punch to the solar plexus. He goes down on his butt. Of course he truly is a strong guy. He jumps up looking uninjured. This time he approaches more cautiously. As he gets within range, I fake to his mid-section and deliver a loud slap across his face just like the first one. His face is a scarlet red, but not just from the slap. He comes at me in a rage, and I fake the slap, and deliver an even harder punch to his solar plexus. This time he lands on his butt, but does not get up. I say OK, it is one to one. What do you want to try next? I know I have rendered him almost useless. To save face, I say, why don't we call it a tie? He has no objection and the game is over. I didn't want to truly hurt Derrick. There would be too many repercussions if I damaged one of NASA's valuable assets. I really only hurt his pride. Natalia runs to his side and helps him stand up. He hobbles off the mat and they head to their cohabitation room. Sonya comes over to me and says what was that all about? I said that Derrick was intent on claiming you as his prize. She said, I wouldn't be with him if he were the last man on Earth or Mars. Where have I heard that before? I was glad to hear it directed at someone else.

The next morning, Derrick was somewhat subdued, but Natalia was beaming. I imagine that Derrick decided that second place was better than no place. I hoped that he would leave me and Sonya alone after this. I also hoped that he would treat Natalia with more respect.

I was wrong about at least part of that.

Eventually, we must return to the caves. NASA is interested in these. I haven't mentioned anything about the big spiders or the ETs. I warned them to keep hidden. Of course, I had no conversations with the crab/spiders. As

we entered the cave, Natalia and Derrick were also struck by the evidence of former life. I was keeping a watchful eye out for our spider friends. Suddenly, Natalia was surrounded by two of them. Her shrieks could be heard back on Earth. I expected Derrick to rescue her, but instead he broke his own Martian speed record by dashing back outside the cave out of danger. Sonya and I both took care of those two.

Back at the habitat compound, Derrick was visibly shaken. He immediately contacted Earth and reported that dangerous lifeforms were present inside the caves. He requested that the next cargo ship contain weapons. This is the last thing I hoped for. We already know we can kill the spiders, but weapons will put the ETs in danger.

For the next several months, we avoided the caves all together. We resumed our normal walk-a-bouts conducting experiments and searching for unusual rock samples. It was on one of these that Derrick showed his true colors. He and I had ventured rather far out from the compound. I had found out that the personal item he had decided bring with him was a knife. He kept it around his waste on all our excursions. As I was leaning over to examine a particular interesting rock sample, he slipped up behind me and cut my oxygen flow tube. He said, lets see how long you can hold your breath. He then left me there. I had no choice except to try and make it back to the habitat. There was still some residual oxygen left in the tube, but it would not last long. Instead of panicking, I proceeded to make a direct walk without exerting myself toward the compound. Once when I was a teenager, I tried to swim four laps in my friends pool without coming up for air. I was on my last lap when I passed out, but came too standing up in the pool at the edge of the final lap. So I knew I had the capacity to hold my breath for quite awhile. Half way back, my oxygen gave out all together. I was still too far away, but I kept going. I was in sight of the habitat when I passed out. The next thing I knew, Sonya had put her own oxygen mask on my face and revived me. Back in the compound, I said nothing about Derrick. I told Sonya that I must have snagged my tube on an overhanging rock formation. Later that evening, the woman were in the kitchen preparing some Russian cuisine when I cornered Derrick. He had drawn his knife and was in a combat stance. This time this was no game. As he lunged toward me, I spun

him around and bent his hand backwards so that he dropped the knife. Using leverage, I twisted his wrist down and forced him to the ground. I took the knife off the floor and placed it across his neck. I said, if you ever get anywhere close to Sonya or me, I will kill you and you will have the honor of being the first to be buried on Martian soil. Do you understand? He nodded affirmative. I kept his knife as a reminder of who is king of the jungle. I think this time he will heed my warning.

**The First and Last Man on Mars**  
(Chapter 5)

	<u>Results of the voting:</u>	<u>Voter</u>
Execution	<u>1</u>	Sonya
Solitary Confinement	<u>2</u>	Nancy, Shelly, Martina
Rehabilitation	<u>1 1/2</u>	Natalia, Shelly
Banishment	<u>1 1/2</u>	Nancy, Sheldon
Sacrifice to the Spider/Crabs	<u>1</u>	Travis
Total votes	<u>7</u>	

Nancy suggested we send him back to Earth (banishment) or solitary. So I split her vote.

