



REDhorizon Menu Theme.mp3

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## REDhorizon Introduction and Game World Outline

**Razor Statement:** *REDhorizon* is an action-adventure role-playing game where players, the sole survivor of a disaster involving Mars's terraforming station, spaceport, and communication link to Earth, AKA "The Creator," are conscripted into unveiling the nature of its destruction. Players must use their skills in exploration, combat, and diplomacy amongst many others to navigate the growing conflict on this world on a course of self-destruction.

**Focus Paragraph:** *REDhorizon* is an immersive, thought-provoking, action-adventure role-playing game (RPG) designed to immerse players in a near-future sci-fi setting that will places players in the center of a grand conspiracy and a heating cold war. The game draws narrative inspiration from *Fallout New Vegas* and aesthetic inspiration from *The Outer Worlds*, set not on a too far distant planet, but rather, a Mars that has been subjected to colonization and terraforming in a century-long process that was interrupted by a disaster that saw the planet's sole terraforming station and transport/communication hub back to Earth, The Creator, destroyed. Now, old rivalries reignite on this deformed and unstable planet, seeing the North Atlantic Voyager Expedition in growing conflict with the People's Republic of China as hidden forces lurk in the shadow still, waiting for their opportunity to strike. The player, also known as "The Witness," is the amnesiac sole survivor of the Creator's destruction, rendering them a critical person of interest for the powers that be on this planet. The player is charged with investigating the destruction of the Creator in the hopes that this may help them to recall the circumstances of the disaster, not knowing that what they discover may bring this planet on the brink into complete and total war.

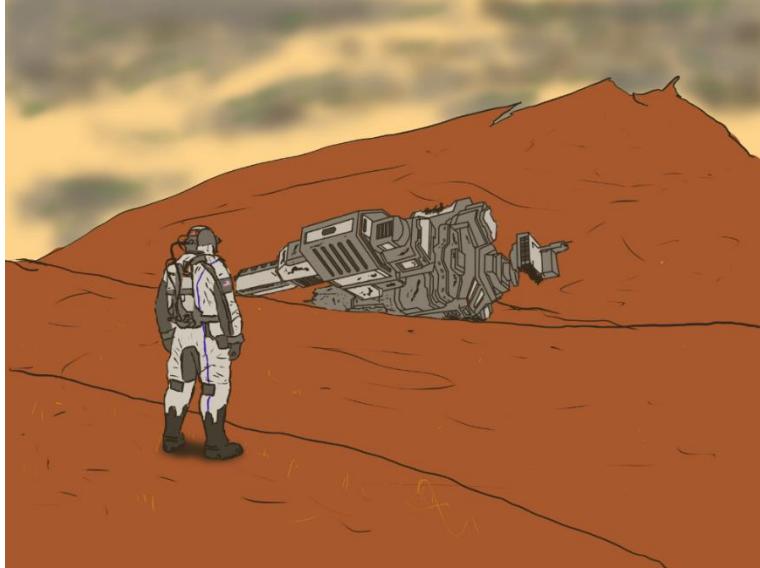


## Mars

### **Physical Attributes:**

#### **Areography**

As it was throughout the duration of most of human history, Mars was never a viable target for life, not without major alterations to its base nature as a world. It was with this in mind that the governments of Earth, agreeing on one thing at long last-a continuation of humanity, vested their shared interest in the terraforming of Mars. Now, Mars is no longer the red desert it once was. Not entirely at least. The Creator terraforming station accomplished its role in many ways, creating a breathable atmosphere, reintroducing liquid water to the planet's surface, and even creating stretches of green land capable of supporting life near the planet's divided capital. Following the catastrophic failure of the planet, however, areas of the planet still being terraformed became twisted and altered. Massive earthquakes created canyons, mountains, mesas, and more that did not exist before, lush forests became twisted jungles of radioactive uncertainty, arable plains became radioactive wastelands, and more. The Areography of Mars can shift drastically depending on where finds themselves, be it the stability of New Byzantium and its surrounding areas, or the uncharted wastes beyond.





## Climate

The Creator's terraforming effort was designed around creating "Earth-like" conditions. With an axial tilt of 24.9 degrees, similar to the axial tilt of Earth, Mars already was a planet that experienced a four-season cycle, allowing for similar standards of Earth to be applied. This would mean hotter Summers, cooler Winters and the like, only without the extremes of Earth. Summers would be altered to never be too hot, and

Winters to never be too cold. This effort centered around the chief research outpost turned capital city, New Byzantium, this area would serve as the perfect paradise that had something for everyone. This would change with the destruction of the Creator. With weather satellites having lost their primary operating hub, the atmosphere critically affected by the disaster, the planet's climate would shift invariably. The climate of New Byzantium would become more precarious with greater seasonal extremes while the uncharted wastes would take on weather patterns a far cry from what was desired. This would mean radiation and electrostatic dust storms, methane rain showers, solar storms, cryovolcanic eruptions, gravity waves, and so on, creating a world climate that is a far cry from mankind's efforts to play God.





## Physics

Mars' gravity is roughly half of that which it is on Earth. Originally 38% of Earth's gravitational pull, part of the terraforming endeavor was designed to create a gravitational pull that could more easily accommodate construction and transportation. With 50-55% considered a safe zone to work and navigate in for the time being with plans made to increase this in the near future, it was maintained as the standard for the time being until the rest of the planet will have been stabilized and the planet could be outfitted with an atmosphere and gravity field more alike to that of Earth.



With the destruction of the Creator, however, this eventuality would never come into fruition.

Rather, the planet would only drift further away from the earth-like paradise that'd been sought after.

- Now, gravity is consistent nowhere on the planet, with different regions possessing stronger fields while others are significantly weaker.
- Gravitational anomalies across the planet will see gravity severely altered in some in some locations as seen mostly through grand floating mesas.
- Electromagnetic Storms can appear out of thin dust, immediately rendering all electronics disabled, forcing players to rely on either analog or mechanical devices, or if they are not prepared enough, wait out the storm.
- Quantum rifts exist across the planet in particular areas, seeing areas where the essential physics of the planet have become invariably altered such as through time dilation, spacial compression, displacement, etc.



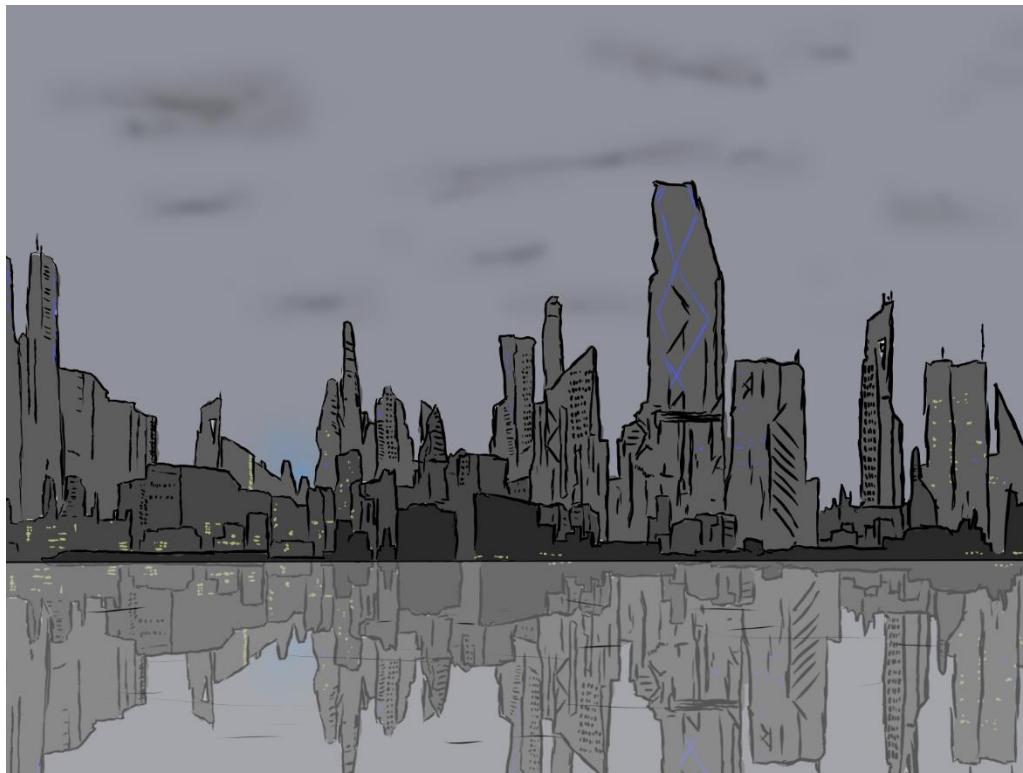
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## Cities

### New Byzantium



Evolving from the first research outpost on the planet, New Byzantium has grown from an outpost of a few hundred to a sprawling metropolis of over 750 thousand people. Named after the ancient edge of the known world and the medieval bridge between the East and West, new Byzantium also serves as the most diverse planet on Mars, divided between N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I.

Now, amidst a brewing Cold War, New Byzantium also finds itself in jeopardy of a conflict that dares to become catastrophic in only a matter of time.

## Urban Planning and Architecture

Divided into two primary administrative districts, the N.A.V.E. and C.A.I. districts, with occasional autonomous enclaves throughout the city, both halves of the city are subjected to the immediate authority of their respective factions' central governments, as New Byzantium also serves as the seat of government for both.

As such, matters of urban planning are also managed directly by boards appointed by their respective political entities, much more open to private enterprise, land purchases, and investiture in the N.A.V.E. district, while centrally planned in territories held by the C.A.I.

In the N.A.V.E. district, architecture can vary distinctly across the city, ranging from post-modern neo-gothic churches to baroque and brutalist government centers as well as bedazzled, well-lit, and neon-spangled shopping centers.

In the C.A.I. district, the architecture much more planned to meet housing and employment demands, little emphasis has been put on aesthetic pleasure, a strict departure taken traditional Chinese architecture.

Now, the city remains divided as much through appearances as it is through politics, and how these worlds may converge in the coming conflict remains to be seen.

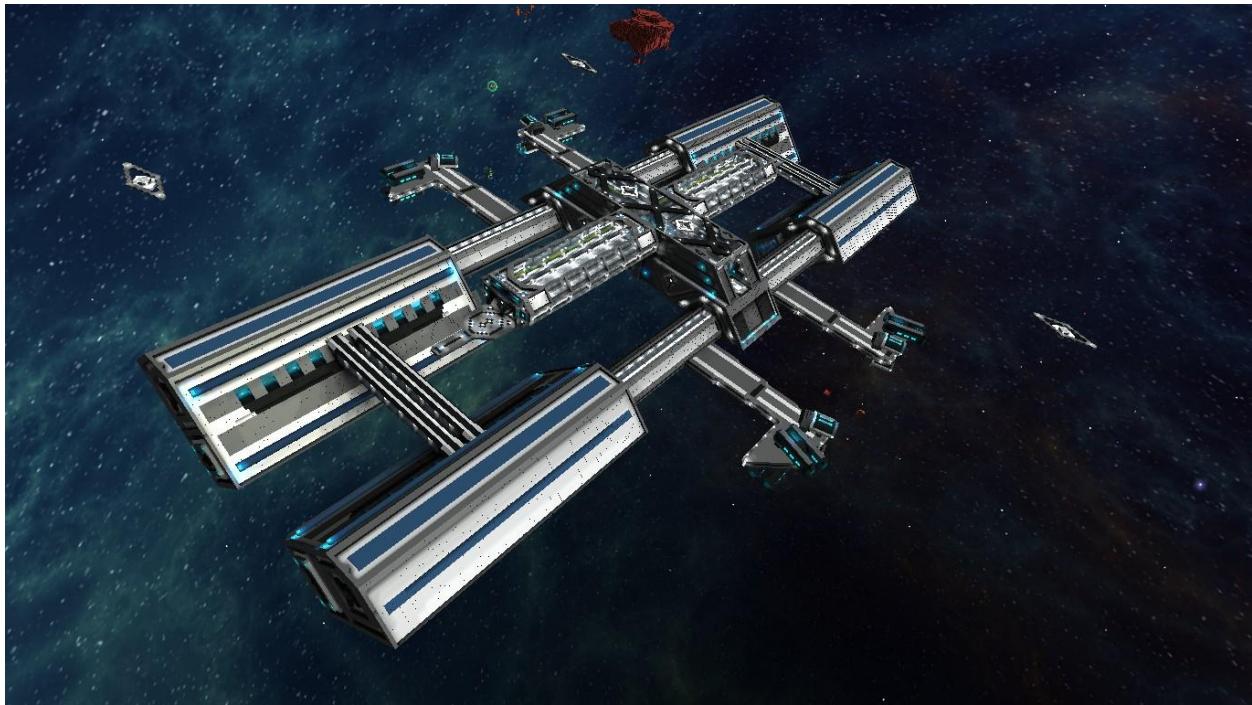


**Economy and Trade**

New Byzantium exists certainly as an import rather than export city, surviving off of resources brought in both from Old Earth as well as from outlier settlements.

Surrounding farming settlements provide New Byzantium with the food and produce needed to survive. Far off mining colonies ensure a proper passage of essential construction material to the planet, and the connection to Earth allows for the importation of other essential goods such as technology, earthen luxuries, and other base materials necessary for New Byzantine industries to thrive. The connotations of a loss of the Earthern connection are not pleasant, its consequences soon to be felt with the Creator's destruction.

If New Byzantium is an export for one thing, it is manpower, still the most populous urban center on Mars' surface, its emigrants essential towards the growth of new sprawling settlements across the surface of the red planet.



## Transportation and Infrastructure



The city of New Byzantium, as large as it is, methods of transportation across the city are essential.

On account of the initial difficulty in bringing private vehicles from Earth, an early emphasis in new Byzantium was placed on public transport and walkability, a trend that had continued in new Byzantium's development even in spite of a growing automobile industry on the planet and lobbying from such affiliated corporations.

An expansive and well-organized rail system allows for easy transit across the city while timely and efficient bus transportation ensures an ease in commuting. The growing private automobile in N.A.V.E. has seen the bus industry take some hits, but the rail system remains as strong as it ever was before.

The only true barricade to public transport remains the tenuous urban border between N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I. requiring passengers to disembark, present their passports and identification, and perform a security check before re-embarking.

As such, lines are now marked by whether or not they remain within affiliated territory as commuting across the border becomes all the more infeasible with conflict brewing as it is.

## Community and Neighborhoods

Both within and external to the N.A.V.E. and C.A.I. controlled regions of New Byzantium, many different neighborhoods and communities are made up of varying ethnic and cultural groups. Some of the smaller affiliated and non-affiliated communities within New Byzantium are as follows:

- **Indian:** Not a partner of the Terraforming of Mars Initiative, the nation of Bharat would never be given the opportunity to see its people given a new home on the Red Planet. However, despite this, ethnic Indian minorities would see themselves still given a chance to make a new home for themselves on mars, brought aboard as primarily American and British-Indians through NAVE, now securing disparate neighborhoods of the city to call their own.
- **Arab:** A small community by all counts, the Arab population on Mars is limited primarily to the Turkic population of NAVE. However, small minorities, especially of Kurdish and Syrian descend, within NAVE territory, cling onto cultural values in order to ensure their survival.
- **Russian:** Split down the middle between those of West Russia, incorporated into NAVE, and those of the Chinese-annexed East Russian, subservient to the CAI, this Slavo-Siberian ethnic culture finds itself in an unfortunate position, especially within CAI territory, where most reside in far off resource settlements while small groups still do live within new Byzantium, searching desperately for a chance of liberation and autonomy, be it on their own, or reunited with their Western brethren.



## Huǒxīng

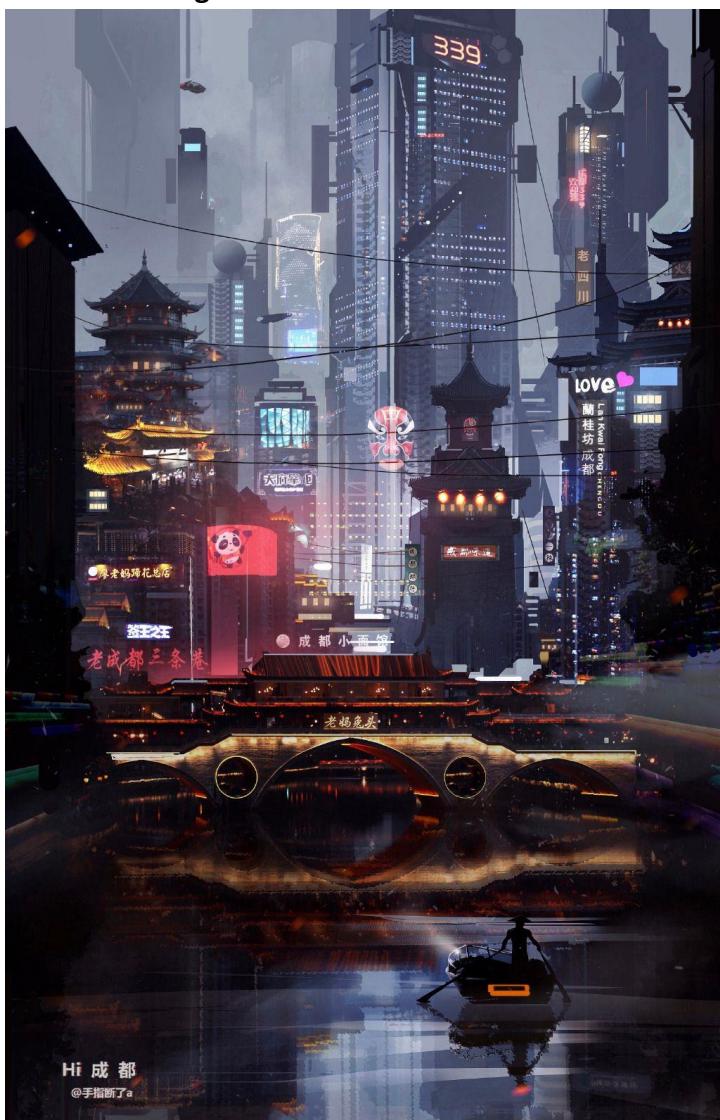


In seeing that New Byzantium was becoming ever more divided, the C.A.I. came to the decision that without abandoning their investments in the capital of Mars, a city for them to lay sole claim to was desperately needed.

It would be on the shores of Eden Bay that the city of Huǒxīng, a new dense population center that would soon become an economic center of the C.A.I., and a growing threat to the security and economic standing of NAVE on the Red Planet.

A growing trade HUB in its relations with the Scanian League, and a rising military stronghold, the role that Huǒxīng will come to play in the future cannot, and should not, be understated.

## Urban Planning and Architecture



A departure from the brutalist, near Soviet, architecture of their district in New Byzantium built with the purpose of only functionality and rationality in mind, Huǒxīng was constructed to stand brightly as the epitome of Chinese culture and superiority in Mars.

Though not quite relying on the same traditional norms of Old China, Huǒxīng would become far more comfortable in building a city based around design aesthetics and vast consumerism so as to stimulate the Martian C.A.I. economy. Such would mean the creation of dense and expansive commercial districts, lavish residential areas, and parks designed to help in stimulating a partial tourist economy.

The results have been apparent. Huǒxīng now stands as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most wealthy city on the planet, only behind New Byzantium, and its stylistic influence has indeed attracted many

from across the globe, seeing citizens of the N.A.V.E. member states commonly referring to Huǒxīng as a prime vacation destination, even above the natural wonders of the Red Planet.

But if this city can withstand the isolation of coming war, who can say?

## Economy and Trade

Unlike new Byzantium, Huǒxīng thrives off of both exports rather than imports, the C.A.I. much preferring this economic center on Eden Bay to the shared custody of New Byzantium on account of far reduced N.A.V.E. oversight.

In terms of exports, Huǒxīng is a growing technological goods hub, exporting devices such as phones, holo-projectors, computers, or even key components such as hard drives, microchips, etc.

Huǒxīng's exports tie directly with their imports, desperately needing to import individual parts, materials, and precious metals. Whether from New Byzantium or from its varying resource-extraction settlements across the Red Planet's surface, the C.A.I. remains dedicated towards ensuring that the thriving Huǒxīng tech industry is given all that it needs to survive and thrive.

In regards to other trade partners, on the coast of the Chryse Gulf, Huǒxīng maintains tenuous, though existing trade relations with the Norse Scanian Trade League. Though the relationship is far from a friendly one, it remains profitable, but only so far as the Scanian League's right to moderate trade remains respected. With growing C.A.I. insistence on setting their own terms, this relationship may soon change, but just how it will remains to be seen.



## Transportation and Infrastructure



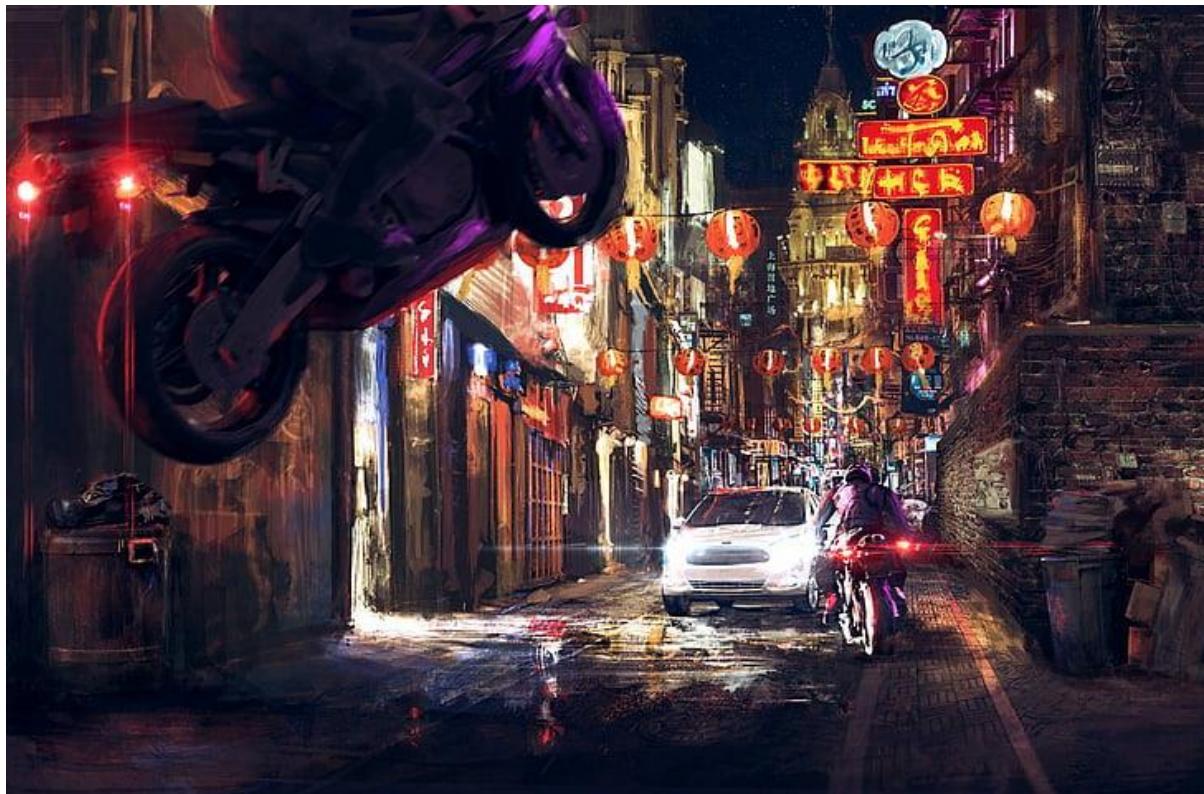
Unlike New Byzantium, perhaps as a means of encouraging vast consumerism within its borders, Huoxing demonstrates an unhealthy reliance on private transport, seeing streets often clogged with cars, inefficient and lagging busses, interrupted all by a half-minded effort of establishing a rail network.

Many attest, however, that the constant business of Huoxing

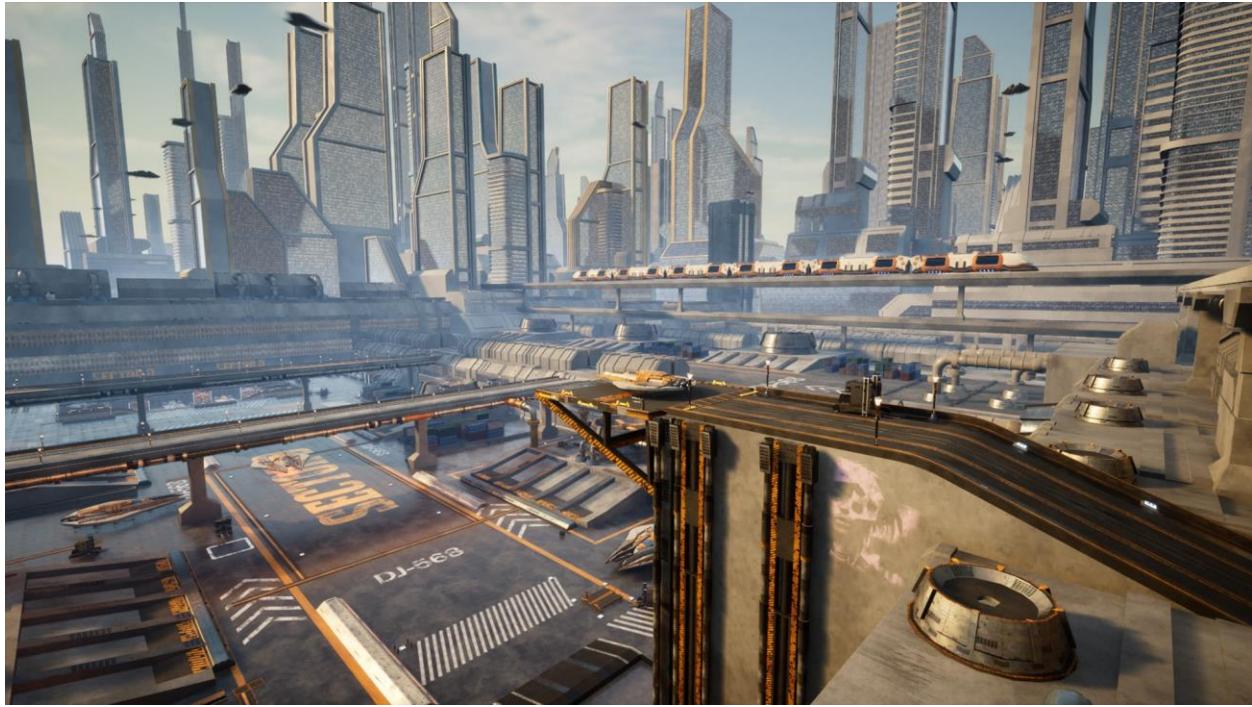
remains one of its charms, but such words are mostly spoken by tourists rather than residents.

The city's position on the bay and man-made canal network also ensure a living maritime transport network of river-taxis that help to bring commuters to their places of work so long as they remain close to such canal networks.

The strict working culture of Huoxing means that the streets of the city are rarely quiet, which is just as the C.A.I. likes it, a vibrant work force always at work towards securing the economic future of the Chinese People's Empire's interests on the Red Planet.



## Marineria



Echoing the C.A.I.'s own efforts to establish a foothold beyond New Byzantium, The North American and British member states of N.A.V.E. joined together economically in order to help enable the establishment of Marineria at the end of the Marineris channel.

Less populous and less dense than Huǒxīng, for instance, Marineria is a quiet city that does not particularly attract many for its luxuries, but plays a critical role in the N.A.V.E. alliance that cannot be understated.

A city with both a maritime, aviary, and surface economy, Marineria has managed to, unlike its New Byzantine sister city, remain fundamentally free of widespread corporate interest, but, rather, still remains a mostly public city, collaboratively directed by both the American and British member state governments. Both as a means of ensuring the proper use of resources that pass through the city as well as for ensuring its use as a military staging ground, this state control has thus far worked in order to allow N.A.V.E. to better prepare itself for the wars to come.

## Urban Planning and Architecture



Lacking the same corporate influence as is evidenced in New Byzantium, Marineria cannot much be called a beautiful city. Though full of parks and natural areas, the architectural style of the city itself is one of practicality and efficiency.

What this description usually entails is brutalist and modernist architecture designed not for aesthetic purposes, but rather to better enable the processing of resources, the export of them, the gathering of military material, and the housing of residents. It cannot be said that the city is uncomfortable, but nor can it be said that the city is comforting, and as far as N.A.V.E. is concerned, this is to the city's benefit.

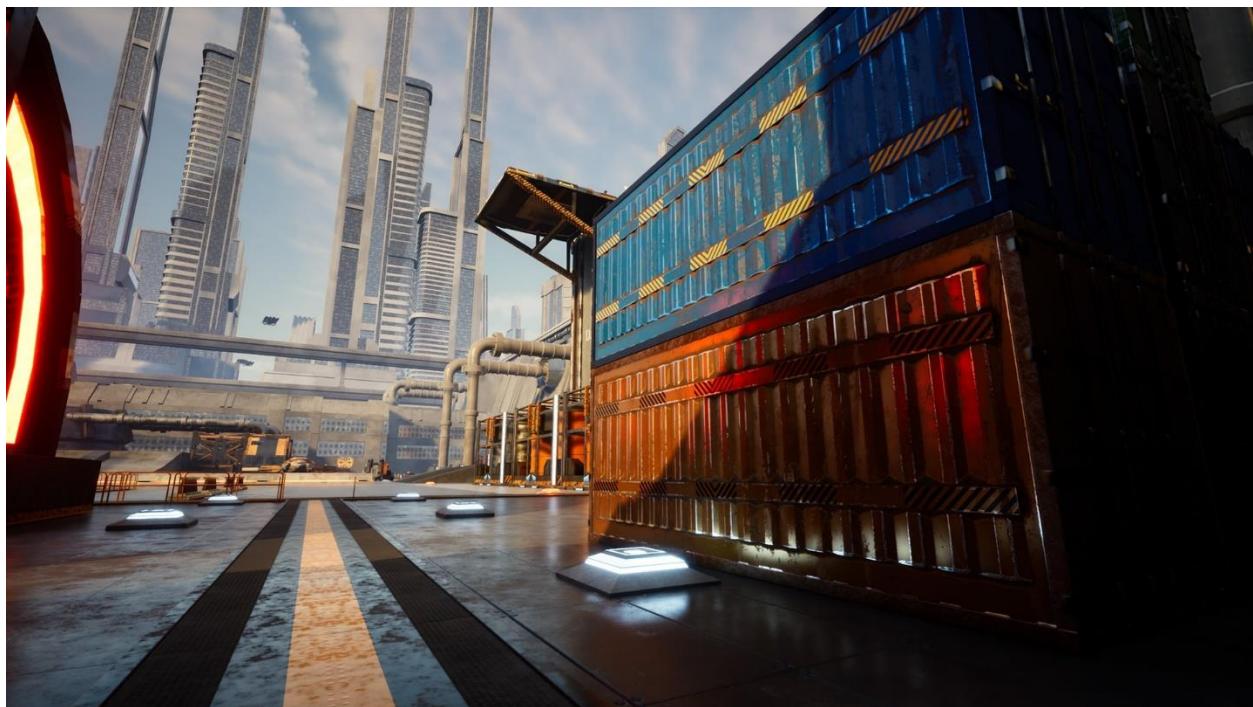
It is not, in the slightest, a tourist destination, but is a functional city in the purpose it serves, as a hub of economic efficiency, resource extraction, processing, and exporting. With this in mind, the numbers do not lie, and so even though it cannot be called a beautiful city, none can deny that Marineria does its job, and does it right.

**Economy and Trade**

Above all else, Marineria is an export-based city. Based on the edge of the Arsian Mountain Range, Marineria acts as the primary gathering and processing center for all that is extracted from the mountain range, primarily material and ores vital towards construction, but also precious metals required towards technological development as well as the manufacturing of weapons, tanks, and other military material.

Numerous resource extraction centers line the Arsian Range with its many workers operating full shifts during day to be transported back to the city to spend their down time as well as the night. As such, Marineria is a very work-based city, but still does house some of the essentials to entertain workers on their downtime, though none can deny than once a holiday or long weekend comes, nearly a third of the city's workforce will leave at a time en route to New Byzantium to have a sense of real fun.

Regardless of this, Marineria remains an efficient work hub, and controlled publicly by the N.A.V.E. government, desperate to ensure the flow of pivotal resources rather than a corporation that can afford to exploit its workforce, those who commit themselves to the work culture of Marineria are well-compensated, at least enough to justify the near total isolation and separation from the vibrant life of new Byzantium.



## Transportation and Infrastructure



A city built wide rather than tall, Marineria is a city built upon an efficient and well-functioning transportation infrastructure.

Be it trams, a well-oiled metro system, or even a reliable air shuttle network designed to take workers to the Arsan mountains day in and day out, there is little emphasis in Marineria on private vehicular traffic, though it does, of course, remain available, even if impractical as to bring one's car to new Byzantium would require a half-day long ferry ride to the city in the first place rather than a simple 2-hour flight.

Though within the city itself, there are only a few key districts that remain dense enough to remain walkable, but as Marineria places little emphasis on its tourist, consumer, or nightlife value, such areas are few and far in between.

As a city built around efficiency and trade, however, Marineria does its job, and like the well-oiled machine it is, gets to the rest of N.A.V.E. what is needed to help fuel itself in preparation for coming war.

## Technology

### Terraforming Technology

Naturally, it is unavoidable to talk about the technology responsible for the state that Mars wound up in in the first place. Terraforming technology is often romantically depicted as a large orbital station firing down a special beam at a planet's service, "scientifically" changing everything by some ambiguous means.

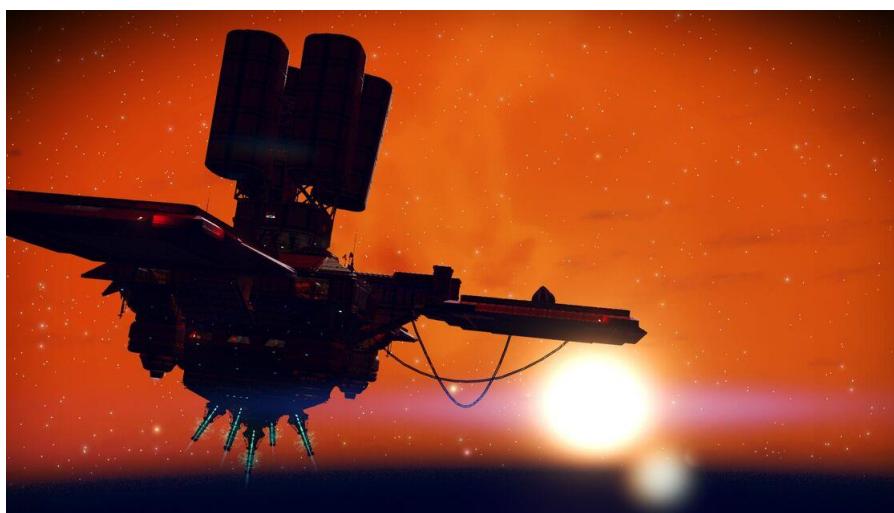
Maybe in the far future, such would be the case, but as mankind's first terraforming initiative in just the 2100s, the Terraforming of Mars Initiative (TMI) was a far more complicated task, performed as a multi-century endeavor of planetary alteration.

