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MARS CONFIDENTIAL!

Jack Lait & Lee Mortimer

Illustrator: L. R. Summers

Here is history's biggest news scoop! Those intrepid reporters Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, whose best-selling exposes of life's seamy side from New York to Medicine Hat have made them famous, here strip away the veil of millions of miles to bring you the lowdown on our sister planet. It is an amazing account of vice and violence, of virtues and victims, told in vivid, jet-speed style.

Here you'll learn why Mars is called the Red Planet, the part the Mafia plays in her undoing, the rape and rapine that has made this heavenly body the cesspool of the Universe. In other words, this is Mars—Confidential!

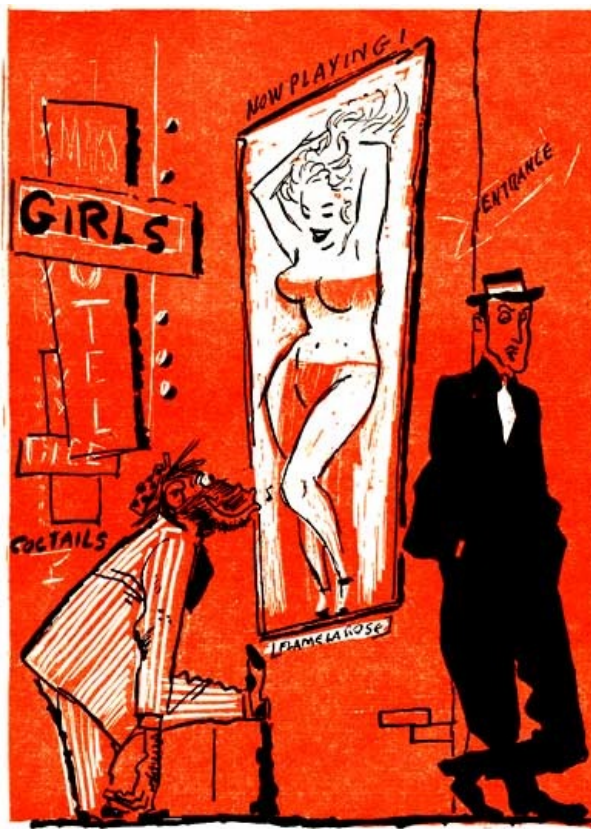
P-s-s-s-t!

HERE WE GO AGAIN—Confidential.

We turned New York inside out. We turned Chicago upside down. In Washington we turned the insiders out and the outsiders in. The howls can still be heard since we dissected the U.S.A.

But Mars was our toughest task of spectroscoping. The cab drivers spoke a different language and the bell-hops couldn't read our currency. Yet, we think we have X-rayed the dizziest—and this may amaze you—the dirtiest planet in the solar system. Beside it, the Earth is as white as the Moon, and Chicago is as peaceful as the Milky Way.

By the time we went through Mars—its canals, its caves, its satellites and its catacombs—we knew more about it than anyone who lives there.



We make no attempt to be comprehensive. We have no hope or aim to make Mars a better place in which to live; in fact, we don't give a damn what kind of a place it is to live in.

This will be the story of a planet that could have been another proud and majestic sun with a solar system of its own; it ended up, instead, in the comic books and the pulp magazines.

We give you MARS CONFIDENTIAL!

I

THE LOWDOWN CONFIDENTIAL

Before the space ship which brings the arriving traveler lands at the Martian National Airport, it swoops gracefully over the nearby city in a salute. The narrow ribbons, laid out in geometric order, gradually grow wider until the water in these man-made rivers becomes crystal clear and sparkles in the reflection of the sun.

As Mars comes closer, the visitor from Earth quickly realizes it has a manner and a glamor of its own; it is unworlly, it is out of this world. It is not the air of distinction one finds in New York or London or Paris. The Martian feeling is dreamlike; it comes from being close to the stuff dreams are made of.

However, after the sojourner lands, he discovers that Mars is not much different than the planet he left; indeed, men are pretty much the same all over the universe, whether they carry their plumbing inside or outside their bodies.

As we unfold the rates of crime, vice, sex irregularities, graft, cheap gambling, drunkenness, rowdyism and rackets, you will get, thrown on a large screen, a peep show you never saw on your TV during the science-fiction hour.