Shelly chose solitary, then rehabilitation. I split her vote too.

Note: Nancy and Shelly are designated voters back on Earth.

Derrick tried to kill me twice and Sonya once. We do not believe in rehabilitation.

I still have not told NASA about the ETs. Only Sonya and I know about them. I really wanted to encourage them to come out in the open. If it is done right, it will benefit them and us too.

Meanwhile, several developments have occurred. First, I asked Sonya to marry me. Sheldon asked Martina to marry him. Both of the woman said yes. Natalia also wanted to get married.



After all the votes were counted, because of Natalia, I could not go through with a harsh sentence for Derrick. Solitary garnered the highest vote count, but that would also punish Natalia.

I decided the best way to handle him, was to erect a jail, and let him exist in there. Let Natalia be his care keeper. Derrick told me that he did not want to marry Natalia. I told him that Natalia was the only one who stuck up for him. She is the only one who visits you and brings you food. If she abandons you, Sonya will have to take over her role. One of the rules we made for prisoners, is that they can have only have conjugal visits with a wife. This swayed him in favor of marriage. I did not tell Natalia that I used this leverage to force him to marry. In fact, there was no rule that stated that.

So our community had three marriages in one day. Two outside, and one in jail.

A couple of months later, Martina announced that she was pregnant. I said, how is that possible? I thought that the scientist insisted that there would be no births taking place on Mars. She said, they decided that I should be just another experiment. I couldn't believe that they would plan something like that.

We all suggested possible names the baby. I liked Astro, (as in astronaut, if it was a boy) and Celeste (as in Celestial, if it was a girl).

Seven months later, she gave birth to the first ever Martian-American. He began a new category of minorities. Martina named him Martin. A reference to Martian and also the male version of her name.

I had a discussion with Sonya to get her idea on how to proceed with the ETs. We had not been back to the caves since Derrick blew up the entrance. First we have to find out how they fared after the explosion.

I meet with the ETs and convinced them to come out of hiding. I explained that there will be more and more people coming each year, and there was no

telling how they would view your kind. I understand you, and I hope you trust me. Listen to my plan and then you decide if you want to follow it.

Eventually they agreed and I planned to announce their existence in a spectacular display.

I made up the following story:

Some of the ETs were killed by Derrick's bombs. (Not True!) Still, I thought we should appeal to NASA to view the aliens as victims and get their sympathy. I told NASA, that the bomb also had damaged their water supply and that they were lacking food. They only revealed themselves out of necessity. I gave NASA the real history of their race and how they came about to have to live underground. I sent a photo of me, Sonya, and Radar, along with several of his family, to imply that they were non-threatening.

This did the trick. NASA, besides being astounded by the news of intelligent life on Mars, fell all over themselves trying to right the wrong vested upon them by one of Earth's astronauts. All these actions reduced the fear that the Martians had towards humans.

I implied that if they allowed one of these aliens to visit Earth, the scientists can examine them and perhaps see how they can live on Mar's oxygen depleted atmosphere.

Ten years later, Radar got his wish. He was the first alien to visit Earth. Upon his arrival, there was a world wide press conference. They asked him, what would you like to do first? He said, I want to go to Disneyland, then the beach.

What I failed to tell NASA, is that I witnessed the aliens defending themselves against the crab spiders. They had some kind of built-in electrostatic force that they could project without even getting close. They were not as harmless or as vulnerable as they seemed. I hoped I was not sending an alien to eliminate the human race.

The Martian colony continued to flourish. At the Earth age of 87, Travis

passed away. Sonya followed him three years later. They erected a grave site monument to them both. Travis's stone read, "The First Man on Mars, but not the Last". Sonya's only stated, "The First Woman on Mars".

So, if I passed away, how can I be telling you what happened after? It is because, I am a "Ghost Writer". Ha! Even after I am gone, my humor lives on.

Derrick only lasted five years then went insane and hung himself. So besides being the first criminal on Mars, he was the first to be buried in Martian soil. Natalia was heartbroken, but later found a new partner that treated her with respect and she happily lived out her remaining years.

The End

### **Epilogue:**

#### **The Incredible Mars Experiment**

Sure, my story was science fiction. But in reality, besides the alien presence, the living habitat and man living on Mars will become a reality, hopefully in my lifetime.

