

G U R P S

Rescue Mission



AN e23 ADVENTURE
for GURPS® from
STEVE JACKSON GAMES
FOR 3 TO 6 PLAYERS

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The year is 2050. Two days ago, Minotaur Station in Noctis Labyrinthus stopped responding. A rescue team – the PCs – has been sent to find out why.

As the adventure begins, the team is leaving Eos Station at the mouth of the Valles Marineris for the long drive up the canyon to Minotaur Station. Eos Station is a medium-sized base with about two dozen people on the staff. There are three crawlers and six open rovers, or “Mars buggies.” Sending out the group as a rescue team doesn’t strain the base’s resources very much, but sending a second party after them would cause problems. Since the Marineris canyon system is about as long as the distance from New York to Seattle, the team will be on their own once they reach Minotaur.

Players can either create their own 100-point characters or use the three sample characters included at the end of this adventure. GMs can also use the sample characters as NPCs to fill out the party.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This adventure uses the “Domed Mars” campaign setting described in *GURPS Mars*, with some slight variations – the hidden colony is Croatoan, located just north of the Argyre impact basin. All PCs have heard rumors about a secret colony, some of which use that name (others call the hidden colony “Shangri-La” or “El Dorado”).

The assumed tech level is TL9, with the “hard science” option. Much of the equipment used on Mars is older, more dependable TL8 gear, but there is no tech level penalty for any of the gear in use on Mars. Genetic engineering of

humans is possible, but most countries restrict it heavily. There are rumors that some countries on Earth have conducted secret genetic engineering projects, and lots of tabloid-style news reports, but no real facts.

International relations are generally peaceful, although China’s claim to sovereignty over a large chunk of Mars has caused some friction. The Chinese program to use genetically-engineered humans as colonists is a tightly-guarded secret unknown outside the Chinese colony, and would certainly cause the government in Beijing some serious embarrassment.

The Expedition

The rescue team has a Mars crawler, including all its onboard tools and gear (see p. 3). Each individual has a personal Mars suit, and special personal equipment is listed with each of the sample characters. If the team wants to bring along any additional equipment, they are limited by what is available at Eos Station – and there isn’t much. In particular, there are no weapons at the station, although items like rock hammers, laser torches, and other tools could be adapted for combat.

Driving from Eos Station to Minotaur Station takes a week. The terrain is charted, and marked by beacons at 10-kilometer intervals. The trip up Valles Marineris is mostly without incident. Players need make only one skill roll to avoid accident. On a failed Driving roll, the crawler jockey must make another roll and consult the table below.

Critical Success – Loss of control causes a minor skid; no harm done.

Success – Skid into deep sand; lose a day digging crawler out.

Failure – Hit a boulder; lose 1d3 days fixing the suspension.

Critical Failure – Crawler rolls into a chasm; proceed on foot.

Minotaur Station

After the long journey up Valles Marineris to the center of Noctis Labyrinthus, the party arrives at Minotaur Station. Minotaur is a small base – two habitats buried in the slope at the base of the cliffside, connected by a tube, with an inflatable greenhouse

and a radio mast. The station’s normal complement is eight, but when the rescuers arrive there is nobody around. The station is empty, and the crawler and two rovers that belong there are missing.

There is no difficulty getting inside; the airlocks are working and the power is on. The station is not obviously damaged, and everything seems to be in order at first. However, both the primary radio and the backup unit have been sabotaged very effectively – key components have been removed. Fixing them requires an Electronics (Communication Systems) roll at a -4.

The emergency food supplies have been opened, and about 100 ration packs taken. The sickbay has been looted; all portable medical gear and drugs are gone. Someone has even erased all the computer logs for the past three months. (An attempt to recover the lost data requires a Quick Contest between the would-be recoverer’s Computer Operation skill and Saburo Shima’s skill of 16. If successful, the computer expert can get a few weather records and a journal entry fragment reading “. . . has stolen one of the rovers. We buried poor Orlov this morning and are packing up as much as will fit in the crawler before we . . .”)

A careful search turns up some oddities. Rescuers outside who make a successful Vision roll can discover what looks very much like a gravesite, complete with a marker made of piled-up Mars rocks. (If they actually want to dig it up, they find the remains of Lt. Orlov, dead of a blow to the head.)

Team members exploring outside or nosing around in the greenhouse can make a Vision roll to spot some strange markings in the dust adhering to the outside of the dome. There are some handprints