Each day the Earth man spends on Mars makes him feel more at home; thus, it comes as no surprise to the initiated that even here, at least 35,000,000 miles away from Times Square, there are hoodlums who talk out of the sides of their mouths and drive expensive convertibles with white-walled tires and yellow-haired frails. For the Mafia, the dread Black Hand, is in business here—tied up with the subversives—and neither the Martian Committee for the Investigation of Crime and Vice, nor the Un-Martian Activities Committee, can dent it more than the Kefauver Committee did on Earth, which is practically less than nothing.

This is the first time this story has been printed. We were offered four trillion dollars in bribes to hold it up; our lives were threatened and we were shot at with death ray guns.

We got this one night on the fourth bench in Central Park, where we met by appointment a man who phoned us earlier but refused to tell his name. When we took one look at him we did not ask for his credentials, we just knew he came from Mars.

This is what he told us:

Shortly after the end of World War II, a syndicate composed of underworld big-shots from Chicago, Detroit and Greenpoint planned to build a new Las Vegas in the Nevada desert. This was to be a plush project for big spenders, with Vegas and Reno reserved for the hoi-polloi.

There was to be service by a private airline. It would be so ultra-ultra that suckers with only a million would be thumbed away and guys with two million would have to come in through the back door.

The Mafia sent a couple of front men to explore the desert. Somewhere out beyond the atom project they stumbled on what seemed to be the answer to their prayer.

It was a huge, mausoleum-like structure, standing alone in the desert hundreds of miles from nowhere, unique, exclusive and mysterious. The prospectors assumed it was the last remnant of some fabulous and long-dead ghost-mining town.

The entire population consisted of one, a little duffer with a white goatee and thick lensed spectacles, wearing boots, chaps and a silk hat.

"This your place, bud?" one of the hoods asked.

When he signified it was, the boys bought it. The price was agreeable—after they pulled a wicked-looking rod.

Then the money guys came to look over their purchase. They couldn't make head or tail of it, and you can hardly blame them, because inside the great structure they found a huge contraption that looked like a cigar (Havana Perfecto) standing on end.

"What the hell is this," they asked the character in the opera hat, in what is known as a menacing attitude.

The old pappy guy offered to show them. He escorted them into the cigar, pressed a button here and there, and before you could say "Al Capone" the roof of the shed slid back and they began to move upward at a terrific rate of speed.

Three or four of the Mafia chieftains were old hop-heads and felt at home. In fact, one of them remarked, "Boy, are we gone." And he was right.

The soberer Mafistas, after recovering from their first shock, laid ungentle fists on their conductor. "What goes on?" he was asked.

"This is a space ship and we are headed for Mars."

"What's Mars?"

"A planet up in space, loaded with gold and diamonds."

"Any bims there?"

"I beg your pardon, sir. What are bims?"

"Get a load of this dope. He never heard of bims. Babes, broads, frails, pigeons, ribs—catch on?"

"Oh, I assume you mean girls. There must be, otherwise what are the diamonds for?"

The outward trip took a week, but it was spent pleasantly. During that time, the Miami delegation cleaned out Chicago, New York and Pittsburgh in a klabiash game.

The hop back, for various reasons, took a little longer. One reason may have been the condition of the crew. On the return the boys from Brooklyn were primed to the ears with *zorkle*.

Zorkle is a Martian medicinal distillation, made from the milk of the *schznoogle*—a six-legged cow, seldom milked because few Martians can run fast enough to catch one. *Zorkle* is strong enough to rip steel plates out of battleships, but to stomachs accustomed to the stuff sold in Flatbush, it acted like a gentle stimulant.

Upon their safe landing in Nevada, the Columbuses of this first flight to Mars put in long-distance calls to all the other important hoods in the country.

The Crime Cartel met in Cleveland—in the third floor front of a tenement on Mayfield Road. The purpose of the meeting was to "cut up" Mars.

Considerable dissension arose over the bookmaking facilities, when it was learned that the radioactive surface of the planet made it unnecessary to send scratches and results by wire. On the contrary, the steel-shod hooves of the animals set up a current which carried into every pool room, without a pay-off to the wire service.

The final division found the apportionment as follows:

New York mob: Real estate and investments (if any)

Chicago mob: Bookmaking and liquor (if any)

Brooklyn mob: Protection and assassinations

Jersey mob: Numbers (if any) and craps (if any)

Los Angeles mob: Girls (if any)

Galveston and New Orleans mobs: Dope (if any)

Cleveland mob: Casinos (if any)

Detroit mob: Summer resorts (if any)

The Detroit boys, incidentally, burned up when they learned the Martian year is twice as long as ours, consequently it takes two years for one summer to roll around.

