

# Red, red, red!

*An adventure for Eclipse Phase, written by Anders Sandberg*



*I don't understand about  
Diamonds and why men buy them  
What's so impressive about a diamond  
Except the mining*

*And it's dangerous work  
Trying to get to you too  
And I think if I didn't have to  
Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill*

*Kill myself doing it  
Maybe I wouldn't listen so much to you*

*There's solace a bit for submitting  
To the fitfully cryptically true  
What's happened has happened  
What's coming is already on its way  
With a role for me to play*

*Fiona Apple: Red Red red*

## **Background and synopsis**

*Ironic, isn't it? The mind of man, wherever you encounter it — Earth or Mars — the highest attainments of human intellect, always diverted to self-destruction.*

*Dr. Carl Eckstrom (John Emery), Rocketship X-M (1950)*

A few days ago, a Martian Ranger raid against a smuggler hideout in the barrens north of Olympus was a bust: the smugglers had fled with most of the goods, leaving only junk behind. A zealous ranger got his helper AI to index the remains and put them in the ranger evidence server. There they would likely have languished forever. Except that a secret Firewall check turned up a small item that got alarm bells ringing: a ceramic Venturi nozzle partially transformed by nanomachines in complex patterns. The kind of pattern sometimes seen in TITAN-related nanoswarm infections in the White Zone. And on one side it had a serial number that a diligent AI search could track to Ebb 15, a ruined settlement inside the Zone.

A remote Firewall organiser decided it would be a good idea to have somebody take a closer look at the settlement. Hence the PCs get enrolled.

The 'Mind the WMDs' scenario from the quickstart rules may have played out in the recent past and made Firewall a bit more concerned about anyone digging in the Zone, even if the players have not played it. If they have, then they are now the designated "on site experts" on this kind of stuff and likely to be asked to help.

The real situation is that the Red Devils, a group of Martian separatists, have begun to dig up dangerously infected equipment in the Zone and putting pieces of it inside cargo headed for major hypercorp industries and terraforming operations. If the right nanotech ends up inside the recycling machinery it will quickly infect it and cause an incident. Even if the effect is minor, the facility will shut down and an expensive decontamination process will have to be done, costing time, money and nerves. The risk of spreading something truly nasty or have a major industrial facility taken over by something superintelligent is viewed as an acceptable risk.

While the PCs are trying to put together the pieces and trace the separatists, the Consortium is starting to do the same. They will come in with far more force – something the Red Devils are *planning* on. Because they plan on starting a revolution. The PCs will be right in the crossfire, possibly able to prevent – or help – a violent uprising of the more extreme wing of the Barsoomians.

## **Themes**

*The revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it fall.*

*Che Guevara*

**Loyalty and trust** – or rather their absence and perversion. In the undergrowth of Martian society betrayal and mistrust is the default, and a cause of much misery. Conversely, the loyalty members of the Red Devils (and law enforcement) feel for their organization and cause might be equally misplaced: they can be used as tools for other agendas. The PCs cannot trust the people they meet, and mixed loyalties might lead to betrayals.

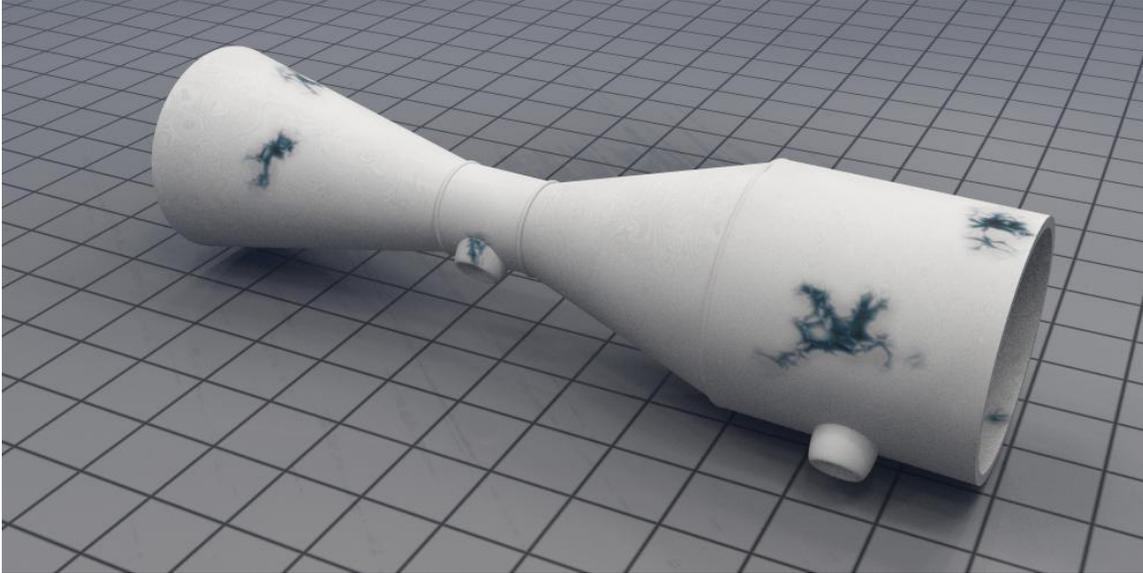
For added contrast, the GM might want to include a few cases of actually loyal or trustworthy NPCs – the nomad family that does hang together, the ranger that actually does their job of upholding the law, maybe even a reliable trader. Paranoia and scheming will make the PCs fail to realize this until it is too late - or they will find themselves cynically exploiting them.

Another theme is **destruction**. Creative destruction, destruction for destruction's sake, accidental destruction and sheer vandalism. Mars is a scarred planet, full of ruins and people who can ill afford to lose more resources. But there are certain things that *should* be destroyed too. How much of the rebellion is an honest attempt at turning things around, and how much is just wanton destruction? In descriptions, play up the existence of craters, graffiti, badly repaired damage, weapons, recycling and the harshness of the landscape. Nothing lasts.

## **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to Håkan Andersson and Miguel Hånberg-Alonzo for causing/forcing the adventure to be written and playtesting it (and Miguel for creating the memorable Gao). Jay Dugger's various discussions about his campaign Martian Autumn on the Eclipse Phase forum also contributed inspiration. Thanks!

## **Your mission, should you choose to accept it...**



The PCs are contacted the usual way by Firewall, given a mission brief and a contact in Olympus.

*“Gentlebeings, we have a situation in the Olympus region you might want to investigate.*

*Four days ago, the Martian Rangers did a raid against a smuggler hideout in Běi-pō Barren, 70 kilometers north of Olympus. It was a bust: the smugglers had long since fled with most of the goods, leaving only junk behind. A zealous ranger got his helper AI to index the remains and put them in the ranger evidence server. There they would likely have languished forever. Except that a secret check from our side (it sometimes pays to infiltrate networks like this) turned up a small item that got alarm bells ringing: a ceramic venturi nozzle partially transformed by nanomachines in complex patterns. The kind of pattern sometimes seen in TITAN-related nanomachine infections in the White Zone. And on one side it had a serial number that a search could track to Ebb 15, a ruined settlement inside the Zone.*

*Smugglers certainly bring artefacts out of the Zone all the time, but they usually know to stay well away from nanotransformed objects. There are more than enough valuable possessions and equipment around, and they don't like to risk contamination more than necessary. This nozzle doesn't fit the pattern. We have done some probability mapping and don't like what we are seeing: we think somebody is digging in Ebb 15, bringing back dangerous objects.*

*Your mission is to check what is going on; we think the best place to start is Ebb 15. If there is somebody stupid enough to bring hot objects out of the Zone, make them stop.”*

The mission brief has a bundle of files attached, including the evidence files and some very uncertain probability maps. The probability maps give a 34% chance that it is a naïve or stupid smuggler or smugglers, 24% chance that there is a deliberate attempt to spread infection, 10% chance that this is an anti-smuggling or anti-Barsoomian psyops orchestrated by Consortium or Tharsis League intelligence, 7% chance that there is an active TITAN-related system interacting

with humans, 6% chance that it is a classification mistake, 4% chance that it is an anti-Firewall trap, 3% chance that it is a secret corporate investigation pretending to be smuggling, and so on.



## Olympus

*O latest born and loveliest vision far  
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy.  
John Keats, Ode to Psyche*

### Untrustworthy contact: Remiel Ælfgar

The local Firewall contact in Olympus is Remiel Ælfgar. A (very) mildly successful fixer, his day job seems to be to coordinate various activities on the grey markets, network the various informal rep networks, and generally buy and sell small stuff. People deeper in the know may also know he is partially in hock to various local political groups; he is not so much a political player as a useful pawn for various branches of the Movement, local crime and local business to use as a go-between. Depending on how you see it, this is a great cover for a Firewall agent or a good reason not to trust him with any important information.

He likes to meet Firewall contacts at a café at the Olympus Farmer's Market, a somewhat run-down mall that occasionally carries some good natural food. His immense appetite goes well together with the gourmet food, and contributes to his money shortages and obese morph. Remiel can help sentinels get equipment and local guides; despite his personal idiosyncrasies he does know people worth knowing in the run-down city.

*"Personally I don't see what has the others riled up about it. Smugglers bring out hot stuff from the Zone all the time. I am more worried about the things that crawl out from it on their own. By the way, try the cannelloni here, it is to die for. Literally, the filling will clog up your arteries instantly. Very fun!"*

**Motivations:** +Hedonism, +Information, -Robots

**Relevant skills and traits:** Networking, Interest: food, Interest: Martian politics, Kinesics, Debts (various), Unattractive

**Roleplaying tips:** Talk. Talk. Talk. You are the most interesting raconteur you have ever met.

If the characters are not directly ready for going into the Zone or travelling around, he will suggest Gao Udoh, a contact who is a skilled tracker/smuggler with some criminal connections. The fact that Gao is a seriously bad egg either has escaped Remiel or is part of his plotting. (If Gao is not necessary he might show up later as an independent NPC – especially if the GM wants to add some chaos to the plot)

### Untrustworthy guide: Gao Udoh

Gao is a fine example of how twisted a young man can become by growing up during the Fall. Exactly what went wrong when is anybody's guess, but the result is paranoid sociopath async who thinks the best way of dealing with people in his power is to dominate them completely. He has a decent reputation as a tracker, smuggler and soultrader, but most people who get to know him tend to stay well away from him and his hobbies – another reason he is a bit of a loner. He prefers the company of his Muse/lover Babydoll, dog Snapper and various bots: they are the only ones he trust.

