Society has forever changed since the adoption of computers and the military. It had been 26 days four hours and 17 minutes since my ship crash landed on the unforgiving surface of Mars. I was alone.

I had seen the movies before. The romance of the red planet called to me before I had even dreamed of being an astronaut for NASA. All those years ago I never imagined that I would be walking, maybe even crawling, on the hot deserted planet. When NASA announced their new program to reach the strange planet I could not resist but to sign up immediately. The ad called for an 18-25 year old male in good health and sound mind. Now I was not so sure of the sound mind bit but I fit the bill for all other requirements. So with my trusty cyber-dog Pal by my side I set out to join the cause.

I arrived at the air base with nothing but Pal and my worn down solar-protecting earth suit. There is a sergeant, maybe a lieutenant, screaming in my face right now so allow me to introduce myself. My parents were the lead scientists that designed the suits that were now mandated world-wide. They had dreams of me being a scientist or a doctor or some other respectable profession. I had it all because they had it all, but I did not want to be a doctor-scientist-lawyer and I did not want to be living under their umbrella. So I left and now I find myself sitting in this briefing before our trip to Mars. “YOU MAGGOTS WILL BE AIRBORNE IN 0700 HOURS SO YOU BETTER BE READY” We should get back to the action.

After what I’m sure was a riveting compressed training session with Lieutenant yells-too-loud, me and my three fellow astronauts were strapped in and ready for launch. The shuttle was a standard N340-s model that NASA had been rolling out for years with a few extra attachments
on board that I am sure had something to do with science. I didn't care, I just wanted my space suit carbon fiber boots to feel the dusty dessert of the red planet.

T-Minus 5-4-3-2-1- Lift off We were reaching breakneck speeds as the earth faded away along with everything I had ever seen and everyone I had ever said “Hello” to. The trip was supposed to take 2 hours and 38 minutes and I was counting down the seconds. All of the sudden I heard the Lieutenant squawk over the radio system “If y’all will look out your left hand window there she is, Mars.” I was stunned, in awe, I almost couldn't believe it, a whole sentence and not one piece of profanity or degrading comment on my moral character! “Enjoy the view scumbags” he said as though he could tell what I was thinking. Mars was a beautiful planet. I preferred it much over my ow-BEEP BEEP BEEP. All of the sudden sirens were going off, people were talking frantically over the radio, and I was caught in a moment of fright. Before I knew what was going on, the shuttle whirled out of control and soon made a nosedive toward Mars head on. The sides of the shuttle grew red with the flames that were shooting off of it. The entire cabin was spinning as we heard what would be the final radio correspondence from the Lieutenant “BRACE MAGGOTS!”

I woke up in a haze with only Pal by my side administering a drug that I can only hope will numb the pain I was feeling everywhere. It was times like these I was happy to have a partner in Pal who could also do a number of medicinal and survival functions. He barked at the space shuttle as though to get my attention. As a stumbled over the hill to see the wreckage I pulled closer to the shuttle to look for any survivors. As I got closer I noticed the writing on what I had thought to be scientific equipment. It read Payload - 10 tons. Then it dawned on me we were not on a scientific exploratory mission, we were sent there to kill any aliens we happen to find.

My mind raced in a million different directions as I retraced my training and realized that there was much more material on “Dealing with locals” then biology. I picked up one of the
weapons from the shuttle and mounted it over my shoulder. With no other survivors, a busted shuttle, and a limited supply of oxygen the only way off the planet would be through a war.

Pal and I walked for what felt like 50 miles before we happened upon a local tribe of alien Marsmen. They did not look to different from us. They spoke a language that resembled a mix of Taiwanese and Mandarin. They traveled in groups and fed upon the various proteins under the rich soil of the planet. Pal let out an ill-timed bark and the jig was up. The entire tribe looked over to see me and the cyber-dog like deer in head lights. Pal motioned to a shuttle they had near their base that could be used to return back to earth if we could fight our way out of this mess. With one heave I swung the massive gun to the front of me and took aim with the heads-up-display. The aiming mechanism analyzed the creatures it was aiming at and determined they were an unfriendly tribe. With a pull of the trigger I stopped the quickly-approaching tribe in their tracks. With a neighboring tribe hearing the commotion I knew I only had a limited amount of time before they too were upon us. I ran as fast as I could to the shuttle and climbed on board with Pal traveling not far behind. With a flip of a switch and a few coordinate adjustments the engine was roaring and the shuttle lifted off the ground as the other tribe tried their best to bring it back down. I was earth bound.