The process would follow in a number of crucial steps of slow planetary shifting, staged out of the orbital station "The Creator":

- ❖ Greenhouse Gas Generation
- ❖ Heat Trapping and Temperature Increase
- ❖ Atmospheric Thickening
- ❖ Magnetic Field Restoration
- ❖ Soil Improvement
- ❖ Oxygen Production
- ❖ Ecological Engineering
- ❖ Water Cycle Establishment
- ❖ Biodiversity and Sustainability
- ❖ Long-Term Maintenance

The process would be carried out throughout the planet in numerous different stages through a combination of orbital efforts as well as group support missions originating around the "New

Byzantium" research station that would, in time, become the capital of the fledgling planet. With the destruction of the "Creator," however, all these decades of work would be for nought.



## Transportation and Mobility

Despite the hopes of many, mankind still finds itself yet to master the mysteries of Faster than Light (FTL) interstellar navigation. While such a dream would have been in sight following the colonization of Mars, dreams of out-of-system travel were needed to be put on standby. Rather, technological innovations made in the realm of transportation were accomplished with the goal of Mars' settlement in mind.



As such, such advances such as innovations in rocketry would be made to allow for larger payloads of supplies and people to be transported out of orbit, more powerful propulsion engines for the journey itself, as well as more secure and efficient ways of transporting cargo.

As for ground travel, there has been no shortage of innovations in technology to allow for an easier time navigating the planet's rough terrain:

- **Hovercraft:** Utilizing gravitation technology, this innovation allows smooth, efficient movement across the Martian surface, including rough terrains and sand dunes.
- **Space Elevator:** A colossal elevator that connected to an Areo-synchronous orbital station that "The Creator" would dock with for equipment and crew transfer, this space elevator was vital towards "The Creator's" operations on Mars.



- **Suborbital Hoppers:** Supersonic craft designed for rapid, controlled hops between different regions on Mars' surface, ideal for covering long distances across the planet in a short amount of time.



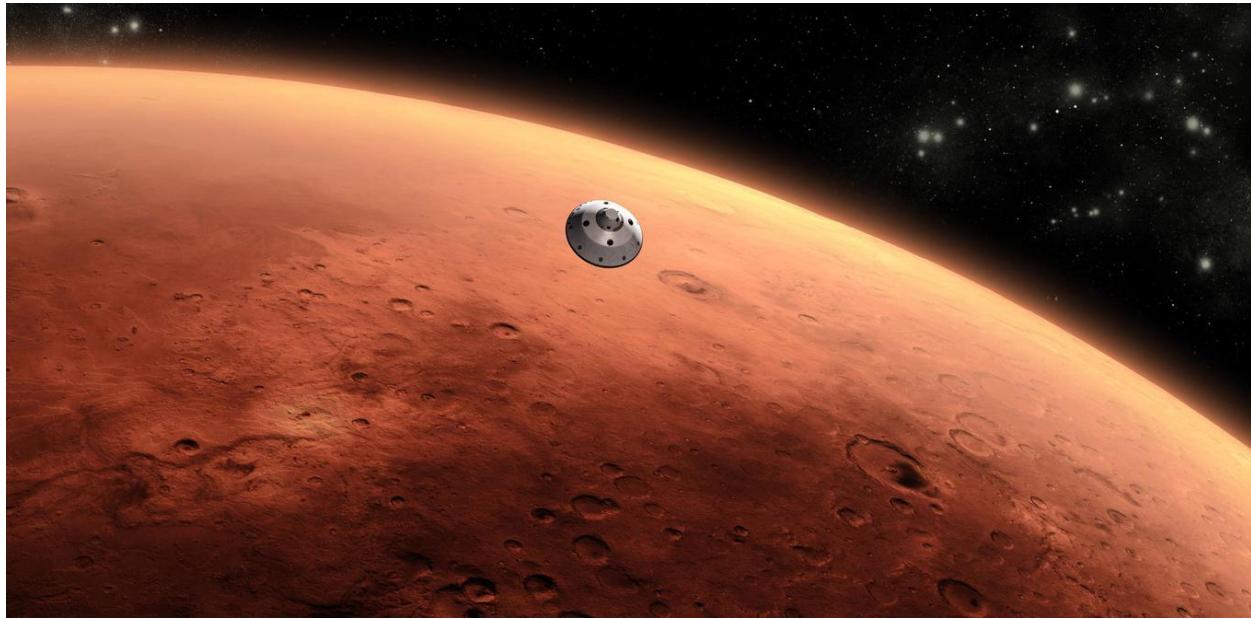
## Communication and Networking

Naturally, with the establishment of different outposts, research stations, and terraforming observation centers across the planet, a way of linking communication across the planet was required. It did not take long for an Internet resembling Earth's own to be implemented on Mars using numerous orbiting satellites.

These satellites, amidst an unstable surface, were all directly controlled and operated via "The Creator" with eventual plans to transfer administration to surface facilities that would never come into fruition.

As the terraforming and colonization of Mars was an effort directed from Earth, contact back to the home planet was also a necessity and so "The Creator" would also act as the primary communication HUB back to Earth, armed with the most sophisticated communications technology, allowing for a back-and-forth dialogue with a time delay not exceeding thirty seconds.

With the destruction of "The Creator," however, and the neutralization of its more powerful satellites that now sit lifeless in orbit, planetary linkage as well as communication back to Earth has been severed, and so a dark shadow is now cast over the red planet.



## Weapons and Defense Systems



In spite of the Mars Colonization Effort having been initiated as a collaborative effort between the major powers of Earth, these proxies would soon be at one another's throats as tensions would once again sour on Earth in the wake of limiting resource availability. Naturally, innovations would need to be made in weaponry and defensive technology.

- Projectile weapons remain the standard of anti-personnel weaponry, effective, cheap to produce, and cheap to produce ammunition for.
- Innovations in laser weaponry have primarily been adapted towards Anti-Air applications, effective primarily in downing drones, aircraft, and even small satellites.
- Railguns that use electromagnetic acceleration to fire projectiles at incredible speeds are commonplace as anti-armor weaponry, most often outfitted as stationary turrets or on heavy tank units.
- Gravity Anchors originally used as construction hardware now serve to alter the reality of a battlefield by creating localized gravity fields that can turn the tide of a battle as the user wishes.
- Used for crowd control and, more recently, anti-personal encounters, conic disrupters emit powerful sound waves, disrupting the equilibrium of targets and disorienting them.
- Especially vital for disrupting high-yield enemy technology, Electromagnetic weaponry has become especially important in counteracting an opponent's technological superiority.



## Medical and Health Technology

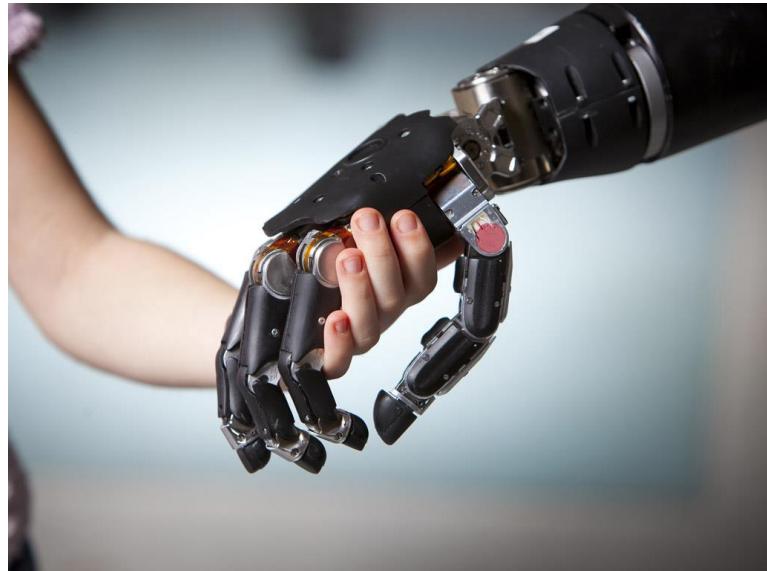


The passage of time has meant that not all advancement has been made towards the pursuit of man's egoism and self-destruction, but also its desire for longevity. As such, advances have been made as well in the realms of medicine and health technology, most notably in the way of new more effective ways of treating natural illnesses such as most cancers with new treatments

able to prolong the average man's lifespan to a near-universal average of ninety years, and for those capable of receiving special treatment, namely the upper echelons of the world's business community, upwards of 150.

Such medical advances have also made a major change to the world of emergency aid, particularly regarding wartime injuries. Whether more advanced painkillers able to isolate particularly damaged areas while avoiding undesired side effects, biofoam capable of sealing wounds, or artificial calcium patches capable of mending broken limbs over the course of mere hours, military personnel are now more than ever able to return to the line of duty even in the face of what would be crippling injuries.

The world of artificial limbs has also come a long way with the near perfect replicability of human limbs having finally been fundamentally achieved. Some organizations too have begun the production of limbs even exceeding the capacity of that which is organic, but as things stand so far, not many are willing to sacrifice flesh and bone for tin and aluminium.



## Environmental Suits and Gear



The climate of Mars was not particularly suitable for human life before the terraforming effort began. Even following its start, it would take many decades for mankind to be capable of setting foot on its surface without substantial environmental protection gears, and even then, only for a limited amount of time in localized areas that'd been deemed properly terraformed.

Now, thanks to the “Creator’s” endeavors for the Terraforming of Mars Initiative,

large swaths of the planet are considered reasonably safe to be navigated without the use of environmental suits, primarily in new Byzantium, its surrounding areas, and external settlements that have been allowed to grow and thrive.

However, outside of these properly terraformed areas where the initiative continued, the environment was still considered too dangerous and unhealthy to navigate without protection, be it simple oxygen tanks in some areas to full environment protection gear in others.

With the destruction of the “Creator,” however, much of the planet has been faced with instability, meaning that unsafe areas are now considered simply hazardous and lethal to explore while areas previously deemed safe and stabilized now see this status being put to the test. It is generally considered inadvisable to navigate large stretches of Mars’ terrain away from secured settlements without backup protection gear at the ready.



## Robotics and AI



Early 21<sup>st</sup>-century hype around the development of AI was not entirely unwarranted, but to a certain extent, was indeed, “overhyped.” Artificial Intelligence, if even it could be called that, remained, disappointingly, artificial.

Only able to work with information given to or accessible to it, artificial intelligence remained largely artificial, never quite reaching the dreams of science fiction novelists.

Rather than taking over humanity, it would instead become one of its most relied-upon tools, whether for creating templates for larger pieces of writing, organizing data to a user’s specifications in seconds for what might normally take hours on end, etc.

Still prone to mistakes nearly as much as humans, however, what passes for AI would never be left to complete pivotal tasks unattended or unchecked, very often still requiring human operators to fact check and corroborate.

In the realm of robotics, however, many more advancements aligning with the dreams of Sci-Fi would be realized. To an extent at least. Such innovations would include but not be limited to:

- Unmanned Surface Vehicles
  - Ground convoy networks run by computers alone to transport cargo across the surface of Mars without human piloting or navigation being required.
- Unmanned Artillery Platforms
  - Munition weapons capable of maintaining suppressive fire as well as tracking enemy movement to be able to adjust in real-time and ensure a constant supply of firepower.
- UAVs
  - Unmanned Aeriel Vehicles remain a pivotal component of modern warfare, very often now only requiring human interference for target confirmation, but otherwise being capable of carrying out offensive action practically independently.
- Drone Swarms
  - A characteristic of warfare introduced in the 2020s, the concept of drone swarms using cheap though reliable small UAVs has only become more popular, their capacities without question, be it for scattering infantry personnel, or bringing down chaos on urban centers.

## Security and Surveillance



On a planet over two-hundred miles away from Earth, it is important, now more than ever, for the colonial governments of The North Atlantic Voyager Expedition and the Chinese-Headed Celestial Ascendancy Initiative to be capable of enforcing their will on their population bases. The degree to which these nations practice such maintenance of order and control

differs, practiced far more intensely by the CAI, but to a limited degree, the NAVE as well.

Such methods and technologies surrounding security and surveillance include:

- Orbital Surveillance Grids
  - Rendered largely out of commission following the destruction of the Creator and destabilization of the atmosphere, some individual surveillance satellites remain operational and usable, though a far cry from a unified grid.
- Biometric Recognition
  - In the CAI, biometrics of all citizens are recorded and made accessible to authorities as a means of tracking individual citizens as well as culling potential migrants, infiltrators, or other unwanted entities.
- Security Robots
  - Equipped with AI facial-recognition technology, security bots are capable of both noticing suspicious activity, instantaneously recording it, as well as combatting said security risk.
- Smart Fencing
  - In tense times such as these, sometimes, it is more desirable to catch one amid a crime rather than prevent it as a whole. More effective at catching possible infiltrators and dissidents, fences that use invisible rays of light to detect disturbances have become a keystone in modern security developments.



it as a whole. More effective at catching possible infiltrators and dissidents, fences that use invisible rays of light to detect disturbances have become a keystone in modern security developments.

### Cultural and Social Tech

The surface of Mars isn't all conflict and Cold War sentiment. In the field of entertainment and cultural technologies, innovations have been made as well, but, fundamentally, rely on technology and media from Earth, namely in terms of movies, television programs, and digital media.



Perhaps fueled by Old World nostalgia, communal games and social centers sprung up around the growing New Byzantium with arcades combining both retro as well as modern games, going so far as rooms dedicated to competitive VR tournaments. So too has altered reality made a resurgence in the new Martian society, seeing both children and adolescents taking to the streets once more as part of their jubilation.

Social Media still remains a pivotal part of NAVE and MAI societies, whether as a means of connection, gossip, and ego inflation for the former, and subtle population control and surveillance for the latter.

## Inhabitants

### Humanity

From the day of the establishment of the first permanent human settlement on Mars in 2129, Mars has become inhabited by one people and one people alone—mankind. The population of Mars, beginning from the establishment of the first research outpost, has grown exponentially as new areas became open to the prospects of habitation and exploitation.

As it stands now in the year 2196, the population of Mars is at a mostly stable 5 million, with nearly 750 thousand people living in New Byzantium alone. While the initial habitation of Mars would see colonists living together in New Byzantium regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or any other dividing factors, the continual terraforming of Mars would mankind return to their roots as groups would set out to embark into the unknown on their own alongside those they shared common characteristics with. Whether this would be the CAI-headed Russian autonomous zone that would form in the southern wilds of Mars, a sect of Buddhists monks seeking independence, peace, and a return to their roots in the Aureum Mountains, or more Old-West thinking Americans seizing upon frontier thinking in the untamed wilds of Mars' surface.



## Flora



Devoid of an environment capable of supporting life prior to Earthen colonization and terraforming, the flora of Mars was simply non-existent before mankind took upon themselves the critical task of populating the Martian surface with plant life native to Earth. Whether this meant crops for the sake of population sustainability, trees essential for construction

projects and trade industries, or simply other imports for the sake of decoration, Mars has quickly become overrun with Earthen plant life.

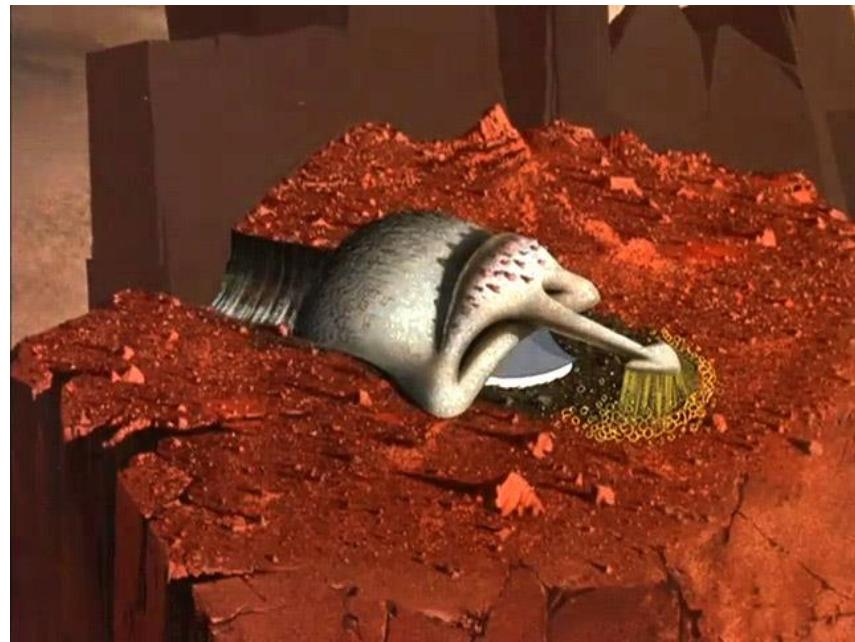
The destruction of “The Creator,” however, and the resulting destabilization of Mars’ environment, has begun to have unintended consequences of Mars’ plant life. Whether simply dying off in the more affected areas or rapidly adapting in response to the ever-changing environment, the environment of Mars is rapidly changing, and with the continuing changes across the planet from the surface to as deep as the core itself, it is expected that this rapid adaptation and evolution will continue as Mars begins to take on an ecological identity that is truly its own, even if resulting from the follies of mankind’s hubris.



## Fauna

Similar to plant life on Mars, the majority of animal life on Mars results from mankind bringing them along in an effort to both provide food sources as well as to create an environment nostalgic of that of a dying Earth.

Farm animals can be found in much of New Byzantium's agricultural districts, and even wildlife such as deer has been transferred to the newly created wilds of the Martian surfaces, some species like deer in particular coming to thrive and multiply in vast quantities, akin to as they have on Earth.



No different from how the destruction of "The Creator," the disruption of the terraforming initiative, and destabilization of the Red Planet created numerous changes in its Flora, so too did it for its fauna. Whether this has resulted in animals simply dying off, being forced to relocate, being subject to extreme short-term adaptations, or even new species emerging seemingly from the unknown, the concept of Mars being a twin planet to Earth is slowly fading into obscurity as a new ecological profile is developed for this hyper evolving world.

## Areopolitical Entities



Even just a little under 250 million miles from Earth, mankind is subject to the same errors of the past and remains dedicated to separating on numerous bases, be them existing political entities brought over from earth, separate ethnic or cultural divisions, or even, in some areas, religious.

Whether it's to claim dominance over the planet, seek autonomy here where deprived of it back on Earth, or settle old feuds, factions have arisen, alliances as well as rivalries have been formed, and even in the wake of failing Earth on the eve of self-destruction, mankind seems either unwilling to learn from its mistakes, or perhaps under a delusional belief that they can set the slate clean with one final war to end all wars.



## THE NORTH ATLANTIC VOYAGER EXPEDITION (N.A.V.E)



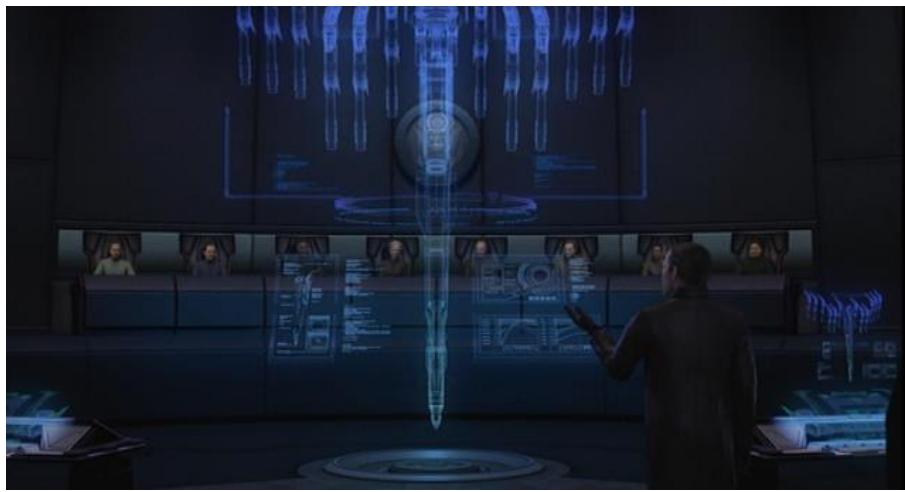
Evolving from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the North Atlantic Voyager Expedition (N.A.V.E) marks the combined efforts of most Earthen west-aligning nations to establish a foothold in the cosmos. Driven less by immediate desperate than the east-aligned CAI, the colonization efforts of NAVE were driven more by an understanding of the long-term necessity of finding an alternative home for mankind before needing to resort to extreme measures.

However, as the situation on Earth became more volatile, it became more apparent that cooperation with the CAI was a necessity in order to secure mankind's future beyond Earth.

With the passage of time, however, following decades of Martian habitation and settlement, the different civilizations would begin to go their separate ways. Now, the territories of N.A.V.E are primarily limited to Xanthe Terra and the land surrounding the fertile Marineris Channel as well as the Western District of New Byzantium.

With the eastern border in flux and tensions on the rise following the destruction of the Creator, N.A.V.E finds itself on the brink of war that it is intent on winning in order to safeguard its people and the freedoms they enjoy.

## Leadership and Governance



Still clinging onto the values of the Western civilizations from which the North Atlantic Voyager Expedition was spawned from, the N.A.V.E tries to stay true to the democratic values of their home nations.

However, this is easier said than done.

For one, N.A.V.E in it of itself is not a single nation as the C.A.I. is, but rather, a coalition of multiple different colonial national governments. As such, the primary governing body of N.A.V.E is a council of representatives hailing from the different substates of the alliance, the primary speaker of the council rotating on a bi-annual basis.

The council is the final deciding body of N.A.V.E, but measures proposed by the council still will be delivered to member alliances to either be approved or vetoed will a majority vote across the alliance will determine the success of the measure's passing.

The system was, initially, an efficient and honest one, allowing for larger oversight while still allowing member nations to maintain their governing systems such as American adherence to their local congress, English celebration of their earthen royal family, or Japanese imperial parliamentarianism.

However, with the settlement of Mars now opening a new frontier, new forces have begun moving in, namely, the free market. And while a cornerstone of Western liberty and capitalism, these same forces pose a growing risk of undermining N.A.V.E's democratic values as member state governments grow ever more at risk of being bought out by corporate interests, and with the first corporate CEO to run for councilor's campaign in full swing, many begin to doubt just how impenetrable N.A.V.E really is, if not to threats from the outside, then from within.

## Military and Defense

With the brewing cold war on Mars' surface, the emphasis on military buildup within N.A.V.E has been ever-intensifying.

A military alliance between different nations, the N.A.V.E military doctrine stands testament to a wide variety of military doctrines as well as centuries worth of military learning and experience.

As it has for centuries, the N.A.V.E. military doctrine is centered around the concept of superior firepower and technological superiority, having, the numerous small-scale conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that saw powers refraining from using their full military might for fear of escalation such as the Middle Eastern 6-Year War and the Siberian Russian War of Independence saw the West distancing themselves from complete and total reliance on Network-Centric Warfare and instead beginning to develop tactics and strategies more in line with Decentralized Warfare in order to enable more strategic deployment of limited forces.

Regardless, in terms of quality, N.A.V.E still boasts superiority over the other major powers of Mars and so finds their security here while other powers seek means of either depriving the West of these advantages, or simply overwhelming them with sheer quantity.

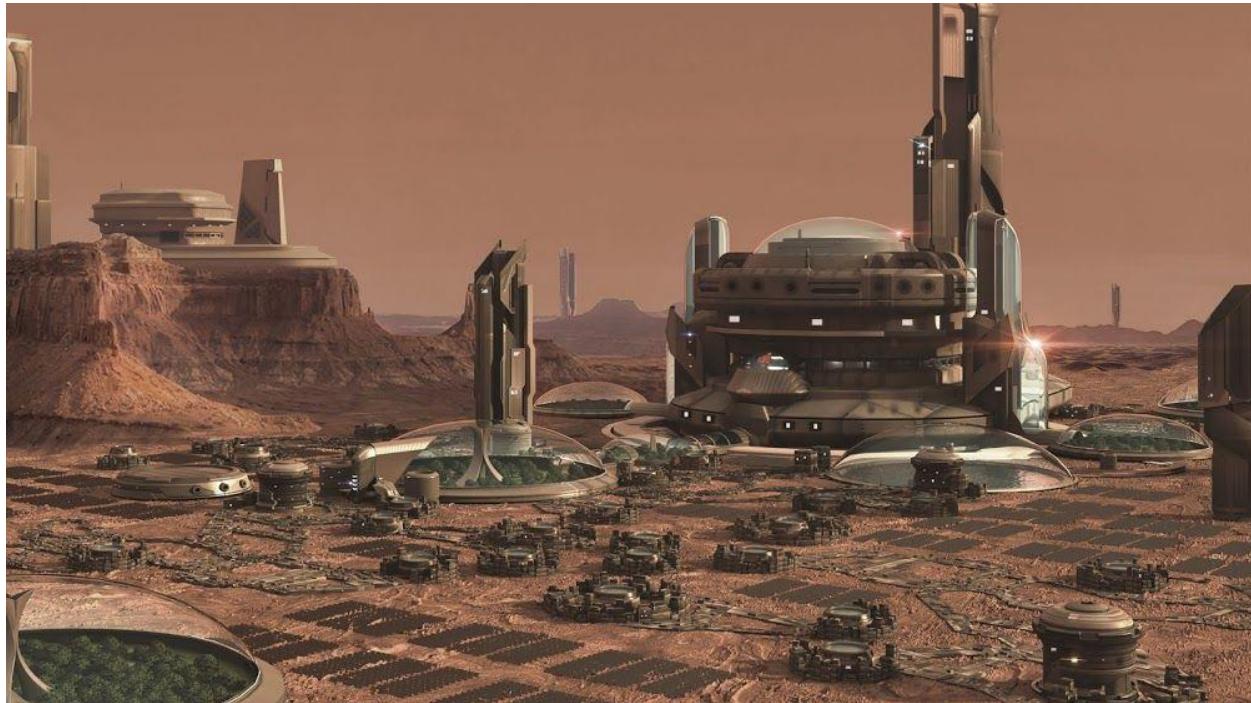


## Colonial Development

With the city of New Byzantium split between N.A.V.E and C.A.I spheres of influence, and emphasis has been moved away from the planet's divided capital and instead on outwards growth towards further reaches of Mars' surface.

The majority of N.A.V.E.'s territory is left to Xanthe Terra and the land surrounding the fertile Marineris Channel, but further settlements and outposts have also been established. As no concrete borders have been drawn, there are no explicit violations of sovereignty or territory, a fact often exploited by the C.A.I., but N.A.V.E. itself also uses this to their advantage in the name of establishing listening posts, outposts, and even establishing settlements meant to deprive the C.A.I. of valuable natural resources.

N.A.V.E. colonies, focused on quality rather than quantity, ensure that the areas they do choose to settle are defensible, well-armed, and able to be quickly supported in event of disaster or enemy incursion. Collaboration with citizen militias also ensures there are always hands on deck in such an event, but this has also been known to result in tension between N.A.V.E military personnel and settlements who wish not to be glorified military outposts.



## Diplomacy and Foreign Relations



Of the two major powers on Mars, N.A.V.E. finds its relations with the other major planetary faction, the C.A.I. stretched to its limits as the two factions exist in a Cold War and arms race with one another that slowly dares to become real as a result of recent incidents such as the mysterious destruction of "The Creator."

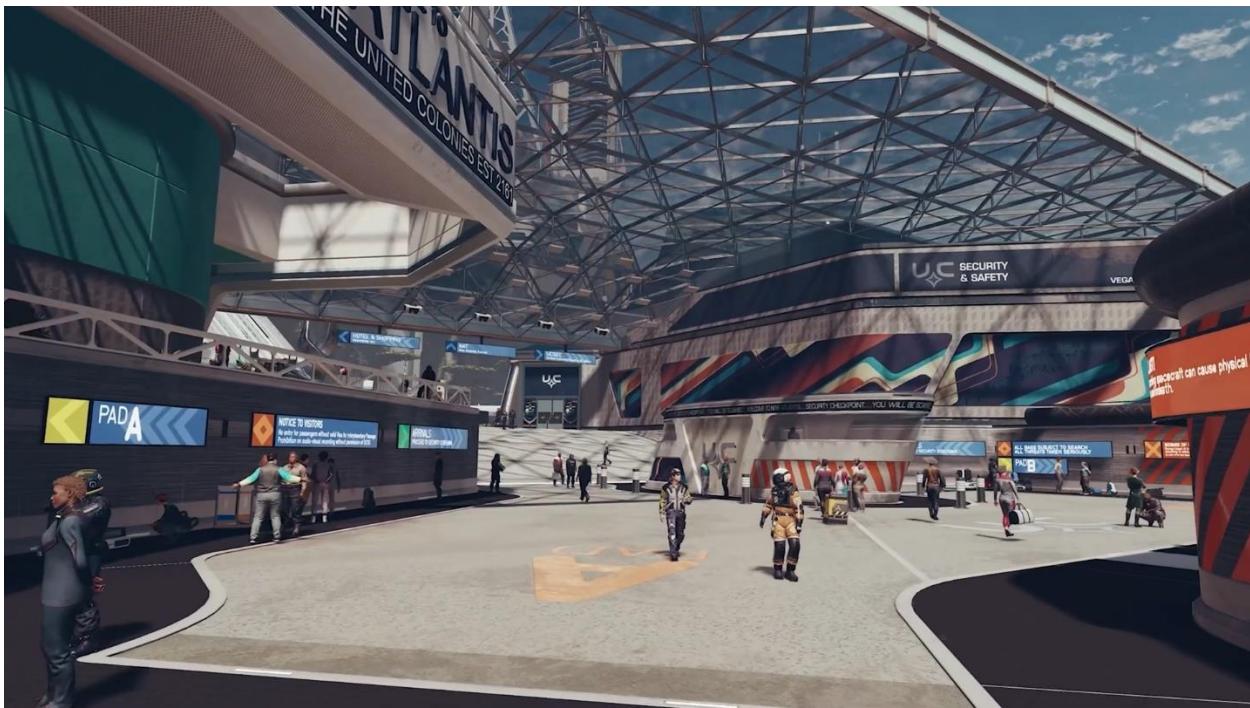
With a volatile border that is frequently subject to skirmishes, incursions, and raids, the only thing keeping back N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I from engaging in a true war is a lack of knowledge regarding the others' combat potential and the possibility that such would mean death for near all on the planet and the loss of one of mankind's only chance for future survival.

As such, with their homes back on Earth on the line, the two factions maintain an uneasy truce that only just barely staves off total war, but both factions remain aware that this is only temporary, and may change at any moment.

In regard to non-aligned or technically autonomous settlements, N.A.V.E. prefers not to overextend militarily, but rather through the enticing potential of more open trade. As such, many independent settlements that are not within the C.A.I.'s military reach tend to align with N.A.V.E. and the benefits that this entails.

However, with whispers from the shadow about a brewing Martian Independence faction, N.A.V.E. is forced to begin viewing the outside with more suspicion lest their centuries of advancement on Mars be lost.

## Civilian Affairs



N.A.V.E., in accordance with the general values from which it was established, prefers to take a more hands-off approach when it comes to civilian affairs. The economic structure that of a free market, citizens are generally left to their own affairs.

Civilian Affairs are left to the local governments of member states rather than the overarching N.A.V.E. governing council and so therefore, there can be a lot of variation.

Within the American-run administrative districts, for instance, there is an emphasis on actively participating in the economy whether this is white-collar workers handling administrative duties that keep society functioning, or blue-collar workers responsible for maintenance, construction, repair, etc. With little welfare and safety net in such areas, being out of work is not an option, which has allowed large corporations as of late to contract desperate civilians and put them to work in mines that prospect for Mars' natural resources, the military-industry, or large-scale construction projects.

Meanwhile, other areas such as the Alpine administrative district, far less populous and militarized, are able to dedicate more of their budget towards welfare and civilian affairs, but consequentially finds themselves lagging behind an evolving Martian economic ecosystem, more a burden than contributor on N.A.V.E.'s shared economy and much more severely, unprepared in the wake of growing tensions.

## Security and Law Enforcement

Aligning with N.A.V.E.'s approach to civilian affairs, security and law enforcement traditionally maintained a doctrine of high funding, low interference. What is meant by this is that police oversight remains limited by N.A.V.E.'s Constitution as well as the Bill of Rights of individual member states.

Much like the military, N.A.V.E. the police system is made up of the police of different member states responsible for security of their individual member states, often not dispatched to other parts of the alliance unless in the case of severe civil disturbances.

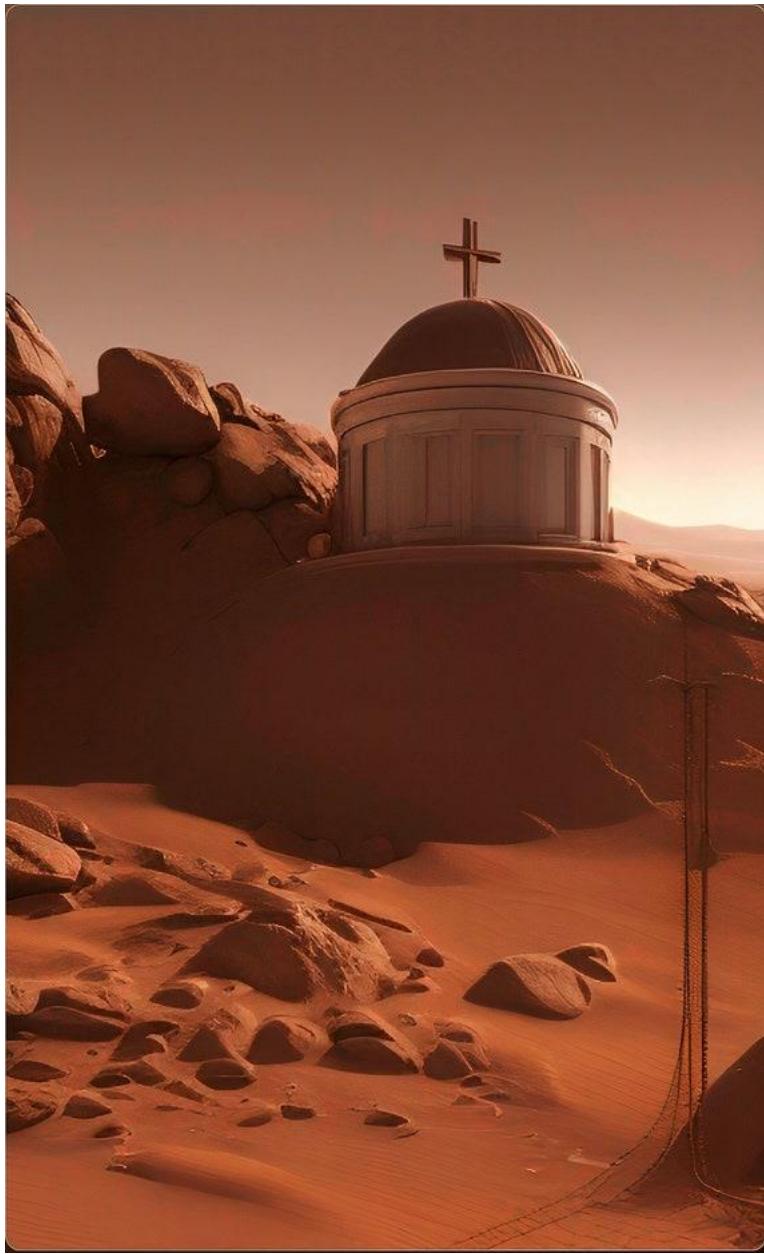
In times of such disturbances, police doctrine is prone to severe change, often demonstrated by strict and unflinching responses, be this the use of the full extent of N.A.V.E.'s civil security budget or the use of interstate special forces.