Most of the time Gao is a quiet survivalist, doing his job like any other gruff Martian. But under the surface he dreams of the day when he will dominate all of society. Unfortunately the Empress is foiling his plans. She is using drugs and medicines as her tools of domination: Gao is convinced that most commercial medicines have a secret payload of mental nanotechnology, making its users servants of Her. There is also the Evil resting under Orcus Patera in the far reaches of the Zone - sometimes he can hear It. Gao is lying low, biding his time for when he will take his rightful place.

As a guide to the Zone he is pretty competent, except for occasional lapses into strangeness. And woe to anybody finding themselves situation where they are dependent upon him.

*"That bottle? It was looking at me. Come now."*

**Background:** Martian

**Faction:** Criminal

**Morph:** Premium Ruster

**Actual age:** 18

**Motivations:** +Power, +Dominance, +Art

COG: 15, COO: 10, INT: 15, REF: 10, SAV: 15, SOM: 15, WIL: 25

TT: 9, LUC 50, IR 100, WT: 7, DUR: 35, DR: 53

MOX: 1, INIT 5, SPD: 1, DB: 1

**Skills:** Blades 50, Climbing 50, Control 80, Fray 50, Freerunning 45, Hardware: Groundcraft 45, Hardware: Industrial 45, Hardware: Robotics 55, Infiltration 40, Infosec 40, Interfacing 40, Intimidation 60, Investigation 40, Kinesics 50, Kinetic Weapons 60, Language: Mandarin 85, Medicine: Biosculpting 25, Networking: Barsoomians 40, Networking: Criminals 65, Networking: Hypercorps 35, Perception 60, Pilot: Groundcraft 40, Profession: Scrounger 60, Psi Assault: 50, Programming 50, Psi Assault 80, Scrounging 60, Sense 40

**Ego traits:** Math Wiz (Level 1), Psi (Level 2), Psi chameleon (Level 1), Psi defense (level 2), Zoosemiotics (Level 1), Social Stigma weirdo (Level 1)

**Mental disorders:** Paranoid Schizophrenia (hallucinations, delusions, megalomania), Sociopathy

**Enhancements:** Direction Sense, Enhanced Smell, Bioweave Armor (light), Drug glands: Hither, Eelware, Enhanced Pheromones, Grip Pads

**Sleights:** Ambience Sense, Grok, Pattern Recognition, Unconscious Lead, Alienation, Psychic Stab

**Weapons:** Wasp Knife, Diamond Axe

**Equipment (mainly in his vehicle the "Zhang Xianzhong"):** Miniature Radio Farcaster, Chameleon Cloak, (4x) Cuffband, Prisoner Mask, White Noise Machine, Smart Vac Clothing, Specs, Tools (kit), Healing Vat, Nanodetectors, Maker (low), Disassembly Tools, (5x) Specimen Container, Backup Insurance (moderate), Facial/Image Recognition (particularly tuned to detect any of his special enemies), Standard Muse, Electronic Rope, Nanobandage, Repair Spray, Breather w/ extra power, Basic Cold Weather Gear, (2x) Pressure Tent (2 person), Mars Buggy,

Automech, (3x) Creepy, Guardian Angel, Wasp Knife, Diamond Axe, (200x) RAP Pistol Rounds, (200x) Zap Pistol Rounds, Plasmaburst, Thermobaric. Various odd robotic parts and other junk.

His dog Snapper might or might not be a smart animal. But it seems to behave like it, perhaps due to his dominant influence.

Beside the Ruster morph he also owns a Pleasure Pod. This is normally stowed in his vehicle, maneuvered by his Muse. The Pod is pretty impressive (Striking Looks 2) and robust (Rapid Healer) but also suffers from Addiction: Hither (Level 2), Low pain tolerance (level 1), and Psi vulnerability (level 1). The truly disturbing thing is the sense-only ghostrider module, which allows sleeving somebody into the pod without any control over it.

**Muse Babygirl:** special skills Profession: Lab Technician 40, Interest: Underground XP 40, Language: English 40

**Roleplaying tips:** You are the One. Normal rules don't apply to you. But since the Empress and the Evil are out there you have to be subtle, oh so subtle. So you quietly play your part while building up your power base: be quiet, show others that you know what you are doing, don't allow them to mess with your stuff or pry into your affairs. Try to act normal.

## The Ranger Raid

Conscientious sentinels will check the Martian Ranger documents from the raid. The raid was looking for Koumei Gigante, a local smuggler with links to the Arsia Mons smugglers. A tip had pointed out a location in the Běi-pō Barren, a rocky part of the northern slopes of Mons Olympus as Koumei's secret meeting spot with some buyers of illegal fabbers. When the Rangers swept down on the site they found only a few abandoned storage containers: they were days too late.

The inventory files suggest that there had been fabbing-related equipment in at least one container. The nozzle was in a small junk pile consisting of several nanofilters, a few UnRealPaper™ boxes, a gun subsystem likely printed as a test, and a canister of spoiled feedstock. There were no remaining vehicle tracks and the surrounding area looked clean.

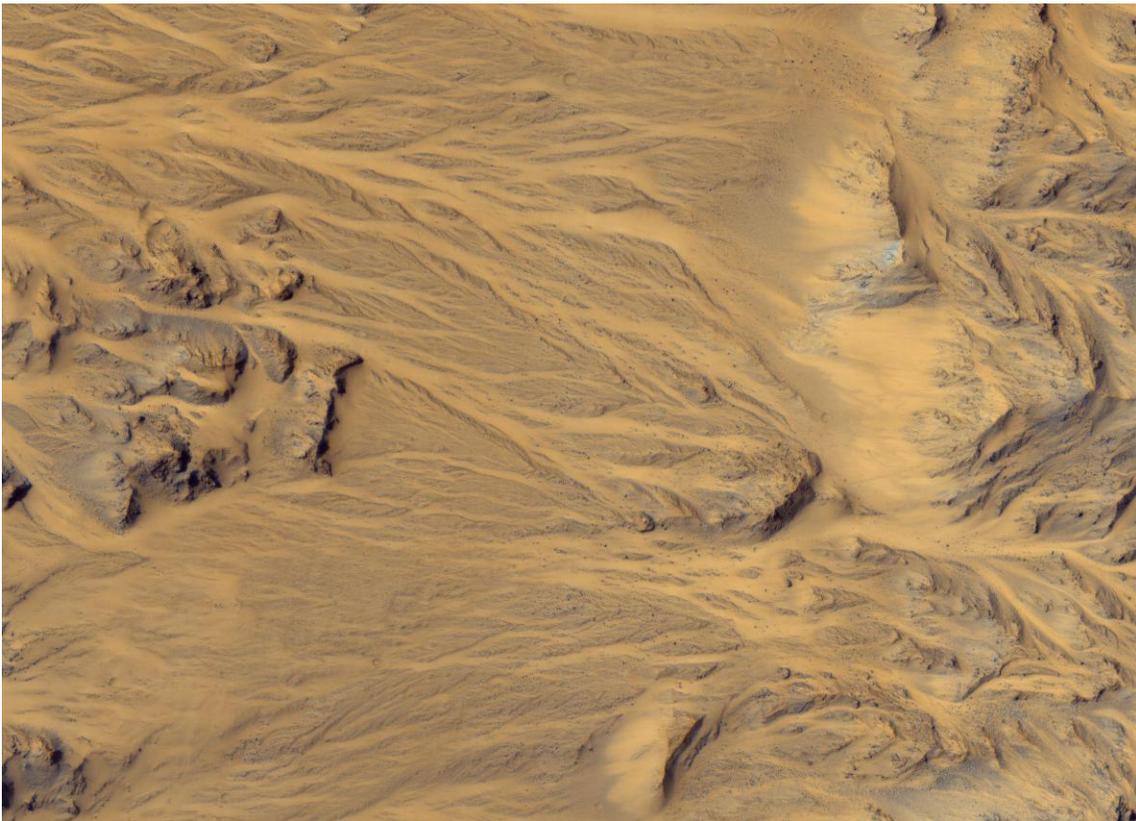
Sentinels with good connections might be able to try to get satellite or orbital elevator imagery of the site. It turns out that the meeting likely happened during the night during a period of northeasterly winds – sensors were mildly blinded by high altitude dust. However, such diligent and paranoid agents will be rewarded if they carefully study the before and after images: there is a spot a few kilometers away from the containers where it looks like something has changed.

Visiting the spot will reveal a burned and partially melted area of rock. A bit of forensics (or Demolitions) will suggest that somebody has used superthermite charges to incinerate a few objects. A bit of analysis of the remnants will suggest that they were something made largely of metal and carbon composites, one perhaps desk sized and several other smaller objects. A desktop cornucopia machine and a few fabbers fit the bill perfectly.

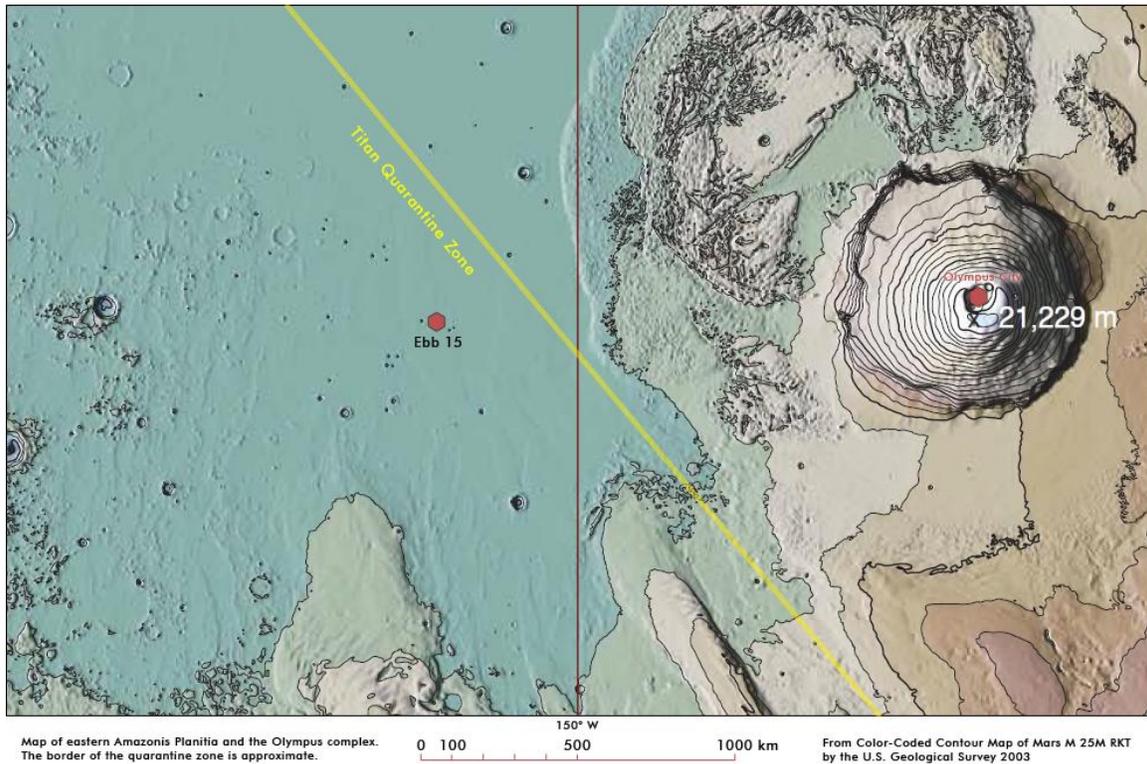
Someone investigating the sand near the meeting spot and the burned spot using nanoscopic vision and actually looking for something on the nanoscale has a chance of discovering a few

unusual artificial silica nanoparticles. They don't have any known function and doesn't fit anything in the literature – completely inert, very fine, with a complex structure. The closest thing is scaffolding debris from certain precision nanofabrication processes. Somebody asking around on the fringe networks of Mars (requires weird skills or backgrounds like Networking: Sufi, Interest: Conspiracy or Interest: Folk Nanomedicine) might find a few claims that lead them in the direction of Dr Linda's wild claims that the right kind of nanoparticles can control TITANs.