After the summary demise of three Grand Councilors whose deaths were recorded by the press as occurring from "natural causes," the other major and minor mobs were declared in as partners.

The first problem to be ironed out was how to speed up transportation; and failing that, to construct spacious space ships which would attract pleasure-bent trade from *Terra*—Earth to you—with such innovations as roulette wheels, steam rooms, cocktail lounges, double rooms with hot and cold babes, and other such inducements.

II

THE INSIDE STUFF CONFIDENTIAL

Remember, you got this first from Lait and Mortimer. And we defy anyone to call us liars—and prove it!

Only chumps bring babes with them to Mars. The temperature is a little colder there than on Earth and the air a little thinner. So Terra dames complain one mink coat doesn't keep them warm; they need two.

On the other hand, the gravity is considerably less than on Earth. Therefore, even the heaviest bim weighs less and can be pushed over with the greatest of ease.

However, the boys soon discovered that the lighter gravity played havoc with the marijuana trade. With a slight tensing of the muscles you can jump 20 feet, so why smoke "tea" when you can fly like crazy for nothing?

Martian women are bags, so perhaps you had better disregard the injunction above and bring your own, even if it means two furs.

Did you ever see an Alaska *klutch* (pronounced klotch)? Probably not. Well, these Arctic horrors are Ziegfeld beauts compared to the Martian fair sex.

They slouch with knees bent and knuckles brushing the ground, and if Ringling Bros, is looking for a mate for Gargantua, here is where to find her. Yet, their manner is habitually timid, as though they've been given a hard time. From the look in their deep-set eyes they seem to fear abduction or rape; but not even the zoot-suited goons from Greenpernt gave them a second tumble.

The visiting Mafia delegation was naturally disappointed at this state of affairs. They had been led to believe by the little guy who escorted them that all Martian dames resembled Marilyn Monroe, only more so, and the men were Adonises (and not Joe).

Seems they once were, at that. This was a couple of aeons ago when Earthmen looked like Martians do now, which seems to indicate that Martians, as well as Men, have their ups and downs.

The citizens of the planet are apparently about halfway down the toboggan. They wear clothes, but they're not handstitched. Their neckties don't come from Sulka. No self-respecting goon from Gowanus would care to be seen in their company.

The females always appear in public fully clothed, which doesn't help them either. But covering their faces would. They buy their dresses at a place called Kress-Worth and look like Paris *nouveau riche*.

There are four separate nations there, though nation is hardly the word. It is more accurate to say there are four separate clans that don't like each other, though how they can tell the difference is beyond us. They are known as the East Side, West Side, North Side and Gas House gangs.

Each stays in its own back-yard. Periodic wars are fought, a few thousand of the enemy are dissolved with ray guns, after which the factions retire by common consent and throw a banquet at which the losing country is forced to take the wives of the visitors, which is a twist not yet thought of on Earth.

Martian language is unlike anything ever heard below. It would baffle the keenest linguist, if the keenest linguist ever gets to Mars. However, the Mafia, which is a world-wide blood brotherhood with colonies in every land and clime, has a universal language. Knives and brass knucks are understood everywhere.

The Martian lingo seems to be somewhat similar to Chinese. It's not what they say, but how they say it. For instance, *psonqule* may mean "I love you" or "you dirty son-of-a-bitch."

The Mafistas soon learned to translate what the natives were saying by watching the squint in their eyes. When they spoke with a certain expression, the mobsters let go with 45s, which, however, merely have a stunning effect on the gent on the receiving end because of the lesser gravity.

On the other hand, the Martian death ray guns were not fatal to the toughs from Earth; anyone who can live through St. Valentine's Day in Chicago can live through anything. So it came out a dead heat.

Thereupon the boys from the Syndicate sat down and declared the Martians in for a fifty-fifty partnership, which means they actually gave them one per cent, which is generous at that.

Never having had the great advantages of a New Deal, the Martians are still backward and use gold as a means of exchange. With no Harvard bigdomes to tell them gold is a thing of the past, the yellow metal circulates there as freely and easily as we once kicked pennies around before they became extinct here.

The Mafistas quickly set the Martians right about the futility of gold. They eagerly turned it over to the Earthmen in exchange for green certificates with pretty pictures engraved thereon.