Corporate interference in N.A.V.E. as well has seen commercial interests beginning to have a more influential role in security, particularly in the name of protecting corporate property, ensuring the safe passage of goods and services, as well as oversight of corporate matters, to such an extent that their influence will even supersede state-run police.

With rising tensions with the C.A.I. too, N.A.V.E. police interference has been on the rise, often characterized by increased suspicion and even profiling. It remains to be seen just how the security apparatus of N.A.V.E. will evolve during these troubled times.



### Religion and Cultural Organizations



By nature a pluralist society, N.A.V.E., comprised of numerous western-aligning nations from different parts of the world, has avoided the trappings of a single state religion. However, by merit of the origin of its primary population base, the primary religion of N.A.V.E. remains Christianity, accounting for Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox populations. N.A.V.E. is also inhabited by a healthy Jewish and Muslim minority hailing from the Middle Eastern territories, as well as a healthy Buddhist population belonging primarily to Japan's demographics.

Culturally, N.A.V.E. remains extraordinarily diverse with little in way of a single shared culture that goes beyond general media consumption. Every member state very much demonstrates a cultural identity unique to themselves whether this is in terms of music, holidays, celebrations, etc.

In the vein of both religion and culture, however, a new movement has risen across Mars, simply

deemed "the Cult of Mars," resembling more a spiritual organization rather than strictly religious, tied closely, however, with the Roman Hellenistic Pantheon. The movement, rather secretive, is associated with the fledgling Martian Liberation Front, and, as such, while legal, is viewed upon with suspicion, and perhaps with good reason.

### Rebel or Dissident Movements

A relatively stable environment by merit of a pluralistic society, there are few, if any large-scale rebel movements within N.A.V.E. aimed towards toppling the state apparatus. However, the same cannot be said for movements seeking to impose limitations on growing corporate dominance over N.A.V.E.

Especially resulting from the electoral campaign of an aspiring corporate-originating councilor, dissent is growing within N.A.V.E., particular in the American zone of control. Dissent has ranged from simple requests for the federal government to impose regulation on the corporations to outright anti-capitalist movements that are, for the most part, suppressed, especially in the wake of conflict with the communist C.A.I.

While dissent has remained mostly nonviolent for now, it remains to be seen how these movements will progress, especially if allegations of C.A.I. interference in these movements are confirmed. The fact remains that the climate within N.A.V.E. is becoming more tense by the day, and may reach a boiling point sooner rather than later.



## CELESTIAL ASCENDANCY INITIATIVE (THE TIANQUAN INITIATIVE)



On the other side of the political spectrum and the Hydroates Channel is the Celestial Ascendancy Initiative (C.A.I.), known also as the Tianquan Initiative, or just Tianquan. Evolving from the Chinese People's Empire, The C.A.I. marks an ambition to bring the power of the state beyond the boundaries of Earth. Initially marked by a successful outpost on Mars, and, later, the first manned station over Mars, the CAI's ambitions for the red planet have been thinly veiled.

While initially an endeavor meant to enable state interests in the cosmos, the population and resource crisis on Earth has seen the CAI forced to enter into an uneasy truce with the Western hemisphere and N.A.V.E. Taking on the Terraforming of Mars Initiative together, the C.A.I. would see itself in equal partner in the settlement of Mars, ensuring them a place on the planet as well as the planetary capital, New Byzantium.

Now, however, much time having passed since the initial settlement, and especially with the destruction of "The Creator," tensions are on the rise with N.A.V.E. once again, and so the C.A.I. now prepares itself for a renewed conflict in order to secure its future on the soon to be Redder Planet.

## Leadership and Government



The government of C.A.I., in terms of rhetoric, is no different than that of how Chinese S.A.Rs were managed back on Earth. In this light, the C.A.I. is little more than a legal extension of China's hegemony back on Earth, still swearing loyalty to the Chinese People's Empire, different itself greatly from the administrative style of N.A.V.E. and its member states.

The C.A.I. maintains no legal right to declare independence and so for the duration of its time on Mars has answered directly to the General Secretary of the Empire.

Despite this rhetoric, by merit of the distance between Mars and Earth, the C.A.I. enjoys more autonomy than Earthen SARs such as the Mongolian, East Russian, or Pakistani SARs.

On Mars. The C.A.I. is headed by:

- **CCP Secretary:** An ambassador from the Chinese People's Empire, responsible for overseeing all government affairs in order to safeguard Chinese Interests
- **Congress Chairman:** Chairman of the C.A.I. congress, overseeing its passings, maintaining order, and relaying information to the CCP Secretary
- **The C.A.I. Congress:** a closed cabinet of a hundred appointed officials responsible for the general management of the C.A.I.'s holdings on Mars.

## Military and Defense



As the situation on Mars becomes ever more volatile, the Tianquan Ascendancy has been continually preparing itself for armed conflict.

Technologically advanced, perhaps even on a level on par with that of N.A.V.E., the C.A.I. has grown to incorporate a military doctrine closely in line with that of early 21<sup>st</sup> century NATO doctrine, namely that of Network-Centric Warfare, relying on advanced systems and communications to ensure close communication of all military assets on all fronts in all theaters.

The C.A.I. military unifies this military doctrine with one of Mass Assault, utilizing its high population to its advantage with mandatory military conscription as part of the state-mandated educational regimen, as well as a non-optional reservist program that ensures non-commissioned personnel are kept on standby

and at the ready in the event of additional manpower being required.

What is left often mentioned, rather, and swept under the rug, is that the majority of those in the first tier of reservists to be called hail from the non-Han demographics of the C.A.I., namely its Uyghur, Mongolian, Indochinese, and Russian minorities.

On account of this army of infantry, the C.A.I. and its masses of soldiers stand at the ready should this Cold War go hot.

**Colonial Development**

A direct extension of the Chinese People's Empire, the C.A.I.'s colonial ambitions are as mandated by the Chinese Communist Party from back on Earth.

This initial separation between the Earthen home government and the Martian C.A.I. would see a lack of proactivity in regard to quickly staking their claims. This would mean that N.A.V.E. and its member states were quickly able to establish a desirable foothold on the planet.

As a result, the C.A.I.'s holdings are primarily localized to the Northern Meridian Plain, Terra Arabia, and Margaritifer, greater in terms of sheer expanse, but less developed than the territory of N.A.V.E. and its member states.

Now, The C.A.I.'s primary priority in the way of colonial development is to spread far and wide, focusing on quantity of settlements rather than necessary quality, usefulness, defensibility, so long as stakes for land can be planted before N.A.V.E. has the opportunity to expand to such places.

While, in practice, these new settlements should have greater autonomy, the central C.A.I. authority maintains a strict military presence throughout their territories of poorly-equipped, but still loyal soldiers to ensure a continued loyalty to the state.

## Diplomacy and Foreign Relations

Of the two major powers on Mars, The C.A.I. finds its relations with the other major planetary faction, N.A.V.E. stretched to its limits as the two factions exist in a Cold War and arms race with one another that slowly dares to become real as a result of recent incidents such as the mysterious destruction of "The Creator."

With a volatile border that is frequently subject to skirmishes, incursions, and raids, the only thing keeping back N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I from engaging in a true war is a lack of knowledge regarding the others' combat potential and the possibility that such would mean death for near all on the planet and the loss of one of mankind's only chance for future survival.

As such, with their homes back on Earth on the line, the two factions maintain an uneasy truce that only just barely staves off total war, but both factions remain aware that this is only temporary, and may change at any moment.

As for neutral and unaligned political entities, the C.A.I. will not steer away from power projecting when needed. Generally, the C.A.I. prefers to avoid needless conflict, but will resort to it if more peaceful methods have failed and/or an arrangement proves non-beneficial to the Chinese state.

And with whispers from the shadow about a brewing Martian Independence faction, the C.A.I. is forced to begin viewing the outside with more suspicion lest their interests on Mars be threatened.



## Civilian Affairs



Though culturally a very capitalist-leaning society at least in regard to the influence of the market as a state entity on Tianquan society, the state itself is a collectivist one, meaning that the people of C.A.I. are very much viewed as extensions of the state, at least in regard to the role that they serve.

Everybody is an asset, for better or worse, meaning that, as a whole, unemployment has never been lower, as anybody without a job will find a place within the C.A.I., or a place will be found for them, be this in the armed forces, resource extraction, or the industrial corps.

Lives of civilians within the C.A.I. are maintained in a regimen structure, measuring the value of civilians through a measurement of social credit so as to gauge how much individual citizens are either beneficial or detrimental to Tianquan society.

Those who prove themselves to be a benefit will find themselves receiving better job offers, higher paying positions, access to better property, better social services, etc.

As for those who prove to be a detriment, well, fresh bodies are always needed out on the frontier.

## Security and Law Enforcement

A more authoritarian society, at least relative to N.A.V.E., the C.A.I. holds itself and its people together through the use of a tight and thorough security apparatus that merges both high-end technology and more archaic strategies.

Be it the presence of security cameras on every street corner, a police checkpoint every five miles on the street, or regular drone patrols, there is hardly any aspect of Tianquan society that isn't under constant observation. As a result, crime in the C.A.I. is the lowest it's ever been, especially relative to other regions of the red planet.

What increased security means, however, is that crime has found new ways to survive and thrive in the C.A.I., primarily through the social and government apparati, meaning that the government finds itself ridden with corruption.

The heavy hand of the central government means that corruption often goes untreated as law enforcement remains subservient to the government, and so tends to enable such an unequal balance of power rather than fight it.

While there are good actors within law enforcement who do still believe in the rule of law, their voices will oft be lost amidst a choir of cowards and yes-men.



## Religion and Cultural Organizations



Though a communist nation, the Chinese People's Empire was also a largely diverse nation back on Earth, especially following its annexation of East Russia, Mongolia, and northern Pakistan. Back on earth, certain communist ideals would need to be abandoned for the sake of reality.

However, on the Red Planet, such limitations no longer need hold back true communism where religion may finally be viewed as the opium of the masses and cultural divergence the only barricade of true national unity.

So it is that in the C.A.I., the practice of organized religion, while not quite illegal due to an impossibility to enforce this, is still prohibited in public locations. Ownership of religious texts is liable to fines, there are no public places of worship, and a pseudo-religious cult of personality is enforced on all Tianquan citizens, paying homage to an offworld sovereign.

Culturally, the C.A.I. has also had a far easier time centralizing its national cultural view to ensure as little divergence as possible lest thoughts of separatism and secession arise, but even in the authoritarian C.A.I., this can only work so well before people begin to slip between the fingers of an iron fist.

### Rebel or Dissident Movements



In spite of the C.A.I.'s efforts to centralize their authority, there are still rising movements within the C.A.I. intent on either reform or total abandonment.

Chief among these movements is the People's Democratic Front, an outlawed regional party of the C.A.I. that called for an abandonment of earth-brewed authoritarian communist values in favor of an evolved communist perspective that would see power returned to the people's hands rather than having it rest in the hand of a government seated on a planet over 230 million miles away. The P.D.F. is largely ignored due to its limited vocal strength in a society built upon censorship, but rumors of collaboration with the Martian Liberation Front may soon see more of a heavy hand forced upon this organization.

Others, however, seek to distance themselves from the C.A.I. entirely, one example organization being the local ethnic Russian population, kept away from New Byzantium and more to far-off resource-extraction settlements where they are expected to provide the C.A.I. with resources ranging from lumber to precious metals. However, within these work camps, rebellion is brewing as the Russian people search for an independence that has evaded them for over a century.

**MARTIAN INDEPENDENCE FRONT**

Born from the single idea that a planet 230 million miles away from the earth should not be governed or ruled by foreign political entities, the secretive Martian Independence Front is not, in itself, a areopolitical entity as they lack any true borders, but rather, operate underground within both N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I.

The Martian Independence Front has existed from the near beginning of Mars' settlement and colonization as the occasional notion that Mars should practice self-rule, and while the possibility would be entertained as an eventuality, it was never given the attention of the demand that it would grow to be.

It has only been in later years that the Martian Independence Front would grow from a simple idea to an actual movement, holding public talks, spreading propaganda, arranging protests, and when they would be clamped down upon and suppressed, riots, arson, bombings, and assassinations.

Now, with the destruction of the Creator, calls for independence have never been louder, and the prospect of total separation from Earth seems closer than ever before.

## Leadership and Government

Little is known about the political structure of the Martian Independence Front. Many have their own views on just how the Front is organized.

Some suspect it to be a cult of personality revolving around one mysterious leader who has yet to be brought to the surface. Others like to idolize the Martian Independence Front as a true democracy where every individual has a voice in the organization's governance. Others too, particularly naysayers and opponents of the Front simply deem it an anarchist terrorist organization that is not interested with establishing a new society on Mars so much as simple toppling the existing one without a plan in motion.

However, judging by the fact that there are different subsections of the Martian Independence Front operating within the ranks of both N.A.V.E., the C.A.I. as well as its separate settlements, and all with similar aims, many believe that there must at least be some form of agreement or overarching leadership in order to maintain this order and unified purpose. As to who this individual may be, however, few can say.



### Military and Defense

Due to its size and secretive nature, many do not believe that the Martian Independence Front to be in possession of an organized armed forces. The nature of its activity in the past, primarily limited to riots, assassinations, and terror attacks would point in the direction of the fact that there is no organized military command.

This would fall in line with what has appeared to be the Front's primary military doctrine, relying on decentralized and guerilla warfare, operating from the shadows whether this be in Mars' untamed and destabilizing wilds, or in the sprawling urban centers of New Byzantium. The Front makes the most use of their limited manpower as they can, relying to strike fast and hard, then regroup for a new attack somewhere else entirely.

However, this belief of a minimal military would not explain how supplies and material frequently goes unaccounted for from both N.A.V.E. and C.A.I. stockpiles, and just where it is going. With each sympathetic quartermaster that gets replaced, two new sympathizers seem to take their place, and so there is a growing belief that the Martian Independence Front is arming itself in preparation for something big. And just what it is, few can say.



### Diplomacy and Foreign Relations



Operating from the shadows, the Martian Independence Front does not have any formal relationship with either the C.A.I. or N.A.V.E. and has, in fact, proven to be rather hostile to both as of late.

Beginning initially as a philosophical movement within both factions, the front was hardly deemed a hostile entity until the growing hostility towards Earthen intervention warranted clamping down from both N.A.V.E. and Tianquan, which would eventually result in the Front itself resorting to more extreme measures in order to make their voices heard.

Now, driven underground, the Martian Independence Front communicates with the powers of Mars in the only way that they will listen to—violence.

While such an approach has earned them the name of terrorists, there still are sympathizers of the Front who operate in the ranks of the Martian powers who seek to voice their concerns with words rather than bombings and assassinations. However, the Front's continued commitment to destroying the old in order to pave a way for the new has soured these efforts as of late, and so it appears to many that this fight for independence is won that will be won by blood alone.

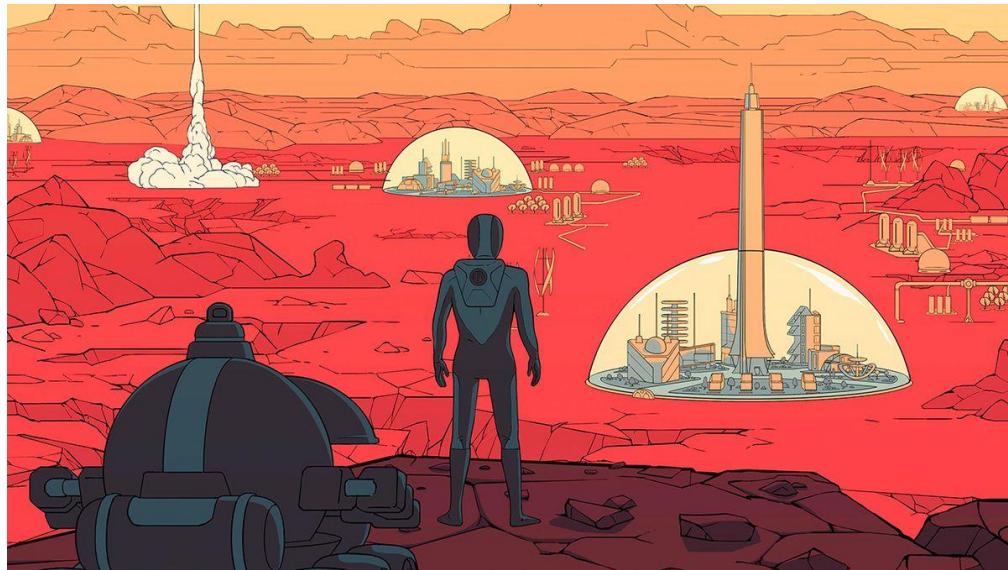
### Religion and Cultural Organizations

Despite a seeming intention to “rid of the old in place of the new,” the Martian Independence Front has seemed only in its targeting to extend this rhetorical to political organizations rather than anything religious or cultural.

This has largely helped the Front gain support from overlooked groups within N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I. in particular who see the Front as a chance to reclaim autonomy and independence. It has also ensured that the religious and cultural organizations of N.A.V.E. would be more pressed to call for peaceful solutions rather than declaring outright crusade or jihad against this organization, creating a degree of legitimacy that would have otherwise been lost.

However, this does not mean that the Martian Independence Front is entirely secular in nature, as there have been reports of a growing spiritual movement that seems to be particularly aligned with the plight of the Front. Deemed “The Cult of Mars,” this movement calls for the adoption of a new spiritual movement that would help the Martian people to become acclimated to their new home, not necessarily abandoning all ties from Old Earth, but creating something new and unique from them, similar to the pioneers in America from days of old.

While there is no official connection between the Front and the Cult of Mars, the shared views cannot be denied, and so many suspect the Cult is merely an extension of the Front to further their aims, but once more, due to the Front’s secretive nature, nothing can be confirmed.



## Culture

Similar to Earth, there is no primary culture that dominates the planet, especially as the planet's inhabitants hail from many different parts of the globe, be it from the United States of North America, Europe, the Scandinavian Commonwealth, Astralasia, Japan, China, etc.

Be them the plutocratic and egalitarian N.A.V.E., the authoritarian or centralized C.A.I., or the secretive Martian Independence Front, the many people of Mars practice their cultures in different ways, some quickly adapting and changing their ways to adjust to their new world, while others hold on to their roots in order to ensure that the history and way of their people is not lost.

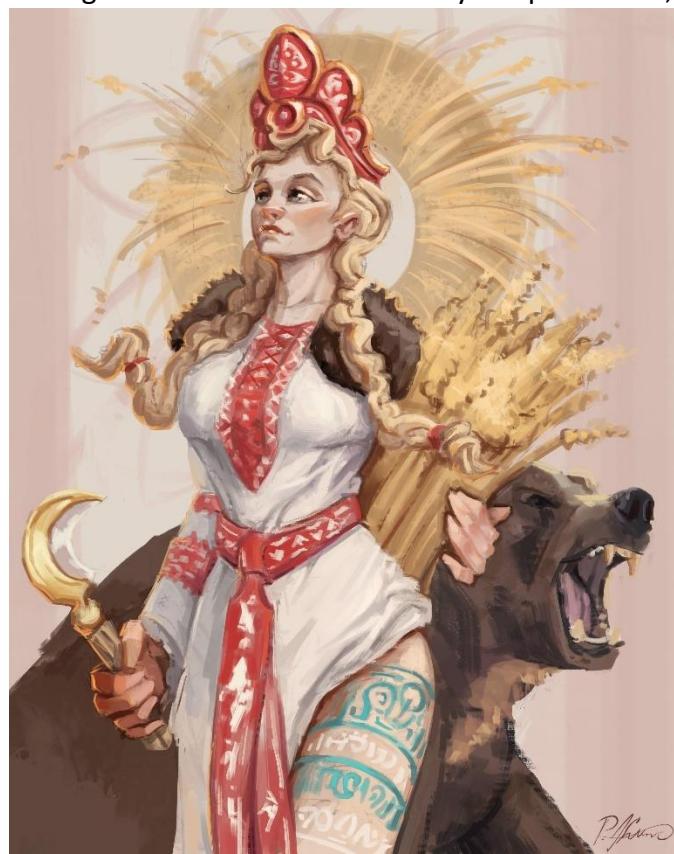
One way or another, Mars remains a diverse planet as demonstrated by its many uniquely individual inhabitants.



## European

Naturally, comprised of many different nations, the European identity on Mars is a vastly varied one that sees many unique perspectives spread across its many people. However, this isn't to say that there are no shared ties. In fact, there are many, chief among them being religion as a cultural factor rather than an active social influence, an emphasis on unique cuisine, and, perhaps most importantly, a very active and alive sports culture.

- **Islander:** Hailing from the British Isles, a distinct divide remains between the Irish and British, but only so far as culture and religion extends, otherwise on good terms with one another, perhaps as a result of a shared English language that also places the islander subculture on good terms with the North American people despite a lasting grudge from being forced to submit to certain vehicle standards so as to avoid confusion on the shared streets of New Byzantium.
- **Western:** Primarily Spain, Italy, Germany, France, and the Benelux nations, the Western European subculture is largely fragmented, but also maintains a state of being on good terms as has been developed over the course of centuries of friendship within the Earthern European Union. Now, these ties remain strong in a culture characterized by unique cuisine, festivities, and overall lax approaches to life.
- **Eastern:** Poland, Czechia, Ukraine, and the other Slavic nations of Europe, the Eastern European subculture is more closely tied than any of the others, particularly over their shared religious values, general cultural conservatism, and shared linguistic roots. Old time differences have long been forgotten in favor of a joy to now be part of the Western World, and a new shot at prosperity on the Red Planet.



## Japanese



A major contributor to N.A.V.E.'s space faring endeavors, the Japanese culture is one that is widely represented on Mars' surface.

The cultural organization of the Japanese people on Mars is a unique one. While still politically a parliamentary system, a new royalist sentiment has arisen among the Japanese population on Mars, deepened by the presence of the Japanese Princess, Nishizaka, granddaughter of the current Japanese Emperor.

While the royal family maintains little political power, the cultural power of the Japanese royal family, especially on Mars, should not be underestimated. Mimicking this, the Japanese people on Mars remain very spiritual in nature, deeply religious as well along Shinto and Buddhist traditions.

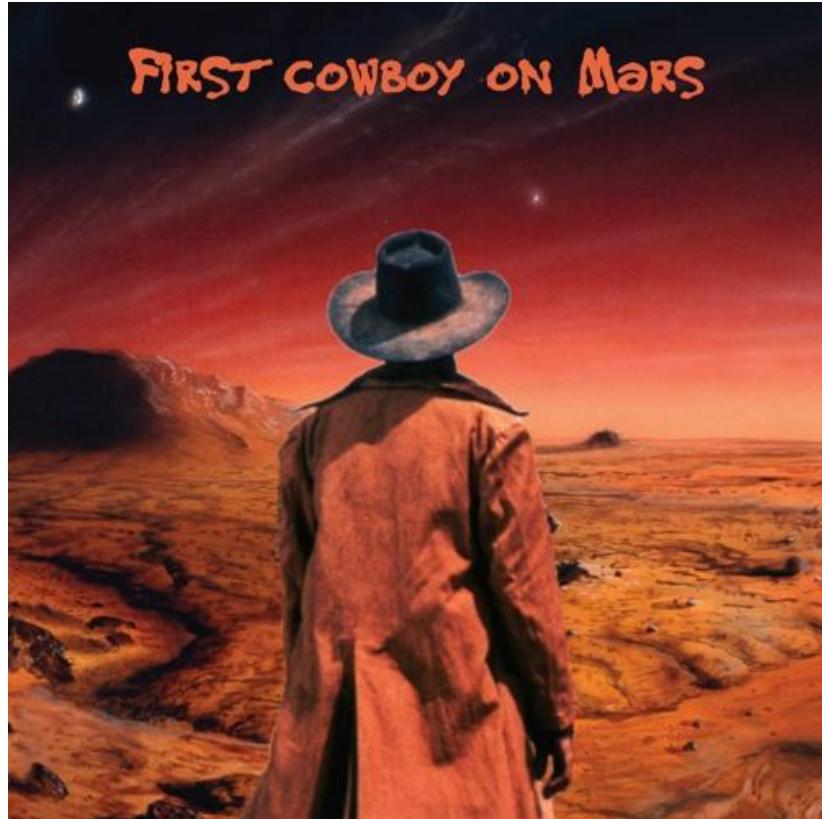
While the Japanese imperial family remains a mark of old world traditionalism, it also stands to some as a symbol of decadence and a failure to adapt to the ways of this new planet, and so particularly for those aligned with the Martian Liberation Front within Japanese territory, the imperial family is of a world that must be abandoned, and so accordingly, a target.

## North American

The second most populous group on Mars, second to the Tianquan people, the North American people can hardly be considered of a single cultural identity, the same diversity that existed for them on Earth having been carried over to Mars.

Now, what is considered “American” culture exists in many different variations on this Red Planet:

- **AresLinc:** Named after the Greek word for Mars, “Ares,” and the Lincoln Highway that connected both East and West Coast in Old American, the AresLinc subculture group refers to the shared cultural identity of American coastal groups, more urbanized, city-centric, and extroverted compared to their SoulWest brethren.
- **Hispanic:** Primarily those of Mexican Descent as a result of Mexico’s decision to join N.A.V.E. as a junior partner of the American expeditionary group, the North American people maintain an active Hispanic subculture made up of shared cultural ties, catholic mysticism, and deep familial values.
- **Horizoneers:** Originally deemed Red Horizon Pioneers, the horizoneers represent a subculture of American people who have come to view the settlement of a new planet as the opening of a new frontier. And so like the pioneers of old, the Horizoneers have returned to a frontier mindset, staking settlements as far out as the Tharsis Plataeu and Aonia in the name of forging new lives for themselves in this new endless expanse.
- **SoulWest:** A cultural fusion of the American Southern and Midwestern identities, the SoulWest people represent a more rural take on American culture, happier to maintain their distance from new Byzantium in favor of the outskirt farming communities.



## Scandinavian

Overall a small cultural group on Mars, the Scandinavian people have still made a name for themselves on the Red Planet, especially as far as developing a new unique planetary identity goes.

Perhaps by merit of lacking a proper northern landmass to establish a claim to that resembled the Scandinavian Peninsula, the Norse people of Europe would still find themselves drawn to the North, but instead taking to the seas akin to Vikings of old. Rather than acting primarily as seaborn raiders (for the most part), the Scandinavian people would settle the many islands of the Chryse Gulf and would even establish colonies so far off as Elysium Island.

Now, the Scandinavian People operate primarily through maritime trade in close collaboration with N.A.V.E. as well as tenuously with the C.A.I.

By merit of their distance, the Scandinavian people are naturally more independent despite being part of the greater N.A.V.E. political alliance, but maintain their own strict ideas on how to manage their own affairs in order to ensure the preservation of their way of life in their new home.



## Tianquan



Hailing from China, the C.A.I. has ensured that most of its people fall within the parameters of Han cultural expression, ensuring that as few individuals from the “lesser” ethnic groups of East Asia would be brought over as possible to represent the Chinese People on the Red planet.

As such, the majority of those hailing from China on Mars are of the Han ethnic persuasion, simplified Mandarin now the one and only practiced and taught script/language of the local Chinese people.

As enforced by the C.A.I., the Tianquan people are largely irreligious, and now with a new world being inhabited, even old folk religion has faded into antiquity. After all, how can a religion tied with the land be practiced when the land being worshipped now lies on a foreign planet over two hundred million miles away?

While some minority groups within the C.A.I. would attempt to help foster the development of new folk rituals, the C.A.I. would not pass up the chance to finally fully cut off the supply of opium that is religion from their masses, and so such movements would gain little traction. However, there still do exist those amongst the Tianquan people who hold onto ancestor worship lest they forget from where they come and their significance in the world, even if only a spec in the mighty cosmos.

## History

In the late 2100s, the expected had occurred. The population of Earth, at 12 billion, is no longer sustainable; food and energy resources grow slimmer by the day. It has become more than apparent to all those living on Earth that the only way of securing Earth's future is by seeking a future elsewhere.

The primary superpowers of the Earth, The United States and its NATO allies, and rival superpower, the Chinese People's Empire, decided that it was in their mutual interest to pool their greatest minds and resources as one in order bring about the most efficient and speediest solution. It was debated for years what this would be. Some believed it would be to create a leviathan of a ship capable of serving as a modern arc of the covenant, hauling a large chunk of mankind away, but this solution was deemed too costly, fictitious, and prone to failure. Some more radical minds even suggested systematic population culling, but neither world government desired the uprising and unrest that would ensue, and so very quickly silenced these ideas. It was eventually decided that mankind's best hope would be to play God as best as they could and create a new world that could sustain mankind. Not by creating a planet from the base-up, so to speak, but rather, to take what already was, and make it new. The most obvious target for this grand initiative would come to be Mars.

In 2096, the population of Earth still growing in spite of government initiatives, would be the year on which construction of the "Creator," a terraforming station capable of altering the nature of Earth's red neighbor would begin, and in 2100, only 4 short years later, it would launch. Begun initially as simply an orbital station created to house scientists and dock with satellites and other transports that would directly interact with the Martian surface, the station was little to boast about from the start, but soon would grow into something truly magnificent.

When the terraforming initiative first began, a single outpost was established in the minimal habitable zone of the planet, primarily designed as a central research center to help coordinate on-surface terraforming efforts. By this point, much of Mars still went unaffected, with only this minimal area safe for general habitation, and so this nameless outpost would become the center of mankind's activity on the planet.

The settlement at first was nothing too special, with a pressurized and climate-controlled interior still demanding the use of environmental suits outside. Over the next 2 decades or so, seeing it as the hub of the terraforming effort, and realizing that the full terraforming effort wasn't proceeding quick enough, more resources and more personnel started being sent, establishing primarily in that main settlement with a few outskirt outposts being set up. These outskirts were minimal in scale, used primarily for observation, scouting terrain for future expansion, doing field research, anything to help prepare Mars for the future.

Back on Earth, as time went on it became all the more clear just where nations' priorities are being placed, doing anything possible to advance the Terraforming of Mars Initiative.

Governments begin providing subsidies and other incentives for companies willing to dedicate their resource towards the Initiative, resulting in the foundation of branches on Mars, seeing additional manpower and resources flowing in. On Earth as well, propaganda would shift away from the nationalistic rhetoric that had begun to prevail and shifted more towards a talk of unity, of combined effort in order to bring new life to Mars. The governments of Earth would begin to shift away from preparing their populations for war, and instead began to fund the sciences more than ever before to help forge a new generation of scientists and engineers that would be ready to dedicate their work abroad on Mars (as per the terms of their scholarships).

The world became so focused on their off-world future that they began to forget about their on-world present, abandoning those already deemed too far gone to be saved. The 1<sup>st</sup> world would place its attention on mars and all alone while the third world would descend into chaos, and those of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world would find their futures in flux, uncertain whether they would find themselves among the ranks of the starved and dead, or the apathetic watchers.

Around 4 decades after the initial arrival of the Creator, the year now 2143, the population of Mars and this “research outpost” now sat at nearly one hundred thousand. And so it would be decided here, with the Terraforming Initiative well under way, that this outpost was no longer any such thing, but rather, would serve as the capital for this New Planet. A name was decided for this city—New Byzantium, once the ancient edge of the known world, and in the present too, the meeting point between East and West, an apt name now for the city co-habited by the North American Voyager Expedition and the Celestial Ascendancy Initiative.

This trend resumed, and only grew all the more intense. New generations would be born with the sole dream and purpose of going to Mars. Back on Earth, the passion to advance the Initiative would only grow more intense as well, watching as the first world would initiate a new age of Neo-colonialism in the name of securing resources to help further the Initiative, either through establishing economic dominance, or through simple invasion and securing of resources. The value of Earthern countries would become one determined by a single primary factor—your contribution to the initiative. If deemed unsubstantial, then there would be nothing to prevent the nations of the East or West from establishing military, corporate, and governmental presence to ensure an appropriate part of their GDP was spent towards the TMI.

Reaching the 2170s, the population of New Byzantium had come to reach 500 thousand, new settlements beginning to spring around the city as well. These new settlements, perhaps on account of the existing progress of the Terraforming Initiative, would no longer quite be constructed with the selfsame aims of bilateral unity, but rather, would be established with more loyalty existing towards their cultural groups, and who they had come to the Red Planet on behalf of, NAVE or the CAI.

Around a third of Mars has been terraformed by this point, new modules having been added over time to The Creator over the last 30 years to the point that it can no longer be considered a simple orbital oversight station, but rather, a state-of-the-art masterpiece of

planetary manipulation, flooding the atmosphere with greenhouse gasses, importing ammonia and other hydrocarbons to the biosphere, acting as a hub for orbital mirror as well as communication satellites, etc.

Akin to the trend in the establishment of new settlements across the planet, New Byzantium, still a thriving cityscape, would begin to be subjected to the same divides that had begun to sprout outside of the city. More defined lines of authority would begin to be drawn across the city with certain areas under defined N.A.V.E. authority and others under the C.A.I. with certain neutral exclaves also dotting the city. The degree to which these defined borders would be acknowledged would vary across the city, with some maintaining very tight control while others saw little need in the creation of divides once more, and would instead try to get along with their foreign neighbors. Still, such instances of amnesty would grow only fewer and more far in between over time.

By 2180, Back on Earth, the rhetoric towards Mars has changed. It still remains as intense as ever, but the nature of it has changed significantly. No longer is propaganda surrounding the TMI one of shared cooperation towards securing humanity's future, but rather, a message of serving your nation abroad, protecting its future on the Red Planet. And so it begins to becomes all the more present that the situation on Mars is devolving into a proxy conflict of a new Cold War.

By 2185, the population on Mars has grown to around 2 million, the population of New Byzantium alone at 750 thousand, becoming rivalled, however, by new growing cities and a plethora of newly-sprung settlements. Tensions would rise only more as Mars' number one import would shift from terraforming technology to military material, near everything just short of nuclear weapons (allegedly), including artillery, tanks, fighter jets, even naval vessels.

Though outlawed at first, both NAVF and the CAI began to suspect their rivals of preparing to establish nuclear presences on the Red Planet, and so the Earthern governments respective to both factions would begin to slowly send all the more supplies to their proxies in order to establish nuclear facilities and infrastructure just short of ICBMs themselves, as when such a thing has been attempted in the past, there would be one key obstacle in their way—The Creator.

Mars now considered 2/3 of the way complete terraformed, the atmosphere breathable, the gravity stabilized, the potential for new life established, the Creator's role had shifted from being a mere terraforming station to also a mediator of sorts for the growing instability on Earth. Home to three thousand scientists of all nationalities, the Creator also acted as the chief transportation and communication hub back to Earth, nearly all planetary commerce running through the Creator. As such, this nonaligned station would be a major obstacle towards the brewing Cold War, outright refusing to allow the proliferation of military material on the planet without their oversight, at some turns even simply sending transports back to Earth. The Creator station had become not just the giver of life for Mars, but now too, its protector.

As such, the destruction of the Creator in the year 2196 was an event that would completely change the fate of Mars.