What actually happened was that the Red Devils wanted to test some of their infected objects to see how effective they were at causing outbreaks. They bought the stock of fabbers from Koumei Gigante, who was anyway planning to clear out since he knew the Rangers were on to him. Then they moved out of the way and tested their samples by recycling them and observing how well they infected the hardware. Finally they incinerated the whole site to avoid leaving too many traces and telltale infections. The particles are the protective nanoparticles of Dr Linda, intended to ward off TITAN systems. Koumei is currently around Noctis-Qianjiao laying low and enjoying his profit; someone finding him (hard) will get a straight lead to the Red Devils.



## Getting to Ebb 15



Ebb 15 is as the name hints another of the unlucky Ebb series of settlements in Amazonis Planitia. It was never intended as anything but a local coordination and repair center for the terraforming devices preparing the surrounding flat plains for one day becoming a seabed. Records from the Fall suggests that the machinery was taken over by something, which used it to breach the dome and kill all inhabitants. A run-of-the-mill tragedy.

A trip by buggy takes about two days. Flying would be much faster, but also harder to hide: even if the traffic control chips are jammed, there are enough nervous satellite systems watching to take notice.

The first part of the trip is a straightforward drive 300 km straight west along the “sunset boulevard highway” down along the gentle Olympian slope, past the impressive western cliffs of Olympus Rupes showing the lowlands beyond (don’t miss the printburgers at Overlook Motel!), and then 700 km further along the M5. It is down beyond the hills of Lycus Sulci where things become tricky. This is where the road leads into the Zone, and this is also where the Rangers have sensibly set up a few remote drones to catch thrill-seekers, smugglers and idiots who want to drive out there. Smart agents (or guides) will detour much earlier, sneak around whatever patrols are out, and get into the Zone further south. Now it is just 400 km left.

As an option to help the players and do some foreshadowing, the ranger patrols might be called away. The PCs hear a report on the emergency mesh channels that there has been an outbreak at the Shanpo 3 Terraforming Complex: all rangers and other emergency response crews in sector Olympus West 6 are asked to help evacuation and containment. Over the next few hours the panic abates a bit, but it is clear that the STC is out of commission for a long while.

## **In the Zone**

The landscape is extremely flat, with sparse craters tens of meters to a few hundred meters across. There are sinuous channels and ridges mostly visible from the air, largely buried in sandy sediment and occasional ancient lava flows. There is remarkably little to see... and nowhere to hide.

If it gets windy dust storms can provide cover, but will of course also make travel harder, get abrasive dust into everything and add just enough static charge to surfaces to make them annoyingly clingy. Plus, now things can sneak up to you.

Much of this area is completely safe, but there could be nasty TITAN surprises hidden under the sand waiting for something to latch on to. People camping better have a perimeter defence, or they might wake up with one or more group members lacking their heads thank to head-hunter drones. During gametesting one PC lost his smart guard dog this way.

About 5 and 10 kilometres before the settlement there are two small escarpments rising a few tens of meters. Ebb 15 is located next to a kilometre-sized crater, slightly raised above the landscape. A few smaller craters pockmark the surrounding plains.

## **Meet the neighbours**

There are TITAN devices near Ebb 15. In fact, the place has more than usual of them. Beside the head-hunters there are two other kinds that might be a problem.

### **Lines**

Lines look exactly like that: a gossamer thin golden thread stretched across the landscape, hundreds of meters long. They are hard to see unless the sunlight glints from them (-20 to Perception in the day, -40 or more in darkness). When something crosses the line it snaps together with surprising force and moves in a complex pattern. Being monofilament-sharp, this is very bad news. Afterwards it untangles itself and returns to line mode.

Treat a line as an attack by something like a monowire garrotte, but with damage 4d10 and AP - 10. If the armour soaks up the damage, then the line has likely tangled with the vehicle/armor and now gives -10 to handling or other movement related-tasks. It also silently signals its position to other TITAN machines that will come to investigate.

### **Sandcrawlers**

Sandcrawlers look like 3 meter long snakes or worms, moving beneath the surface of the desert. They have overlapping black diamond scales and a conical head that can expand into a nasty three-sided "jaw" filled with fractal teeth. They are quite deadly against individual transhumans, but their greatest utility is to impair transport. They hide in the path of a vehicle, and then strike its undercarriage as it passes over, stopping it. Often they come in small groups, one or two stopping the vehicle, the rest targeting its passengers when they step out.

COG: 15, COO: 30, INT: 15, REF: 20, SAV: 5, SOM: 25, WIL: 15, MOX: -

INIT: 100, SPT 1, DUR 50, WT 6

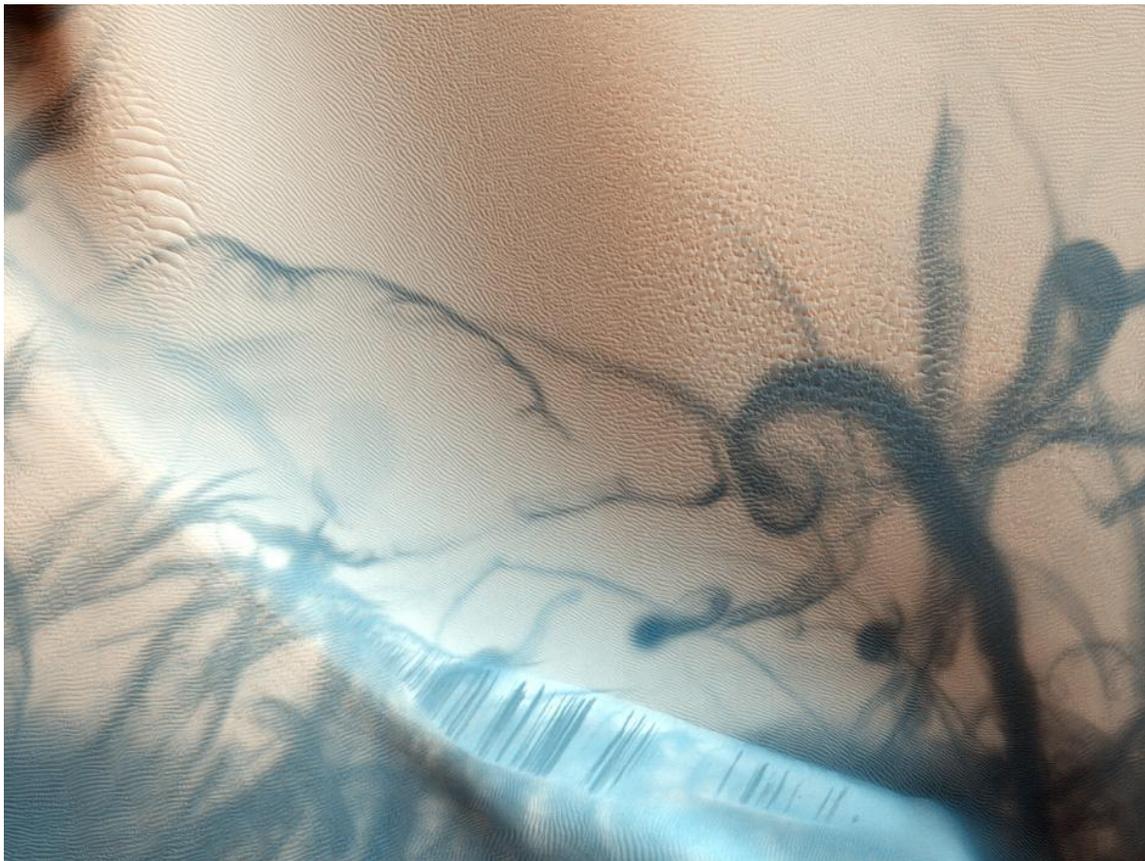
Mobility: Snake (5/25)

Skills: Fray 60, Infiltration 40, Perception 50 [sound], Unarmed combat 60 [bite]

Armour: 20/20

Enhanced Hearing, Magnetic system (+30 to hold onto vehicles), Anti-glare (it is blind except in the t-band), T-ray emitter

“Bite attacks” do 2d10 kinetic damage but also functions as subdual attacks: if successful with MoS greater than 30 the sandcrawler has immobilized the target (see p. 204). For transhumans the sandcrawler can use subsequent bite actions to drag them underground where the sand will provide a +30 bonus to the crawler for each drag action.



## At Ebb 15



The ruins of Ebb 15 consist of an outer circle of the broken dome and piles of wreckage, and a cluster of smaller buildings forming an inner circle. Over the years wind has blown plenty of sand into the breaches, burying much of the ruins. The architectural style is a mainly repeated utilitarian prefab modules, covered with the scars of nanoattacks and erosion. Everything looks blotchy in infrared, t-rays or UV due to now dead nanoinfections. The place doesn't *look* actively sinister, but bad things have happened here.

Inside the dome there are tracks of at least one big Martian rover – someone has been here recently (a successful investigation will also find similar, older tracks: they have been here at least twice). Measuring the tracks can give a way of identifying the rover make. Someone succeeding in a forensic analysis will find that they are from a Draffan 660G track, a somewhat old-fashioned but high-end smart track system mainly used for Gonow Paradise rovers.