III

RACKETS VIA ROCKETS

Gold, platinum, diamonds and other precious stuff are as plentiful on Mars as hayfever is on Earth in August.

When the gangsters lamped the loot, their greedy eyes and greasy fingers twitched, and when a hood's eyes and fingers twitch, watch out; something is twitching.

The locals were completely honest. They were too dumb to be thieves. The natives were not acquisitive. Why should they be when gold was so common it had no value, and a neighbor's wife so ugly no one would covet her?

This was a desperate situation, indeed, until one of the boys from East St. Louis uttered the eternal truth: "There ain't no honest man who ain't a crook, and why should Mars be any different?"

The difficulty was finding the means and method of corruption. All the cash in Jake Guzik's strong box meant nothing to a race of characters whose brats made mudpies of gold dust.

The discovery came as an accident.

The first Earthman to be eliminated on Mars was a two-bit hood from North Clark Street who sold a five-cent Hershey bar with almonds to a Martian for a gold piece worth 94 bucks.

The man from Mars bit the candy bar. The hood bit the gold piece.

Then the Martian picked up a rock and beaned the lad from the Windy City. After which the Martian's eyes dilated and he let out a scream. Then he attacked the first Martian female who passed by. Never before had such a thing happened on Mars, and to say she was surprised is putting it lightly. Thereupon, half the female population ran after the berserk Martian.

When the organization heard about this, an investigation was ordered. That is how the crime trust found out that there is no sugar on Mars; that this was the first time it had ever been tasted by a Martian; that it acts on them like junk does on an Earthman.

They further discovered that the chief source of Martian diet is—believe it or not—poppy seed, hemp and coca leaf, and that the alkaloids thereof: opium, hasheesh and cocaine have not the slightest visible effect on them.

Poppies grow everywhere, huge russet poppies, ten times as large as those on Earth and 100 times as deadly. It is these poppies which have colored the planet red. Martians are strictly vegetarian: they bake, fry and stew these flowers and weeds and eat them raw with a goo made from fungus and called *szchmortz* which passes for a salad dressing.

Though the Martians were absolutely impervious to the narcotic qualities of the aforementioned flora, they got higher than Mars on small doses of sugar.

So the Mafia was in business. The Martians sniffed granulated sugar, which they called snow. They ate cube sugar, which they called "hard stuff", and they injected molasses syrup into their veins with hypos and called this "mainliners."

There was nothing they would not do for a pinch of sugar. Gold, platinum and diamonds, narcotics by the acre—these were to be had in generous exchange for sugar—which was selling on Earth at a nickel or so a pound wholesale.

The space ship went into shuttle service. A load of diamonds and dope coming back, a load of sugar and blondes going up. Blondes made Martians higher even than sugar, and brought larger and quicker returns.

This is a confidential tip to the South African diamond trust: ten space ship loads of precious stones are now being cut in a cellar on Bleecker Street in New York. The mob plans to retail them for \$25 a carat!

Though the gangsters are buying sugar at a few cents a pound here and selling it for its weight in rubies on Mars, a hood is always a hood. They've been cutting dope with sugar for years on Earth, so they didn't know how to do it any different on Mars. What to cut the sugar with on Mars? Simple. With heroin, of course, which is worthless there.

This is a brief rundown on the racket situation as it currently exists on our sister planet.

FAKED PASSPORTS: When the boys first landed they found only vague boundaries between the nations, and Martians could roam as they pleased. Maybe this is why they stayed close to home. Though anyway why should they travel? There was nothing to see.

The boys quickly took care of this. First, in order to make travel alluring, they brought 20 strippers from Calumet City and set them peeling just beyond the border lines.

Then they went to the chieftains and sold them a bill of goods (with a generous bribe of sugar) to close the borders. The next step was to corrupt the border guards, which was easy with Annie Oakleys to do the burlesque shows.

The selling price for faked passports fluctuates between a ton and three tons of platinum.

VICE: Until the arrival of the Earthmen, there were no illicit sexual relations on the planet. In fact, no Martian in his right mind would have relations with the native crop of females, and they in turn felt the same way about the males. Laws had to be passed requiring all able-bodied citizens to marry and propagate.

Thus, the first load of bims from South Akard Street in Dallas found eager customers. But these babes, who romanced anything in pants on earth, went on a stand-up strike when they saw and smelled the Martians. Especially smelled. They smelled worse than Texas yahoos just off a cow farm.