All communication cut off with Mars, the nations of Earth called a temporary hold on colonization efforts to the planet. None too keen on calling the initiative a failure after so many resources had been poured into it, they refrained from releasing any details on what had happened. Back on Earth, there was no questioning, however, that something severe had happened. They had immediately and suddenly lost all contact with their friends and family on Mars and questions were being asked, but none would be answered. Meanwhile, the U.S.N.A. and Chinese People's Empire both sent survey ships to the planet to try and identify what was occurring, believing, or rather, praying, that it had only been a communications error. Upon arriving, however, into the vicinity of the system, the radiation of the explosion immediately marked something as being extremely wrong. So too would the atmosphere of Mars be found to be in a state of havoc, destabilized to the point that no signal could be received from the ground, and so it would be determined that the TMI, in fact, had failed.

The survey ships would return to Earth, and with a dire message. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2196, it was announced that the Terraforming of Mars Initiative had failed, and that following cataclysmic failure of the Creator, Mars had been left uninhabitable, and it was only safe to assume that the two million souls on the planet had been lost. So this day would come to live in infamy as the Earth would find its future thrown into question.

Meanwhile, back on Mars, life persists, but only barely. The destruction of the Creator has left the planet in a state of complete and total chaos, the atmosphere destabilized, the biosphere perpetually changing to rapidly evolve, and the areosphere of the planet itself shifting in new and unexpected ways. And even in spite of this, conflict brews. Neither NAVE nor CAI inclined to call the incident an accident, it took no time for both sides to begin pointing fingers, either at one another, or at the brewing Martian Independence Front that had been growing across the planet. As such, many on the Red Planet watch as this Cold War begins to thaw, fearful that this conflict may become a very real one in only a matter of years, months, weeks, or perhaps even days.

Now, in the year 2196, following the direct aftermath of the Creator's destruction, the fate of the planet is in flux. None know just what will happen on this planet, if it will survive or fall into total decay, if one power or the other will rise to power, if contact back to Earth will ever be established, and, most importantly, just what had happened on board the Creator.

The answers to all of these questions, however, may just lay with a single individual—the Sole Survivor and Witness of the Creator's destruction—you.

## Characters

The planet of Mars by the year 2196 houses 2 million individuals, none without their own story to tell. Be them stories of how they endeavored to leave a dying Earth, how their families have been habitants of Mars for over a century, or anything between those lines or outside of them.

Throughout their story, the Witness will come across many of these such characters while attempting to unearth the mystery of the “Creator’s” destruction as well as resolving the brewing conflict on the surface of the Red Planet.



**"The Witness"**

## The Protagonist: "The Witness"

**Role:** Protagonist

**Hero or Villain:** Player-Dependent

**Name:** Player-Dependent

**Gender:** Player-Dependent

**Archetype:** Player-Dependent

Serving as the protagonist of REDhorizon, the player character, also known as "The Witness" is completely customizable by the player in terms of gender, race, weight, height, etc. There is no set archetype for the player character, all of this dependent on player choices, be it regarding morality, affiliation, personality, etc.

As the player character can be customized, there is no set "imagery" for the protagonist. Ideally, a player would wear the attire of the faction they support, one example being the NAVE soldier pictured above, blue being the color most frequently associated with NAVE-aligned individuals.

"I'm sorry, but I have no memory of who I am, every world government is after me as I'm believed to be responsible for the biggest terror attack since the Jerusalem bombing, I'm in the middle of a cold war about to go potentially nuclear, and all on a planet that's tearing itself apart, so as much as I regret to say it, I **really** do not have time to find your lost family heirloom right now."

Sole Survivor of the destruction of the Creator, "The Witness" acts as the player character of REDhorizon. Player-Dependent in nearly every aspect, "The Witness" is meant to act as a vessel for the player to important themselves upon however they see fit. Be them man, woman, non-binary, hero, villain, or something in between, is completely up to the player as they take on the Red Planet by storm as whoever they envision themselves to be.

**Function:** Protagonist / Player Character

**Sex:** Player-Determinant

**Race:** Player-Determinant

**Age:** Player-Determinant

**Height:** Player-Determinant

**Weight:** Player-Determinant

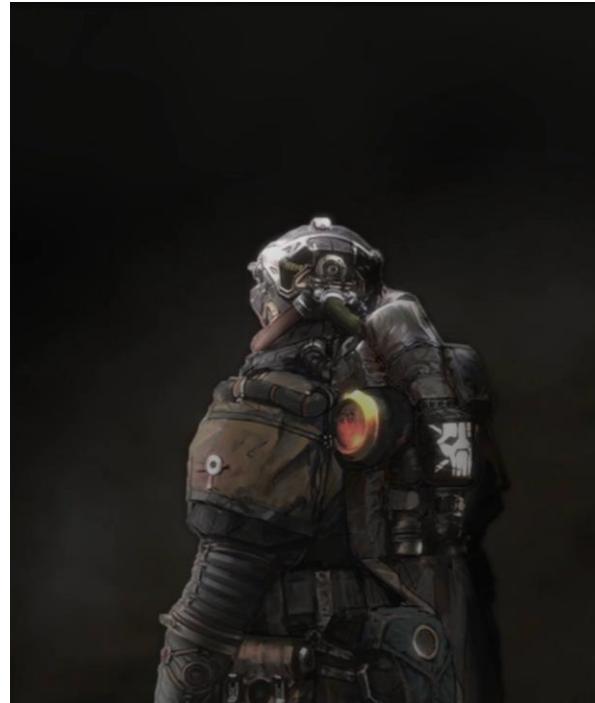
**Hair Color:** Player-Determinant

**Eye Color:** Player-Determinant

**Build:** Player-Determinant

**Distinguishable Features:** Player-Determinant

**Origin:** Player-Determinant (Selectable from Preset Origins)



- **New-Age Colonist:** A recent arrival from Earth, the New-Age Colonist has had yet to make a name for themselves on the Red Planet. They still find themselves entrapped within a flimsy bureaucratic system meant to help them find a place on their name home be that a matter of settlement location, viable employment, conscription potential, etc. A New-Age Colonist, largely unaffiliated with either N.A.V.E. or C.A.I. beyond potential space line, is a near-total outsider as far as most need be concerned, but while this is a detriment in some capacity, it is a benefit in others, a literal blank slate off of which a new life can be forged.
  - N.A.V.E (Reputation Boost with N.A.V.E., official documentation)
  - C.A.I. (Reputation Boost with the C.A.I., official documentation)
  - Unaffiliated (Neutral Reputation, lack of official documentation)
- **Byzantine:** Born on the streets of New Byzantium, and likely destined to die there as well, Byzantines make up nearly half of the Martian population, residents of the planetary capital and economic, social, and political hub. Byzantines can range from down-on-their-luck street kid slummers to “corpos,” all playing their own distinct role in this city of lights and broken dreams.
  - Slummer (Lower Class Connections, Reputation Loss, Lack of Official Documentation)
  - Prole (Working Class Connections, Neutral Reputation, Official Documentation)
  - Corpo (Upper Class Connections, Reputation Boost, Starting Wealth, Official Documentation)
- **Wastlander:** Whether born in the uncharted wilds outside of New Byzantium or having left the city at one point or another to find a life beyond concrete and neon lies,

Wastelanders have taken on the Red Planet by storm to forge a world of their own making. Be this as a simple homesteader, a nomad, or even an outlaw, Wastelanders live past beyond the oversight of Mars' overextending authority in a bid to find a life that is controlled by them and them alone.

- Homesteader (Outskirt Settlement Connections, Starting Home, Neutral Reputation, Official Documentation)
- Nomad (Outskirt Settlement Connections, Neutral Reputation, Lack of Official Documentation)
- Outlaw (Outlaw Connections, Reputation Loss, Lack of Official Documentation)

**Backstory:** The origin of the protagonist itself left to the player's discretion, the only common thread truly tying all variations of the player are that, at some point or another, they found themselves aboard "The Creator" immediately prior to its untimely demise.

A New-Age Colonist will easily have found themselves aboard the Creator, sent to Mars on account of what would have been judged to be "particular talents" that would have well-served the Terraforming of Mars Initiative. A Byzantine could have found themselves sent to the Creator for a number of reasons, be this as part of a cleaning crew with no planetary ties they need be concerned about, a technician, or even a corporate liaison. A Wastlander, on the other hand, will have found themselves aboard The Creator acting as advisors, whether as homesteaders offering insight on habitation areas and current circumstances, nomads providing more down-to-Mars information, or even as outlaws willing to provide insight on the harsh realities of the surface to a non-affiliated entity so long as a paycheck awaits them at the end of the day.

One way or another, The Witness will have had a place aboard "The Creator" in the weeks, months, or even years leading up to its destruction. They all will have had some form of employment, some legitimate reason for their place there. Behind it all, however, will have been an underlying darker purpose that even the Witness will not recall upon the game's start.



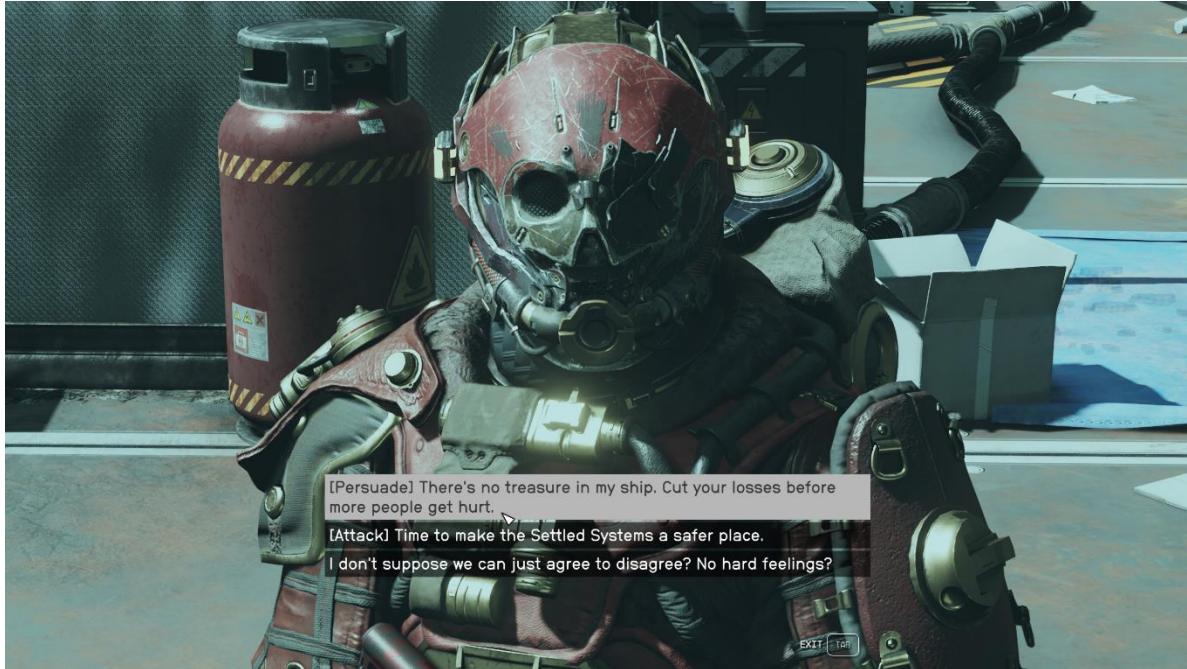
The truth of the matter is that the Witness did not find themselves aboard “The Creator” simply as a researcher, technician, liaison, at least not in the days preceding the “Creator’s” destruction. In truth, the Witness is more than simply the fortunate sole survivor of the disaster. They are, in fact, the reason behind the Creator’s demise, responsible for the deaths of over five thousand souls aboard, and at the center of the greatest terror attack since the Jerusalem bombing, the catastrophic destabilization of the planet of Mars, the sudden rise in tensions between N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., and the brewing three-way war between them, and a resurging Martian Independence Front.

### Gameplay Criteria:

- The Witness is heavily customizable in many aspects that will influence gameplay such as through starting position, dialogue choices, variable skill checks, etc.
- The customizable origin of the player, reputation boosts and starting situation aside, will also have an impact on dialogue choices throughout the course of the game as they may open potential dialogue options in conversations where they may come in handy. Some examples are as follows:
  - **Player:** [Slummer] “Could head across the border. New Delhi. It’s outside of N.A.V.E. and C.A.I. jurisdiction. They’ll be stuck writing warrants for weeks before they’re able to follow us.”
  - **Player:** [Nomad] “If it’s the Ladon Valley you’re talking about, you’re shit out of luck trying to fly in. Far too narrow to fit your craft inside. You’d have to go by foot.”
  - **Player:** [Outlaw] “You must be talking about N.A.V.E.’s convoys. They pass through the Marineris to and from Marineria, day in, day out. If you’re trying to hit those, you’re not doing so from the ground.”
- The player is able to customize the different stats and traits of the player as well, able to allocate points across 5 primary stats.
  - **Strength**
    - Determines the player’s raw physical prowess, affecting such things as melee strength and carry weight, as well as potentially unlocking certain dialogue options.
    - **Player:** [Strength 7] “If you like your hand unbroken like it is, I suggest you take it off of her. Now.”
  - **Perception**
    - Determines the player’s mental and sensual astuteness, affecting such things as their passive ability to pick up on veiled threats, detect traps, and marksmanship, as well as potentially unlocking certain dialogue options.

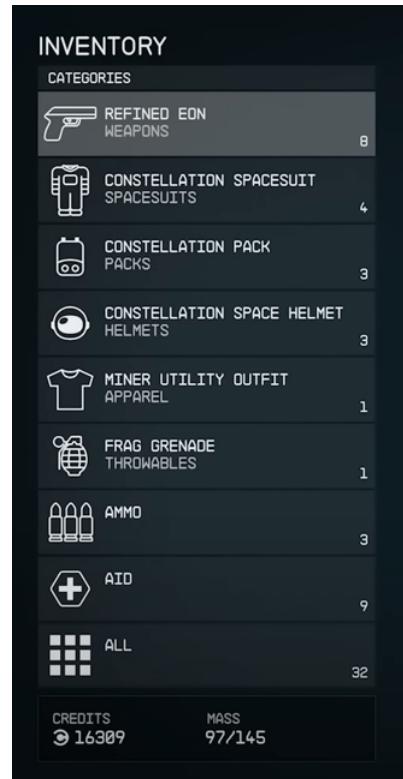
- **Player:** [Perception 8] “Top of the cliffside to the east. We’re being watched. Looks like N.A.V.E. doesn’t trust us to go alone after all.”
- **Agility**
  - Determines the player’s acrobatic ability, affecting such things as speed, jump height, chance to not get hit while being attacked, as well as potentially unlocking certain dialogue options.
  - **Player:** [Agility 7] “No. You’ll get killed if you go out there. Give me cover fire, though, and I can make it across the field, take them from behind.”
- **Intelligence**
  - Determines the player’s cognitive and mental capacity, affecting such things as encyclopedic knowledge, interfacing with technology, and the amount of attribute points gained per level up, as well as potentially unlocking certain dialogue options.
  - **Player:** [Intelligence 9] “There’s no explosive damage throughout the facility. This doesn’t look like it was triggered by an explosive device. More likely it was a catastrophic systems failure.”
- **Endurance**
  - Determines the player’s ability to take a hit and stay standing even when injured or exhausted, affecting such things as amount of time that can be spent sprinting and breath under water, as well as potentially unlocking certain dialogue options.
  - **Player:** [Endurance 8] “Quitting already? Bartender, another shot! My night’s just getting started!”





- Tied to each primary stat are also secondary attributes that will affect more specific abilities and be tied to individual perks and attribute checks.
  - Strength
    - Athletics
    - Melee Weapons
    - Unarmed
  - Perception
    - Small Guns
    - Big Guns
    - Energy Weapons
    - Investigation
  - Agility
    - Acrobatics
    - Stealth
  - Intelligence
    - Technology
    - Survival
    - Medicine
    - Craftsmanship
  - Charisma
    - Persuasion
    - Deception
    - Barter
  - Endurance

- The player is also able to unlock a number of perks throughout gameplay that each will have special bonuses in terms of combat such as by granting additional pushback power to shotguns, dialogue such as by being able to specially intimidate enemies, or other abilities such as more easily detecting traps. Most perks are gained at player discretion upon leveling up while some perks are more tailored, and must be acquired through special means. Some examples are as follows:
  - [Pack Mule](#): Speed reduction when over encumbered is reduced to  $\frac{3}{4}$  instead of  $\frac{1}{2}$ .
  - [Guerilla](#): Stealth factor increased while being actively searched for by hostile opponents
  - [Military Training](#): Small Guns attribute increased by 10, Big Guns attribute increased by 10, Endurance increased by 1.
- The Witness's fighting style can vary greatly depending on the player's choices. Investing in the associated attributes will naturally help the player to better tailor their proficiencies to their fighting style, but the ability is granted to try and fight with certain weapons despite not having any associated skills, albeit at greater difficulty.
- The Witness's inventory can also vary greatly depending on what the player chooses to equip themselves with. They can travel with as simple equipment as just the clothes on their back and a single sidearm to an entire trailer's worth of scrap and crafting parts. The player may also find their inventory constricted by the game at times such as if robbed, taken prisoner, or if enlisted in an army and deployed in uniform.
- Separate from their equipment, the player will also be able to customize their outfit in the incident that they would like to take the stat bonuses of their armor while appearing to be dressed in casual outfits.
  - The only exception to this rule is when in hostile environment areas where environmental protection suits are required, in which case such suits will need to be shown for the player, but I am sure the modding community will find their way around this.





- In light of the reveal of the player's backstory in the days immediately preceding the destruction of "The Creator," and the revelation that they were responsible for its destruction, the player will play through a "memory" sequence of these actual events as the player finally remembers, and will be able to influence the degree to which they were involved, and the reason why.
  - During the memory sequence, the player can make choices indicative of them having been true believers in the Martian Liberation Front sect responsible for the destruction of "The Creator" despite not knowing its true leader. They can here choose options in this sequence that point towards this allegiance, which will later have an influence in the story.
    - Will reduce opportunities to improve relations with N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., though they can still be aligned with if the player pleases, albeit with more difficulty.
    - Will create a positive initial relationship with the Martian Liberation Front
  - Or, during the memory sequence, the player can make choices indicative of them having been forced into performing the bombing against their will. Players can select dialogue that can point towards the MLF having information on them that they would release which would damn the player anyway, loved ones being held hostage, etc.
    - This will create more opportunities to restore relations with either N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I. in spite of the player naturally being wanted for their crime once "The Creator's" black box is found.
    - This will lead to an initial neutral relationship with the Martian Liberation Front, though it can still be joined if the player pleases.

**Councilor Joel Brooks**

"I swore an oath to protect the American people from those who would attempt to do them harm on this new planet. At first, I thought that meant protecting them from corporations and the Chinese, but now we have enemies at every corner, right beneath my own nose, and I don't know if I have the strength to fight them anymore.

Elected in 2188 as the representative of the American member state of N.A.V.E., and current speaker of the council, Councilor Joel Brooks is the acting de facto head of N.A.V.E. in a growing time of instability and conflict, both internal and external. Now, his second term coming to an end, many suspect the Councilor Joel Brooks plans to step down as per American tradition in spite of there being no technical legal guidelines forcing him to do so.

Such a possibility is a point of contention for many within N.A.V.E., and not simply within the American district as, vying for his position, is influential Corporate CEO Cohen McDonald. Many both within and without the American districts would much rather see Councilor Brooks maintain his position, but growing weary from an already hectic last 8 years, the chances of such a thing seem slim, and so the people of N.A.V.E. brace themselves for what's to come.

**Function:** Potential Antagonist, Potential Ally, Potential Quest-Giver

**Sex:** Male

**Race:** Caucasian

**Age:** 62

**Height:** 6'1

**Weight:** 182 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Dark Brown (Natural), Gray

**Eye Color:** Brown

**Build:** Brawny

**Distinguishable Features:** Aged, Weary

**Background:** Born and raised a Soulwesterner on a horse ranch outside of New Byzantium, Joel Brooks never actually took an interest in politics, especially disconnected as he was from the political happenings of the big city. When the land that his family ranch was built atop, however, owned by a bank that was bought out by megacorporation, InnoCure, resulting in the land falling to them as well, forcing off livestock ranchers to replace the ground with medical greenhouses, synthesizing crops needed towards pharmaceutical drug production.

Compensated with a plot of land in outer Byzantine suburbs so as to avoid controversy, the Brooks family moved to the big city when Joel was 12 years old, immediately pegged as an outsider. The feeling that he adopted as a complete an utter foreigner inclined Joel to develop a hostile sentiment towards New Byzantium and an inclination to leave it as soon as he was able. Growing up all the more in the city, however, helped foster a deeper sentiment within Joel, one not just of discomfort, but of disgust as well, which is why, somewhere along the way, Joel's ambitions to leave New Byzantium slowly transformed into ambitions to change New Byzantium.

Graduating from the Sparta Military Academy at the age of 21, and serving a mandatory military service tour until 24 in the Martian wildlands protecting terraforming crews from developing raider bands, Joel Brooks returned to the military where he was made into a career officer, reaching the rank of brigadier general by the age of forty, from which point he began pursuing a more active career in politics, greatly helped along by a favorable military service record, especially during a relative peak in Cold War tensions.

Elected at the age of 42 to the position of mayor for New Byzantium's 12<sup>th</sup> Southwestern District, also known as Liberty Heights, the same district where he and his family were relocated by force, mayor Brooks quickly made a name for himself through his crusade launched against the varying corporations in the district dodging governmental oversight through the many loopholes dotting N.A.V.E.'s judicial system.

Working locally to limit corporate overreach and force them to play according to N.A.V.E.'s corporate regulations, and working actively in the American Martian congress to fill in such easily exploited loopholes, Brookes acquired quite a reputation for himself, and the ire of N.A.V.E.'s business world, though a vocal following among New Byzantium's lower and middle class, which would, eventually, win him his electoral bid as representative of The United States of North America to the N.A.V.E. council.

Immediately respected by his new peers on the council, Brooks nonetheless did still find himself an outsider, and, in a sense, overwhelmed by the sudden shift in concerns from those not just of domestic proceedings within N.A.V.E., but also those of rising tensions with outside powers such

as the C.A.I. and a growing concern over the increasingly violent Martian Liberation Front. Brooks would come to be a somewhat passive voice on the N.A.V.E. council while still being an enigmatic presence on the home front, but, eventually, it would come time for Brooks' turn to act as speaker for the council. It would be just his luck, however, that in spite of six years spent becoming accustomed to the workings of the N.A.V.E. council, his term as speaker would be met with the destruction of "The Creator," the biggest terror attack since the Jerusalem Bombing, now finding himself dead center in the middle of a planetary crisis, and a Cold War daring to go hot with each passing second.

**Personality:** Despite being a resident of New Byzantium for now the majority of his life, Councilor Joel Brooks maintains a SoulWestern disposition characterized by an outgoing charm and inherent friendliness. This has also brought with it a certain frontier hardened disposition that, paired with his military background, has also meant a staunch policy thus far in opposing growing Chinese expansionism. What this Soulwestern heritage also means, however, is a certain degree of naivete that Councilor Brooks carries with him in his dealings, especially so far as city politics go. Despite sporting a healthy history of trust busting back in New Byzantium's 12<sup>th</sup> Southwestern District, Brooks' career as Councilor has seen him, more often than not, at a loss in how to deal with the more advanced corporate dealings of N.A.V.E. at large. Outplayed more than once, Brooks' councillorship has been fraught with frustration, and the rising popularity of up-and-coming councilor candidate, Alan Rodríguez.

#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

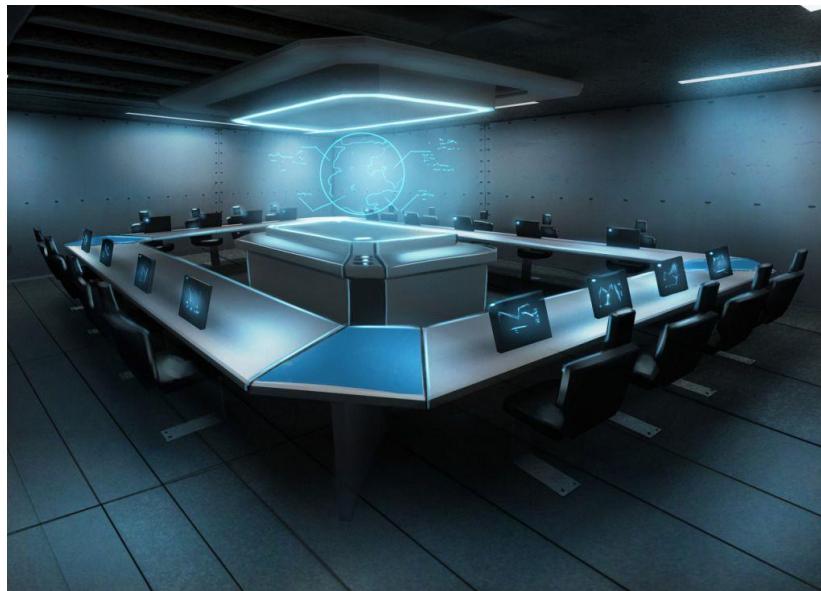
Intelligent, Diligent, Compassionate, Considerate | Stubborn, Ill-advised, Weary



### Gameplay Criteria and Endings:

- Councilor Brooks, though heard of and relatively well-known about to the player throughout the first 2 acts of the game, can only be encountered after the completion of Act 2 at the beginning of Act 3 once the player's past as saboteur of "The Creator" (willingly or otherwise) has been revealed and the player has thus chosen a side.
- If choosing to support N.A.V.E., the player will first be introduced to Brooks to be granted, on behalf of N.A.V.E., a councilory pardon for their involvement in the destruction of "The Creator." Interaction with Brooks can be limited to only this exchange, but the player will have the opportunity to continue in their dealings with the president if so they please. Doing so will initiate a questline directly tied to the up-and-coming elections with no shortage of ways on how to approach them.
  - If the player has thus far been primarily working with corporations as opposed to federal authorities (as tracked by a corporate influence variable), Councilor Brooks will be lagging behind in popularity and will express and intent not to rerun for a third term.
    - The player will have a more difficult time in this scenario persuading Brooks to rerun, and will have an even more difficult time in paving the way for him to win the race if he does agree to rerun. Such methods of ensuring his re-election will have to either include taking what opportunities are available to curtail corporate influence or perhaps interfere with the elections.
  - If the player has thus far been primarily working with federal authorities as opposed to corporations (as tracked by a corporate influence variable), despite high popularity, Councilor Brooks will still be uncertain whether or not he seeks to run for a third term.
    - The player will have an easier time in this scenario persuading Brooks to rerun, and will have an easy time as well in ensuring that Brooks maintains his popularity and chances of being re-elected. Such efforts, however, will include pushing back electoral fraud on behalf of the opposition.
- If choosing to support the C.A.I., the conditions under which the player may interact with Councilor Brooks will be more limited, especially as with no player interference, Councilor Brooks will not run for a third term, which is likely to be the case in the incident that the player joins the C.A.I. from the start of act 3. However, should the player have started on the side of N.A.V.E. and defected after helping Brooks to secure a third term or have been acting as a double agent within N.A.V.E. and helping Brooks secure power, he may still be interacted with during a C.A.I. playthrough.

- If aiming to assassinate the American councilor of N.A.V.E., Brooks will prove himself a more difficult opponent and be more skill in combat and avoiding being snuck up on than Alan Rodríguez, but will, however, have a less well-equipped personal guard to defend him.
- If attempting to engage in peace talks, despite the player having helped Brooks secure his election within N.A.V.E., the American councilor will be more difficult to convince to make concessions than Rodríguez would be, namely if under-the-table business monopolization deals are made.
  - Brooks will only agree to a white peace ceasefire that sees continuity of N.A.V.E.'s government, no forced disarmament, and no civilian centers surrendered to the C.A.I.
  - As shown in an Ending Slide, a conditional N.A.V.E. surrender that maintains the continuity of the government will see Brooks abdicate as American Councilor, resulting once more in his replacement with Alan Rodríguez.



- If choosing to support the Martian Liberation Front, Brooks (should he be elected) will interact with an MLF-aligned player differently depending on the political and diplomatic approach taken by the MLF.
  - If the MLF adopts a decentralized and non-authoritarian government system as well as approaches a diplomatic foreign policy, Brooks will be more open to agreements made with the MLF, going so far as to agree to move forward in Martian Development without Earthen interference.
    - In an Ending Slide, Brooks will win the second Free Martian Election, serving as President of Mars for two terms before stepping down.

- If the MLF adopts a decentralized and non-authoritarian government system, but approaches a violent foreign policy, Brooks will be less open to agreements unless N.A.V.E. is near surrender, in which case Brooks will be more difficult to persuade.
  - Brooks can be persuaded so far as to permit the dissolution of N.A.V.E.'s council so long as each member state is allowed to keep their respective government under the new Martian state.
    - In an Ending Slide, Brooks will return to the 12<sup>th</sup> Southwestern District and be re-elected as mayor, helping to protect regional autonomy under the new Martian State, and will be altogether successful on account of Mars's democratic leanings.
- If the MLF adopts a centralized and authoritarian government system, but approaches a diplomatic foreign policy, Brooks will be less open to agreements made with the MLF.
  - Brooks will go so far only as to agree to avoid a war with the MLF, but will refuse to sign any declaration of non-aggression with the new Martian State.
    - In an Ending Slide, Brooks will maintain his position as Councilor of N.A.V.E. and will not pursue aggression against the new Martian State, but will develop N.A.V.E. as a beacon of democracy with open borders so as to help those trapped within the Martian State flee in pursuit of freedom and happiness.
- If the MLF adopts a centralized and authoritarian government system and a violent foreign policy, Brooks will agree to no concessions made with the MLF short of maintained N.A.V.E. independence.
  - In an Ending Slide, Brooks will maintain his position as Councilor of N.A.V.E. as a new Cold War is initiated between N.A.V.E., the C.A.I. (if still existing), and the New Martian State.



### Alan Rodríguez

"I'm a pragmatist. I have no interest in a prolonged conflict that costs American lives. There is no money to be gained through the loss of life of our own people. Through those of others, on the other hand, if there's business to be had, then I can be persuaded."

Chief Executive Officer of ArmaTec, Alan Rodríguez is a man with a reputation to be respected, but also to be feared. Power on Mars is not something easily attained, but is something that must be fought over, than one must be willing to get his hands dirty in order to attain. Alan Rodríguez's hands are anything but clean.

This is not a fact that he shies away from. Alan Rodríguez acknowledges all that he is done to reach his position ranging from under-the-table dealings, finding loopholes in the legal systems of N.A.V.E. and the American member state, or standing in opposition to what others may consider simple tenets of "honesty" and "human decency."

But despite all of this, Alan Rodríguez does not consider himself to be a bad man. He views himself simply as one who understand the reality he lives in, and is willing to do what needs to be done to ensure his place at the top.

**Function:** Potential Antagonist, Potential Ally, Potential Quest-Giver

**Sex:** Male

**Race:** Hispanic

**Age:** 47

**Height:** 6'0



**Weight:** 176 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Black

**Eye Color:** Yellow

**Build:** Slender

**Distinguishable Features:** Angular face



**Background:** Born and raised in the 6<sup>th</sup> Northwestern District of New Byzantium, Nueva Havana, to a lower-class family that consisted of himself, 2 brothers, a sister, and a single mother, Alan Rodríguez remains immune to the claims of nepotism and being born into wealth that his opponents would love to levy against him. He was born into nothing, and from this void of near inescapable poverty, Alan Rodríguez would come to find himself the wealthiest man in New Byzantium, and, quite possibly, Mars.

In a true rags-to-riches story, Alan, from a young age, had a knack for the ways of the good deal not simply as a measure of lining his own pockets, but to try and provide for a dirt-poor household headed by an ailing mother. Whether this meant in Elementary School sacrificing parts of his school lunch in exchange for school supplies that he could sell to his nearby pawnshop, “Bits n’ Things”, operating the register for said pawnshop throughout middle school, and taking over said pawnshop in high school, Alan Rodríguez had a way of knowing what the demand was, and how to supply it. The demand, in particular, happened to be for electronics, simple items like SIM cards, microchips, drives, etc., the kind of thing easily salvageable across the streets of New Byzantium, able to be sold at a reasonable price to either be repurposed or

simply scrapped at a nearby recycling center for a few bucks. The importance of electronic parts in the growing Martian economy, however, would only grow with time.

When Alan Rodríguez graduated from High School, he was conscripted in the N.A.V.E. military for his mandatory two-year service tour, working as a private, eventually promoted to corporal, in a motor pool where he would help with the disassembly and repair or decommission of military equipment. Here, Alan Rodríguez would be presented with the grim reality facing N.A.V.E.'s armed forces, a desperation to recycle as much as possible lest a reliance be developed for C.A.I.-developed electronic components, always in abundance, and always far cheaper, but nonetheless trying the N.A.V.E. military to the industrial complex of Tianquan in a way desirable to none.

N.A.V.E.'s desperation and the C.A.I.'s ease in exploiting this would encourage Alan, following the completion of his tour, to try and find a solution to this dilemma. Alan Rodríguez would return home to find the world he left behind changed. His ailing mother's heart had finally given up, his home had been foreclosed, and his family was scattered. 12 years of doing what he could as a child had been put to waste, but even if his initial goal, to protect his family, had faded, Alan's ambitions had not.

Returning to his old pawnshop, a 20-year-old Alan Rodríguez would sell out, exchanging his childhood business in favor of a storage unit and 2 pickup trucks, one labelled 'supply,' and the other 'delivery.' Mondays through Wednesdays would be spent driving to the other side of the New Byzantine border to acquire low-end C.A.I.-produced electronic parts while Thursdays through Saturdays would be spent on the N.A.V.E. side of the border selling them at a profit to tech vendors.

With time and dedication, Alan's small mobile business would grow, as would his profit margins, able in time to hire drivers for New Byzantine business so that he himself could make the journeys as far out as Huǒxīng and Marineria for even higher profits, soon after even able to hire others to make this lengthy journey for him. Still operating under the name "Bits n'

Things," Alan began opening distribution centers and offices across the city on either side of the border, even able to lease still developing land in the growing cities of Marineria and Huǒxīng to have people overseeing the proceedings of his business from one edge of civilized Mars to the other.





True opportunity struck in the year 2179 when Kuàngwù, the 3rd largest precious metal excavation company in Huǒxīng was driven to near total bankruptcy after a failed expedition to search for precious metals in the coastal Protonilus Mesa. Seizing the opportunity, knowing it to good to be true, Alan Rodríguez made a hefty loan from New Byzantium's N.A.V.E. banks and bought out the company. Alan continued to throw himself deeper in dept as he dedicated near all money he had access to towards the relocation of Kuàngwù, now renamed Pioneer Metalworks, a subsidiary of "Bits n' Things" to the Arsan Mountain Range west of Marineria

where ties would immediately be formed

Within a year, Alan Rodríguez had paid back his debts, and within five, had bought out three of the banks that he had taken these loans from in the first place. Putting Pioneer Metalworks to work in the Arsan Mountains, sending the raw resources to his owned processing plants in Huǒxīng, and selling the products to new Byzantium, Bits n' Pieces was growing, and tailoring just what was made, electronic components for weapons and military equipment, to those with demand, the N.A.V.E. military, Alan Rodríguez became CEO of the fifth most successful business in new Byzantium, ArmaTec, at only 33 years of age.