A few smartpaint flakes on some debris that scratched against the rover will confirm this, if anybody looks *carefully* for them. Nanodot repair information will tell them that it was a red-colored Gonow Paradise made in AF 4 with serial number 21380711418. Somebody sifting through the dust looking for nanoparticles will also find the unusual silica nanoparticles (together with plenty of normal Zone spores and nanoindustrial pollution – actually telling that they are something different requires some expertise).

The surface level and buildings of the dome are empty, except for depressing signs of a desperate last stand near the central building – marks of weapon fire, decapitated skeletons of all ages, a bunch of synthmorphs that appear to have exploded from the inside with colorful plastic

growths. There is a notable lack of certain materials, as if something had scoured the settlement for them. On the other hand various junk lie in neat piles: a room might contain a collection of perfectly folded clothing (despite the blood and holes), the next room parts from robots and the next pieces of cable laid out along a Hilbert curve. One room might contain a neat grid of cortical stacks – welded to the floor and unusable.

One brave way of getting more data is to find active TITAN devices, hack them and try to get surveillance footage. That might actually work – but it is hard, has a decent chance of infecting the hacker with something nasty, and could (if the device can raise a silent alarm) attract more dangerous devices. If it works, then some fragmentary footage of the Red Devil expedition will be revealed, showing both the vehicles and people loading some sort of cargo picked up from below.

Visitors who are incautious about protecting themselves – going in bare-skinned rusters or alpiners, messing with old bodies etc. – feel free to infect them or their equipment with some interesting nanovirus like melder or petrifier. Ebb 15 is dangerously contaminated.

## Going down?

Someone calling up old maps of the settlement (downloaded beforehand, since there is no mesh here – you did remember to pack them, right?) would notice that there are significant underground spaces used for workshops and storage of terraforming equipment. Their side entrances are now all covered by thick sand or piles of dome debris, but there are several lifts from the interior down to them. This is also where the recent visitors appear to have gone: there are tracks leading to one of the heavy cargo elevator shafts.

The elevator seems to be gone, but it is possible to climb down using ropes or the side ladders. While a climb in Martian gravity isn't too hard, there is a nasty surprise at the lower levels: long blades of diamond growing out of the walls and ceiling of the elevator parked at the deepest level. They are very sharp, good at cutting ropes and bad to fall on. The body of a synthmorph at the bottom of the shaft, neatly impaled on a blade gives ample evidence.

The shaft is 30 meters deep, giving 3d10+22 damage for falling all the way. But the diamond blades add 2d10+2 damage (as a monofilament sword, AP -4). Somebody rappelling down must make an extra Climb roll to avoid being cut by one of them.

The synthmorph (an Elysium Peripherals Wu-7 standard Martian synthmorph) belonged to one of the visitors, but one of its comrades retrieved the cortical stack. While the morph looks salvageable, it contains enough nanospores to give somebody repairing it and powering it up a very nasty surprise (see below). It is however easy to get serial number and other identifying data from it, which will help track down whoever was here.

## Lurking in the dark



The lower levels are largely hallways and warehouses, dark, mostly empty and dead. However, they are not entirely silent. There is a strange vibration coming from somewhere.

A few storage rooms contain junk strongly affected by TITAN activity: it was from here the nozzle originally came. Some walls have odd carvings, in a few places sharp diamond object are placed as if intended to form some overall pattern.

Seeking out the source of the vibration leads to a former large vehicle bay. Now it has been turned into something that looks like an early industrial factory floor: a bewildering jumble of shiny black machines moving quickly. Giant flywheels, pistons, complex racks of linkages and swirling gears. There is no visible energy source, although it could be hidden somewhere in the central big machines. The purpose of the machinery is obscure. It might be just random engineering. Or it could be a mechanical implementation of a part of a TITAN mind, safe from most forms of attack.

There are no guard railings or other safety. To move around the “factory” characters need to make Fray tests to avoid the whirling devices. A failed roll means taking  $1d10 \times 3$  kinetic damage. A critical failure means the character is caught in the machinery; they take damage and further rolls are at -20 until they succeed with one.

If the machinery is damaged a fractal will show up in a short while to fix it.

## Guardian fractals

*The Heavens. Once an object of superstition, awe and fear. Now a vast region for growing knowledge. The distance of Venus, the atmosphere of Mars, the size of Jupiter, and the speed of Mercury. All this and more we know. But their greatest mystery the heavens have kept a secret. What sort of life, if any, inhabits these other planets? Human life, like ours? Or life extremely lower in the scale. Or dangerously higher.*

*Richard Blake, and William Cameron Menzies, Narrator, Invaders from Mars, at the opening of the movie (1953)*

The lower levels are inhabited by fractals, repairing the machinery and occasionally building strange things. Intruders walking around will sooner or later run into one of them. The fractals are aggressive but clever: ambushes, quickly nanofabricated toxins, or sealing intruders inside rooms are all options.

The fractals have developed a nasty trick for dealing with intruders. They make an Unarmed Combat attack, "punching" an enemy with a sharp filament bundle doing AP -8 1d10+5 damage. If it penetrates it leaves fragments in the wound. These fragments are self-repairing and will start to regenerate like the parent fractal: they grow 1d10 points of DUR per half hour, doing an equal amount of damage to the host. The small fractal will branch into tissues, enhancements and synthmorph materials, becoming harder and harder to separate as time goes on. Eventually the host dies and the fractal emerges from the corpse.

Use the mini-fractal's DUR as a negative modifier to medicine rolls; critical failures mean the doctor or her equipment gets infected. Each successful roll (resisted by its Perception) reduces the fractal's DUR with the MoS. Note that fractals are smart, so if they think they are in trouble they might construct defences or subvert useful implants. Placing the victim in a healing vat might help, assuming the fractal does not successfully subvert it using Programming: Nanofabrication and turn it into a machine for making more fractals...

This is also the best weapon gathered by the Red Devils from the site: some fractal branches that are sure to mess up any technosystem they are planted in.

## ***Finding the Red Devils***

After gathering evidence at Ebb 15, the challenge is to figure out where the rover went and/or who the synthmorph belonged to. Ideally they should also wonder why anybody would voluntarily go to Ebb 15 and how they managed it without any major losses.



Tracking a red Gonow Paradise rover with Draffan 660G track is not the easiest, but knowing it had to be at Ebb 15 recently narrows things down a lot. It most likely went east, since it would be suicidal and cumbersome to go anywhere else but out of the zone. There might be some tracks to follow for very skilled trackers, but once it snuck onto the traffic grid they disappear. Agents with contacts (or skills) who might get data from the traffic grid, road sensors or satellite cameras are only partially in luck: the vehicle was using spoofing and employing some clever smuggler's tricks to make itself hard to find.

If they found the paint flake they will have a little bit more information. Tracing vehicle 21340711418 will however clearly lead to a recycling manifest from Nordrec Industries in Noctis-Qianjiao that proves it was recycled as scrap three years ago. This manifest is of course forged, but tracking down the dishonest vehicle dealers involved in turning the vehicle untraceable will be a major nightmare. They make a living from confusing authorities about who owned what when.

Still, just looking for the rover in the west Tharsis region might work: it is not that populated, and the rover model is a bit noticeable (at least to gearheads; it is big, it was too expensive for the market, and had a for-its-time innovative chassis suspension from Wu Industries...). Agents could ask around their networks and in settlements and get a lead, although it might also tip off the wrong people that somebody is asking questions (see below).

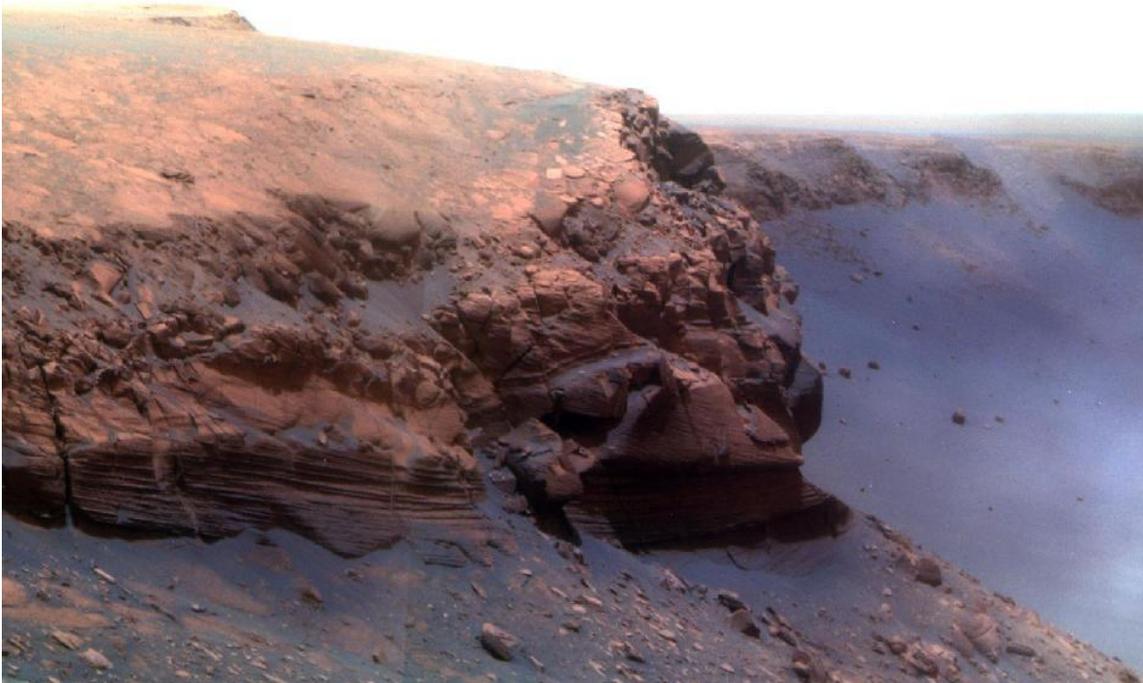
If they have the synth things become easier. The synth was registered to Pau Cerda, last known address Euboea Mansions in Olympus a few years ago. A bit of investigation will reveal that he was a student taking game character design classes for JE Entertainment University but dropped out three years ago. He was apparently involved in radical student politics online, clearly down with the Movement and (if his various online texts are studied) a real hardliner. His mesh trail continues until about two years ago, with various reports from demos and 'practical activism' among outlying settlements in Tharsis. Finally, with a short message stating "My old identity is unsafe and discarded: I have heard the thunder and now joined the whirlwind." the mesh trail ends.