The rovers have done a magnificent job. Their lifespan was only designed to last three months. Instead, look at what they did.

#### **Spirit:**

Described as a "wonderful workhorse"—Spirit operated for **6 years, 2 months, and 19 days**, more than 25 times its original intended lifetime. The rover traveled 4.8 miles (7.73 kilometers) across the Martian plains. On May 25, 2011, NASA ended efforts to contact the marooned rover and declared its mission complete.

#### **Opportunity:**

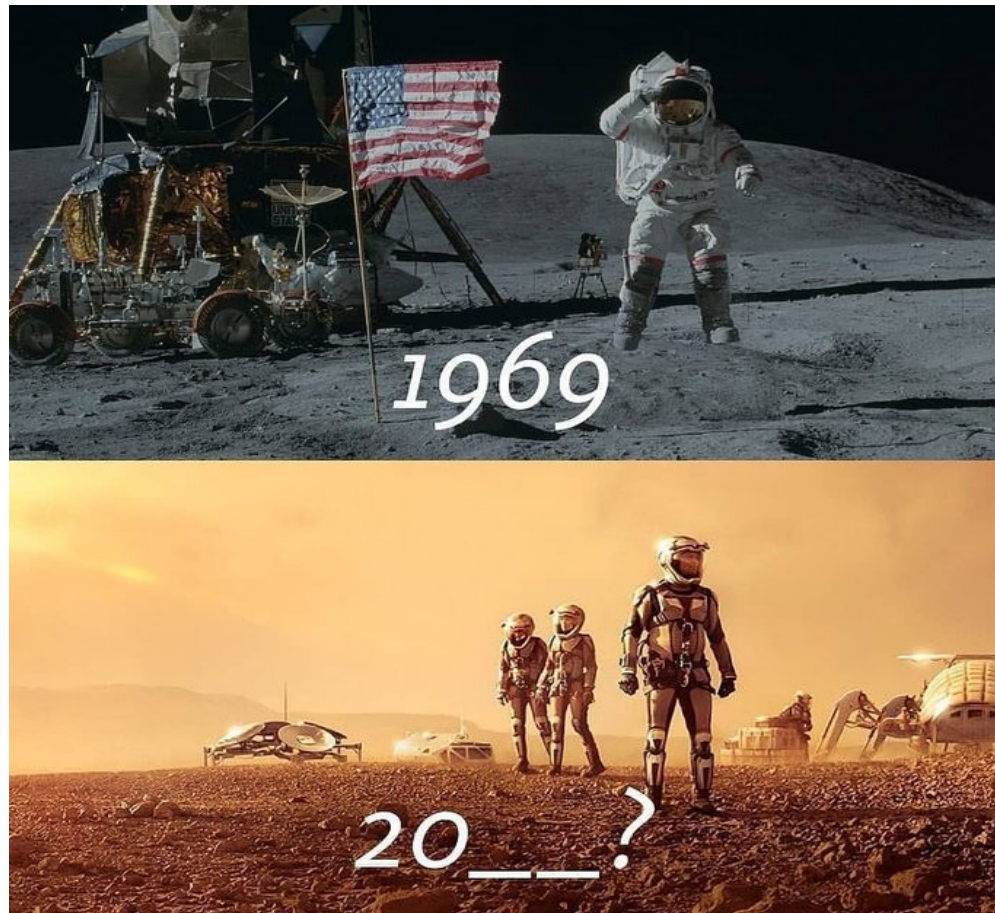
The spacecraft lasted more than 50 times longer than originally planned, delivering groundbreaking science and inspiring a generation. After **more than 14 years** driving across the surface of Mars, the NASA rover Opportunity has fallen silent—marking the end of a defining mission to another world.

Who is left still operating?

The ones that are operational are **5** and these are Sojourner, Spirit and Opportunity, Curiosity,

and Perseverance. A Mars rover can be considered as a motor vehicle that travels across the surface of the planet Mars upon arrival. Rovers have several advantages over stationary landers.

**Elon Musk** - The CEO and founder of SpaceX is working for his Starship spacecraft to reach the red planet in the next few years. His plans even aim to establish a city on Mars and in his first statements in this regard, said in December 2020, he calculated that this milestone would be achieved **between 2024 and 2026**.



**The Real End**