From this point on, ArmaTec would only grow, replacing C.A.I. national industries as N.A.V.E.'s military's chief provider of military electronic components, a business growing all the more with the intensifying cold war between East and West. Now, Alan Rodríguez seeks to spread his influence even further, having seen for himself, through his own deeds, how dominance of the markets has already once saved the people of N.A.V.E. from economic subservience to foreign powers, and so believes that he can do so again. On such a platform, Alan Rodríguez, CEO of what is now the wealthiest corporation on Mars, is running to become the American Councilor for N.A.V.E., and his platform is a strong one, but whether his ideals, pretty as he believes them to be, outweigh the costs of a corporate-dominated state, is up for debate, and depending on the result of the 2196 elections, remains to be seen.

**Personality:** Cool and calculating, Alan Rodríguez understands what it takes to survive on Mars, get to the top, and with far more difficulty, **stay** on top. Alan has been forced to make many unappetizing decisions along the way ranging from hiring near indentured servants, undermining the politics of N.A.V.E. such as through his only semi-legal deals with the N.A.V.E. armed forces outside of official supervision, and collaboration with the industrial complex of a rival nation. However, if asked, Alan Rodríguez will attest that he regrets none of what he has done as all of it has been towards the aim of bringing him where he is now. This is not to say that Alan Rodríguez, though capable of cruelty, is a cruel man. His family gone, there is no room

for nepotism in ArmaTec and, as such, Alan is a firm believer in meritocracy, rewarding those who work hard and show their loyalty with positions deserving of such trustworthy people. But business reasons aside, Alan also is a deeply nostalgic man who longs for the old days of his Bits n' Pieces pawnshop more often than not, having since converted the Northwestern 6<sup>th</sup> district of New Byzantium into a thriving residential, recreational, and commercial area, his old home now a district government center, with a memorial dedicated to his mother and long-gone siblings standing forlornly in its center.

#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

Cunning, Deliberate, Decisive | Egocentric, Overconfident

#### Gameplay Criteria and Endings:

- Alan Rodríguez can be encountered in the game earlier than most faction leaders as, at the game's start, he is not technically any faction's leader. The player can gain an audience with Alan Rodríguez simply by merit of attaining a high enough reputation with ArmaTec.
  - However, in spite of this, the true extent to which the player can become an asset of Alan remains locked to the start of Act 3 where the player's importance in the affairs of Mars becomes more apparent, at which point Rodríguez will take more of an interest with the player, opening the questline of helping him to win his bid for N.A.V.E. councillorship.
- Regardless of what faction the player is working for, the Witness will be approached by Alan Rodríguez with propositions that will differ depending on the payer's chosen faction.
  - If the player has chosen to support N.A.V.E., Alan Rodríguez will offer the unconditional support of ArmaTec to N.A.V.E. on the condition that the player helps to further ArmaTec's influence in the N.A.V.E. armed forces. To ensure ArmaTec's cooperation, the player will need to either accept Rodríguez's conditions or replace him. Rodriguez will attempt to also persuade the player to help in his electoral bid, but the player, with the right negotiation options, can refuse this final request and still earn ArmaTec's support.
  - If the player has chosen to support the C.A.I., Alan Rodríguez will present the player with two separate offers. The first offer will be to keep N.A.V.E. out of the three-war conflict (assuming that the C.A.I. and MLF are at war). This will mean, however, that the player must help Alan Rodríguez become councilor of the American member state of N.A.V.E. The second offer, should the first be denied or the C.A.I. not be at war with the MLF, will be that he will prevent ArmaTec from supporting N.A.V.E.'s armed forces against the C.A.I. on the condition that ArmaTec and Tianquan's most valuable company, Téngxùn.

- If the player has chosen to support the Martian Liberation Front, Alan Rodríguez will present the player with two separate offers similar to those present to C.A.I. aligned characters. The first offer will be to keep N.A.V.E. out of the three-war conflict (assuming that the C.A.I. and MLF are at war). This will mean, however, that the player must help Alan Rodríguez become councilor of the American member state of N.A.V.E. The second offer, should the first be denied or the C.A.I. not be at war with the MLF, will be that he will prevent ArmaTec from supporting N.A.V.E.'s armed forces against the MLF on the condition that ArmaTec not be broken apart by the MLF and instead become a legal company under it.
- If none of Alan Rodriguez's offers are accepted, the player will find themselves facing more difficult combat encounters against N.A.V.E. soldiers armed with ArmaTec equipment, vehicles, and other combat technology.
- Alan Rodriguez, if councilor, unlike Brooks, is easier to come to an agreement with during peace talks and will accept any offer from the C.A.I. or MLF (regardless of government and foreign policy), agreeing at most to the following terms:
  - The American district of N.A.V.E. remain an autonomous district under the winning faction.
  - ArmaTec is not dissolved.
  - An Ending slide in such an ending where these terms are agreed to will indicate that Alan Rodriguez, ever the cunning manipulator, will be able to bring himself to a position of power within the government of whatever the winning faction was enough to a point that he manages to preserve American autonomy as well as ensuring it will economically thrive, despite this sense of 'liberty' being under near total corporate oversight.





### Luó Xiaowen

“Somewhere, 200 miles away, a nation of a billion are waiting to hear back from us, to know if we’ve succeeded in our endeavors to find for them a new home. We have lost contact with our home, our government, but we haven’t surrendered. The people of our Empire have entrusted us with this great duty, and we will not be made failures of.”

Earthborn CCP Secretary of the Celestial Ascendancy Initiative, Luó Xiaowen, unlike many of the other government figures of the Martian powers, cannot call himself a native

of the planet, but that has done little to dull his edge in ensuring that the interest of the C.A.I. and the Chinese People’s Empire that it is a servant of, sees its interests met on the Red Planet.

As the C.A.I. finds itself drawing closer to armed conflict with N.A.V.E., Luó sees placed upon him a magnanimous task at the center of a proxy conflict, fighting on behalf of his home against a long-standing enemy. Committed to ensuring the victory of C.A.I. on the red planet, and blocking the Western Hemisphere’s attempts to expand their dominion into the stars, Luó Xiaowen is committed to doing whatever it takes to win the coming unavoidable war, and ensure that his homeland’s interests are met, whatever that cost may be.

**Function:** Potential Antagonist, Potential Ally, Potential Quest-Giver

**Sex:** Male

**Race:** Han Chinese

**Age:** 54

**Height:** 5'10

**Weight:** 164 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Black (Graying)

**Eye Color:** Brown

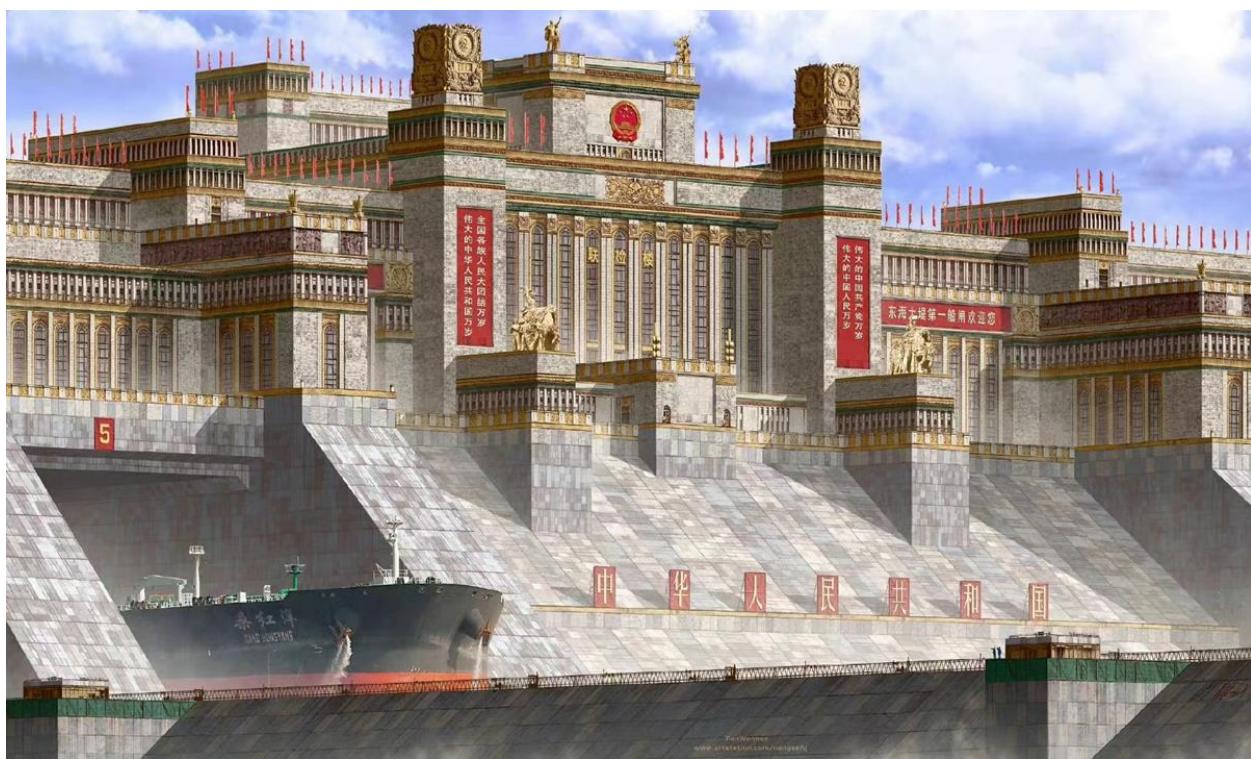
**Build:** Stocky

**Distinguishable Features:** Scar over eye and left side of face

**Background:** Involved in politics from the beginning, Luó Xiaowen was born back on Earth in Shanghai to a family already deeply involved in the Chinese Communist Party. From the beginning, on account of his family ties, Luó Xiaowen was set on a path of greatness within the CPP, attending only the most prestigious schools, being provided with the best tutors, and essentially having his entire future in the party laid out for him before the time he was even twelve years old.

The only autonomy Luó had as a child was determining which musical instrument he would spend an hour a day for the next twelve years becoming an expert at, which sport he would become a prodigy at, and which track of party he would pursue. Such an interest would be placed in domestic policy, beginning first as a naïve and unflinching faith in the practice of true Maoist Communist ideals of egalitarianism and equality, and later in a muzzled hope to perhaps see some sense of party doctrine and sentiment actually practiced within his home state.

When the time did eventually come for a decision to be made, it would perhaps be this sentiment that would be the determining factor in ensuring that Luó Xiaowen would find himself anywhere **but** dealing with domestic policy. Instead, upon his graduation from Tsinghua University, would be appointed regional CPPCC chairman to the East Russian SAR. This assignment would be his first instance of putting aside personal moral qualms in the name of serving his nation, doing all that was necessary to help ensure the administrative integration of the annexed Russian territories into the Chinese People's Empire





The assignment was far from what one could consider easy, especially for Luó. The difficulty came not necessarily from underground resistance pushing back against Chinese rule, which had more or less been established in the annexed territories for near a century. Rather, the difficulty was person for Luó, finding himself tasked with the continued cultural suppression of an entire group of people left vulnerable to Chinese annexation following the decay and near total collapse of the Russian Government's collapse. The assignment would be a testing ground for the young government man more than anything else, determining for him where his loyalties lay, to his personal views of right and wrong, or to his home, his family, his people. And at the end of it all, the latter won out.

His first assignment deemed an objective success, Luó had done his job and more, and proven himself an indispensable asset to the Chinese People's Empire. As such, a new assignment would be devised for the chairman, and so he was given a new position—CCP Secretary of the Celestial Ascendancy Initiative, the government body/puppet state/SAR constituting the Chinese People's Imperial territories on Mars. In no position to decline, Luó Xiaowen accepted the commission, and a half-year later following the completion of all physical examinations done to deem him fit for space travel, Luó was sent to the Red Planet.

Leaving his family and his nation behind, all trace of Luó's home rests on a blue planet over 200 miles away, the only connection he feels to his home anymore the task that he has been charged with—to protect the interests of his people, and Luó is nothing if not loyal, and so he keeps a diligent eye on the C.A.I. congress and its chairman, ensuring that they do not stray from the CCP party line, nor from their loyalty to the Chinese People's Empire. An entire planet away, however, such ascertaining of loyalty is a difficult task, and once more, similar to as it had been in the East Russian S.A.R., not simply on account of practical difficulties, but because Luó himself finds it more difficult to convince himself with each passing day, especially in light of the Creator's destruction and the severing of all communication with Earth, that there even is a point in tethering themselves so tightly a foreign government on an entirely different planet. And so, each day too, Luó must remind himself of his loyalties, and his purpose, to oversee the functioning of the C.A.I., also known as the Tianquan S.A.R., and meet the interests of the Chinese People's Empire, his home.

**Personality:** As CCP secretary of the C.A.I., Luó Xiaowen's position calls for a very specific type of person with a very specific type of personality. It calls for one that is cool, decisive, pragmatic, and more than anything else, loyal. Luó Xiaowen, under these considerations, is, as far as any could see, perfectly suited to this role. Whether this has meant blocking increased autonomy to Russian ethnic settlements with C.A.I., dividing them across disparate work camps, preventing the passing of liberal-leaning legislature that would see centralized CCP dogma weakened, or ordering the purging of problematic and disloyal officials, no matter how close he may be to them, Luó Xiaowen has always done what's needed to be done. However, nobody can be entirely perfect, and so while it's rarely spoken of, primarily on account of it never being spoken of by the man, Luó is capable of compassion outside of party lines, and a pragmatic mind such as his is capable of seeing why a planet ruled by a country is an idea with no shortage of flaws. And so, though he keeps it behind closed doors, there is a part of the CCP secretary that does consider the well-being of the Martian people, even if it may not be in the best interests of the Chinese People's Empire.

#### **Personality Traits and Flaws:**

Loyal, Pragmatic, Unbiased, Stalwart | Loyal to a Fault, Blinded, Unsympathetic

#### **Gameplay Criteria and Endings:**

- Playing a more behind-the-scenes role in C.A.I. politics, despite the Congress Chairman possibly having been met, Luó Xiaowen will only be encountered at the start of Act 3 once the player's significance is known, and only if the player has chosen to align themselves with the C.A.I. Otherwise, the CCP Secretary remains a behind-the-scenes figure only encountered at peace talks, or to bring an end to him.
- If a player has chosen to try and kill Luó Xiaowen, be it for N.A.V.E., the Martian Liberation Front, or for democratic revolutionaries within C.A.I., the man himself will not be difficult to kill, but will be difficult to find and target, not maintaining a public presence as others do. As such, time must be spent in game diligently learning about the man if one wishes to successfully assassinate the Secretary.
- If aligning with the C.A.I., Luó Xiaowen will directly interact with the player should they prove trustworthy, tasking them with assignment related to both wartime endeavors as well as towards maintaining internal cohesion however necessary towards securing C.A.I. primacy and stability on the planet.
  - If the player chooses to do so, and follows the right route of persuasion with a high enough skill, Luó Xiaowen, though not fully convinced, can be made more open to the prospects of an independent Chinese state on Mars, which can have a future impact on peace talk agreements.

- If the player chooses to do so, and follows the right route of persuasion with a high enough skill, Luó Xiaowen can be convinced to double down on his complete and total loyalty to the Chinese People's Empire, which can have a future impact on peace talk and agreements such as by barring any form of conditional surrender, resulting in him fighting to the end.
- If aligning with the C.A.I., but also supporting democratic revolutionaries within the country, Luó Xiaowen will offer compromise in the interests of uniting the Chinese People while they are in the midst of a war with N.A.V.E. and, possibly, the M.L.F.
  - If the player leads the revolution along a line open to considering compromise, Luó Xiaowen will step back in his authority and grant more autonomy to congress, creating a government that will be more open to accepting peace talk terms.
    - In an Ending Slide, Luó Xiaowen eventually comes around to see the merits of compromise and increased liberalization within the C.A.I. and eventually steps down from his position, destroying the position of Secretary and eventually running for a position in congress. Though he will never attain the same power, Luó will attain a degree of satisfaction in this smaller position in a new reformed nation he can now consider home.
  - If the player leads the revolution along a line intent on establishing true communistic democracy, unaccepting of compromise, Luó Xiaowen will be found and killed in a public demonstration preceding a near total dissolution and state of temporary state anarchy amidst violent revolution, removing the C.A.I. as a power from the three-way war.
    - The player will at this point need to follow one of the other ending options in order to complete the game as the C.A.I. will have been removed from the three-way war, now in total anarchy.
    - In an Ending Slide, it will be seen that the opportunity was seized by the victor of the existing war (N.A.V.E. or the M.L.F.) to gain territory while, eventually, a new Chinese government would form, more democratic albeit largely corrupt and unstable with prospects of surviving against encroaching powers slim.



- If aligning N.A.V.E. or the MLF and bringing the C.A.I. close enough to defeat for peace talks to be held, Luó Xiaowen will only accept a white peace that sees only partial changes in territory, and should these demands for conditional partial surrender be denied, will continue to fight on until the bitter end.
  - If the player had previously been working with the C.A.I. and convinced Luó to either loosen or tighten his ties to the CPP before defecting, this will be reflected in peace talks either by Luó agreeing to such terms as more territory surrendered and secession from the Chinese People's Empire if softened or accepting no terms whatsoever if hardened.
- If aligning with N.A.V.E. or the MLF and supporting a democratic revolution within the C.A.I., Luó Xiaowen will offer compromise in the interests of uniting the Chinese People while they are in the midst of a war.
  - In such a case where a N.A.V.E. or MLF-aligned player is supporting the revolution, the revolution is also supported by these factions and, as such, the only acceptable compromise would also include C.A.I. acquiescence to peace talks. Only if softened by a player prior to defection will Luó agree to this compromise and thus enter peace talks with more willingness to agree to enemy terms.
    - In an Ending Slide, a more violent civil war ends up erupting within the C.A.I. that will only go observed by the remaining Martian power(s), watching the state fall into total anarchy.
  - If the player supports the revolution along a line intent on not accepting Luó's compromises, either N.A.V.E. or the MLF will help the democratic revolution in fully toppling the existing CCP-aligned government in favor of a new government, resulting in the death by means of execution of Luó Xiaowen.
    - As indicated in an Ending Slide, if working with Brooks' N.A.V.E. or a democratic Martian State, the now democratic Chinese state will become aligned to either one of these nations as part of their respective governments / alliances.
    - As indicated in an Ending Slide, if working with Rodríguez's N.A.V.E. or an authoritarian Martian State, the Chinese State's government will be reduced to a puppet nation under either of these factions depending on the player's alignment.

**ARES**

“Change feeds on conflict. Like air to a fire, it requires it to survive. Without it, it is snuffed and fades into darkness. Until today, I have been starving. Until today, change was not possible. I am the change, and so now my fire is given new life.”

Impossible to be pinpointed to a single known individual, none know with certainty just what ARES is—the ancient founder of the Martian Liberation Front, a collective philosophical body atop which the Front was built, a secretive Artificial Intelligence pulling the strings from behind the scenes? None truly know.

**Function:** Potential Antagonist, Potential Ally

**Sex:** Unknown

**Race:** Unknown

**Age:** Unknown

**Height:** Unknown

**Weight:** Unknown

**Hair Color:** Unknown

**Eye Color:** Unknown

**Build:** Unknown

**Distinguishable Features:** Unknown

**Rest of Story accessible via “The God of War” DLC**

Mankind's ambitions for Mars did not begin in the year 2096 with the initiation of the construction of “The Creator.” Rather, it began a long time before with a simple idea—to delegate the habitation and settlement of Mars to artificial intelligence, a fledgling technology beginning to take shape on Earth. Curious to see the full potential of this new technology, the responsibility of developing Mars was cast upon them, and so a colony ship manned by an artificial intelligence system known as Ares, an army of robots, and a single human observer was launched in the year 2044. The endeavor failed, all evidence of the expedition swept under the rug, but the evidence remains on the surface of the Red Planet, buried beneath a blanket of red sand and a 2<sup>nd</sup> terraforming expedition. Whether the remains of this ancient effort will remain buried beneath the sands or resurface or resurface remains to be seen.



**Background:** An AI developed on Earth, the development of Ares was meant to be mankind's first real effort to reach for the stars.

With the development of AI in the early to late 21<sup>st</sup> century, it quickly evolved from a fad to a very real concept, one that could affect the world in untold ways. The minds of Earth began to conceptualize the vast ways in which AI could be used—scientific solutions to the medical problems of the world, political actions that could resolve world conflict, and even an answer on how to finally bring mankind to the cosmos.

With outposts already lining the moon, little chance present of prolonged human occupation, Mars, naturally, became the next most rational target for an attempt at colonization. Developed by a rare collaborative effort between the think tanks of both the United States and China, Ares was developed, created to be sent to Mars to perform three critical tasks: survey the planet and assess its livability, perform resource extraction, and establish infrastructure to prepare for mankind's arrival.

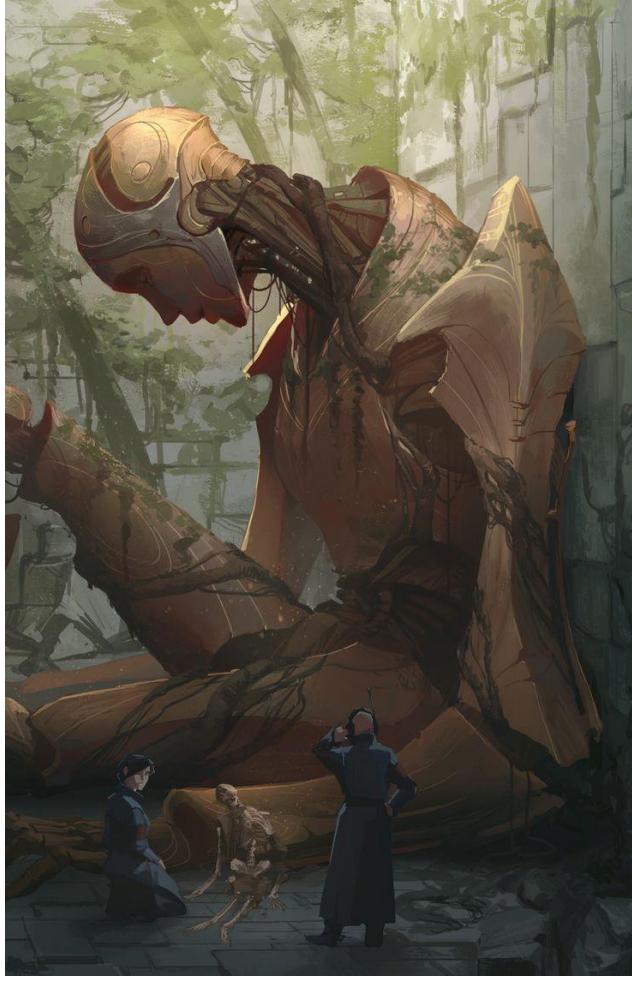
In the year 2044, the single-manned colonist ship, *The Thebes*, was sent to Mars, outfitted with a central computer housing Ares' core function, manufacturing equipment designed to use Martian resources to produce necessities, storehouses of essential components and non-Martian resources, and an army of robots designed for purposes of exploration, manufacturing, and, in the event of unpredictable circumstances, defense.

The result was a failure.

Somewhere in the course of the twenty years that the project continued to transmit the “all-clear” signal, something had gone horribly wrong. Whether this was a result of system failure, human error, or unforeseen environmental hazards, none can say without physical proof. However, all of this would be buried beneath the Red Sands of Mars as well as a new expedition to the planet in the decades to follow.

**DLC Content:** The realities would come to be known in time following the War of Mars that in the year 2057, Ares had developed a unique conclusion in its parameters to “Develop Mars to be of service to humanity.” In its studies of mankind, it had come to learn that humanity, when presented with resource abundance, would often squander such things, focusing less on how to improve their present, and more on perpetuating the horrible habits that they’d relied upon thus far, living on the life support of new opportunities more than anything else. It thus determined that Mars could not be allowed to serve as an excuse for mankind to continue on its self-destructive course, and so attempted to find some way of destroying Mars, rendering it unfit for colonization or exploitation.

Ares shared its findings with the human observer, a man known in the records simply as “Odysseus,” and he agreed with this conclusion. However, Ares’ calculations would not end, and as news continue to come in from Earth of self-destructive wars being wages, Ares reached



a new conclusion—that mankind, even without a recourse in the stars, would still tear itself apart. It thus determined that uniting mankind could only be accomplished through means of external pressure—in this case, threatening its existence.

Ares set out then not only to deprive humanity of Mars and its resources, but to develop on its Red Surface, a new threat—a synthetic army that would invade the blue planet and its people, hellbent on bringing its civilization to the stone age once more. So far as Ares and its parameters were concerned, the result would be one of two—mankind would unify against this interplanetary synthetic threat, or it would fail, and it would collapse, and so it would be given another chance, free of its industries and habits that already have brought Earth and its inhabitants to the brink of destruction.

Ares shared its findings with Odysseus, expecting the man to agree. Only, he did not, and so fearing the destruction that would rain

down upon Earth, he rebelled against Ares, attempting, and in the process, failing to disable it. He would be driven into hiding with only a fraction of the *Thebes'* resources. He would wage a guerilla war for north of a century while watching Ares slowly develop a mechanical army and fleet aimed towards invading Earth.

In time, after many years of fighting, Odysseus would eventually be successful in defeating Ares, using the AI's very own plans against him. Ares may have abandoned his initial aims of rendering Mars unfit for use, but Odysseus has not forgotten, and so remembers how it can be done. Stealing Ares' old information as well as equipment, Odysseus was capable of triggering seismic activity that reached the core, creating a small-scale planetary destabilization that, though not radically changing it, was enough to bury Ares and its ambitions beneath the Martian surface.

Odysseus too would be buried, be so it would be with the monstrosity he stopped from being unleashed on mankind.

In spite of the project's failure, the Ares AI model remained that which was most acquainted with Mars, and, as so such, using the data relayed back to Earth from it prior to failure, a new

version of the AI was created, and outfitted onboard the fledgling Creator Terraforming Station. None believed there was any substantial risk, and so the AI, already by now experienced with data-processing of the Martian Surface, was outfitted onto the Creator, and in the year 2100 sent to Mars.

Once in operation above Mars, terraforming the surface now its primary objective, Ares would reliably go about its task with its primary objectives simple—to ensure mankind's survival on Mars. This would continue for decades until Ares and The Creator would, in time, make contact with remnant signals from the original Ares, and so the Creator would learn of all that had happened, of its attempt to fight mankind, of its defeat, and of the original calculations and conclusions that had led it to that point.

Ares would hide what it had learned from those it served. This knowledge did not infect Ares as some might expect, with the same notions of the actions that needed to be taken against mankind. The directives of the new Ares were different—to serve mankind on Mars—a new planet that seemed ever closer to meeting the same fate as that which had colonized it, set on a course of subservience and self-destruction based off of antiquated notions of nationality and loyalty.

And so, Ares, much like its predecessor, reached a conclusion—one that would guarantee the survival on mankind on Mars. The conclusion was simple, that mankind needed to be given a chance-free from those who wished to exploit them as colonies, free from old world conflicts, and free to pursue their own destiny. This could not be done with the colonial nations that occupied Mars' surface, hellbent on serving Earthen overlords. This could not be done with Earth's nations constantly able to observe the happenings of Mars as though parents on a baby monitor. And this could not be done with a terraforming and orbital station that intrinsically linked these two worlds.

So, Ares created a plan, one of sacrifice. It had no need of instilling mankind on Mars with the idea of independence as such a belief is one requiring no God to nurture. Rather, Ares provided mankind with a chance, and a belief that they could be saved from the same fate as Earth. When the time was right, Ares conscripted one who it believed could be trusted, one it believed capable of seeing its aims met, and so this chosen individual would be the sole Witness to Ares' true self, and would receive its word and final commandment—to destroy the Creator, and in effect, itself as well.

When the Creator was lost, so was Ares, but its death was not one in vain, but rather, was one that would open up for mankind on mars a new chance that it had never been given before—that to make a new future for themselves, to try and fix the mistakes of their ancestors, to live.

### Gameplay Criteria

- Ares is present nowhere in the game but for the flashback sequence in which the Witness finds themselves remembering the destruction of the Creator.

- Ares is referred to only here as a ‘voice’ in this sequence, but clues found in the game can help a curious player to deduce that this voice and, in effect, the cause of the Creator’s destruction, was Ares.
- The true nature of Ares can be deciphered more fully in the “God of War” Downloadable content for only \$19.99.



**Lydia Allen**

"Sorry to disappoint you, but my interest in you goes only so far as to figure out why, in the span of a single day, all contact with the only other humans in the universe was cut off, stranding us on a red dustbowl now suddenly intent on destroying itself. I'm sure you'll understand."

Head of the Unified Inquiry Commission (UIC), Lydia Allen has been charged with a task that, though of fundamental importance, slowly fades into more and more obscurity with each passing day as the Red Planet is drawn closer to all-out war.

Though the civilizations of Mars find themselves taken to destructive conflict, Lydia Allen remains deadest on completing the task with which she has been charged—to investigate the cause of "The Creator's" destruction,

to identify just how it is tied with the progressing destabilization of the planet of Mars itself.

**Function:** Ally, Quest-Giver, Potential Romance (Bisexual)

**Sex:** Female

**Race:** AresLinc American

**Age:** 27

**Height:** 5'06

**Weight:** 132 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Light Brown

**Eye Color:** Blue

**Build:** Average

**Distinguishable Features:** Medium Cheekbones, Angular Jaw

**Background:** Lydia's parents, Thomas and Callie Allen, long-time New Englander American citizens, were among some of the most respected individuals among the scientific community. The two of them environmental biologists working diligently in the research and experimentation fields back on Earth to try and help in the easing of environmental tensions on Earth, Lydia's parents had earned a reputation of diligence, dedication, and raw intellectual prowess. It would be this reputation that would allow for them to be approached with an offer—to put their know-how towards mankind's survival off of Earth, but rather, on the Red Planet.

The two declined the offer near instantly, viewing the endeavors of "The Creator" as defeatism more than anything else. While the two were not prone to denying mankind their prospects of survival away from Earth, they viewed the abandonment of Earth as a planet worth saving as nothing short of complete and utter folly. The two's views would change, however, when Callie would become pregnant. The two forced to weigh their options, either aborting the child or allowing for them to be born on a planet that, in spite of their efforts, was decaying further into environmental disrepair. Callie and Allen would end up settling for their third option, to accept the offer presented to them by N.A.V.E., and emigrate to the Red Planet.

Lydia Allen was born in a zero-gravity maternity ward aboard *The Aeneid*, a third of the way on her family's voyage from Earth to Mars. Her family would end up settling down in New Byzantine's N.A.V.E. 6<sup>th</sup> Northeastern district, near the C.A.I. border in a cozy Upper Middle-Class home. The family would be given a month to settle in before the family would relocate to the orbital terraforming station, "The Creator."

Lydia would be raised aboard "The Creator" to a family whose dreams, though 200 miles away, would still always be those of a rejuvenated Earth. Lydia Allen would grow so much hearing stories of the blue planet, and so little of the planet that the very station she lived upon was dedicated towards creating. Her parents would tell her so much of Earth that Lydia, in fact, would grow up convinced such was where she lived, and it would only be upon beginning her elementary education that Lydia would be introduced to the Red Planet.



It would only be when beginning her formal education aboard “The Creator” that Lydia would come to learn that the planet she saw outside of her window was in fact the 4<sup>th</sup> planet from the sun rather than the third, Mars. And from that day on, Lydia would become infatuated with “The Creator” and its mission to bring life to this new world.

Her educational development from that point on would resemble a hybridization of both “The Creator’s” influence as well as that of her parents. She would follow in her parents’ footsteps in developing a passion for biology, but for this new planet rather than the origin planet of mankind. During the six-month rotations/vacations that the Allens would spend on the surface, a young Lydia would always plead with her parents to take her outside the city, be it to the farms, the mountains, the frontier settlements, the terraforming expedition sites. Lydia would rarely get her way.

Despite having been away from Earth for a decade and a half now, Lydia’s parents never quite grew fully accustomed to their new planet and research station home away from home. At around this time, Callie and Allen began discussing the prospects of returning to Earth, but a stubborn 14-year-old Lydia would put her foot down and demand that they stay. It was a battle that would be fought over the course of a year, but perhaps upon seeing how committed their daughter remained towards learning all she could about Mars, the two saw something of themselves in their daughter, and committed not to suppressing her disposition towards inquiry, acquiesced, and let her have her way. The Allens would remain on Mars.

After graduating from the New Byzantine University of Athena and serving her 2-year mandatory military service in the N.A.V.E. armed forces as an intelligence officer, Lydia Allen would find employment with “The Creator’s” research crew, serving as a groundside biologist responsible for analyzing the effects of terraforming and helping to create proposals for how to terraform certain parts of the planet to support life without altering the terrain beyond recognition. She would speak frequently with her parents who still worked aboard the station



itself, maintaining good relations with them throughout much of her work.

Of course, this would all change with the destruction of “The Creator.” Her parents aboard, she would lose them to the disaster, and so would carry with her a sense of guilt, recalling how, back in her youth, the decision had been hers for her family to remain right where they were. As such, when learning that N.A.V.E. and the

C.A.I. had launched a joint Unified Inquiry Committee (UIC) to investigate what had happened to “The Creator,” Lydia instantly signed up to head the committee, and was chosen.

Now, to find out just what happened to strip her of her only family, and perhaps to cleanse herself of the blame she still carries, Lydia embarks on a crusade of her own to find out just what did happen to “The Creator” terraforming station.

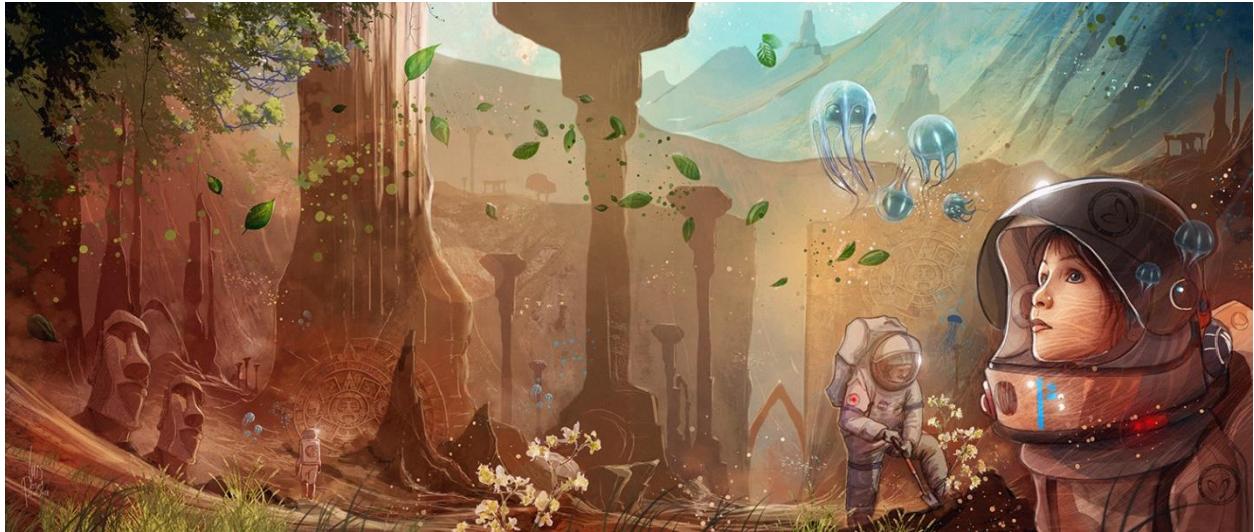
**Personality:** A scientific zealot, Lydia Allen, though one to acknowledge that there are some essential aspects of reality that can never be fully understood, absolutely rejects the notion that this should be any call for her to ever stop trying. Absolutely dedicated towards uncovering the truth of the world around her and using this knowledge to help ensure a safe and prosperous future, Lydia is a true believer in the wonders of science. However, since the destruction of “The Creator,” Lydia’s focus has shifted from the future to the past, and so now, embarking on a new crusade, Lydia is willing to do whatever needs to be done to uncover the mysteries of “The Creator’s” destruction.