Anybody who knows anything about underground movements can guess that he joined some real hardline group and now moved under a new identity. Someone with very good Barsoomian networking can even figure out the codewords and conclude that he is now part of the Red Devils. Even without this information it might be possible to ask around: it is hard to completely shed an identity, and some of the contacts in radical circles he was dealing with will likely know something.

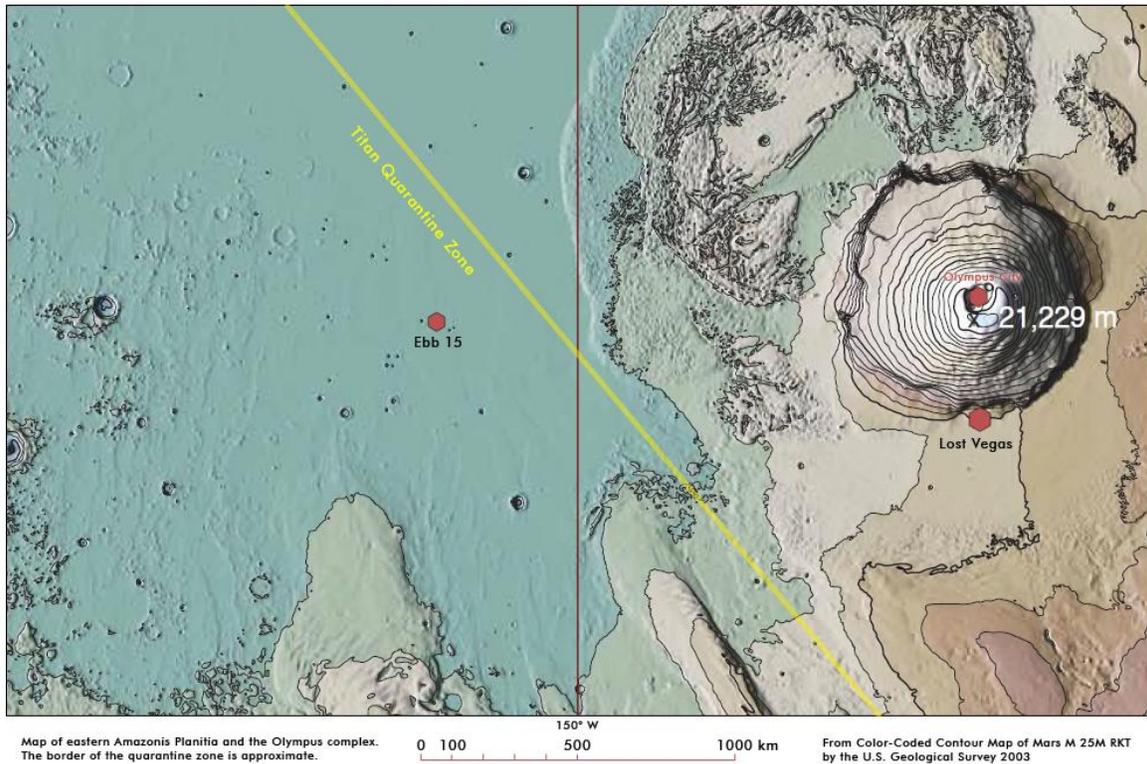
Perhaps the easiest way of tracking the Red Devils is Dr Linda's nanoparticles, but they are also the hardest clue to find. The group liberally doused themselves with them before going into the Zone and have been shedding a cloud of them ever since. Somebody who starts looking for the particles with a nanodetector will soon find that they can track where the people have been moving, at least as long they are on foot or parked (the vehicle is also shedding particles, but when it is driving fast they get dispersed so widely that they are hard to detect). Dr Linda can easily clean them off using a cleaner swarm, but cautiously prefers to do it after they have made use of all infected artifacts, not before.

The investigations will likely eventually lead to Lost Vegas: either because it is in the right area and a likely place to check for the rover, because it is a hangout for Barsoomians, because some of Pau's contacts are there, and/or they find a particle trace leading there.

If the investigators get stuck the GM can help them by having them come across leads from other people looking for the Red Devils – perhaps local law enforcement, perhaps Liberte Mars! Or, if they are sloppy, they will be found by the Red Devils and hauled off for interrogation.



## Lost Vegas



Lost Vegas, formerly Jincai Village, is a gambling and trading spot popular among nomads, smugglers and refugees south of Olympus. Located 300 km south of Olympus, on the sandy plain just below the mountain's foothills, it is far away enough to avoid Olympus police and most visits from the authorities. Rangers occasionally pass by, but most of the time security is run by the Sons of Deimos, the local ruling gang.

Lost Vegas is a squat truncated concrete pyramid, partially ruined in the Fall by an explosion. When it was recolonized after the Fall it was conveniently empty and ownerless. It has been cheaply repaired using builder nanotech that has patched large parts with silica crystals. The crystals give a kitschy glittery appearance to many sections, fitting in well with the Las Vegas theme. The main building contains a casino and various entertainment facilities, small businesses and the headquarters for the Sons of Deimos. Outside there is a big parking space/trailer park/open air market. The market has everything, from Kai the petal trader to a few unsavory people selling found stacks.

The Sons of Deimos are the local gang/militia/casino owners. Their main interest is to keep the place running. The leader, John Chan, is good at negotiating or fighting for solutions to problems, and smart enough to know which method to use. He will act as mayor or judge if necessary. While the Sons mainly appear to be security or pit bosses they have some more unsavory personnel if needed. Down in the basement Ben the torturer maintains a special torture-enabled synthmorph where he sleeves undesirable stacks as object lessons or to get information.

The Casino looks like a casino should look, based on old XP and entertainment. It is a cheaply nanofabbed pastiche of Old Monaco with anachronistic elements of Las Vegas and Macao mixed

in. People do not come there to admire the décor. The bar is competent and can mix and fab some surprisingly good drinks – check out their red arrow and Olympus fizz.

Beside the casino and housing for the Sons of Deimos there is a creaky recycling/fabbing center and kitchen, a makeshift power plant selling not very green electricity and a variety of small hole-in-the-wall companies (Martian Union, Shengtai Bodymorphing, Shamolantu Blueprints, ...) that crowd into the seedy “business center” section of Lost Vegas. Strongmorals.com is a small church claiming that building strong morality makes you physically stronger, luckier and more secure – and vice versa, by building your body and training physically, you become a better person. They combine a bit of prosperity theology with some self-help and plenty of mailorder religiosity.

Some of the Red Devils are lounging in the upper floor bar.



## **The Red Devils**

*“The first step is to hit the elite where it counts: in their wallets. We will inflict as much capital damage to the status infrastructure of the oppressors as we can. They will be forced to respond by beefing up security, but that is far costlier than our interventions. And we are mobile, we can change targets, and we strike at hard to monitor early parts in the supply chain. As we spread across Mars and hit systempunkts we will get their operations to grind to a halt.*

*The second step is to establish alternate means of communication, memetic spread and means of production. This is already being done by our pink allies who are networking with active citizens.*

*As the elite increases repression as a response to our activities it will by necessity affect the major cities and the middle classes most strongly. This is a good thing, since we need them to come on our side rather than remain passive allies of the oppressors. Repressing the nomadic or small-settlement population is far more costly and inefficient. I almost hope they try; it will speed up the revolutionary process.*

*The third step is to establish a strong memetic counterposition: we must seize the commanding heights through example, radical demonstration and viral sousveillance revealing the repression. Symbolic attacks on key oppressive infrastructure is ideal. It is at this point we can hope to activate the masses. Once they are activated the cost of holding the planet will go up exponentially given the economic realities of a post-service economy. At this point the Consortium is likely to wish for negotiation and appeasement, which should be resisted until a sustainable victory is assured.*

*The fourth step is the organisation of a new social order directed against the oppressors. It will be necessary both for legitimacy and for protection against the many counter-revolutionary elements still in existence. We should not expect a clean ending, but ideally we will by this point have enough strength to force a decisive ending and establishment of a détente.”*

*Akinyi Hendrikje: Our Freedom*

The Red Devils are a radical Barsoomian terrorist group aiming at making any centralized control over Mars too expensive to sustain. They are known among Barsoomians as hardliners, and those deeply in the know have noticed that they recently have taken a turn for the truly violent – while largely keeping off the media map.

The Red Devils have deliberately taken an easily confusable name: there are several football teams, music groups, gaming guilds and companies with the name. Anybody trying to find them will have to work for it. It also helps that they are uninterested in claiming responsibility for their deeds.

The Red Devils were founded by **Mozes Yanni**, a dour refugee from the unfair aftermath of the Rift Valley Conflict and the Salib Incident back on Earth. A skilled desert guerrilla fighter he has been with the Movement since day one, always on the more violent side. He is still around, but increasingly pushed aside by Akinyi. He is deeply unhappy about it but feels powerless to stop it. Maybe it is even God’s will that she will take over. Regardless, he takes pride in still leading daring (and almost suicidally dangerous) operations.

**Akinyi Hendrikje** is the de facto leader of the group. A former hyperelite, she has taken to revolution and terrorism like a fish to water. Charismatic, smart, connected and with a twisted tactical genius that keeps her a move or two ahead of her enemies: she is formidable person. She has killed and sabotaged enough to convince anybody that she is 110% down with the movement – and anybody who questions her motivations will anyway have to deal with the loyal fighters she keeps around. Something she doesn't admit is that she is async: at least part of her ability to lead and plan is due to the strange neural pathways she has gained.

**Dr Julijana Linda** is the team researcher and sabotage expert. A former safety officer, she has gone over to the black hat side and now loves to see things blow up. Opinionated and difficult, she is not very popular with the rest of the Devils.

The core of the Devils are travelling around in a convoy of rovers, currently in the Olympian highlands. They are ready to regroup and cause trouble elsewhere (Argyre seems ripe, and if the railway gets built to Meltwater in Hellas it might also be a good target), but right now the pickings here are good.