This proved embarrassing, to say the least, to the procurers. Considerable sums of money were invested in this human cargo, and the boys feared dire consequences from their shylocks, should they return empty-handed.

In our other Confidential essays we told you how the Mafia employs some of the best brains on Earth to direct and manage its far-flung properties, including high-priced attorneys, accountants, real-estate experts, engineers and scientists.

A hurried meeting of the Grand Council was called and held in a bungalow on the shores of one of Minneapolis' beautiful lakes. The decision reached there was to corner chlorophyll (which accounts in part for the delay in putting it on the market down here) and ship it to Mars to deodorize the populace there. After which the ladies of the evening got off their feet and went back to work.

GAMBLING: Until the arrival of the Mafia, gambling on Mars was confined to a simple game played with children's jacks. The loser had to relieve the winner of his wife.

The Mafia brought up some fine gambling equipment, including the layouts from the Colonial Inn in Florida, and the Beverly in New Orleans, both of which were closed, and taught the residents how to shoot craps and play the wheel, with the house putting up sugar against precious stones and metals. With such odds, it was not necessary to fake the games more than is customary on Earth.

IV

LITTLE NEW YORK CONFIDENTIAL

Despite what Earth-bound professors tell you about the Martian atmosphere, we know better. They weren't there.

It is a dogma that Mars has no oxygen. Baloney. While it is true that there is considerably less than on Earth in the surface atmosphere, the air underground, in caves, valleys and tunnels, has plenty to support life lavishly, though why Martians want to live after they look at each other we cannot tell you, even confidential.

For this reason Martian cities are built underground, and travel between them is carried on through a complicated system of subways predating the New York IRT line by several thousand centuries, though to the naked eye there is little difference between a Brooklyn express and a

Mars express, yet the latter were built before the Pyramids.

When the first load of Black Handers arrived, they naturally balked against living underground. It reminded them too much of the days before they went "legitimate" and were constantly on the lam and hiding out.

So the Mafia put the Martians to work building a town. There are no building materials on the planet, but the Martians are adept at making gold dust hold together with diamond rivets. The result of their effort—for which they were paid in peppermint sticks and lump sugar—is named Little New York, with hotels, nightclubs, bars, haberdashers, Turkish baths and horse rooms. Instead of air-conditioning, it had oxygen-conditioning. But the town had no police station.

There were no cops!

Finally, a meeting was held at which one punk asked another, "What the hell kind of town is it with no cops? Who we going to bribe?"

After some discussion they cut cards. One of the Bergen County boys drew the black ace. "What do I know about being a cop?" he squawked.

"You can take graft, can't you? You been shook down, ain't you?"

The boys also imported a couple of smart mouthpieces and a ship of blank habeas corpus forms, together with a judge who was the brother of one of the lawyers, so there was no need to build a jail in this model city.

The only ones who ever get arrested, anyway, are the Martians, and they soon discovered that the coppers from *Terra* would look the other way for a bucket full of gold.

Until the arrival of the Earthmen, the Martians were, as stated, peaceful, and even now crime is practically unknown among them. The chief problem, however, is to keep them in line on pay nights, when they go on sugar binges.

Chocolate bars are as common on Mars as saloons are on Broadway, and it is not unusual to see "gone" Martians getting heaved out of these bars right into the gutter. One nostalgic hood from Seattle said it reminded him of Skid Row there.

V

THE RED RED PLANET

The gangsters had not been on Mars long before they heard rumors about other outsiders who were supposed to have landed on the other side of *Mt. Sirehum*.

The boys got together in a cocktail lounge to talk this over, and they decided they weren't going to stand for any other mobs muscling in.

Thereupon, they despatched four torpedoes with Tommy guns in a big black limousine to see what was going.

We tell you this Confidential. What they found was a Communist apparatus sent to Mars from Soviet Russia.

This cell was so active that Commies had taken over almost half the planet before the arrival of the Mafia, with their domain extending from the *Deucalionis Region* all the way over to *Phaethontis* and down to *Titania*.

Furthermore, through propaganda and infiltration, there were Communist cells in every quarter of the planet, and many of the top officials of the four Martian governments were either secretly party members or openly in fronts.

The Communist battle cry was: "Men of Mars unite; you have nothing to lose but your wives."

Comes the revolution, they were told, and all Martians could remain bachelors. It is no wonder the Communists made such inroads. The planet became known as "The Red Red Planet."