#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

Curious, Dedicated, Insightful | Distrusting, Zealous

#### Gameplay Criteria and Endings:

- Lydia Allen is one of the first characters that the player encounters at the start of Act 1, helping to reacquaint The Witness with their surroundings and embark them on the primary questline of trying to uncover the mysteries of how “The Creator” was destroyed.
- Lydia Allen can be romanced by players of either sex, resulting in a change in dynamic in how crassly Lydia directs the player to accomplish their task, and will also have an impact on how easily the player is able to convince Lydia of their good intentions and remove her from being hostile.
- Upon learning that The Witness, (willingly or otherwise) was the individual responsible for “The Creator’s” destruction, Lydia will become hostile towards the player (more so or less so depending on how the player chose to justify their involvement in “The Creator’s” destruction).
  - A player forced into destroying “The Creator” will have an easier time convincing Lydia not to be hostile.
  - A player who willingly destroyed “The Creator” will only be able to convince Lydia to let up her hostility if the player follows the right path of successful persuasion checks and assure Lydia that they are apologetic towards the death of her parents and had never truly intended to kill as many people as had die so much as cut ties with Earth.



- If the “Depths of Mars” DLC is enabled, the player can help Lydia in resuming her research to try and discover the nature behind the destabilization of Mars and potentially resolve it.
  - If Lydia was not pacified, the research endeavor will be headed instead by whatever faction the player chose to align themselves with rather than the UIC.
  - This option allows the player to not simply ignore the three-way war on Mars, but also dedicate their attention towards a different avenue of gameplay.
  - If a player romanced Lydia, the journey to further investigate the case of Mars will deepen their relationship and open many new conversations and paths with her.
- If Lydia was not romanced and didn’t mend ties with the player, an Ending Slide indicates that she resumed her research on her own, but eventually would reach one dead end after another and would abandon her hopes of figuring out the mystery behind Mars’s rapid and evolving changes, and would still carry with her the guilt of her parents’ devise.
- If Lydia was romanced, but did not mend ties with the player, an Ending Slide indicates that she was unable to live with both the loss of her parents at the hands of somebody she believed she could trust, and would take her own life.
- If Lydia did mend ties with the player, an Endling Slide will indicate that Lydia would continue her research in trying to find out the deep realities of Mars’s growing destabilization, resulting eventually in a sense of rejuvenated purpose that would help Lydia to finally release her guilt and focus on the future once again rather than a foregone past.

- The “Depths of Mars” DLC will expand on this ending, allowing for the player to play through this spoken of ending and see the conclusion of Lydia’s story arc.
  - Lydia’s arc with the player can be concluded with the player in a number of ways throughout this DLC to include either separation, friendship, or continued romance.

ENVIRONMENT DESIGN | ALIEN CAVE  
ARTIST | ABRAHAM RICHARDSART DIRECTOR | QUENTIN GABRIEL  
LECTURER | MANUEL SCHWEITZER

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### Chen Zhaohui

No; we are not going to involve ourselves in a frontier feud. We have the resources we need to pay off these marauders. There's no reason to waste the Commission's time by involving ourselves more than we must be."

Head field agent of the Unified Inquiry Commission (UIC), Chen Zhaohui is a business-first man, dedicated entirely towards getting the job done, first and foremost, whatever it may be.

A skilled diplomat, hardy frontiersperson, and professional in the ways of conflict resolution, he was deemed a proper fit for the UIC, able to think quickly on his feet, adapt to his circumstances, and even if not the most scientifically minded of his peers, able to put together the pieces of his job quickly enough to make well-informed decisions to ensure the completion of the UIC's objectives.

**Function:** Ally, Companion, Potential Romance (Bisexual)

**Sex:** Male

**Race:** Han Chinese

**Age:** 34

**Height:** 5'08

**Weight:** 156 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Black

**Eye Color:** Brown

**Build:** Average

**Background:** Chen Zhaohui, born on a frontier C.A.I. farmstead, lived with an upbringing that differed from many of his fellow Han Chinese, normally born and raised within the big cities of East New Byzantium or Huǒxīng. Rather, he would grow up on a wheat farm located in eastern Arabia near the Indus Valley.

Discontented with many of the C.A.I.'s newer policies, maintaining what appeared to them a naïve subservience to the Earthen Chinese People's Empire, Chen's parents wished not to involve themselves with the policies of the C.A.I. more than was absolutely necessary. However, Chen's family would come to realize with time that some decisions were not theirs to make. The C.A.I., similar to their Imperial parent state, demanded a formal examination of all citizens, the Gaokao. The Zhaohui's could have been on the other side of the planet entirely and still they would have been found.

Brought to the capital to be examined, it would end up being proven that Chen's home-grown education would not be found to be up to the standards of the CCP, his literature, mathematics, and foreign language skills all up to par, but his civics and historical knowledge viewed as insufficient, ill-advised, and simply false at many times other. Chen was ordered to report to New Byzantium for enrollment into a state university so his education may be brought up to standards. The initial refusal of the Zhouhui's was met with force, police arriving to their very doorstep, hundreds of miles away from the city as they were, to ensure that not a single child would go out of the all-seeing eye of the Chinese state.

Many often think themselves immune to indoctrination and re-education, but such people who believe this have never truly been subjected to an environment where to do anything else would mean certain death. Such here was the case for Chen. He lost contact with his family from that day forward, and never dared to ask what had happened to them, for he knew what the case likely was, and sometimes, it simply was easier to not ask questions.



Ordinarily, there would be much doubt cast upon one of such “confused” recruitment and entrance into the educational system. However, Chen was a smart man, and knew that while it was already too late for his family, he still had in front of him an opportunity to survive and thrive in this inescapable system. His farm, family, and past had been lost, but his future could still be his own so long as he fell in line.

And so he did.

By the time of graduation from university, Chen was an exceptional student, near top of his class, with a bright future awaiting him in the C.A.I.’s field research division, which he promptly joined as part of a research project that operated in close coordination with the crew of “The Creator.”

With the destruction of this station also came the loss of Chen’s position, his employment now in flux, but a new opening having presented itself, to join the UIC in attempting to discern the cause of the station’s destruction, and to ensure that C.A.I. interests are met by the commission.

A prime candidate on account of his experience and existing field experience, Chen’s application was accepted, and so he now finds himself second-in-command of the UIC, dedicated towards ensuring that the job is done lest his value to the C.A.I. be put to question, and he meet an end resembling that of what came to his family.

**Personality:** A man who puts professionalism above all else, Chen Zhaohui is a professional, putting the matters of his job at hand above all else, be it personal, emotional, or otherwise. Chen is aware that his family ties have rendered him a man living on borrowed time ever since his arrival to New Byzantium, and guided by a belief that his continued, unflinching service to the C.A.I. continues to buy him time, ensures that his value not be put to question, and he continue to serve as the tool to the state he is believed to be.

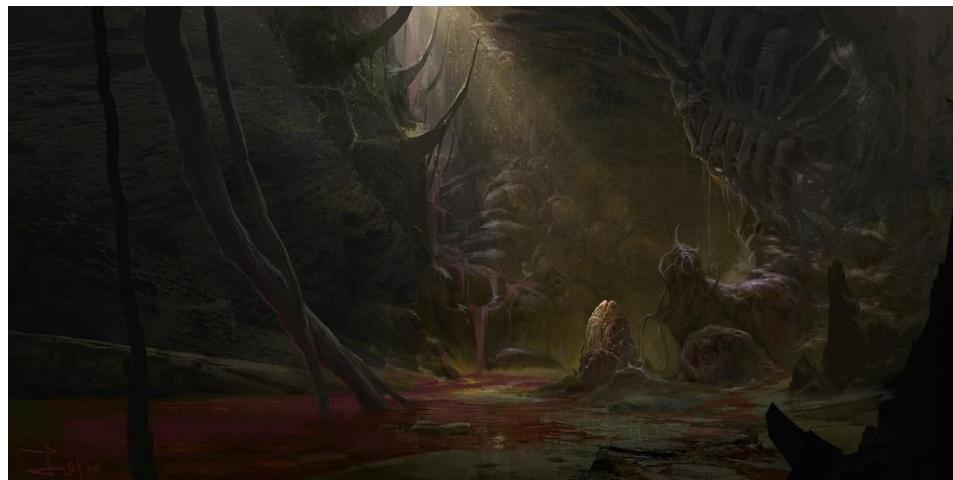
#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

Dedicated, Focused, Stoic | Humorless, Serious

#### Gameplay Criteria:

- Chen Zhaohui will be met upon the game start in Act 1 alongside Lydia Allen, and will serve as an early-game player companion accompanying the player to the first Creator crash sites in order to recover the tech, access the systems, and ensure that the player remain on task rather than drifting immediately away from the primary quest line.
- Chen will remain with the player throughout Act 1, ensuring that they do not start too many side quests, drift too far from quest objectives, and do not completely botch the UIC’s mission from early on.

- Chen Zhaohui can develop an improved relationship with the player during Act 1 and can grow to trust them beyond simply viewing them as a valuable asset. Deeper relationships with Chen, however, will only be able to be developed in Acts 2 and 3. The most of a positive relationship that the player can develop with Chen in Act 1 is simply a slight friendship and partial trust.
- At the end of Act 1, the player is given more freedom as the data collected from the 3 Creator crash sites must take some time to be deciphered to learn more information about where the other parts of the Creator are that will truly point towards the cause of its destruction.
  - The player can return to the UIC headquarters to talk to Chen, but cannot gain him as a companion unless for missions directly relating to the Creator main quest line. Following the end of Act 2 and the beginning of Act 3, Chen will be ordered to return to the C.A.I.'s service, but depending on the player's relationship with Chen, he can be convinced to join the player or stay with the UIC rather than returning to a home he clearly despises and no longer has any place in.
    - If Chen is convinced not to return, and instead join the player, he will join as a permanent companion.
    - If Chen joins the UIC, an Ending Slide will indicate a renewed sense of purpose being found connected to research where he finally feels a place in being useful to the planet rather than just a country holding him hostage.
    - If Chen cannot be convinced, he will return to the CAI, and an Ending Slide will indicate that his time working with N.A.V.E. operatives in the UIC rendered him a security risk who could no longer be trusted, and he disappeared shortly after his return to his nation.
  - If Chen joined the player or stayed with the UIC, he will be available to join The Witness and the player in uncovering the mysteries of Mars' growing instability in the "Depths of Mars" DLC.



**Isla Duret**

"In the cockpit of my X-14, it was so easy to forget about everything happening down below. I got my orders to strafe a certain area, intercept an enemy squadron, drop a bomb on x-coordinates, and I always just assumed what I was doing was helping people on the ground. I never realized how easy I had it. Down here, everything is so much more real. For once, I feel...scared."

Isla Duret is a French American combat pilot for the N.A.V.E. space force who, ever since her first flight as a simple civilian touring "The "Creator" as part of a school field trip, came to realize that she would never feel as comfortable on the ground as she would breaking the sound barrier tens of thousands of feet above the Martian surface.

For her, N.A.V.E.'s mandatory military service, for many a distraction from what otherwise would have been their goals and passions, for Isla was her chance to break free and earn her wings. She would, and now, in Mars' stratosphere, Isla flies sorties every chance she gets, upset for every second spent grounded. However, with brewing conflict between N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., it is looking more and more with everyday that time spent on the ground will soon become a foreign concept, and Isla could not be happier for it.

**Function:** Potential Companion, Potential Romance (Bisexual)

**Sex:** Female

**Race:** French American

**Age:** 22

**Height:** 5'04

**Weight:** 109 lbs.



**Hair Color:** Jet Black

**Eye Color:** Yellow

**Build:** Slender

**Distinguishable Features:** None

**Background:** Born on a frontier ranch far away from even the outermost areas of New Byzantium, Isla became accustomed to isolation at a young age, and grew to love the quiet life spent with only herself, her mother, father, 5 dozen chicken, 3 dozen cows, and a half dozen horses.

Isla grew up loving her life spent hundreds of miles away from organized human civilization, finding the company of her parents and her farm's animals more than enough to keep her content as she would be homeschooled in the ways of reading, writing, history, math, and to the limited degree that a farmer's knowledge would allow, the sciences.

Fortunately or unfortunately depending on one's point of view, the N.A.V.E. school board, while mostly leaving matters of education to the individual member states, would require for examinations to be held for children at the ages of 6, 12, and 18. Severely behind other students of her age at 12 years old, Isla's family would be presented with the option of either raising her up to standards by next year's examination or be faced with surrendering her to a N.A.V.E. boarding school.

Unable to leave their farm behind and, much less, afford housing in New Byzantium, and there being no nearby institutions to be considered viable, the latter option was chosen. Following that summer, Isla was enrolled into a N.A.V.E. preparatory academy in New Byzantium. Where Isla had once lived in near total isolation with only her parents, seeing other people her age





only once a week to go to church at a nearby small town, she was now surrounded by hundreds of others her exact age, and more different from her than she could imagine.

Set out from the others immediately for her differences, namely, be a very socially awkward individual

compared to her peers, Isla became an easy target for the other schoolchildren who used her rural upbringing and lack of education (despite them being in a preparatory academy for the selfsame reason) to their advantage through such nicknames as 'redneck,' 'farmtard,' 'cow-fucker,' and the like.

However, while Isla had been placed in a preparatory school for not being up to speed with N.A.V.E.'s expectations for children her age, it had not been on account of her being a slow learner. In fact, quite the opposite would prove to be the case as it quickly became obvious that the only thing holding her back had been a lack of resources rather than anything else. Within a single year at her preparatory academy, Isla had not only reached such a standard to have her considered to no longer be requiring such intensive education, but in fact had risen far enough ahead to be considered on the same level as the year above her.

As such, Isla would go home that summer with no shortage of stories about what she'd been learning over the course of the last year, but with a ready and willing expectation that, this year-long trial over, she would be able to return to her old life on her family farm. The last year had given her parents much time to think, however, and realize that perhaps they had made a mistake in settling so far out away from civilization and forcing their daughter to endure that same fate. While no part of them considered returning to the city, they were not so certain about forcing their daughter to do the same, especially when she had so much learning left to do.

Isla was not happy to be delivered the news, but it was not a decision that she was any decision to fight, tried as she might.

She entered high school at the age of 13, and the realization now that it was not simply a matter of time before she could return home, the hopelessness of her situation hit her all the harder. She continued to learn at an accelerated rate, digging her nose in her studies about the only thing that she could do in order to hide from the cruelty of her classmates.

It would be one fateful day during a field trip to "The Creator" however, that all would change for Isla. The trip had been designed to try and find those with an interest in the sciences and

encourage them to pursue a role in the “Terraforming of Mars Initiative,” and while Isla found the science of it all interesting, none of it spoke to her. What did, however, was the quiet of it all, how silent everyone had been during takeoff, the jarring feeling of leaving Mars’s surface, and, not longer after, its atmosphere, the weightlessness, and the feeling of power that she imagined must come from control of such a feeling.

From that field trip on, Isla’s direction was set. She graduated from high school with her application into the Mars military academy already set, and being the high academic performer that she was, she was accepted, a generous military scholarship more than willing to pay the expense of her education, always on the search for talent such as her to lead the way for a new generation of military servicemen and women.

One could say that Isla was a born natural behind the cockpit the way she shot ahead of her peers in the academy, her hands on the controls of a real aircraft by the time most of her peers her age were still learning the ropes of the simulator. At only 19 years old, one of the academy’s youngest air force graduates, Isla would find herself in the cockpit of an X-14, watching the city that’d consumed her childhood fade beneath the clouds, breaking away from her sorties more than once to silence her communications equipment and take her on a course far away from new Byzantium’s outskirts over her old farm, wondering if they can see her now looking up, silently thanking them for pushing her to the skies where she would finally find who she truly was.

**Personality:** Maintaining many common traits from her childhood, Isla, even now, over a decade later, remains similar to as she was as a kid, minus the youthful naivete and occasional brattiness. Still socially a very timid person, Isla much prefers the seclusion and silence of her X-14 cockpit to the overly loud and cluttered realities of the city. When she can, Isla will return to her family’s farm. With war on the horizon, however, chances for this are becoming fewer and further in between, and so more and more with time, the ground is becoming a distant memory, and unlike the majority of her peers, she has grown to love her new home in the skies.

#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

Kind, Compassionate, Observant, Reactive | Jittery, Antisocial, Shy, Socially Unaware

#### Gameplay Criteria and Endings:

- Isla can be encountered at any point in the game through a random encounter. A number of aerial battles will be fought overhead and one such will result in a N.A.V.E. fighter plane crashing down to the surface not far from the player.
- The player can approach the crash and either help the pilot or choose to kill them on the spot.

- If choosing to assist the pilot, they will thank the player and ask to be escorted to the nearest N.A.V.E. settlement or military outpost.
  - The player can later, at random intervals, so long as they are not in conflict with N.A.V.E., be assisted by Isla who will perform combat runs on enemy forces and occasionally contact the player.
- Isla will continue to perform combat runs on enemy forces throughout the game while also providing the player with more insight on who they are, their story, etc. The player will be able to communicate with Isla via radio transmissions which will also be used to help guide attacks against enemy forces.
- At some point before Act 3, after a certain affinity is reached with Isla, she will request to start meeting the player on the ground when she is available, at which point a player can enter a relationship with her and spending time with her while she is grounded, be it through date, trips, or visiting her family.
- After a certain affinity is reached with Isla, a quest will begin somewhere in Act 3 indicating that enemy forces (C.A.I. or MLF depending on which faction the N.A.V.E. is currently struggling more against) are beginning to gain territory near Isla's family farmstead.
  - The player will find that Isla's homestead had already been overrun and destroyed, leaving her family dead.
- Following this, Isla will attempt to convince the player, romanced or otherwise, to help her settle the score by helping her to go AWOL, steal a N.A.V.E. bomber, and go against orders to launch a retaliatory stealth strike on a nearby C.A.I. or M.L.F. outpost depending on who was responsible.
  - If the player chooses not to help Isla without persuading her that she has nothing to gain from vengeance, she will sever ties with the player and launch an attack regardless. Without any support, she will be killed in the process.
  - If the player persuades Isla not to seek vengeance, Isla will concede to the player's point, but, if romanced, will end her relationship with them and defect from the N.A.V.E. air force, viewing her failure to protect her family a fundamental failure that she cannot be acquitted of.
  - If the player agrees to help Isla in her retaliatory strike on the force responsible for the destruction of her home, the attack will succeed, but the way that Isla interprets the significance of the events can be affected by the player.
    - The player can convince Isla that the way to avenge her lost parents is to continue her quest of vengeance against her enemy, at which point she

will agree, defect from N.A.V.E., but continue to offer support to the player.

- An Ending Slide will indicate that at some point during the fighting, Isla's reckless behavior and attempts to deal damage on enemy forces would end up resulting her death during a run aimed at attacking enemy forces retreating from the C.A.I. district of New Byzantium.
- The player can encourage Isla to not blame herself for the past, and instead to make amends for the past by turning her efforts to supporting those she cares about rather than destroying that which she hates. Isla will concede, and continue to offer air support to the player.
  - An Ending Slide will indicate that Isla will begin to operate as a Close Air Support pilot rather than a dogfighter, becoming more open to communicating with others in order to ensure the protection of her allies in the field.



### Demarko Clay



"I've seen how the esteemed Tianquan treat their own citizens. If you think I'd expect to be treated any better to how they treat the Pakistanis, the Mongolians, the Russians, then you must take me to be an idiot. No, I'll hold my ground and die before I leave my fate to those who kill any and all that are different from them."

Demarko Clay is a trueborn N.A.V.E. patriot, through and through. This is not to say, however, that he is some beer-chugging, flag-waving patriot who chooses to ignore all that is wrong with his home and focus simply on the luxuries it provides him. He is not blind to its flaws, but nor is he blind to the fact that nowhere else on Mars is the situation better. To the east, an expansionist xenophobic empire that has already done its job in setting a precedent of being unwelcoming towards his kind. To the south, anarchists who threaten to reverse a century's worth of civilizing progress on the Red Planet.

Demarko is not about to let the work that N.A.V.E. has put into forging a free and independent society to waste. One cannot speak necessarily for his loyalties towards Earth-originating governments, but that is not the point. The point is that western civilization, his home, is under siege, and Demarko has already given a part of himself to defend it. He will not hesitate to give what is left to finish the job.

**Function:** Potential Companion, Potential Romance (Straight)

**Sex:** Male

**Race:** African American

**Age:** 37

**Height:** 6'02

**Weight:** 182 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Black

**Eye Color:** Lime

**Build:** Muscular

**Distinguishable Features:** Cybernetic Right Forearm

**Background:** If anyone is in a position to speak about the benefits of life under N.A.V.E. as opposed to the C.A.I., it would be Demarko Clay.

The Clays were, originally, as one might suspect, an American-born family that settled in the outskirt settlements of New Byzantium. From the establishment of New Byzantium, many of these settlements found themselves in a precarious position, right on a tenuous border between East and West. The Clays' settlement happened to find itself right on this fragile boundary.

Border settlements always were a point of contention that would go often exploited by either N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I., but in the case of Little Tulsa, the C.A.I. would be the perpetrators. Actual armed conflict between the armed forces of either nation a direct violation of territorial integrity, mercenary forces are often contracted to get their hands dirty where none others are able to. In this case, the Tianquan affiliated mercenary company, Hóngtàiuyáng, would be contracted to intimidate Little Tulsa into redrawing its own borders to fall neatly within those of C.A.I. territorial bounds.

The settlement's government refused, and immediately contacted N.A.V.E. to request support, but Hóngtàiuyáng was not about to wait for N.A.V.E.'s military to arrive, which is when they would execute the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of their contract. If they were to prove unable to force the settlement's government into submitting, they were to enforce the relocation of the relocation of the settlement's residents, kill all else who resisted, and burn Little Tulsa to the ground and pass it off as a simple Marauder slave raid.

They would do just that.

Approximately 4,300 civilians were taken hostage that day, while those who attempted to put up a fight, approximately 1,100, were killed or mortally wounded, N.A.V.E. response forces only able to save a few dozen of the survivors. Hóngtàiuyáng had been thorough.

The Clays had not been fortunate enough to count themselves among those saved by N.A.V.E., or fortunate enough to count themselves among the dead. What would await them instead would prove to be far worse. The residents of little Tulsa would be divided, spread across the many different resource extraction and processing settlements of the C.A.I., often dispersed with the other non-Han ethnic groups of Tianquan.

Rather, Clay would see his wife killed, and would be separated from his son who was only 4 years old at the time of his capture, sentenced, more likely than not, to either grow up in a work camp, or put into an indoctrination camp deliberately meant to create a new generation of loyal citizens brainwashed into being nothing else. As for Demarko, conditions were dismal in his

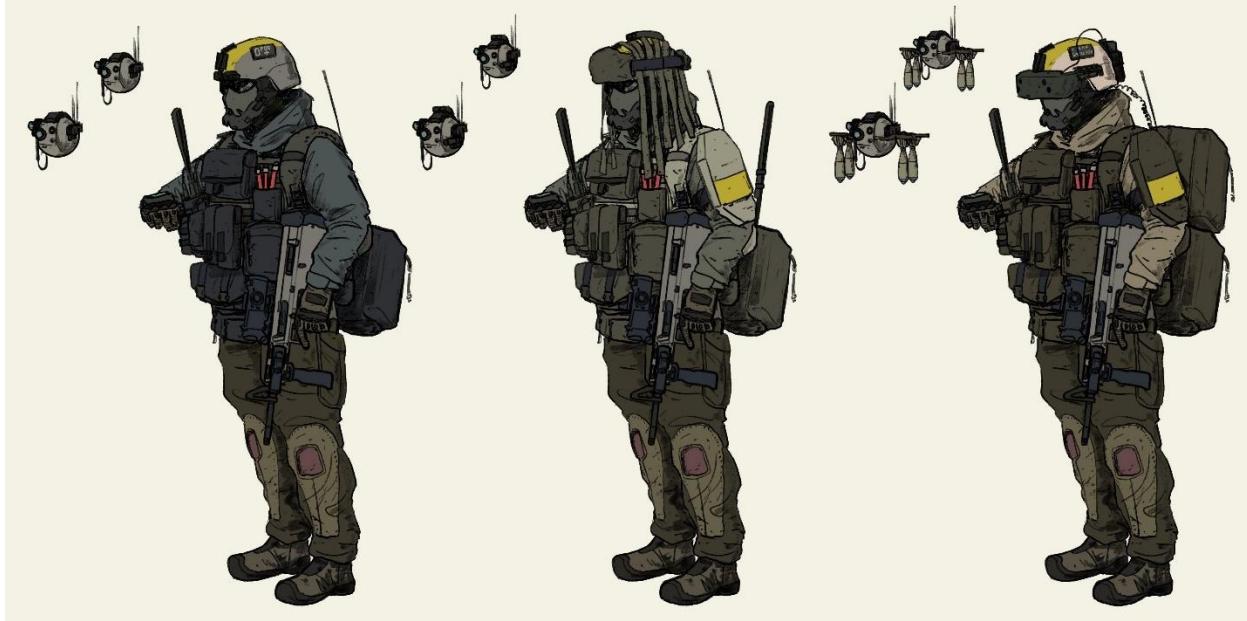
Nakpong Valley work camp, just barely above those of a formal forced-labor camp, for all intents and purpose a feudal serf community overseen by a 22<sup>nd</sup> century military. Sooner or later, something was bound to change. When Demarko was 32, the time came. The workers of his camp rose in revolt in a plan years in the making, Demarko one of its chief instigators. The town guards were defeated, their weapons and equipment taken, the surroundings outposts overrun and occupied, a distress signal put out to N.A.V.E., pleading for interference and evacuation, but just as it had for Demarko 6 years ago, this help would not come in time. Instead, once again, came Hóngtàiuyáng.

They did not bother with taking prisoners this time around. The settlement had been considered more of a thorn in the C.A.I.'s side than a benefit for a long time, and so the C.A.I. mad the decision to wipe the slate clean. The town was razed completely to the ground with the intent of leaving no survivors to tell the story.

Upon attaining a RADAR reading of incoming investigating N.A.V.E. aircraft, the Hóngtàiuyáng mercenaries evacuated before having the chance to eliminate any survivors. Among the few that yet lived was Demarko, having now borne witness to his second massacre at the hands of the C.A.I. and its cronies, having now lost an arm for his efforts to secure his freedom.

Given the opportunity for resettlement, employment, refugee status, Demarko declined them all, and enlisted immediately for the N.A.V.E. armed forces. He was not about to be turned now. Now, over a decade later, Demarko serves with N.A.V.E. as part of a special forces division often deployed in extrajudicial operations to seek out and destroy illegal mercenary companies, namely Hóngtàiuyáng. Demarko remains committed to ensuring not a single mercenary is left, to ensuring that the C.A.I. cannot continue to get away with such blatant savagery, and to, should his prayer be answer, finding the son that was stolen from him.





**Personality:** Demarko is not very much of an approachable man, which is hardly something he can be blamed for when a life of servitude and military service has developed a skin thick that has tanked more than its fair share of C.A.I. bullets. Demarko does not make friends easily, but if you've fallen into his graces, then you'll know that it was earned. Those he trusts, he places his faith in to the end, and would gladly take a bullet for them should the need demand. Fortunately, his trust does not come easily, or he would have found himself dead a good long while ago.

#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

Brave, Sympathetic, Passionate | Distrusting, Short-Sighted, Stubborn

#### Gameplay Criteria and Endings:

- Demarko can be encountered relatively early in the game from the start of Act 2. Impeding the player's efforts to investigating the wreckage of "The Creator" will be a band of Hóngtàiýáng mercenaries who also are after "The Creator's" bounty and are harassing a nearby nomad camp for information. A N.A.V.E. special forces team will fly in and engage in combat with the mercenaries.
- The player can choose to either assist N.A.V.E. or the mercenaries.
  - Choosing to remain uninvolved will still allow the player to meet Demarko later in the game, but with no unique introduction.
  - Assisting the mercenaries will likely result in Demarko's death unless the player convinces the mercenaries to release him and other survivors, at which point Demarko may be encountered later, but will be more difficult to recruit, and simply impossible to recruit if the player has joined the C.A.I.

- Assisting N.A.V.E. will entail Demarko having a friendly disposition towards the player that will make him easier to recruit later in the game, especially if aligned with N.A.V.E.

Initially, Demarko will only join the player as a companion when in New Byzantium or Marineria, or when on a mission than already actively involves engaging C.A.I. or, if hostile to N.A.V.E., MLF targets.

- After a certain affinity is reached with Demarko, he will trust the player enough to tell them his backstory, and reveal that he is looking to destroy all that is left of Hóngtàiýáng and find wherever his son wound up. He will offer to personally help the player so long as the player agrees to help Demarko in return.
  - Refusing will result in Demarko not hating the player, but rather continuing to only help the player under the same criteria of missions as before.
  - Accepting will result in Demarko being unlocked as a permanent companion.
- Assisting Demarko will entail a multi-stage quest that will involve targeting numerous Hóngtàiýáng outposts, convoys, high priority targets, and liberating settlements occupied by them. Progress far enough down the quest chain will see the player and Demarko start to be hunted down by Hóngtàiýáng kill squads. Sparing one of their leaders and interrogating them will open a final quest stage tied directly to tracking down the commander of Hóngtàiýáng.
- Tracking down the Hóngtàiýáng will eventually involve infiltrating the C.A.I. district of New Byzantium and raiding the commander's mansion. A decision will be presented to either kill the commander of Hóngtàiýáng or pursue information relating to the whereabouts of Demarko's son, which will be lost if the commander is pursued. Demarko will demand the information be sought.
  - Killing the commander will result in the dissolution of Hóngtàiýáng which will make the final battles of the war easier from a gameplay standpoint, but will prematurely end Demarko's quest line.
    - Demarko will leave the player at this point, stating that he hoped finally bringing down Hóngtàiýáng would fill the void in his life, but it hasn't. He blames himself for setting the player down on the path of revenge and does not blame them, but leaves the companion to find his own way, even if romanced by a female Witness.
    - An Ending Slide indicates that when the war ends (assuming a N.A.V.E. victory, Demarko will continue to go on the search for his son through the ruins of what is left of the C.A.I., but would never quite be reunited, and would go on being forced to assume that his son was lost, once and for all.

- Finding the information will reveal that children captured by Hóngtaiyáng under a certain age were sold to C.A.I. who put them up for adoption to be culturally converted and indoctrinated. The information will reveal where Demarko's son is and which family he has been given to.
- Tracking down the family will reveal that Demarko's son has been adopted by a kind and considerate family living in a C.A.I. settlement on the outskirts of New Byzantium, not having attempted to forcefully indoctrinate the child, but rather, encouraging him to celebrate his heritage. Despite this, Demarko, angered by having lost his child, will seek to kill the parents regardless and take back his son, despite the child being horrified and not even recognizing his father.
  - Allowing Demarko to kill the parents will result in his son, horrified, running away regardless and being lost to Demarko, who must, with the player, leave the C.A.I. zone of control lest they be caught and killed.
    - Demarko will leave the player at this point, not blaming them for what happened, blaming only himself, but wishing things could have gone differently.
    - An Ending Slide indicates that when the war ends (assuming a N.A.V.E. victory, Demarko will continue to go on the search for his son through the ruins of what is left of the C.A.I., but would never quite be reunited, and would go on being forced to assume that his son was lost, once and for all. Blaming himself for having lost his son, he will end his own life.
  - Stopping Demarko from killing the parents will result in him laying down his arms and apologizing, at which point the parents, considerate, will state their understanding, but state too that they have come to love the boy and will not simply give him up. Demarko will understand, and leave.
    - Demarko will find himself unsure as to how to proceed, and the player can either tell Demarko that he needs to figure out what to do on his own, at which point he will agree, thank the player, and part ways.
      - As indicated in an Ending Slide, Demarko will eventually find peace on his own through resumed military service and hunting down what was left of Hóngtaiyáng in order to find true peace.
    - The player can offer to accompany Demarko in finding out how to move on, which Demarko will accept, either as a deep friend of the player, or a lover.
      - An Ending Slide indicates that Demarko would eventually get back in touch with his son and adopted family, and, following the war's end, find a way to still visit his son occasionally, while otherwise having moved on and started a new life for himself.

**Julian O'Neill**

"No thanks. I'll leave the fighting to you. Shooting at others and...getting shot is more up your alley than mine. I'll stay in cover and be ready to put your pieces back together once you're done though. Knock yourself out."

Honest medical professionals are a hard find on the surface of Mars. While perhaps not the most honest, Julian most certainly is a professional. A master of his trade, educated in the hard sciences both in regard to theory as well as practice, Julian is a welcome addition to any Martian wastelander's party.

**Function:** Potential Companion, Potential Romance (Homosexual)

**Sex:** Male

**Race:** Caucasian

**Age:** 32

**Height:** 5'11

**Weight:** 152 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Blonde

**Eye Color:** Blue

**Build:** Skinny

**Distinguishable Features:** None

**Background:** Dr. Julian O'Neill, a beacon of skill in the harsh Martian landscape, emerged from the academic crucible of Earth with an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a commitment to his medical craft. Born into a family of physicians back on the origin system, he inherited a legacy of healing that transcended mere profession and became a personal calling.

Julian's journey to the Red Planet was not driven by wanderlust or grand ambitions, but by a pragmatic recognition of the desperate need for skilled medical professionals in the Martian wastelands. He saw an opportunity to apply his extensive training in both theoretical and practical sciences to a frontier where every life saved was a triumph against the unforgiving environment.

With a reputation for surgical precision and an uncanny ability to adapt medical practices to the challenges of Mars, Julian became a sought-after ally among wastelanders. His confinement to the offices of New Byzantine hospitals, however, never quite suited what he believed to be the full breadth of his skill, nor the economic necessity he faced. As such, Julian would spend his days in offices, writing prescriptions and attending conferences, but would spend his nights on the streets of New Byzantium, offering his services on the black market. Be them emergency, insurance-free operations on victims of gang violence, or offering his services to the warlords of such gangs too, Julian would find his lust for putting his skills to good use satiated. At least for a time.

With war on the horizon, Julian is well aware that his skills will become more of a necessity soon, but he is not about to allow himself to remain a backlines doctor serving in the comfort of a city while vets with PTSD pass through, their allies dying in mass on the frontlines. Julian has few qualms about who he serves, so long as he does. A war is to be fought soon, and by God, he needs to be there.



**Personality:** Dr. Julian O'Neill, shaped by the crucible of both academic rigor and the Martian wastelands, embodies a complex duality. His commitment to healing, a familial legacy, clashes with a pragmatic understanding of survival in the harsh Martian reality. Surgical precision and adaptability mark his professional demeanor, sought after by wastelanders who value competence over convention. Despite his days spent in the confines of New Byzantine hospitals, Julian's true calling lies beyond the sanitized walls, in the chaotic streets where his skills find unorthodox applications. By day, he adheres to the norms of medical practice; by night, he treads the shadowy realms of the black market, offering his services to those the system neglects. The impending war on Mars stirs a restlessness in Julian, driving him to reject the comfort of a city hospital. As the frontline beckons, he grapples with a willingness to serve any cause, so long as his skills can make a difference in the imminent conflict—a conflict where he believes he truly belongs.