## Sabotages

<Blackbox transcript begins 07112148@06321118.18>  
IW42: "Wang Si": "Seven, why is intake A running hot?"  
MAI7: "Some heavy fluorite lumps in the digester, nothing to worry about."  
IW42: "Yeah, but it looks like it is drawing 15 Ampere extra. And intake B is also on the rise."  
MAI7: "Fluorite again."  
[Warning: Digester A temperature at 660K]  
IW42: "So why is the output not rising? I am starting to think there is something seriously..."  
[Seal breach digester A] [Nanosensor warning: unknown nanosystems in section A00-A31, A52, A59, A99]  
IW42: "Cao!"  
[Seal breach digester B] [Nanosensor warning: unknown nanosystems in section B00, B02-B12, B44-B59, B99][Digester A, B offline][Emergency shutdown initiated][Emergency containment initiated][Emergency nanoswarm activated]  
IW42: "Seven! Get us away!"  
[FAULT: Nanosensors offline: Code 11][Firewall corruption in infomorph node AF006][Node security shutdown][FAULT: shutdown failed: Code 48][FAULT: power shutdown interrupt failed: Code 121][FAULT: S(Û·¶ÜIIIpÖŸz~?iF¼]  
<Blackbox transcript ends 07112148@06324200.19>

The current sabotage campaign has been a great success. It is easy to infiltrate transports of raw materials to the hypercorp operations – security of ore transports tend to be lax, and the guards/monitors under-equipped, underpaid and bored. The results of having TITAN nano bloom in the middle of a greenhouse gas factory full of reactive chemicals and massive nanocompilers are simply amazing. Even a small outbreak is enough to shut down production and cause considerable delays, and should an outbreak really take off the losses will be enormous. In terms of return on investment it is a brilliant guerrilla tactic.

Right now the Red Devils are doing their best to spread infected material onto supply trains wherever they can, with little care for what might happen.

They have also found some potent infections that can be replicated by putting them into ordinary nano-recyclers: they bloom, more material is harvested, and then the whole thing is sterilized with thermite. This means they can supply them to other radical groups, and get them to breed more on their own.

Akinyi is however considering something bigger for later. Messing up industrial infrastructure is one thing, striking at the heart of power another thing. She is planning to bring some of her most potent samples to Valles New Shanghai and release them on the Bund. At the least it would cause an expensive security scare, at best it might get some of the hated corp people.

## **Mozes Yanni**

### **Tired guerilla leader**

*Insurrection is an art, and like all arts has its own laws.*

*Leon Trotsky*



Mozes grew up in the tough arcologies of Haifa, a semi-orphan who early on worked himself up from gang member to gun for hire to guerilla for hire. He ranged across the Middle East and Africa, usually seeing their worst parts when they were going through their roughest spots. Over time he went from a cynic youth who preferred to be on the side with the guns to a pessimist adult who simply couldn't stay away from various doomed battles for freedom. He was good enough to survive, largely because his pragmatic understanding that fighting a possibly hopeless battle didn't mean one couldn't retreat and regroup whenever resistance became too strong – he took to heart Kissinger's saying "The conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose."

Eventually his luck ran out and in order to avoid ending up in a hypercorp prison he had to allow his friends to mix him into the stream of colonists/deported that was sent to Mars. Unsurprisingly he soon found intolerable injustices to fight, and untrained amateur warriors in need of mentoring. With the exception of a few years around the Fall when he ran a refugee group in Mangala Valles he has been a consistent outlaw.

Things began to change when he met Akinyi. Maybe it was some male urge to prove himself to the ambitious woman, but he began to increasingly take risks and make bold moves – and she moved with him. He moved from minor sabotage and attempted slow erosion of hypercorp power to bold strikes – a bombing of a supply train in Kasei Vallis, sniping at a Red Eden team, freeing an indenture slave camp near Hecates Tholus. And now full-scale nano-terrorism.

Mozes thinks there is something wrong, but he finds himself unable to confront Akinyi. Maybe she has somehow brainwashed him, maybe he is in love. He cannot avoid protecting her. Despite his dour surface and ingrained pragmatic survivalism he has against all odds begun to hope. And he is willing to kill and be killed for that feeling.

Mozes is an excellent guerilla fighter. Always aware of his environment, always ready to melt into the surroundings or strike from an unexpected direction. He is particularly good at stealing the weapons of his enemies or using them against them – even a user-keyed gun can be useful if stolen and then "dropped" with a hidden grenade underneath.

**Motivations:** +Freedom, -Hypercapitalism, +Survival

**Relevant skills:** Blades 60, Demolitions 60, Fray 80, Gunnery 50, Infiltration 65, Kinetic weapons: 70, Profession: Guerilla 80, Profession: Strategist 70, Unarmed combat 70.

**Relevant traits:** Brave, Danger sense, Situational Awareness, Tough, Addiction: Akinyi, Enemies (oppressors past and present), On the run (Tharsis League, Ecologene)

**Relevant gear:** Adrenal boost, Emergency farcaster, Neurachem (Level 1), Heavy Pistol with accushot AP or jammer ammo, hidden weapons (from blades and poison to a light pistol and grenades)

**Roleplaying tips:** Be silent and listen. When you speak, be terse and to the point. Always have a way out – or make a new one.

## Akinyi Hendrikje

### Would-be Che Guevara

*Thou art the Mars of malcontents.*

*Shakespeare: The Merry Wives of Windsor. Act i. Sc. 3.*



“Akinyi” (her birth name is Nadine Hintikka) is the black sheep of the Hintikka family, a superrich clan with ties to Old Earth law firms and banks. She grew up a tough woman who couldn’t stand living in the soft world of the post-Scandinavian elite on Luna. Instead she went to Mars to build herself a career of her own. She ended up going for a career as a revolutionary.

She met Mozes Yanni by chance in Ashoka, and he opened her eyes to the struggles on Mars. At first he suspected he was just a diversion for a bored hyperelite lady, but when she sprung him from a local corp jail after a failed action he began to realize she was serious. Very serious – she followed him into the desert and began to live the life of the Movement. Over the years she has killed and sabotaged enough to convince anybody that she is 110% down with the Movement. Her resources have been cleverly hidden away in accounts, caches and servers that make them impossible to trace.

Akinyi is a fighter. She likes to struggle against opponents to win. As a lawyer she was a bit too fond of tough courtroom tactics. She might not be too skilled as physical fighting (she does keep a pretty impressive training regimen, though) but she will not easily back down - and she will fight as dirty as she can. 'Honor' is merely an optional restriction people use within a mild-mannered society: what matters is winning.

She does not know exactly when she became async. She might have had it in her when she decided to leave Luna, she might have encountered it in the desert near Ashoka or gotten it from some member of the Movement. But it has turned her from a somewhat dangerous recruit into a would-be Che Guevara. Her knowledge of tactics, law and hypercorp finance combined with practical guerrilla skills and the twisted "right decision at the right place and time" coincidences makes her a very potent insurrectionist. And she knows it.

As she sees it, she is the hero of a thriller. She is James Bond, Che Guevara or Lenin. She will see through that Mars is freed from the Planetary Consortium and its people become masters of their own fate. She doesn't do it because she deeply loves them, but because it is \*right\*. She knows that she desires the accolades of being a revolutionary hero, but that is not why she does it: when she moves she feels the pull of destiny moving her forward.

Of course, it could just be delusional megalomania. But she doesn't care. She has a planet to win.

**Background:** Hyperelite

**Faction:** Barsoomian

**Morph:** Fury

**Actual age:** 32

**Moxie:** 3

**Motivations:** +Winning, +Freedom, -Cowardice

**Armor:** 15/16

**Rep:** @-rep 50, c-rep (as Nadine) 40

**Ego traits:** Brave, First Impression, Psi (Level 2), Psi Chameleon, Mental disorder (Narcissism, Megalomania), On the run (Tharsis League)

**Morph traits:** Striking looks (Level 2), Tough (Level 2)

COG: 20, COO: 15, INT: 20, REF: 30, SAV: 20, SOM: 30, WIL: 20

TT: 10, LUC: 40, IR: 80, WT: 12, DUR: 70, DR: 85

INIT: 13, SPD: 1(1)/2, DB: 3

**Skills:** Academics: Economics 50, Academics: Political Science 50, Academics: Military theory 50, Art: Speech 50, Blades 40, Control 50, Deception 70, Demolitions 30, Flight 50, Fray 60, Freerunning 70, Infosec 50, Interest: Martian politics 50, Intimidation 60, Kinesics 70, Kinetic Weapons 60, Language: Fenno-Swedish 90, Language: English 60, Language: Mandarin 50, Language: Arabic 40, Networking: Autonomists 70, Networking: Hypercorps 70, Networking: Media 40, Perception 60, Persuasion 60, Pilot: Aircraft 30, Pilot: Groundcraft 50, Profession: Lawyer 60, Profession: Guerilla 50, Protocol 50, Psychosurgery 20, Seeker Weapons 40, Unarmed Combat 50

**Muse:** Haltija. Notable skills: Academics Sociology 40, Profession: Squad tactics 40, Academics: Old Earth Military History 40.

Weapons: Unarmed (Skill 50, DV 1d10+3), Flex cutter (Skill 40, DV 1d10+6, AP -1), Heavy Pistol (Skill 70, DV 2d10+4 AP -4 (accushot AP)), Seeker armband (Skill 50, laser guided plasmaburst minimissile)

**Implants:** Basic Biomods, Basic Mesh Inserts, Cortical Stack, Enhanced Vision, Eidetic Memory, Hyper Linguist, Adrenal Boost, Bioweave Armor (light), Enhanced Respiration, Muscle Augmentation, Neurachem (L1), Temperature Tolerance, Toxin Filters, Emergency Farcaster, Hardened Skeleton, Medichines, Mental Speed, Nanophage

**Gear:** Chameleon Cloak, Dazzler, White Noise Machine, DNA Chaff, Graybox, Personal Interaction Sensor, Anonymous Account, Backup Insurance (mod), Body Bank, Fake Ego ID, Tactical Networks, Standard Muse, Nanobandage, Martian Rover, Helmet (full), Body Armor (light) (w/ Chameleon Coating, Immunogenic System, Thermal Damping), Flex Cutter, Heavy Pistol (w/ Smartlink, Safety System, Laser Sight, Silencer), Seeker Armband (w/ Smartlink, Safety System), Accushot Armor Piercing Pistol Rounds, Laser-Guided Plasmaburst Minimissile.

**Sleights:** Ambience sense Emotion control, Enhanced creativity, Instinct, Predictive boost, Superior Kinesics, Charisma

**Roleplaying tips:** Be larger than life: make sure you give a memorable impression on friend and foe alike. Neutral people are cowards. Talk as if everything you say will end up as a quotation.



## Dr Julijana Linda

Dour grey-hat nanohacker

*Don't throw that away! It is full of lanthanides we need. Get it to the recycler.*



Before the Fall, Dr Linda was safety officer for the Phlegra Montes Mining Consortium. For years she conscientiously tried to keep operations safe and efficient, struggling against management, miners and the environment. Then the entire site was wiped from the map in an instant when something took control of the mining nukes and detonated them. She was away inspecting an aquifer when it happened, and had to trek 1,200 km to the relative safety of Elysium as the battles against the TITAN machines began to flare up.