In their confidential books about the cities of Earth, Lait and Mortimer explored the community



of interest between the organized underworld and the Soviet.

Communists are in favor of anything that causes civil disorder and unrest; gangsters have no conscience and will do business with anyone who pays.

On Earth, Russia floods the Western powers, and especially the United States, with narcotics, first to weaken them and provide easy prey, and second, for dollar exchange.

And on Earth, the Mafia, which is another international conspiracy like the Communists, sells the narcotics.

And so when the gangsters heard there were Communist cells on Mars, they quickly made a contact.



For most of the world's cheap sugar comes from Russia! The Mafia inroad on the American sugar market had already driven cane up more than 300 per cent. But the Russians were anxious, able and willing to provide all the beets they wanted at half the competitive price.

VI

THE HONEST HOODS

As we pointed out in previous works, the crime syndicate now owns so much money, its chief problem is to find ways in which to invest it.

As a result, the Mafia and its allies control thousands of legitimate enterprises ranging from hotel chains to railroads and from laundries to distilleries.

And so it was on Mars. With all the rackets cornered, the gangsters decided it was time to go into some straight businesses.

At the next get-together of the Grand Council, the following conversation was heard:

"What do these mopes need that they ain't getting?"

"A big fat hole in the head."

"Cut it out. This is serious."

"A hole in the head ain't serious?"

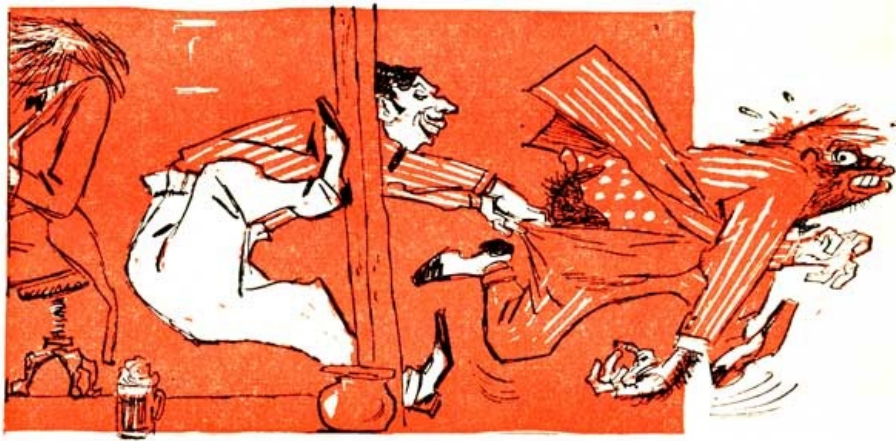
"There's no profit in them one-shot deals."

"It's the repeat business you make the dough on."

"Maybe you got something there. You can kill a jerk only once."

"But a jerk can have relatives."

"We're talking about legit stuff. All the rest has been taken care of."



"With the Martians I've seen, a bar of soap could be a big thing."

From this random suggestion, there sprang up a major interplanetary project. If the big soap companies are wondering where all that soap went a few years ago, we can tell them.

It went to Mars.

Soap caught on immediately. It was snapped up as fast as it arrived.

But several questions popped into the minds of the Mafia soap salesman.

Where was it all going? A Martian, in line for a bar in the evening, was back again the following morning for another one.

And why did the Martians stay just as dirty as ever?

The answer was, the Martians stayed as dirty as ever because they weren't using the soap to wash with. They were eating it!

It cured the hangover from sugar.

Another group cornered the undertaking business, adding a twist that made for more activity. They added a Department of Elimination. The men in charge of this end of the business circulate through the chocolate and soap bars, politely inquiring, "Who would you like killed?"

Struck with the novelty of the thing, quite a few Martians remember other Martians they are mad at. The going price is one hundred carats of diamonds to kill; which is cheap considering the average laborer earns 10,000 carats a week.

Then the boys from the more dignified end of the business drop in at the home of the victim and offer to bury him cheap. Two hundred and fifty carats gets a Martian planted in style.

Inasmuch as Martians live underground, burying is done in reverse, by tying a rocket to the tail of the deceased and shooting him out into the stratosphere.

VII

ONE UNIVERSE CONFIDENTIAL

Mars is presently no problem to Earth, and will not be until we have all its gold and the Martians begin asking us for loans.