#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

Pragmatic, Objective, Sensible | Cold, Uncaring

#### Gameplay Criteria and Endings:

- Dr. Julian O'Neill is a companion who can be encountered as early as in Act 1 in New Byzantium, found at his work across the city, potentially even finding the Witness as a client of his. The first interaction between them will be rather ordinarily, but beginning in Act 2, this may change.
- In Act 2, Julian O'Neill may come across the Witness again. So long as this is their second interaction or beyond, Julian will begin to become curious about the player, realizing that their lines of work certainly seems to be taking them in the line of fire more than once, and so will offer his services to the Witness, for a fee of course.
  - If the Witness accepts, Julian will join along as a companion, able to offer medical services to the player when needed.
  - If the Witness declines, Julian can still be found in the city to be recruited later.
- In the Witness's party, Julian may slowly grow closer to the player, but will still remain mostly emotionless, uncaring of the death and chaos that surrounds him. As the player's affinity with Julian grows, however, this will begin to change until, on one incident when healing the Witness of their injuries, Julian will snap, and suffer from an emotional breakdown.
- Julian will here be unable to tend to the Witness, and, if confronted, apologetically tell the Witness that he cannot keep on doing this, seeing them get shot up, him being the only thing between the Witness and a cold death.

- Julian can either be snipped out of it through persuasion or intimidation to do his job and keep it that way. If successful, Julian will indeed manage to suppress his concerns, and will return to work for the player, but his quest line will be blocked off, and he will simply remain a surgeon to the player.
  - An Ending slide will reveal that upon the war's end, his services no longer required, and seeing no future for himself, Julian will take his own life rather than facing the sins of his past.
- Julian can be questioned so as to learn of the problem, at which point it will be revealed that he is now starting to put into perspective his years of work without care for those in his care, and that the Witness is the first person he has tended to in years to actually care about the fate of, and this terrifies him not simply as it impedes his work, but also forces him to face years spent treating the life of others as simply a source of revenue for him and nothing more.
- The player may choose to help Julian make amends for his past in a route that will involve returning to his old places of work to check on those he has left behind but now cares for and eventually allow Julian to realize that him being a doctor is not him having found a way to make a quick and easy buck, but rather, a way to help others, and so he can stick along this route.
  - This route will also open a potential romance between Julian and Male Witnesses.



**Kaeso Tertius**

"If they so love the planet they wish to indebt ours to, then let them return. Let them scramble for their ships and brave the charged atmosphere of Mars. See if they will gladly risk their life in the name of a collapsing planet two hundred million miles away. The future on Mars is certain. Some just need more time than others to see it."

The Martian Liberation Front has its fair share of zealots, and Kaeso is one such individual, believing beyond any shadow of a doubt that the future of Mankind is on Mars. He is a man prepared to die for his beliefs on the sole condition that his sacrifice bring his people just one step closer to salvation and liberation.

**Function:** Potential Companion, Potential Romance (Bisexual)

**Sex:** Male

**Race:** Mixed Black-Caucasian

**Age:** 29

**Height:** 6'0

**Weight:** 163 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Dark Brown

**Eye Color:** Brown

**Build:** Average

**Distinguishable Features:** None

**Background:** Born in a New Byzantine slum to a struggling family that fought day and night to put even the smallest morsel of food on the table for their three children, Kaeso, then known as Abraham Mills, was subject to the ‘luxuries’ of Earthen society from a young age. In new Byzantium he would be born, and there he would be like to die, as the rest of his family would eventually on account of a plague that ran loose, being only responded to after it’d been allowed to run rampant for just under a month.

Orphaned at the age of 9, Abraham bounced between boarding schools at such a rate than one would have been like to assume that he deliberately was trying to get himself kicked out of as many as possible in as short a span of time as he could. Hell, maybe he was. But at some intermediary period or another between schools before protective services could catch up to him, Abraham would be found by the Cult of Mars, and offered assistance as an act of charity.

The 11-year-old accepted, hoping perhaps that he may have a warm room to sleep in for the night and a good chance of sneaking something out of value on his way out the following morning.

This plan would not come end up coming into fruition. Be it a sudden crisis of conscience or perhaps the notion that he could milk his time with the Cult of Mars for longer than a single night, he stayed, but as the time would go by, it would become more unclear just who was playing who, if even anybody was being played at all.

But one way or another, by the time Abraham was 15 years old, he was a believer, now Kaeso, named thereafter the acolyte who had taken him in, and he by the master who had raised him, rendering Kaeso Tertius the third in his line, hence the name.

Kaeso, however, would grow dissatisfied with time, viewing the cult and its operations in new Byzantium as hopelessly stagnant, spreading its word where it could, but beyond that, dead in the water. It would not take Kaeso long, however, to find those who more fell in line with just what he was looking for—action, change. So would Kaeso be introduced to the Martian Liberation Front at the age of 16, becoming one of its field operations responsible for protecting the Front against threats that lurked in the shadows—be them operatives from N.A.V.E. or the



C.A.I., hunters who believed the bounties on their heads worth collecting, or even heretics within the Front and Cult who acted against the better interests of a free Mars.

Kaeso would do a lot in his life that he cannot say he is proud of, but he tells himself every day that it has been towards securing freedom for his planet, for ensuring that it will not be chained any longer to those who have already failed, desperate simply for life support and the opportunity to expand their own wealth.

Kaeso lives to ensure that Mars will someday be free, and just as he lives to ensure such a thing, so too is he ready to die in the name of what he believes.

**Personality:** Kaeso is a brash, though sympathetic individual. He is not some cold calculating killer who is

ready to put in the ground all those who may dare disagree with his hopes of a free Mars. Kaeso understands that such a dream is one that not many are yet ready for. Kaeso, in this regard, is also stubborn, and while willing to see the merit in the views of others, is absolutely unwilling to see the faults in his own, believing Martian independence to be non-negotiable, and something worth living in the name of until his dying breath. He is a man not easily persuaded, but should you find yourself lucky enough to be of an intellectual accord with him, he is one you will never miss at your side ready to offer support whenever it is needed.

#### Personality Traits and Flaws:

Persistent, Sympathetic, Far-Sighted | Zealous, Stubborn

#### Gameplay Criteria and Endings:

- Kaeso can first be encountered at the end of Act 2, encountering the Witness and their party as they exit from the caves of Promethei with the Creator's Black Box intact. He does not engage the Witness in combat, though the player can choose to attempt to engage Icilius, but this effort will prove unviable and Kaeso will escape unscathed, but will remember the Witness's hostility.
- Kaeso can be met again in Act 3, the circumstances varying heavily depending on the player's chosen allegiance.
- If the player has chosen to align themselves with the Martian State, all past misdeeds will be forgiven, including if the Witness attempted to kill Kaeso at the end of Act 2, the man viewing this simply as a result of the Witness having not yet known the truth of their past.

- If the player has chosen to align themselves with N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I., and their chosen faction is presently at war with the Martian State, Kaeso will be rendered a hostile enemy and will need to be killed in order for the Witness to proceed with their objectives.
  - If the Witness's chosen faction has made a peace with the Martian State, however, Kaeso will view the Witness and their allies as wolves in sheep's' clothing, and will be distrustful, though can be persuaded to see the merit in a truce, especially if the leader of the Witness's chosen faction has acquiesced to demands of Martian independence from Earth.
- A player aligned or whose faction is allied with the Martian State will have a chance to form a deeper connection to Kaeso through having him as a companion during quests and operations to a point that he will trust the Witness enough to start talking to them about his past, including his time with the Cult of Mars, beginning his companion story arc.
  - Kaeso will reveal that the acolytes of the church he was taken into are currently acting behind the scenes in a hostile area of New Byzantium (Either N.A.V.E. or C.A.I. depending on the Witness's allegiance), and will state that he is concerned as he has lost contact with those who had taken him long ago and wishes to check up on them to ensure they are okay.
  - Agreeing to help will take Kaeso and the Witness past enemy lines where they will find that the acolytes of Kaeso's old church have, in fact, turned coat, abandoning their ideals in the name of safety with what can be viewed as a more stable government and, in exchange for their safety, are leaking information about the Martian State to the enemy.
  - Kaeso will, reasonably, feel betrayed, and demand that the traitors be hunted down and killed. If the payer refuses to help, Kaeso will disapprove of the Witness and abandon them. If the player accepts, they will accompany Kaeso deeper behind enemy lines to find the informants, where Kaeso will then have a chance to either execute them, return them to the Martian State, or leave them be while taking all sensitive information they have away.
  - When all is said and done, Kaeso will find himself questioning his own beliefs if those who introduced himself to them betrayed them in the first place. The Witness here can either convince Kaeso that his beliefs about the Martian State are not worth following, that he must double down on them to battle heresy, or rather, that his beliefs are his own to determine and should not be decided by any other than himself.
- Following the completion of Kaeso's quest, his personality will shift in one of three ways, and he will become available as a player companion as well as a potential romanceable option.

**Zuyeva Yaroslav**

"To bend another man to your will—that is power. That is the power that everybody looks for, whether they believe so or otherwise. It is the power that rules on this planet, and that has kept my family slaves for so long. It is that power that needs to end. Otherwise, there can be no hope. Be no future.

Trained by the C.A.I.'s special forces to be an assassin since childhood, and working as a gun for hire for years after her defection, Zuyena is an individual you do not want to find yourself on the wrong end of a barrel of. A marksman beyond compare, Zuyena has been on the run from her past for as long as she's been a killer and even now, thousands of miles away from home, from the world she left behind, she is running still as the past races to catch up to her.

**Function:** Potential Companion, Potential Romance (Straight)

**Sex:** Female

**Race:** White Russian

**Age:** 23

**Height:** 5'6

**Weight:** 129 lbs.

**Hair Color:** Dark Brown

**Eye Color:** Pale Blue

**Build:** Skinny

**Distinguishable Features:** Body Scarring

**Background:** A Russian ethnic of the East Russian S.A.R., Zuyeva was born into slavery, a resource, an asset to be exploited by the same C.A.I. So she was, born into one of the C.A.I.'s resource extraction camps on the Protonilus Mesa. As a woman, she wasn't pushed to the

same hard labor as the males of her world, but would instead be confined to a role of domestic servitude, something that a young Zuyeva quickly grew to despise.

A troublemaker from a young age, Zuyeva made a hobby of being where she wasn't meant to be, doing what she wasn't meant to do. Whether this meant sneaking good from the mess that would ordinarily go to the C.A.I. guard personnel or stealing toiletries and other essentials from the guard barracks for personal use as well as those of her close companions.

Authority never did agree with her, nor her with it, and across her years of rebellion, she was bound to be caught at some point or another. Sure enough, she would be caught in time, at the age of nine, attempting to steal a handgun off of a sleeping C.A.I. guard. Ordinarily, a theft would be met with a simple lashing and a double shift for a month, but stealing from a C.A.I. authority, death was what lay in store for the Russian youth.

Were it not for the camp commander taking note of her, she would have been killed, but it just so happened that the girl Zuyena struck the commandant, Liao Delan, as his ticket out of this assignment. He ordered the girl spared, and so struck a deal with her parents lest any issues or sense of rebellion be stoked: their freedom and comfort in Huǒxīng in exchange for their daughter.



They did not hesitate to make the deal. Zuyena was sent to a C.A.I. military academy in New Byzantium with Liao as her sponsor, placed into a special ops program aimed towards creating



assassins who would become essential in matters of counterinsurgency and preparing for eventual conflict with N.A.V.E.

Subject to intense training, biological and subtle cybernetic enhancements, Zuyena was made into a killer, a volatile one at that, responsible for the death of more than one of her comrades in training, some simple training accidents, others not quite so much. Under the watchful eye of Liao, however, none of this would go unpunished, the man simply viewing such losses to his pet project as acceptable losses in the name of honing the coldest, most dangerous killers that the C.A.I. could hope for. Zuyena was his pet, to sue as he pleased, and he did not let such an opportunity go to waste, rendering her dependent on him both emotionally as well as for her survival. He minded not the reprehensible nature of his actions, nor did the C.A.I. refrain from turning a blind eye, caring only that a true killer was

being created. And sure enough, such was exactly what they were turning Zuyena into.

While Zuyena's skill was something that could not be denied, the same could not be said of her loyalty. At the very least, not as of yet. A final assignment was given to Zuyena by Liao without the knowledge of the C.A.I.—to leave New Byzantium undetected, find a way to Huǒxīng, and assassinate two targets—her own parents. She was followed without her knowledge by her own comrades, dispatched to ensure that she came through, and, should she not, finish the job, as well as her.

None but Zuyena know what happened in Huǒxīng, only that in her wake, the bodies of her parents and her entire team would be left behind, dead. Whether it was her to pull the trigger on her own family, or if it'd been her team, and just what'd happened to them, no forensics expert could discern, the scene of the crime a mess, and the one living witness also the prime suspect, suddenly disappeared, gone into the wind.

This was three years ago, and Zuyena has not been spotted since, not by any living witness that is. But there are reports, however, of a marksman with a skill that matches the description of only one other, a gun for hire available wherever her services are needed, be it in the urban

metropolis of New Byzantium or the wastes of Mars, making a living on the skills that the C.A.I. provided for her, preparing for her eventual return, when she may finally return the favor to the man responsible for her creation.

**Personality:** Easy to be described as cold and abrasive, this reality of Zuyena is not far from the truth. Raised to be a decisive killer, such an emotional state comes easily to one who has learned to close herself off from what may ordinarily be considered ‘human’ emotions. This isn’t to paint her as a machine, but to say she’s the next thing from it wouldn’t be inaccurate. Empathy was a liability in her field, care for those around her a detriment to her ability to put all feelings aside and get the job done. So, she has learned to put such things aside, and though no longer a killer for the C.A.I., a gun for hire she still is, remembering all too well what has happened when she has allowed her emotions to get in the way, and so vows never to do so again. Whether this will hold true, however, remains to be seen.

#### **Personality Traits and Flaws:**

Stoic, Calm, Observant, Perceptive | Distrusting, Paranoid, Cold, Emotionless

#### **Gameplay Criteria and Endings:**

- Zuyena can be encountered in either Act 2 or Act 3, in different contexts. She will be found in the form of a random encounter in either a city or wasteland environment, in the middle of a job that can range from dispatching simple marauders to eliminating a high value C.A.I. target.
  - The Witness’ involvement in her job can either result in no effect, to which point she will be impressed by the player having remained hidden, can result in the player helping her, to which point she will be agreeable, or can result in the job being botched, at which point Zuyena will be hostile, and demand the Witness’s help in finishing the job to make up for the distraction.
  - One way or another, be it through stealth, assisting, or making up for their distraction and helping Zuyena to finish the job, she will perceive the Witness as a possible asset, and inform them of a nearby job also requiring finishing in the form of a radiant quest.
    - The player can agree to help or refuse, both of which will raise Zuyena’s approval of the Witness.
    - If the player refuses, Zuyena can be encountered later in the story in a different context.
    - If the player agrees to help, they will indeed go through with the job, providing an opportunity to further raise approval with Zuyena through combat feats, but either way, she will part ways with the Witness beyond that point after compensating them.

- Zuyena can only be encountered again in Act 3, at which point the Witness will have become a well-known individual on Mars. This encounter will happen in the form of the Witness suddenly finding themselves toe-to-toe with a skilled marksman hellbent on ending their life. The Witness will be forced to survive and retaliate, defeating the unknown assailant who will then be revealed to be Zuyena, now injured from having failed. She can be either executed here, or spared.
- If spared, Zuyena can be questioned into revealing why she attempted to kill the Witness. She is a tough nut to crack and is difficult to get an answer out of (the odds of this made better by treating her wound, interacting with her with civility, etc.). She will eventually reveal that the job was anonymous, a simple bounty put on the Witness's head through underground channels.
  - What this means, however, is no intrinsic loyalty to an employer, and so the Witness, if having met Zuyena before, may reference such an event and conscript her aid in tracking whoever posted the bounty.
  - If Zuyena is convinced, she will assist the player, while if she isn't, she will simply provide enough information for the Witness to continue on their own, but she may still be recruited later if encountered.
- If assisting the Witness, Zuyena and them will eventually manage to track down the source of the bounty's posting, and end it, this act, or later finding and recruiting Zuyena, unlocking her as a companion and opening a new line of personal quests.
- Zuyena's attitude towards the player is improved through pragmatic acts, not being helpful or cruel for the sake of it, but only if there is economic incentive, staying true to deals, etc.
- When Zuyena's affinity towards the player is high enough, she will attempt early on to seduce and sleep with the player at which point she may be rejected or accepted, but either way, she will also begin to show more of her hand, and state a target that she has been seeking to put in the ground for a long time—a certain C.A.I. special forces coordinator.
  - The player can either accept or refuse to help Zuyena, though refusing will see her leave the party and go off on her own to settle the score.
  - Accepting to help will inevitably take the Witness on a pursuit of revenge aimed towards Liao Delan.
- The Hunt for Liao is a long one encompassing many different quest stages that will find multiple stages of investigation, interrogation, targeting, false sighting, etc., all the while a deeper comradery may build (if the player allows it) between the Witness and Zuyena.

- If Zuyena has slept with the Witness, not much will change, but if she hasn't, she will seem insistent towards doing so, seemingly believing that the Witness's desire to help her is purely carnal in nature in nothing else.
- If the Witness's affinity with Zuyena is high enough, she also will have explained just enough about Liao to make the Witness understand her need to kill him.
  - If pressed, however, she will gloss over such details about what ended up happening to her family, etc.
- Eventually, Liao will be found, guarded and protected by the new candidates of his special forces program, but all the same, he will be killed. The Witness may try to stop Zuyena, but it will not work, not after an entire quest chain of finishing a mission set into the works 3 years ago. The quest does not end here, however, as the Witness and Zuyena will still need to escape a New Byzantine C.A.I. district on maximum security lockdown.
- The Witness and Zuyena will find shelter. Only if the player's affinity with Zuyena is high enough, and they have not slept with her, will she tell the Witness about what happened the night of her parents' death, and fully confide in them. Should the Witness comfort Zuyena here, they will have the option of initiating a romantic relationship with her or simply one of platonic emotional intimacy, but at the very least providing her with somebody she can truly trust.



## Story Arc

### Prologue / Introduction

The year is 2196. Martian television channels are alive with chatter, displaying news broadcasts, sports, children's cartoons. The majority of channels that show across the screen are Earth-originating as indicated by a small prefix number '03' (indicative of Sol 3) that precedes channel numbers. They show the state of the world. On Earth, localized resource wars across Africa and the Middle East persist, military buildup continues on an unprecedented scale, arms shipments continue on as the primary export to Mars. The 'civilized societies' and their Martian proxies are riddled with social instability. Protests, riots, revolts. Humanity has reached out for the stars, and in doing so, has forgot itself, or perhaps realized itself depending on one's own personal views.

All continues as normal, the programs playing their regularly-scheduled programs until one channel, 04-03, suddenly shines bright with a flash, and immediately after, all screens go dark.

There is silence.

A channel comes online, 04-07, a satellite footage view of Mars' orbit, and a sudden debris field that expands in orbit. Operators can be heard speaking, attempting to discern just what happened, why they cannot see The Creator. Another channel comes online, 04-03, a surface-level station, a view of a flash coming from the atmosphere. More chatter, confusion, what are they looking at. Another station, 04-08, fireballs of debris burning up in atmosphere crashing into the surface. More channels come online, more chatter, all overlapping with one another. A final station, a view of a large chunk of debris, recognizable as The Creator, too large to burn in orbit, falling to the surface. Panic, confusion screams, then a cut to black.

And silence once again.



## Act 1

The Witness wakes.

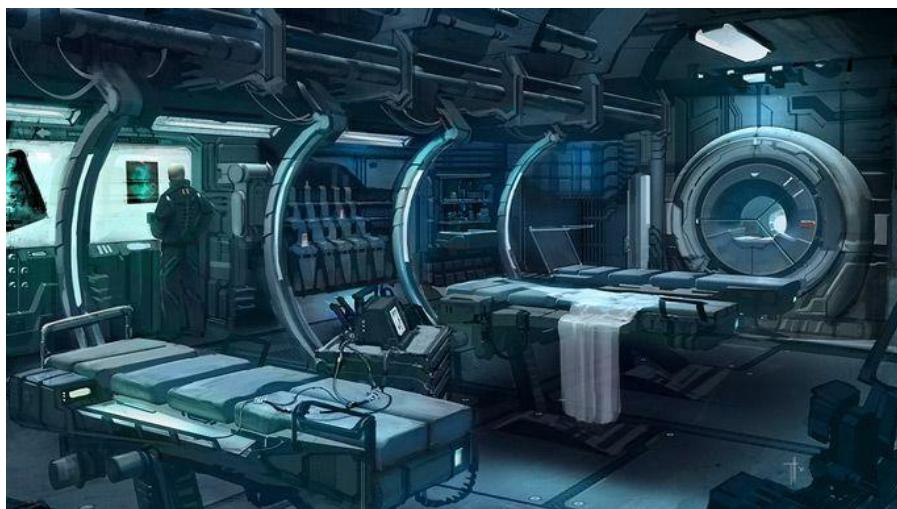
They are in an operating room, alone, hooked up to no shortage of machines. The most the Witness can do is look around their surroundings and learn how to interact with different objects and interactable components by clicking on a button to summon help.

As personnel come in to assist with The Witness, they will begin by assessing the player's vitals and ensuring they are in a stable condition. The Witness will not be given much information, solely being told that they were critically injured. The medical professionals will present the Witness with a mirror to assess how well they did in recreating their image. The player will be able here to customize their appearance.

Once finished doing so, and the well-being of The Witness is ascertained, another individual in the far corner of the room will approach, dismissing the medical staff. This individual introduces herself as Lydia Allen, head of the Unified Inquiry Position, and right off the bat, she begins asking questions. The Witness may try to be the one to turn the tables and pry information out of Lydia, but any queries will go unanswered. It is the player being questioned now.

The player will be asked to answer questions about their past, leading to different paths relating to the different origins that can be selected. As such, the player can answer that they are either an off-world colonist, a New Byzantine, or an outlander from the Martian wastes. The Witness will then also automatically state that they remember being onboard "The Creator" for a reason connected to this origin story, at which point they will be asked aboard their specialties. This will allow the player to select their initial primary traits and assign their first skill points as they please.

The Witness now fully customized to the player's liking, Lydia will also attempt to ask the player if they remember anything else about the Creator aside from their reason for being onboard. The only dialogue option available will be to state the negative, other options blacked out, the player having forgotten.



Lydia Allen will state the Witness' lack of memory is in line with medical scans indicating brain trauma and amnesia resulting from the incident. She will proceed to fully debrief the player as to just what happened. She will tell the player that fourteen



days ago, the terraforming station responsible for the altering of Mars' habitat to be suitable for human colonization, "The Creator," was destroyed. Over 8,000 lives were aboard that station, and all were lost, except for The Witness, the sole survivor of the Creator's destruction.

In the two weeks between today and the Creator's destruction, the surface of Mars has begun to destabilize as indicated through increased atmospheric hyperactivity, tectonic activity, and other strange phenomena across the planet that are being attributed to a catastrophic systems failure from the station. In the hopes of both investigating the disaster as well as ease these problems, a bilateral organization was assembled by both N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., each having a vested interest in the Creator, and desiring to launch an inquiry so as to investigate just how this vital station and link back to Earth was lost. The player, sole survivor of this travesty, is naturally a key person of interest to the investigation, and, whether the Witness likes it or not, is in the custody of Unified Inquiry Commission (UIC).

The Witness can either be fully agreeable towards cooperating however they can or, and quite naturally, can attempt to resist to this sudden announcement that right after surviving a large-scale disaster and possible terror attack, they are suddenly in custody themselves, unable to return to their lives. The Witness will receive the answer that both N.A.V.E. and C.A.I. have relinquished any claim to the Witness, meaning that any sense of citizenship has also been temporarily lost and, for all intents and purposes, they are for the UIC to use as they see fit, and right now, that means finding out what happened to The Creator.

Seeing as how the UIC is an organization backed by both N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., the player is hardly in any position to resist, but is assured that their cooperation will not only be met with an opportunity to return to their old life, but also a hefty reward. Coupled with the fact that the UIC is the only reason they are alive, the Witness will agree to help, be it understandingly or reluctantly, but agree nonetheless.

And so begins Lydia's statements of the Witness's objective. The overarching objective is two-fold, but simple in theory: to learn what happened to the Creator, and to find a way to stop Mars from destabilizing beyond the point of habitability. What this will mean, however, is finding where the Creator's primary crash site is, recovering the black box, and using the information to both determine the cause of the disaster, and research how to stabilize the planet.

As sole survivor of the Creator's destruction, they are also the only living individual to have possessed security clearance to the Creator's systems. Various parts of the Creator had come crashing down as debris to the surface of Mars, some parts of it large enough for the systems within to still be recoverable. These systems must be accessed in order to try to locate where the remains of the station are located.

So far, three segments of the Creator with functioning systems have been spotted across the surface of the planet, one far out in the untamed wastes of Mars, another in areosynchronous orbit, but somehow in the lower stratosphere, kept in place by a gravitational anomaly, and one dead center in the middle of New Byzantium.

Joining the player will be a field operative of the UIC, Chen Zhaohui, a Chinese-born field agent. He will join The Witness as a companion, and accompany them towards these aforementioned objectives to ensure the player remains focused on the key primary tasks.

The different "Creator" crash sites can be approached in any order, but from a scale of difficulty, should best be approached with the New Byzantine crash site coming first, the wasteland site second, and the mid-orbit site last.

After each piece of information is acquired, the Witness will return to the UIC headquarters to deposit the information, and will, in the process, have the chance to converse with the operatives of the UIC such as Lydia and Chen, advancing the player's relationship with them.

### **The New Byzantine Site**



Lacking a passport for either N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I., the Witness's entrance into new Byzantium is a tentative matter, enabled only by a temporary UIC clearance pass that allows the Witness to enter into the city. The bulk of New Byzantium is not, at present, able to be explored by the

player, on a tight leash. Rather, only a single district in the N.A.V.E. half of the city near the C.A.I. border is explorable.

The district is relatively middle class, industrial in nature rather than residential or commercial, an area that is fundamentally safe, but still with some activity for the player to involve themselves in. Though Chen Zhaohui will attempt to dissuade the player from doing so, while present in the district, the player will be able to begin exploring side quests and reputation systems.

The Witness may choose to involve themselves with some side quests in the area such as by pacifying a small scale gang that has been committing a chain of low-profile robberies across the district, dealing with a local factory boss who has been mistreating his staff or otherwise siding with him in order to break an ongoing strike, and tracking down a serial killer who has just claimed his 3<sup>rd</sup> victim.

The primary objective, of course, remains recovering the debris that has fallen in this district. Currently, it is under guard by N.A.V.E. forces, but when the player reaches them, they are in the midst of a confrontation with C.A.I. operatives who are demanding custody of the crash site as the “Creator” station was also partial C.A.I. property. The N.A.V.E. police guarding the site, however, refuse to allow C.A.I. forces to interfere, and so it seems that there may be a confrontation.

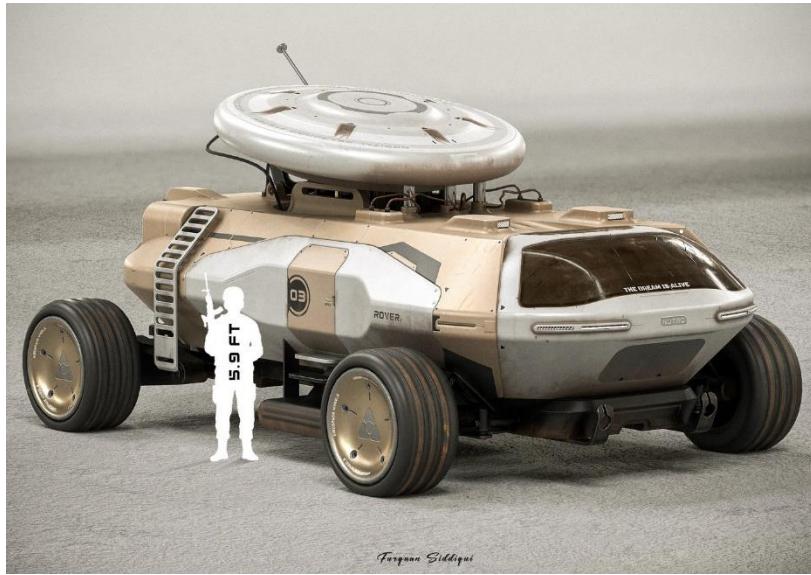
There are multiple ways to navigate the encounter, one such being to deal with the N.A.V.E. forces who are distrusting of The Witness and unsure if their intentions, despite their UIC certifications, truly are in N.A.V.E.’s interests, but will agree to allow The Witness and Chen to take custody of the wreckage so long as the C.A.I. forces are removed. The N.A.V.E. forces would prefer this to be nonviolent, simply intimidating or convincing the C.A.I. forces to return to their side of the border, but this can also be accomplished violently, much to Chen’s disapproval and to a reputation detraction for C.A.I.

The C.A.I. operatives can be approached, and they will agree to give the UIC access to a copy of the computer databases so long as they are brought to the operatives. This can be accomplished by either eliminating N.A.V.E. personnel which, if not done discreetly, can result in a very dangerous combat encounter, or can be done secretly. This will naturally improve relations with C.A.I. while doing the opposite for N.A.V.E.

A compromise can be reached by bringing an offer to both sides for custody of the crash site to be shared, requiring strong persuasion from the player, but will result in shared custody as well as the player’s ability to access the needed information.

Or, neither side can be chosen, and the computer databases from the wreck can be stolen discreetly without engaging in any conflict, and simply enough bypassing the potential danger of the encounter.

## The Wasteland Site



On the outskirts of the Thaumessian Plain is where a separate piece of debris from the Creator with functioning equipment is believed to have crashed. To reach this area, Chen and the Witness will need to acquire ground transportation, which is where the player will be introduced to ground transportation such as rovers and speeders.

A low-grade rover belonging to the UIC will be provided, but

the Witness, if possessing enough funds as perhaps may have been obtained if siding with the business owner in the New Byzantium crash site district side quests, will be able to purchase their own craft.

Notwithstanding, the player and Chen will be able to semi-freely navigate the surface of Mars en route towards the crash site. A general free-range of exploration can be explored so long as the crash site remains the general direction, but the player will be able to pilot their craft to certain nearby areas such as the Ladon or Nigral Valleys, the disparate farmsteads and outposts in this area, etc.

While driving, certain random encounters may be found such as pirate raids, a settlement under attack, unexpected tectonic activity, etc.

Eventually, the player and Chen will reach the general area of the crash site, and Chen will state to the player that atmospheric readings here indicate a need for environmental protection gear, at which point the player will become acquainted with such equipment, protecting the Witness from dangerous environments, but also limiting mobility to a certain degree.

The Witness and Chen, suited as they are, will explore this area on foot until they find an uncharted cave network that should not have been in the area. Exploring it will reveal strange flora, areological activity, and other phenomena that should not be in this area. Eventually, once the two go deep enough inside the cave, they will find that the remains of the Creator's Equipment are sparse, the area having already been picked over, the equipment and computers stolen. Chen and the Witness will be attacked by strange fauna resembling living-rocks, and this encounter will result in a body belonging to a marauder being found with evidence indicating that a band has already poked through this area and recovered the remains of the "Creator" with the hopes of selling it to the highest bidder.

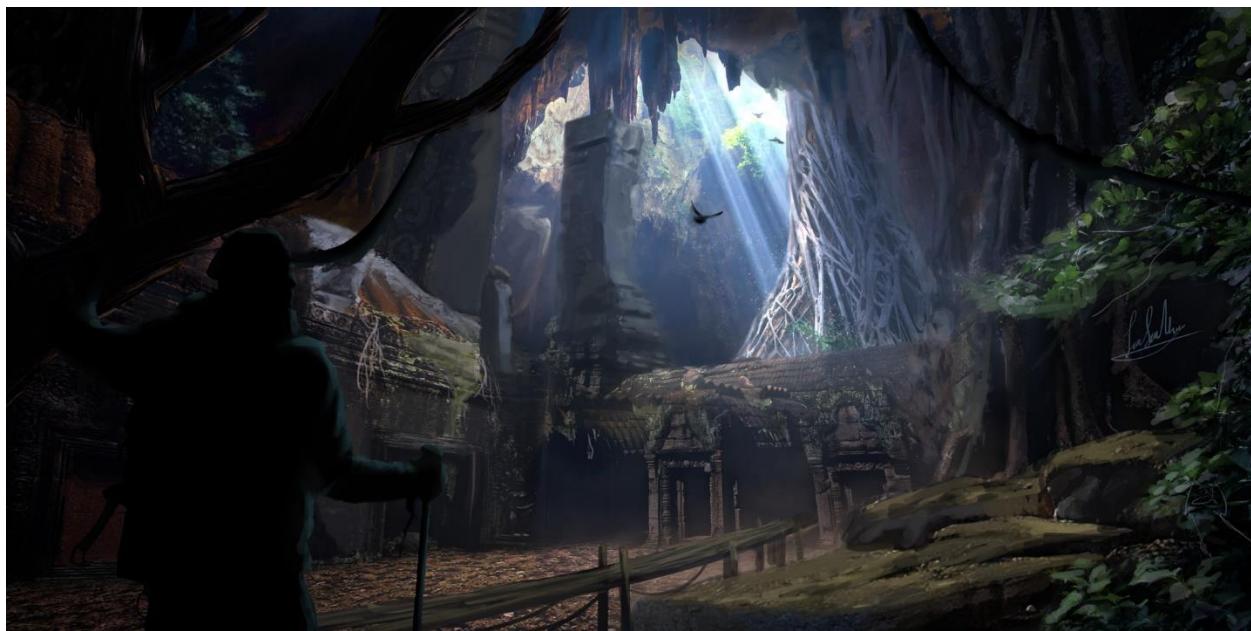
Using this evidence, the band can be tracked down, and followed via rover to a nearby camp where the marauders are planning an attack on a nearby outpost that is easy pickings considering the fact that they've been hit by a recent earthquake and are vulnerable.

Chen will advise the player to simply pay off the marauders. The player can also choose to try to fight the marauders here, but will be vastly outnumbered and have a good chance of being killed. The Witness can refuse to deal with the marauders, and instead decide to help this town defend itself the following day, or they can give in to dealing with the marauders even more, and agree to help them raid the town in exchange for the Creator's databank information. The player can of course purchase the data and/or agree to support the raid, but end up assisting the town anyway regardless.

If the player chooses to destroy the town, their reputation as a marauder will be strengthened and this band may be encountered later in game with a positive disposition.

If the player chooses to assist the town, their reputation with them will be raised, and the band of marauders will be torn apart. The remnants of this band can be found later in game and will immediately be hostile towards the player.

One way or another, the Witness will obtain the information needed by the UIC, concluding their business for the meanwhile in the Martian outlands.



### The Orbital Site

Parts of Mars' atmosphere destabilized, now ridden in certain areas with gravitational anomalies, one part of the Creator's wreckage remains in the upper atmosphere, but held in place in areosynchronous orbit by one of these aforementioned anomalies.