After the events of the Fall she began to drift into Barsoomian circles. She became more and more convinced that the official story about the Fall was a lie. She suspects that it was more like a struggle between power elites (the Offworld Consortium and the UN?) that got out of hand. The TITANS were of human origin and there are still fragments of human control in them. She began to do private experiments, helping smugglers, pirates and other radicals with nanotechnology in exchange for equipment and money.

When Akinyi found her, she had just finished her latest idea: protective nanoparticles. As an answer to her prayers Akinyi appeared and promised both support, a way of testing her work, and a worthwhile cause. Only later did she realise she had been roped into a terrorist mission, something that made her angry. She doesn't mind destroying Consortium installations or fighting for her freedom, but she dislikes being manipulated.

**Motivations:** +Exploration, +Technoprogessive, -Wasting resources

**Relevant skills:** Demolitions 60, Interest: Fall conspiracy theories 60, Profession: safety engineering 65, Programming Nanotechnology [non-traditional] 60, Survival: Mars 75

**Relevant gear:** General hive, suitcase nanolaboratory, guardian, repair and saboteur nanoswarms and blueprints, liquid thermite canisters.

**Roleplaying tips:** Keep to the topic. Make sure things work. Avoid colour.

### **Dr Linda's nanoparticles**

Dr Linda has worked on the problem of how to control TITAN nanotech, using various scraps of data, crowdsourced 'folk science' and a few theories from an online community of Sufi nanotechnologists. She thinks she has succeeded in if not neutralising it, at least making it safer.

Dr Linda calls her nanoparticles "smoke", referring to the practice of using smoke to calm beehives. According to her theory the nanoparticles act as a 'calming' signal in the collective of nanomachinery that underlie most TITAN technology. The calmed technology also produces calming signals to other devices using other media such as ultrasound, mesh and laser.

She has also worked on 'prion' nanoparticles that supposedly kill off self-replicating nanodevices. According to her they ingest them and then are taken over, producing more prions. Using a shower of prions people and equipment can be cleaned from clinging nanoviruses.

Whether her particles actually *work* is another matter. Dr Linda's theory is based on some shaky assumptions about the nature of the TITAN ecosystem, and the testing has been very spotty. They certainly *look* like they work, but that could just be because the specific TITAN nanosystems she has dealt with are susceptible – or even decide to temporarily hold off, curious about what the humans are attempting. Dr Linda is trying to avoid overconfidence, but with so much riding on a possible cure for the Zone, she is not entirely successful – deep down she *believes* in her particles. This might prove to be her undoing.

### **Red Devil members**

*I began revolution with 82 men. If I had to do it again, I do it with 10 or 15 and absolute faith. It does not matter how small you are if you have faith and plan of action.*  
*Fidel Castro*

The typical Red Devil members are former mainstream Barsoomians who have drifted towards greater radicalism out of frustration with the lack of progress of the "pinks". Mozes doesn't let in just anybody with a grudge against the oppressors: he runs a background check and usually makes sure they can be vouched for by other people he trusts. Typically they have already proven their loyalty to the cause by committing a few crimes. They don't have to be perfect fighters to be relevant: Mozes has learned that the right mindset – a combination of tenacity and commitment to the cause – is more important than skills, since skills can be trained but personality tends to be constant.

Red Devil members get trained in the relevant skills for a modern guerilla force: some fighting skills of course, but also how to evade surveillance, how to hack and manipulate technological infrastructure, wilderness survival, and applied sociology. While many members might enjoy a

good fight, they have been drilled to realize that it is the perception and eventual outcome of the fight that actually matters.

**Stats:** Use Anarchist Saboteur (p. 3) in NPC File 1: Prime. Replace Beam weapons skill with kinetic weapons (and the agonizer with pistols and automatic rifles). Add Survival [Mars] 50, Profession [guerilla] 50, and a hidden emergency farcaster implant (transmitting the ego to a discreet backup facility in Elysium City).

## **Banishing the Red Devils**

The Red Devils are wily, well prepared and suspiciously lucky. They will not allow themselves to be cornered in a fair fight, but will most likely have a way out, have an ambush planned or select a battleground that give them all the advantages. Unless the PCs are exceptionally deadly or perform a totally out-of-the-blue attack when it would not make sense, the Red Devils will have the advantage.

Perhaps the best way of defusing the Red Devils is to take Akinyi out of commission. Without her they are still dangerous, but will not aim at equally grand targets – and are far more likely to be stopped by their enemies. One way of getting rid of her is to sow split and paranoia around her, playing out the tensions in the group against her overbearing and outsider personality. Another approach might be to try to drive her mad. As an async she is not the most stable person, and the right stimuli or disaster might unbalance her. Of course, this might also make her lash out with even more ferocity.

One of Akinyi's weak points is her double nature. She is not hiding that she has had a privileged background from the Barsoomians, proving her loyalty in various ways. But skilled memeticists might be able to spin suspicion against her anyway. More seriously, if the link between the terrorist Akinyi Hendrikje and the lawyer Nadine Hintikka was made public, then she would lose access to much of her resources and legit contacts. She has hidden many resources under anonymous accounts and using alternate ID, but this infrastructure would be put under serious stress if authorities began to dig.

It should be noted that PCs are potentially vulnerable too. The Red Devils have a network of informants (and remember the potential for betrayal), allowing them to set traps for snooping PCs. They can spread suitable rumours; like that they are agents of a Triad or hired killers looking for Big Man Briggman, in order to hamper their investigation. Or they can do a bit of vehicle sabotage stranding the PC in the middle of the desert, within sniper range from a well-protected nest. If the PCs are not careful they might end up "guests" of the Red Devils.

Beside interrogation, hostage-taking and ransom are classic guerrilla methods – Mozes and Akinyi are good at figuring out who might be interested in a captive ego. In particular Akinyi might prove troublesomely adept at dealing with Firewall: she will quickly figure out what lengths Firewall will go to protect itself, and use that to negotiate good terms. Especially since she can threaten to sell out captives to other fractions. She might not have known about Firewall before, but her abilities will make her make the right intuitive jumps.

## ***Here come the men in black...***

*Economically considered, war and revolution are always bad business.  
Ludwig von Mises*

At some point there have been enough outbreaks to allow data mining software and paranoid minds to start seeing a pattern. Stellar Intelligence's anti-destabilization analysts will quickly put two and two together and brief their customers in the Planetary Consortium about the emerging threat. The Oversight Antiterrorist Program is only too happy to jump in to do something about the outbreaks, while SI and Experia begins to prepare a memetic campaign against dangerous Barsoomian terrorists spreading TITAN viruses.

On the ground this means that various intelligence assets are activated and begin their own investigation – far better funded and organized than what the players have likely achieved. Files and data are quietly copied, servers subpoenaed under gag orders, certain unobtrusive people start to look for leads, feeding back to the investigation. If the player sentinels have confidantes in the right places they might get hints that something is going on. If the players have been sloppy, they might instead end up on the list of 'persons of interest' – after all, they visited Ebb 15 very recently, right?

The PC wants to squash the Red Devils quickly and decisively, ideally after having gathered enough evidence to convince all authorities and enough of the public that they were bad people spreading horrific spores in the name of Martian independence. No trial to use as a soapbox, no going out in a blaze of glory. A quiet elimination in the desert, or even a redirected "accidental" impact of a terraforming comet would be best.

## **The revolution will be televised!**

*Time it's time  
A quantum leap  
The moment I've prepared for  
All the world to see  
Our history  
The final destination  
Vacuum: Atlas Shrugged*

However, Akinyi is entirely aware of this. She has planned on it. She has placed her own supporters in suitable positions to both detect the hunt and to some extent document it – getting info on Oversight assets is valuable. She has also been planting evidence for them to find that will either misdirect them or allow embarrassing disprovable misinformation to enter the propaganda. Being hunted will also improve the cred of the Red Devils significantly.

Most importantly, she will push things so that a good confrontation happens. She will not keep to the far desert where a quiet decapitation strike would work. She is playing to ensure that she will go out in a blaze of glory with as many witnesses as possible... especially since she and her group has emergency farcasters.

The GM should arrange things so the player characters are involved in the finale (unless they have somehow defused the situation on their own). Even if they are not taking direct part in the final battle they may be close enough to see what happens. They will see events arrange themselves so that the might of the authorities bear down on a tiny band of rebels who nevertheless make a grand final stand thanks to ingenious traps and tactics (hidden mines, subverted bots carrying bombs into air intakes of vehicles, ambushes from below, all the tricks from millennia of guerrilla tactics). There might even be a few innocent bystanders who are saved by self-sacrificing fighters. In the end, despite their luck, the Red Devils will be overwhelmed of course. Just as she sets off a massive suicide charge to take out some enemies Akinyi broadcasts a final defiant message:

*“Mars! What is coming is already on its way – liberation! Red as our deserts! Red as our blood!”*

It all makes a beautiful picture. Exactly as planned.



## ***Optional complications and twists***

### **The people's front of Judea**

As the PCs are approaching the Red Devils they encounter another group looking for them: Liberate Mars!

Liberate Mars! is another radical Barsoomian group, but it deplores the methods of the Red Devils. Tired of online debate they have sent a strong team for some face-to-face discussion – and if necessary revolutionary justice. The team is under the leadership of Kim Bezan, a former geologist with firm ties to the nomads. The confrontation may well turn ugly, with the PCs in the firing line or mistaken for Consortium agents. Or one of the sides might decide to use the PCs as a distraction while they take out the others.

Liberate Mars! belongs to the Reclaimer/nanoecologist wing of the Barsoomian movement. They dislike the big terraforming projects and want Mars to be itself rather than some bad copy of Earth. They get some financing from friends on Luna, quite possibly radical Reclaimers who want to keep the Consortium busy with their own back yard. The group also have a more conservative “nationalist” agenda than the more military oriented Red Devils: they see Martians as an emerging nation rather than a social class throwing off oppressors. And most importantly, they deplore the spread of dangerous nanomachinery.

### **It's a trap!**

*The more there are riots, the more repressive action will take place, and the more we face the danger of a right-wing takeover and eventually a fascist society.*

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Maybe this is all an elaborate trap for the Barsoomians, organized by Oversight. Akinyi is actually their agent provocateur, sent to infiltrate the Movement. After a few outrageous actions that alienate the public and create disagreements in the Movement it will be easy to convince the public and local authorities to allow various security measures that will bring stronger Consortium control over Mars.

Akinyi might not even be aware of this. Thanks to psychosurgery it is quite possible to supply agents with selective amnesia and subconscious commands. Once the mission is over she will remember her real position in Oversight, but for the time being she thinks she is a rebel.