Meanwhile, Lait and Mortimer say let the gangsters and communists have it. We don't want it.

We believe Earth would weaken itself if it dissipated its assets on foreign planets. Instead, we should heavily arm our own satellites, which will make us secure from attack by an alien planet or constellation.

At the same time, we should build an overwhelming force of space ships capable of delivering lethal blows to the outermost corners of the universe and return without refueling.

We have seen the futility of meddling in everyone's business on Earth. Let's not make that mistake in space. We are unalterably opposed to the UP (United Planets) and call upon the governments of Earth not to join that Inter-Solar System boondoggle.

We have enough trouble right here.

THE APPENDIX CONFIDENTIAL:

Blast-off: The equivalent of the take-off of Terran aviation. Space ships blast-off into space. Not to be confused with the report of a sawed-off shot gun.

Blasting pit: Place from which a space ship blasts off. Guarded area where the intense heat from the jets melts the ground. Also used for cock-fights.

Spacemen: Those who man the space ships. See any comic strip.

Hairoscope: A very sensitive instrument for space navigation. The sighting plate thereon is centered around two crossed hairs. Because of the vastness of space, very fine hairs are used. These hairs are obtained from the Glomph-Frog, found only in the heart of the dense Venusian swamps. The hairoscope is a must in space navigation. Then how did they get to Venus to get the hair from the Glomph-Frog? Read Venus Confidential.

Multiplanetary agitation: The inter-spacial methods by which the Russians compete for the minds of the Neptunians and the Plutonians and the Gowaniuns.

Space suit: The clothing worn by those who go into space. The men are put into modernistic diving suits. The dames wear bras and panties.

Grav-plates: A form of magnetic shoe worn by spacemen while standing on the outer hull of a space ship halfway to Mars. Why a spaceman wants to stand on the outer hull of a ship halfway to Mars is not clear. Possibly to win a bet.

Space platform: A man-made satellite rotating around Earth between here and the Moon. Scientists say this is a necessary first step to interplanetary travel. Mars Confidential proves the fallacy of this theory.

Space Academy: A college where young men are trained to be spacemen. The student body consists mainly of cadets who served apprenticeships as elevator jockeys.

Asteroids: Tiny worlds floating around in space, put there no doubt to annoy unwary space ships.

Extrapolation: The process by which a science-fiction writer takes an established scientific fact and builds thereon a story that couldn't happen in a million years, but maybe 2,000,000.

Science fiction: A genre of escape literature which takes the reader to far-away planets—and usually neglects to bring him back.

S.F.: An abbreviation for science fiction.

Bem: A word derived by using the first letters of the three words: Bug Eyed Monster. Bems are ghastly looking creatures in general. In science-fiction yarns written by Terrans, bems are natives of Mars. In science-fiction yarns written by Martians, bems are natives of Terra.

The pile: The source from which power is derived to carry men to the stars. Optional on the more expensive space ships, at extra cost.

Atom blaster: A gun carried by spacemen which will melt people down to a cinder. A .45 would do just as well, but then there's the Sullivan Act.

Orbit: The path of any heavenly body. The bodies are held in these orbits by natural laws the Republicans are thinking of repealing.

Nova: The explosive stage into which planets may pass. According to the finest scientific thinking, a planet will either nova, or it won't.

Galaxy: A term used to confuse people who have always called it The Milky Way.

Sun spots: Vast electrical storms on the sun which interfere with radio reception, said interference being advantageous during political campaigns.

Atomic cannons: Things that go zap.

Audio screen: Television without Milton Berle or wrestling.

Disintegrating ray: Something you can't see that turns something you can see into something you can't see.

Geiger counter: Something used to count Geigers. *Interstellar space*: Too much nothing at all, filled with rockets, flying saucers, advanced civilizations, and discarded copies of *Amazing Stories*.

Mars: A candy bar.

Pluto: A kind of water.

Ray guns: Small things that go zap.

Time machine: A machine that carries you back to yesterday and into next year. Also, an alarm clock.

Time warp: The hole in time the time machine goes through to reach another time. A hole in nothing.

Terra: Another name for Earth. It comes from *terra firma* or something like that.

Hyperdrive: The motor that is used to drive a space ship faster than the speed of light. Invented by science-fiction writers but not yet patented.

Ether: The upper reaches of space and whatever fills them. Also, an anaesthetic.

Luna: Another name for the Moon. Formerly a park in Coney Island.

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