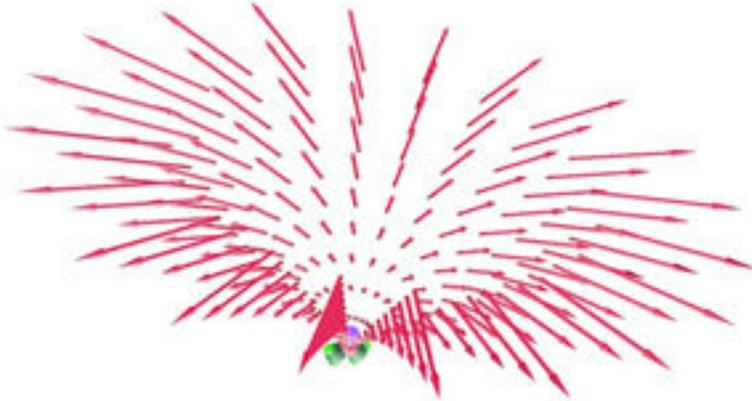


## The Vectors



"It feels cold... I can feel the cold of things around me."

"Great! You are opening up, Barbara. Tell me, what is beyond that wall?"

"Nothing... no, there is a space there. Two oblong objects, horizontal. And... no, I can't get it. Too dizzy and cold."

"Just relax and listen to what the Virus is trying to tell you. It makes you feel strange, but that is just the way it is. You have to relax and allow yourself to change."

- *Recording from Breccia Station, mote N459, 15 Jan 10AF*

Not all people are fighting against the Exsurgent virus. Some people support it and try to help it spread.

The vectors believe that the Watts-MacLeod strain is something positive: a post-singularity tool given to mankind by benign superintelligences. If it was intended to do harm, why fine-tune it so it could enter symbiosis with humans, leave their free will intact and enhance their capacities? It might still be an unruly beast, but it is not actively harmful. It has much to teach us.

Vectors deliberately infect themselves and others with the virus. Usually this is done in a controlled fashion rather than just spreading it around (although that has happened too). Potential recruits are befriended, the vector ascertains their views on human evolution and, if they appear ready, reveals the possibilities of the virus. If the recruit is willing, they infect them.

While most vectors do not know about Firewall or other anti-Exsurgent groups they are not stupid: obviously there are powerful groups out there resisting the spread of what they consider a dangerous and subversive virus. Spreading nanoviruses is criminal nearly anywhere and some vectors have disappeared mysteriously. Hence there is a need for a low profile and caution. Vectors form small cells working together, budding off new cells as members move around; this way only one or a few cell members know about who is in other cells. They use sleights to check recruit quality and loyalty. Ideally they approach recruits just after a backup, so that if they turn out to be strongly negative they can be removed without any stored evidence. Similarly it is possible to "roll-back" a recruit if the infection goes wrong.

Each vector keeps a few stored vials of blood or other body fluids from their "awakening", the 12 hours after infection when they are contagious. These vials are both a personal memento and a

way to induct new recruits. The vectors are very interested on getting access to the infomorph strain of the virus, since it is easier to transport and hide.

The vectors are an entirely decentralized organization where any cell can replicate the whole. Unlike a normal terrorist group they do not need financing or access to weapons since they literally carry their weapon inside. There is little need for communication between cells. Educational recordings and documents are locally created and distributed between connected cells. They mostly consist of notes on how to train new recruits in using their psi, homebrew methods for recruitment and infiltration, and tips on what to do when things go wrong. Such documents are of course of great interest to the enemies of the vectors, so they are kept carefully hidden. And quite possibly, the documents may contain hidden messages from different virus infections to other virus infections.

Firewall and other agencies suspect the existence of the vectors, but have not yet deduced the size and strength of the network. It is very hard to infiltrate cells, and it is always unclear after catching a few members whether there could be more out there. However, the vectors generally have fairly low counter-espionage skills (they make do with psi and paranoia) so they do slip up from time to time.

## **Adventure possibilities**

Someone (possibly a PC) had their morph and stack incinerated in a freak accident. Investigating after coming back from backup reveals that they were approached by a long-time friend (who even now is around; ideally this figure should have appeared in earlier adventures) and apparently the friend arranged the accident. Actually it was a recruitment offer (or even infection) that went wrong and was "cleaned up". The friend is a vector, and might have been tipped off by their investigation - can the PCs capture them and uncover the local vector cell?

Having a virus apologist around can be interesting. A NPC (perhaps a family member, teammate or even a Firewall contact) might be convinced about the general vector idea without being a member or even async. They discuss with the PCs whether the Watts-MacLeod is the best chance of humanity's survival, suggest clever ways psi could be used or dream about getting psi themselves. They might go through the entire campaign without doing anything more sinister. However, they might also want to enrol the PCs in getting the virus for them, or be approached by the vectors - which might have been the plan all along: the NPC is actually working for Firewall or somebody else as a honey pot, trying to attract the vectors in order to infiltrate them. They do not even know this themselves, since any trace of insincerity would be potentially detectable.

Asyns are not the most stable people, and some vector cells have serious problems. One cell splits into two due to a mixture of paranoia, shared delusions and personality clashes. Now there are two cells of asyns who are mad at each other in a small habitat, willing to do a great deal of harm to each other. When strange things start happening, can the PCs figure out what is going on before the fighting escalates to deadly levels?

The Sanjitsar Bosonics Condensate Lab, a physics project on Mars (or perhaps the Large Collider at Titan) is under assault from the vectors, for reasons not even the vectors understand. They just have a strong intuitive feeling that the project should be stopped or interfered with as much as

possible. Apparently independent acts of sabotage, violence and strange subversion are happening around the project. Could it be that the exsurgent virus has discovered that the experiment may somehow threaten its plans? Or is the experiment producing some physical effect that is affecting asyncs in general but the vectors in particular (since they are so organised or descended from related sub-strains)?

Somebody is leaking information about Firewall and its procedures to the vectors. Documents warning against the organization, revealing recognition codes and suggesting counter-tactics are distributed from cell to cell. Is there a vector infiltrator inside Firewall, or is one of Firewall's enemies using the vectors against the organization?

A Firewall investigation into a data cache related to the old mess of Cognite's Lost disaster finds a new lead on where the exsurgent infection originally came from. Datastream tracking implies that the virus was inserted into the project network by a fairly high-ranking Cognite neurosecurity expert. She used her security clearance to erase (almost) all traces of the message, and was later appointed to the internal investigation tracking down the infection. The expert is a vector sympathizer who has been working very discreetly to spread the virus - first among the Lost, now by inserting it into enhancement code. Can the PCs catch the expert from within Cognite without her triggering failsafes that would infect millions?

What is the next stage of virus development? Some vectors experiment with pushing their psi skills or even attempting to interface with the virus. In most cases it ends with madness, death or infection with a nastier strain. But some cells may accidentally develop entirely unknown strains, spreading through their psi. What if they develop a version that links all infected into a telepathic network that can infect anybody it gets into mental contact with? A sleight that imitates a TITAN nanovirus infection in the victim? Or a way to infect and "awaken" machines, despite the apparent law that psi only affects biological minds? Anything could happen - or it could just be a paranoid scenario implanted in the minds of the PCs by hidden asyncs.