PCs investigating the Red Devils might accidentally upset this plan: the operation has not yet reached the point where the terrorists have gained enough cred to really matter. Akinyi will want to remove the nosy outsiders quickly, ideally in such a way to alienate parts of the Movement or the public. Staging a messy execution of infiltrators or Consortium agents might be useful.

### **This is now under our jurisdiction!**

Ozma doesn't care much for Martian terrorism, but if something *interesting* happens related to psi, Firewall or exsurgent threats they will barge in. They are interested in apprehending persons of interest for interrogation/experimentation, even when it is inconvenient for Oversight. And

they have much fewer inhibitions about doing things that upset local people, then ordering Oversight to cover it up.

While PCs might not be able to tell one kind of man in black from another they might benefit from internal conflicts in a tight spot: where an Oversight agent might just want to “disappear” captured PCs into the desert, the new superior will order them transported back to Olympus for ‘proper interrogation’ – a transport that will occur using a quickly requisitioned vehicle that could be attacked by outsiders (or even outsiders anonymously tipped off by a seriously annoyed Oversight agent who wants Ozma to look bad...)

On the other hand, if some of the nanoviral threats of the Red Devils get out of hand Ozma might actually be saving angels. They do have access to secret technology not even Firewall suspects about. That probably includes a few aces up their sleeves – advanced anti-TITAN software, robust defence nanoswarms, bizarre psitech hacks and pocket sterilization nukes. Under the right conditions they could be allies of convenience with Firewall agents – untrustworthy allies with secret agendas and a penchant for double-crossing, but nevertheless still dedicated to keeping Mars habitable and crushing peddlers in existential risks.

## **Betrayal**

There is plenty of room for betrayal and mixed loyalties:

**Remiel** might sell out the PCs, either to the Red Devils or Oversight. In the first case he might have been bribed or coerced. In the second case he might actually have sold out Firewall and is now well on his way to become an Ozma agent... at least he thinks so. Ozma might find him too untrustworthy to keep, at least not without some serious brainwashing, coercion or insidious manipulation. In any case, now the PCs have extra trouble – and their Firewall superiors might either ask them to deal with Remiel or send some dangerous cleaners to get rid of the whole mess before anything sensitive leaks out.

**Gao** might sell out anybody to anybody – he is amazingly untrustworthy. His insanity and selfishness also makes him a risk to *any* plot. Remiel might have arranged a betrayal with Gao as his agent, but Gao might well sell out Remiel to the PCs (or somebody else) if he thinks it will lead towards his grand destiny. He might fly off the handle when encountering Akinyi, seeing her as the Empress of Mars. One interesting possibility is that he pulls a con on the PCs if they prove gullible or paranoid enough: he gets them to investigate “evidence” and threats he imagines/manufactures. After all, Firewall agents tend to see posthuman threats in every shadow: maybe there is *some* truth to the stories of a great Evil buried under Orcus Patera or Gao’s warning that somebody sabotaged their nanoequipment...

**Locals** are likely down with the Movement to some extent, and might well report suspicious strangers asking around to self-appointed facilitators and “peacekeepers”. Or they might be in the pay of, loyal to, afraid of or just leaking to the authorities.

**The authorities** (Olympus, the Rangers, Oversight and others) are by no means unified or ideologically pure. As discussed in the jurisdiction section above, overbearing Ozma agents might cause minor rebellions in the ranks of Oversight. Oversight might similarly raise hackles

among the local law enforcement people, some of which are sympathetic to the Movement. And there might be surprise Firewall members anywhere.

**Dr Linda** might be a weak point among the Red Devils: she did not sign up for terrorism, and she wants out. She might become a useful inside woman willing to betray the group in exchange for safe passage somewhere else. The fact that she may have found a good tool against TITAN infestation is another plus she is willing to milk for all it is worth. Still, she might also be playing Akinyi's game, becoming a double agent who can escape using her emergency farcaster.

## **Sorry, I found the Grail**

Dr Linda's nanoparticles actually work. Through some combination of luck, tenacity and genius she has actually figured out how to subdue TITAN systems – or even the exsurgent virus. When Firewall, Ozma or other groups like the Reclaimers realize this a ruthless scramble will break out to see who can get her ego and her files. At the very least this information would allow pushing back the quarantine zone on Mars... and if transhumanity has been lucky, even on Earth.

It doesn't matter if this is actually true: if one major conspiracy becomes convinced Dr Linda is essential, they will act accordingly. Firewall might order the PCs to do whatever it takes to gain her cooperation. Ozma might order Oversight to help them acquire her; the Red Devils and their little games are irrelevant. Reclaimer networks will send agents to recruit or egonap her. Criminal groups might see a business opportunity.

A darker twist is that some powerful groups suddenly begin to move to get rid of her and her information. Maybe there is a conspiracy to keep the TITANs a threat in order to maintain social cohesion... or maybe Dr Linda is right, and there is a link at the highest level between human elites and the cause of the Fall. Or the exsurgent virus is quietly orchestrating things behind the scenes to keep transhumanity vulnerable. In any case, suddenly vast resources are arrayed against her. "Misaligned" cometary strikes, sudden overrides on government or hypercorp morphs and equipment that allow teleoperated assassination, unmarked stealth drones, anything can happen. The PCs, Red Devils and even the various government agencies might all find themselves in the line of fire. And what if the PCs discover that some of the attacks come from *within* Firewall?

## **Immortal leader**

*I almost feel like Mars has been taking care of me for all of these years.  
Ann Robinson*

Akinyi is not exactly aware of it, but she has been infiltrated by a fractal. Perhaps it was her psi that forced it into dormancy and cooperation, perhaps it is actually the one running her and using her personality merely as a convenient interface. It doesn't matter: neither of them would change anything if they knew. She is able to adapt and repair herself as needed, just like the fractal. If needed she can nanofabricate things like toxins, small devices or implants – something that might be a nasty surprise to anybody capturing her.

To truly kill her she needs to reach her DURx3, otherwise something roughly like her will slowly regenerate from the remnants. Of course, she still has the emergency farcaster – which might lead to a bizarre situation where there are two of her out for revenge on whoever ‘killed’ her.

She might also have inserted similar fractal infiltration into other people, turning them into potential nanoweapons. This might be part of her plan to attack the Bund or other places – send in unknowing victims or suicide bombers (thanks to backups the resistance to destroying your morph and deleting a fork for the cause is no longer a problem) that carry nearly undetectable nanite infections to the site and then let them erupt fully.

## **The diamond brain**

*Heaven brings forth innumerable things to help man.*

*Man has nothing with which to recompense Heaven.*

*Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.*

*Zhang Xianzhong, 1647*

The real force behind the plot is the TITAN mind under Ebb 15. It is secretly and quietly manipulating events for its own agenda. The agenda will likely remain inscrutable: it is an inhuman device created for unknown purposes by something vastly smarter than any transhuman. But spreading chaos and nano-infections among the fragile Martian settlements is likely a part of the plan.

The Red Devils are not mindless puppets, but the brain is subtly pulling their strings using psi or nano-infections. It might be setting up the broader situation using other agents or methods of manipulation. How come that Firewall AI search found the index on the evidence server? Could it be a case of subtle hacking of a search algorithm to find carefully assembled evidence that would cause Firewall to act in a certain way?

## **Say you want a revolution**

*The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.  
Karl Marx*

The adventure can end in a number of ways. Much depends on whether the PCs (or Oversight) manage to prevent Akinyi's planned magnificent showdown and whether the Red Devils get away.

- If the showdown is defused and the Red Devils properly wiped out the status quo remains. Other radicals might attempt sabotage and smuggling, but are far less likely to succeed or survive. The moderates continue their struggle. The Consortium doesn't have the bad example of the Red Devils to scare people with. Dangerous nanosystems remain in the Zone but are not actively spread.
- If the showdown happens but the Red Devils are wiped out then things heat up a bit: radical Barsoomians are indeed inspired to more action, and the Consortium have a good excuse to crack down. Without the clever planning of Akinyi and the others the Movement will likely look bad, do serious mistakes and be somewhat weakened. From a Firewall perspective the propaganda the Consortium launches about Barsoomian spread of dangerous nano-infections is pretty acceptable: making people more careful with Zone artefacts is worthwhile, regardless of politics.
- If the grand showdown is prevented but the Red Devils remains at large, then they will regroup somewhere else and start again. Probably with a vengeful Akinyi doing her best to mess up the lives of the counterrevolutionary traitors responsible for the failure. Firewall and Oversight will have to start from square one, at least until other terraforming and infrastructure projects start blowing up.
- If there is a grand showdown and the Red Devils escape, then things heat up a lot. The group will milk it for all media attention it is worth, making the Consortium look brutal and giving the Movement radical martyrs to follow... and useful instructions and caches of nano-infection easily available. Over the next few months Akinyi will resurface, stepping up her terror campaign as planned.

The PCs might of course also become convinced that the Red Devils are onto something, and start supporting them. Firewall will likely not be too happy.

The interactions with the Barsoomian rebels might affect characters @-rep and c-rep, depending on who they antagonize or ally with.

- Discovering that the Red Devils are the ones behind the nano-smuggling: +3 i-rep
- Stopping the smuggling: +5 i-rep
- Preventing the showdown: +5 c-rep
- Permanently ending the threat of Akinyi and the others (+5 i-rep, +5 c-rep, -5 @-rep)

## Can the glorious revolution really happen?

*A revolution can be neither made nor stopped. The only thing that can be done is for one of several of its children to give it a direction by dint of victories.*

*Napoleon Bonaparte*

Whether Akinyi has any chance to “win” is uncertain. Most revolutions need more than a charismatic leader and effective guerrilla tactics: they need strong popular support, the right political openings, external diplomacy and the right economics. But Akinyi might be lucky enough to be the right person at the right place in such a historical shift, even if it is not all due to her. She will be happy to take credit.

Most likely, there will not be the right conditions for an old-fashioned political revolution or fifth generation institutional takeover on Mars. Instead Akinyi will help turn minor disagreements into an infected low-intensity conflict with no end in sight. To make matters worse, a sizeable fraction of surviving transhumans live on or near Mars and might be affected. The worst case scenario is a slow escalation: the rebels hit Consortium installations, the Consortium steps up repression, the rebels gain anti-Consortium allies (Jovians, Autonomists, maybe even the Constellation) and/or develop more dangerous weapons and methods – thanks to modern manufacturing weapons of mass destruction are not too hard to make – leading to worse atrocities. Repeat until Mars is a hellhole.

