

# "Labyrinths of Mars"

## Movie Pitch:

First Men In The Moon meets Red Planet

**Tagline:** "Those aren't underground canals, they're... tunnels."

## Background/Premise:

The European Space Agency's Mars Express Orbiter uncovers some interesting features beneath the planet's surface when it finally begins its radar scan for subsurface water. Images sent back to Earth show that many feet below ground there is a network of what appear to be tunnels, criss-crossing the planet and extending virtually everywhere. In countless places the tunnels converge at a central point, creating what look for all the world like tiny conurbations -- subterranean hamlets.

Suddenly there's a mad scramble to get humans to Mars and examine the tunnels in person.

Initially there is a lack of co-ordination. The USA urges collaboration for greatest safety, China elects to go it alone after conflicts over North Korea's nuclear program, and after some disparaging words about the European Space Agency and its lack of experience in even sending humans into orbit, the Europeans forge an alliance with the Russians (who are not happy with the Americans' failure to acknowledge the importance of their contribution to the survival of the International Space Station after the shuttle tragedy) to form a third expedition.

Once the three groups are in space and on the way however, the importance of and the need for collaboration becomes self-evident as first the Chinese and then the European ventures fall foul of unexpected problems, the survivors eventually being rescued by the Americans but in the process jeopardizing the survival of that mission too. There is barely enough oxygen, food and water to go around.

When finally the combined teams arrive at the surface of Mars, the magnitude of the problem becomes evident. Their tools are inadequate to drill down deep enough through the severe permafrost and one by one the expedition members begin to succumb to the harsh, unforgiving environment.

A small group still manages to cling to life as they try to locate a simpler way down below the surface. Improved, higher resolution maps from the Orbiter hint that there may be a channel to the planet's surface. The group sets off to locate it. If they're going to die on Mars, they may as well be doing something constructive.

They do indeed find an opening in the form of a series of linked subterranean caves. As they slowly descend they lose regular radio contact but the temperature rises and the levels of oxygen appear to increase the farther they go. There's also evidence of liquid water, and it appears to be fresh and drinkable.

The most stunning discovery is made as they finally make it through to the network of tunnels. There are tracks and evidence of machinery, long since abandoned. And there is reason to want to send further missions to Mars...

## Possible characters:

TBD

## Possible candidates:

TBD

## Possible locations:

Cooper Pedy for external shots

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