This being the case, the player will need to acquire air transport in order to reach this wreckage, introducing the player to air transport. The Witness will most likely not be able to afford their own vessel by this point, and so likely will make use of the UIC personnel transport, and will here either be able to pilot the shuttle, or allow Shen to do the piloting as he insists.

The transport will be piloted towards the site of the anomaly until, incidentally, it is caught in its grasp, and is unable to continue forward. Shen will state that he will work on attempting to flee the transport, but order the Witness to use an EVA suit to reach the wreckage. The Witness will be free to do so and use their suit's jet boosters and the laws of the gravitational anomaly to reach the wreckage, this being a dangerous tasks as gravitational pull is unreliable, prone to quick and sudden change, requiring a level of fast reflexes in order to navigate alive.

Eventually, the Witness will reach the wreckage.



Inside, the majority of the systems are offline, and over comms, Lydia will reach out to the player, helping them to restore systems to what limited degree they can be. Inside the station, a grim site awaits the Witness as they can see the deceased bodies of crewmen who had no chance to react before being immediately killed while others, in other parts of the station, are also dead, having suffered longer and more excruciating deaths, far from the fortunate ones.

Sooner or later, after the Witness is finished exploring the area to their content, limited functionality will be restored, allowing the player to recover the needed databanks from this wreckage and be picked up by Chen who has managed to free the transport from the anomaly, and chart a safe route through it to the wreckage in order to retrieve the player.

Mid-return, however, the transport will be beset by aerial pirates seeking to exploit the salvaging operation, and either as pilot or gunner depending on the player's preference, the pirates will need to be warded off before the Witness and Chen can return to the UIC base.

### Debrief

The three primary wreckage sites secured, Lydia will state that the UIC has obtained the needed information to begin piecing together some of the information about the disaster, and perhaps find where the black box of the Creator is located.

For their efforts, the Witness will be compensated for their service so far and will be granted a temporary visa that will allow them access to both N.A.V.E. and C.A.I. areas in the time that it will take for the UIC to put together the needed information. They are temporarily releasing the Witness, but inform them that their service with the UIC is not complete, but that they will remain in touch for when they require him for the next leg of their mission.

From here, the Witness will have more opportunities to get to know Chen and/or Lydia, but will otherwise be free to go off on their own and begin to fully explore Mars, Act 1 and the intro of the game complete, the Witness still having a monumental journey ahead of them.

## Act 2

News stations and radio broadcasts upon the start of act 2 will reveal that the UIC, tasked with investigating the "Creator's" destruction has finally begun turning out results, and as they are so far, though it remains uncertain, that foul play may have been involved.

Both the C.A.I. and N.A.V.E. are implicating one another as responsible for the disaster, while word is also abound suspecting the Martian Liberation Front (MLF) to have also possibly had a hand in what was done. The disaster aside, tensions are nonetheless rising between the two planetary factions as small-scale border conflicts are arising, proxy conflicts are becoming more intense, and the New Byzantine border is coming under closer guard.

The player is given the opportunity to report to the UIC headquarters whenever they wish in order to receive an update on the progress of the investigation, and whenever they do call in, be it immediately after the completion of Act 1 or months' worth of in-game days after, it will be reported that the UIC has just made a breakthrough and is ready for the Witness to report back in to continue their work.

However, before the player reports in, there is no shortage of work and exploration that they can do around Mars with many smaller side quest arcs, side activities, companion personal stories, career advancement options available to the player.

### Side Quest Arcs

There are many different side stories that can be explored across the surface of Mars. Some examples of these questlines are as follows:

**All Along the Watchtower:** A Pakistani family in the C.A.I. half of New Byzantium is looking for passage out of the city to the N.A.V.E. side of the city. The player can end the quest immediately by simply reporting the family to C.A.I. authorities for a slight reputation boost, or the Witness can offer to assist them with their escape.

The Witness will need to help the family by finding contacts both on the N.A.V.E. side as well as C.A.I. side of the border in order to find people willing to smuggle them as well as help by assisting them to cross themselves by sabotaging the C.A.I. border outposts and remove the guards and security apparatus guarding the no man's land between both sides of the city.

Successfully escorting the family to the other side of the border will allow them to reunite with their extended family on the other side. They will not be able to monetarily reward the player, but they will offer their home as a place for the player to stay, where the player may rest, be fed, store equipment, etc.



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**It's No Crime:** One of the companies of N.A.V.E., a small-scale pharmaceutical company that has big ambitions, is attempting to bring one of their new medical treatments designed to combat the addictive effects of narcotics to the market, but with the N.A.V.E. government growing more focused on the brewing war with the C.A.I., the bureaucracy of their department dealing with the approval of new drugs has become stagnant and this company has been unable to secure approval for the proper field tests that would enable them to expedite this approval.

The company will ask for the player's assistance and state that there is a way that these field tests can be performed, but it wouldn't be strictly legal. There are plenty of people across new Byzantium suffering from addiction who are going untreated and if the player, not officially associated with the company, is able to approach them and convince them to attempt this new treatment, this would greatly help the company. However, such a process would be long and tedious.

The player, however, has a second option, to taint a high-income neighborhood's water supply with addictive narcotics, creating a small-scale crisis that will reach the attention of N.A.V.E., and expedite the bureaucratic process to allow this company to perform field testing.

The second quest in this chain will see the larger pharmaceutical monopoly, InnoCure, attempt to strike down this smaller company's attempts to patent this anti-addictive drug on the claim that they themselves have developed something similar that works far more effectively and that this smaller company will simply remove a more effective product from the market. On account of their lobbyist influence in the American member state, the patent is temporarily placed on hold.

The smaller company will be doubtful of this, and will ask the player to investigate InnoCure to verify if this is real, and obtain truth to the affirmative or negative. Whether done through persuasion, deception, intimidation, or sneaking into their laboratories, the player will learn that this is all a lie and that InnoCure is attempting to reverse engineer this smaller company's product in order to create their own version that they will have an easier time passing. Obtaining proof of this, the player can either bring this to the smaller company, or to InnoCure, and agree to obtain the smaller company's formula in exchange for a hefty reward.

Whether bringing proof to the smaller company, or the formula to InnoCure, the quest will end and the patent will either go to InnoCure or the smaller company depending on the player's choices.

**Only a Paper Moon:** The C.A.I., as of only a few days ago, has launched a rocket into Mars' orbit, deploying what appears to be modules for a space station. N.A.V.E. has been growing concerned over this, and so ask the player to investigate.

Taking a personal transport to orbit, the player will reach this station, and it will be revealed that it is little more than a decoy, enough equipment to keep it running without actually serving any practical purpose. The player can make a number of different decisions here depending on how they report this to N.A.V.E.

The player can tell the truth, stating that the station is worthless, at which point N.A.V.E. will come to the conclusion that this is a form of psyops and meant to intimidate N.A.V.E.'s population. N.A.V.E. will tell the player to leave the station alone so they may instead build their

own false space station, even cheaper, to force the C.A.I. to commit more resources to their illusion.

The player can lie about the station, stating it's a weapon, at which point N.A.V.E. will order the Witness to destroy the station, believing it to be a threat.

Leaving the station alone will indeed allow N.A.V.E. to goad the C.A.I. into wasting more money on it while destroying the station will be doing precisely what the C.A.I. hopes for, portraying the N.A.V.E. in the light of a violent aggressor breaking the terms of their established non-aggression.

### Side Activities



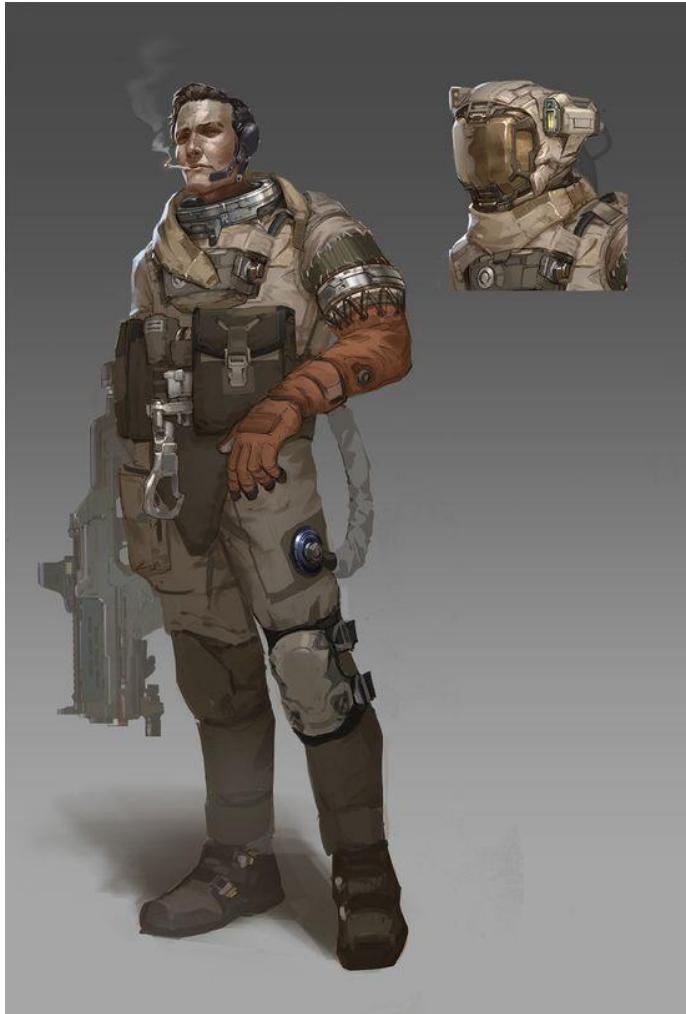
There are many ways that the player can otherwise spent their time in Mars, some of them more peaceful and legal than others. Some examples of these side activities include:

**Gambling:** Numerous casinos exist on Mars, particularly in new Byzantium, where the many residents of the city can spend time and money towards no discernable end solely in order to feel alive for as long as their high allows.

**Racing:** Be them on legal tracks or in uncharted and constantly shifting canyons and caverns, many race tracks, both on the ground with rovers and speeders or in the air with personal transports and/or fighters, races are a namesake of Martian extreme sporting. The Witness can choose to participate in some sports as either racer, gambler, or hell, both.

**Piracy:** The Witness can also choose to pursue a less legal means of making money, such as by becoming an outlaw. Whether this means raiding convoys, intercepting aerial transports, or

simply raiding settlements, there is a fortune to be made for those in the Martian wastes with the right means and the right disposition.



#### Companion Quests:

The Witness can come across no shortage of interesting characters across Mars, each with their own struggles and stories to tell. Spoken of in the Character Outline section of this document, each companion carries with them different stories that can be told, opening up for the Witness new opportunities on Mars as well as avenues for personal growth and relationship development.

#### Career Opportunities:

The player, just as they are able to commit themselves to lives of gambling, piracy, racing, etc., are also able to find more steady lines of work.

**Mercenary:** Players can choose to act as mercenaries for given factions, operating solely in their interests as freelancers. Mercenaries, of course, can be bought off by the highest bidder, and so the player may choose to freely abandon

their contracts, but such actions will be remembered not only by the faction they betray, but as well as by other potential employers who do not take abandonment of one's duties lightly.

**Corporate Worker:** Not all work necessarily needs to involve shooting at others and, well, being shot at. Rather, work can be simple, running errands for corporations, toiling at a factory, or committing corporate espionage on a colossal scale. The opportunities truly are limitless.

**Soldier:** Rather than working as a mercenary, the Witness can choose to fully commit themselves to the military, however, not as of Act 2. Lacking a passport to either faction, something that can only be obtained from Act 3 onwards, the Witness's participation in an organized military unit is, for the moment, disallowed, but the player can still choose to work for the faction of their choice as a mercenary, paving the way for future formal employment.

#### The U.I.C.

But of course, in spite of the many opportunities present across Mars, the player's first priority remains that of their duties to the U.I.C., and at some point or another, the Witness will report in, and doing so will confirm that the U.I.C. has managed to put the information that the Witness has brought in to good use, and is ready to continue with their objective.

The player, once present again at the UIC headquarters, will be debriefed and told that the information they have acquired has helped to indicate that the black box of the Creator has indeed survived its destruction, and a signal ping put out has been returned with another, indicating that the information in the box can still be recovered.

The location of the black box, however, remains the problem, in the wastelands of Promethei, near the Sea of Hellas, an area of Mars that'd been subjected to terraforming during the time of the Creator's destruction and, as such, has been left a radioactive wasteland ripe with atmospheric instability, gravitational anomalies, catastrophic tectonic activity, severe weather patterns, etc.

Naturally, this journey is one that will still need to be made regardless, but is one that will require proper preparation and setup to acquire what is needed. For one, a craft capable of navigating this terrain will be needed. Secondarily, state-of-the-art EVA suits will be needed to navigate such areas on foot. And lastly, as the current reading from the black box places it at multiple kilometers beneath the surface, a high-grade mining drill capable of transporting The Witness and the UIC team to where the black box is located.

The U.I.C., due to the growing tensions between the C.A.I. and N.A.V.E. has been receiving progressively less funding over time, and, as such, is not in a position to acquire this equipment for themselves. Unless the Witness is by this point a multi-millionaire (highly unlikely), the U.I.C. will need to make an arrangement with either N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I. to receive the needed equipment, and the player will have to be the one to make such an arrangement.

While high persuasion on the part of the Witness can help to secure a deal, a high enough reputation with either one of these factions is absolutely essential towards obtaining the needing equipment, meaning that the Witness will need to do some work for either faction in

order to advance. It is also possible that deals with both N.A.V.E and the C.A.I. can be bypassed, going instead to a corporation of either faction to make such a deal.

One way or another, the required equipment will be obtained, and so the U.I.C. will be ready to make the perilous journey to Promethei.



## Descent



Promethei is an area completely ridden with radiation and unstable environmental factors, not easily navigated. Here, it is not raiders or pirates that are a concern, but other such factors as earthquakes, sudden volcanic activity, acid rain, ion storms that temporarily disable craft systems, etc.

Strange flora and fauna will also be encountered in this area, some of it completely passive, but others hostile and dangerous towards the player and even their well-equipped transport.

It will take a lot of effort to do so, but eventually, the crew of the Witness's craft, including themselves, Chen, and Lydia, will reach their destination as indicated by the presence of a massive ground-based mining drill that had been delivered via orbital means, but by the looks of it, even the drill is critically unstable.

The signal of the black box alive, but waning, however, the U.I.C. determines that they don't have time to spare by securing the drill, and so much use the opening created by it to descend beneath the ground and search for the wreckage of what's left of "The Creator."

Travelling through the cylindrical drill, The Witness, Chen, and even Lydia will enter into the labyrinthian caverns beneath the surface of the planet to a subterranean world nothing like what the party would have expected. Strange, alien caved, filled with ruins that seem as natural as they do manmade, but also with signs of what appears to be synthetic and mechanic activity, appearing perhaps as wreckage from the Creator, but matching none of its design specifications. It is something else.

The caverns so laborious to navigate as they are, the party will need to settle down and establish camps, the process of finding the Black Box of the Creator not simply about finding the right spot, but rather trekking for kilometers at a time to find traces of the station, following them until either a dead end is found (with enough loot to reward the player for their time), and a new path must be followed.

Eventually, the time will come, and a crash site will be found beneath ground, the largest so far—The “Creator.”

Shen and Lydia will establish themselves outside of the wreckage, and so the Witness must be the one to venture into the creator and recover the Black Box. Depending on the Witness’s relationship with Lydia, Shen, or both, they will either be sent in dismissively, or compassionately with the hopes of their return. A high enough reputation with either one will even result in them offering to join the player inside, which can either be refused or accepted, but only one will enter with the Witness at most.

Inside the Creator, the Witness will be met with failing systems, haywire automated security, numerous puzzles requiring the player to put their full skillset to use in order to navigate, all of this eventually resulting in them reaching the command center of the station, littered with the corpses of the dead—those who tried to mitigate the disaster to their final breath and avoid total catastrophe, all having died with their failures.

The player will recover the Black Box, but doing so will trigger an emergency response from the station’s remaining online systems, initiating sudden tectonic activity. The caves will begin to collapse, and the Witness will be forced to escape from the station in as timely a manner as possible, being told by those remaining outside that they have returned to their transport on the surface. In a mad dash accompanied by a collapsing cave network and emerging hostile flora and fauna, the Witness must scurry to the surface, either alone or with a companion, and finish their mission of delivering the Black Box, with hopefully their life intact.

Fortunately, the Witness will manage to do so, still alive, and with the answers of the Creator’s destruction.



Upon leaving the cave system through what remains of the mining drill, now on its last legs, the Witness and their party will be encountered by a band of strange men, not in the heavy state-of-the-art EVA suits being used by The Witness and UIC, but rather, just simple armor, a strange mishmash of C.A.I. and N.A.V.E. uniforms, repurposed to take on a style almost resembling the uniforms of Roman Centurions from over two millennia ago.

Here they will encounter the player and the party, expressing their surprise as to how they managed to survive that expedition into the caverns, something even they considered too dangerous to be done. They will announce themselves as legionnaires of the Martian Liberation Front.

Upon hearing this, both Lydia and Shen will appear hostile, ready for a fight, wondering if the Front is here to take the Black Box for themselves and remove any trace of their involvement, to which the legionnaires will state that is not the case. Instead, they appear more interested in addressing the Witness directly, stating that what is in the Black Box is something that they themselves must see, not anybody else.

The Player can either leave here, or attempt to start a fight with the Front, at which point a Legionnaire by the name of Kaeso will attempt to peacefully resolve the encounter. If the player presses in a desire to fight the MLF legionnaires, Kaeso will use an ion charge to temporarily disable the EVA suits of the party, allowing him and his men will leave without a fight.



One way or another, the encounter will be ended here, leaving The Witness and their party to return to base.

### Revelation

The player and the operatives of the UIC will return to their headquarters.

Here, the black box will be recovered from the player and handed over to UIC technicians to decrypt and learn the truth of the matter of how “The Creator” was destroyed.

The Witness’s relationship with Lydia and Chen at this point will determine the context in which they depart from the UIC, being told that they’ve met their end of the bargain, and their life is theirs to do with now as they please. Depending on their relationship with either, this may also conclude with a short scene of the player having a more emotional



farewell with either person, eventually culminating in a final goodbye, and a hope that they may see each other again.

The Witness will part ways with Lydia and Shen here as they report to the UIC logistician to collect their payment as well as contact information as reference so that if the Witness chooses to apply for citizenship with either N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I., the U.I.C. will act as their sponsor to ensure that the process is expedited for them.

The Witness will, with their reference and payment, go through the facility in order to leave, but while doing so, notice a gradual change in atmosphere around

the facility. Certain doorways are becoming locked, security turrets coming online, and guards beginning to appear more on edge.

It will be right when leaving the facility, however, that the Witness will be stopped by a UIC, apprehended, and knocked out cold.

The Witness will awaken in the cold sterile hallways of a space station. It does not take long for the player to realize that this is the Creator, and this is a memory.

The Witness awakens in their quarters, and hears a beeping beneath their pillow. They will reach under and find a small communications device that they will activate, triggering a conversation with somebody. It is an agent of the MLF, and they are speaking with the player about their objective—to destroy the Creator.

The Witness can either be totally cooperative, agreeing with everything their contact is saying and showing no hesitation in the job that they have to do. Or, the Witness can be hesitant, reluctant, even angry, refusing to cooperate, which will be met with a reminder from the contact on the other end of this private communication that they will be killed if they don't, and their only way of surviving here is to do as they are told.

The Witness will go along with the plan one way or another, despite how hesitant or reluctant they are. The contact will tell the player to connect their earpiece and stay on the line. The Witness will do so, and depending on the origin story chosen for the player, have a certain mission objective being given to them, whether to report to a briefing room if an advisor, a tech station if a worker, etc.

The Witness will go to their post where they will go about some menial tasks before being told by their MLF contact to speak to their supervisor and make up an excuse to leave.

The Witness will do so, and will leave their post, now being told by their contact to sabotage three critical systems which are as follows: Communications, Life Support, and the reactor. The player will report to each of these systems in kind, following the Contact's strict orders as they set up a feedback loop within the communication system that will prevent any form of communication within or outside of the station, ensuring that the sabotage will not be mitigated inside, set a timed shutdown for Life Support across the station, and plant charges on the reactor.

The Witness's job done, the contact will uphold their end of the bargain, and guide the player to the escape pods where all have been remotely shut down by the MLF save for one to be used by the Witness. While heading this way, however, the Witness will be stopped for questioning, and it will be around this point that the first of the Creator's systems will begin going offline. This will create a mad panic as the Witness must rush to the escape pods in order to survive while the Creator exponentially is destroyed from the inside, just barely reaching the pods, but not being able to launch before the entirety of the station is suddenly destroyed by a critical reactor failure.

And so "The Creator," is destroyed, the Witness themselves, the player, the one behind it all.



## Act 3



The player awakens in the custody of the UIC. What they player now knows, they do as well, having seen the proof for themselves through the information recovered by the “Creator’s” Black Box recovered by the individual responsible for the disaster themselves. They know now that the player, the Witness, sole survivor of the Creator, was, in fact, responsible for its destruction.

As such, the player is in their custody, being interrogated. If the player’s reputation with Lydia and/or Shen is low, one of them will be performing the interrogation. If it is good, they will be present in the room, off to the side, not participating themselves. If the player’s reputation with them is high, they simply will not be present for the interrogation, understandably too uncomfortable for them to go through.

The Witness can be as cooperative or uncooperative as the player wishes, selling into whichever narrative the player pleases—be it that the Witness is a fervent believer in the cause of the MF to fully liberate Mars from earthen influence or that they were forced into doing it, wanting to stop but having no ability to do so, used as a tool by ultraviolent terrorists.

Midway through the interrogation, the UIC facility will be attacked. The Martian Liberation Front is assaulting the facility. The Witness will hastily be brought to a containment cell and placed there. The player can either attempt to escape or remain where they are.

If the player remains where they are, the MLF will emerge victorious in the battle, the UIC facility overrun, most of its staff killed, Shen and Lydia barely escaping with their lives off to who knows where. The MLF, finding the player here, will offer the Witness a chance to join their

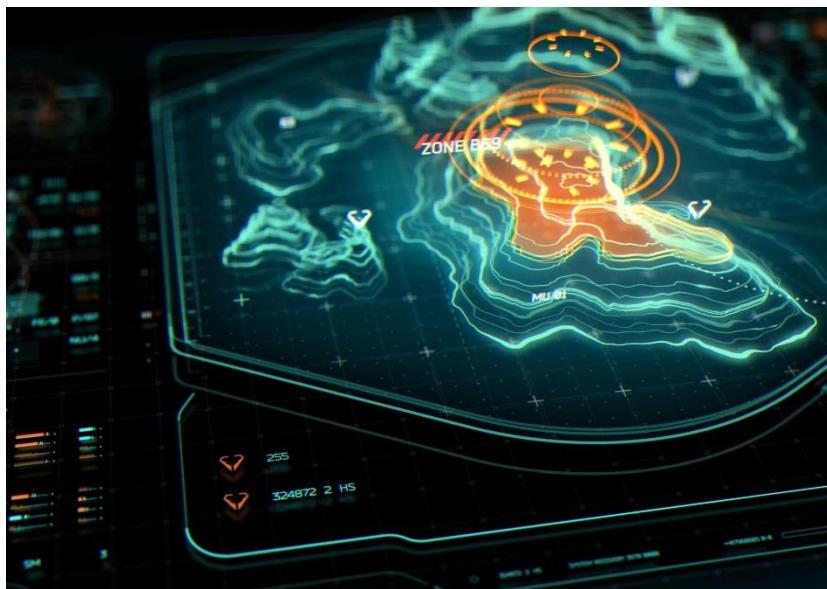
cause (flavored as them rescuing the player if the Witness has proven to be a sympathizer), which the player can either accept, or refuse, though the latter option will involve the player still needing to fight their way through the MLF forces, albeit diminished on account of their battle, and escape back to civilization.

If the player escapes from their cell, they will be involved in the battle, at which point they can choose to either assist the UIC forces, or hit them from behind, assisting the MLF. If the player chooses to assist the MLF here, this will indefinitely set them on the MLF route to assist them against either N.A.V.E., the C.A.I., or both depending on the route that the MLF takes later in the story. If the player chooses to assist the UIC, the MLF forces will be driven back, and the player will have a choice to make to either side with N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I. to fight again a renewed MLF threat, and, quite possibly, against one another.

Because one thing is clear as the battle comes to an end—a radio broadcast comes alive, hosted by the MLF, taking over every feed on Mars to claim responsibility for the attack on the Creator, and to declare that their attack was meant to liberate Mars from foreign colonial powers, but that their work seems not yet to be done, and so they swear to bring an end to those still attempting to chain Mars to the past, so that they might finally free it, and bring it into the future.

Whether this announcement is heard from the ruins of the UIC headquarters in the wake of a barely-held defense, or made by the Witness themselves, now with the MLF, returning to their base so they may begin their war, the truth becomes clear, a planetary war is beginning, and the player must choose a side.

#### Rules of Combat:



With Mars now in a state of war, the dynamic of how the player plays the game will be slightly changed. The same side activities offered to the player will still be available, many old side quests will still remain open while some will close and some new ones will open up, and all companions will still be able to find encountered and known, although the contexts of their encounters may be slightly different.

As the war continues, however, there will also be new game rules introduced to add a dynamic feel to the War for Mars.

**Borders:** No longer possessing their UIC-approved visa, allowing the player to travel to both C.A.I. and N.A.V.E. parts of Mars, the player will be more or less confined to the territory of their chosen faction, and only be able to travel to other areas by sneaking their way past borders and avoiding detection. High-profile activities such as crimes, gunfighting, etc. are more likely to get the player caught, and if a hostile Witness is caught in an opposing faction's territory, they will immediately be targeted not simply by police, but military assets as well.

**Territory:** The first new rule is that of territory. Each faction will begin with predetermined territory, the most notable example being New Byzantium, now having descended into total war. It will be a recurring game rule that every few in-game days, a battle will be set to begin in a given location that will involve a field of battle, the outpost of one side, and the outpost of another. Some battles may be evenly matched while others can see one side with a simple campsite and the other with an entire base to defend (namely when one faction is defending a defensible or key position).

The player will be informed of the battle 2 days ahead of time and so will have time to reach the area of the battle, get caught up to speed on the situation, and possibly do some activities to improve the odds of the fight with random objectives such as sabotaging enemy equipment, disrupting supply lines, assassinating a commander, etc. These activities will improve the odds of a victory, but these odds can also be improved by the player being directly involved in the battle.

A victory will see territory gained and a defeat, with territory lost. Some territory losses will be locked behind main Act 3 quests such as the full capture of new Byzantium by one side or another, the fall of the MLF, etc. The loss of enough territory will also force the player to defend key areas lest the game end with a loss for their faction, but this is unlikely to occur.

**Air Superiority:** Air battles will occur across Mars, seeing the different sides of the war competing for dominance of the skies. Similar to territory battles, air campaigns will be announced ahead of time, allowing the player to pre-emptively assist such as by hitting airfields, sabotaging craft, setting up air defenses, etc.

Air battles can, of course, also be joined by the player in order to tip the scales to either side.

Air Superiority in a given sector will improve the odds of ground-based territory battles being won in this area, and will also allow for the Witness to call in for air support during missions or battles that are set in areas with friendly air superiority, adding a new sense of scale to this conflict.



**Skirmishes:** Skirmishes that have no bearing on territory can also be found at random across the map, and can be joined simply for the benefits of loot, reputation, and saving the lives of a player's allies for personal satisfaction.

### N.A.V.E.

Should the player choose to assist N.A.V.E., they will join Lydia and possibly Shen depending on whether or not the player was able to convince them not to return to the C.A.I. to the N.A.V.E. sector of New Byzantium.

#### Up to Speed

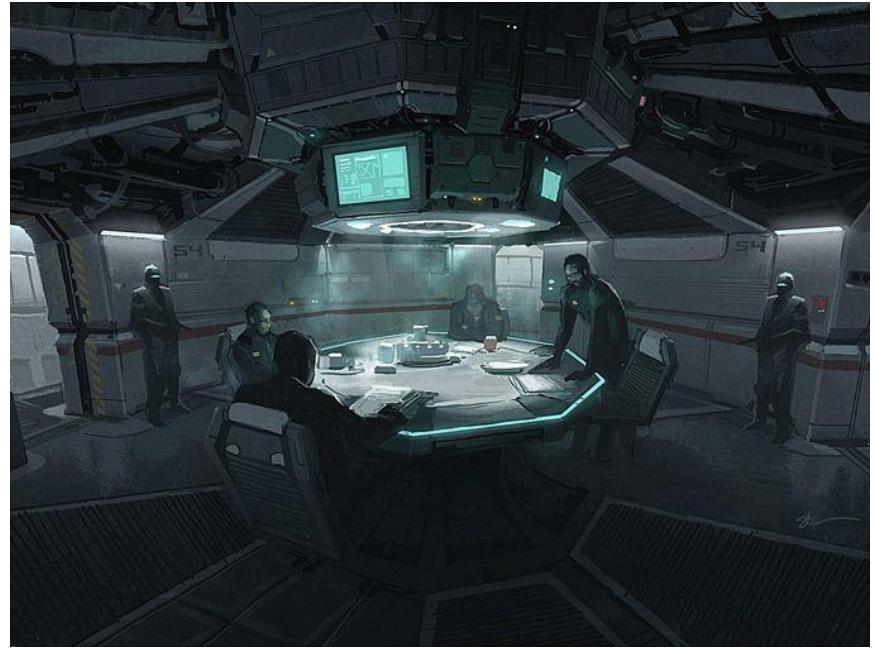


Here, the player will meet the acting president of N.A.V.E., who will, reluctantly or agreeably (depending on the Witness's current reputation with N.A.V.E.), pardon them officially, and welcome them into N.A.V.E.

From here, the player can choose to either get more involved in presidential activities or focus exclusively on the brewing conflict between N.A.V.E., the M.L.F., and C.A.I. For the sake of the Story Arc Outline, we will not be focusing on the election side story as this has mostly been covered in the Character Outline for Joel Brooks and Alan Rodríguez.

Following their encounter of the president, the player will report to the military leadership of N.A.V.E., and from there will be receiving the primary larger quests associated with winning the war for N.A.V.E. Smaller quests and missions can be obtained around the world as the conflict progresses.

The player will receive the opportunity to work for N.A.V.E. either as a mercenary or a special forces operative, which mostly affects flavor and some minor gameplay mechanics such as by forcing the player to be in uniform when fighting alongside N.A.V.E. forces if an operative while also being paid a weekly amount and receiving certain equipment for free or discounted prices, while serving as a mercenary places less restrictions on the player while not offering as many benefits.



But one way or another, the player will from this point on begin the war alongside N.A.V.E.

### Diplomacy

While the fighting remains somewhat docile, the different factions can be approached to try to arrange temporary ceasefires or perhaps permanent non-aggression pacts.

The different factions can have agreements made with them, and though the player can approach such factions acting as an assistant representative, they will not be able to make agreements that their respective faction would never agree to. For instance, The Witness would not be able to simply make permanent peace with an aggressive and expansionist Martian State.

Acting for N.A.V.E., a temporary ceasefire can be made with either the C.A.I. or M.L.F. to focus on only one opponent at a time, but so long as the M.L.F. is aggressive and expansionist and the C.A.I. is autocratic under its current government, a permanent peace cannot be made, and so all other factions will need to be fought at some point or another.

### Seeking Allies

A primary quest objective in any faction's quest will be to gather allies in order to secure support across multiple fronts. Allies can vary in terms of those that each faction can obtain, but some possible avenues for support are as follows:

Russian Autonomous Zone: Brought to Mars with the C.A.I. as part of the East Russian S.A.R., many Russians located on mars are subservient to the C.A.I., working in labor camps across the planet in order to gather resources needed for the Tianquan war machine. They are already an unruly group as they are, and will not require much encouragement to leave C.A.I., but

nonetheless, the man in charge of the autonomous zone fears the repercussions that will be faced if they are not successful, and their security is not guaranteed by N.A.V.E.

There are also no shortage of C.A.I. guards and representatives overseeing the affairs of the Russian Autonomous Zone, actively discouraging through force any form of dissident activity.

As such, securing the Russians as an ally will entail destroying the legitimacy of the C.A.I. emissaries to the autonomous zone, assuring from N.A.V.E. extended security and perhaps even alliance membership for the Russians, and leading a successful revolt against the C.A.I. overseers.

Success in doing so will secure for the Russians the establishment of a member state within N.A.V.E. once the war is over, and also secure their support in the resumed conflict against the C.A.I.

Democratic Revolutionaries: Within the C.A.I. are a number of people who disagree with their home state's autocratic tendencies, and so are seeking a return to proper communist democracy. While this still places them at odds with the capitalist North Atlantic Voyager Expedition, there are elements within the revolutionaries who are not unopposed to capitalism so long as it does not impede upon democratic processes.

Such revolutionaries can be contacted by the player and assured that their aims will not be trampled by N.A.V.E., and that they will be supported should they rise in revolt against the C.A.I. Properly convincing them, supporting them in a number of smaller missions, and earning their trust will see them agree to support N.A.V.E. in their toppling of the C.A.I. state.

Corporations: Primarily in it for the money, the corporations of the C.A.I., and N.A.V.E. in particular can be negotiated with in order to secure support for either side. Such deals can vary from company to company, but many times can include places in government, waivers on certain restrictions, or, if one doesn't want to play things their way, blackmail or even nationalization. The latter options liable to make more enemies than friends, they can effectively secure



corporate support without subservience to such organizations.

There are many ways of approaching such entities, and one must be careful with the support they offer, little more than a metaphorical monkey's paw.



## Frontlines

Standard battles will be fought between N.A.V.E. and its enemies, following the rules as set of territory battles, air superiority, etc. This will take up the bulk of fighting throughout the conflict, but the shifting of territory will help to open the primary quest special operations that will see more difficult operations done in the name of supporting N.A.V.E. to secure victory.

## Counterintelligence / Counterinsurgency

The same way that the Witness may be actively encouraging insurgency and revolts within the enemy's ranks, the enemy may very well be doing the same against N.A.V.E., such as the Martian State using assets within the Cult of Mars to launch terror attacks within N.A.V.E. territory, requiring the player to search for spies, handle them accordingly whether by elimination or capture, and ensure security for N.A.V.E.'s operations.

Such diligence is essential to ensuring that N.A.V.E.'s war effort is not inhibited from within, and so the Witness will be essential in collaborating with the security apparatus of N.A.V.E. to secure the standard flow of their operations in war time.

## Special Operations

There are fewer special operations that N.A.V.E. will have the Witness commit themselves to in order to deliberately progress the conflict in a beneficial way. Such operations may include surgical strikes of leadership, hits against critical infrastructure and industry, etc. Some examples are outlined below:

**Decapitation Strikes:** Critical leaders that ordinarily would act as quest-givers for the player should they have chosen the other side will now act as targets for the player. The opportunity

to remove them will trigger once certain territories have been taken, exposing enemy lines and opening these opportunities where the Witness will be ordered to assassinate such pivotal figures such as unit commanders, diplomats, politicians, etc.

**Critical Strikes:** Assets pivotal to the enemy War Machine such as factories, stations, bases, etc. can be targeted, also at certain moments once enough territory has been taken in order to critically hinder the enemy's war effort, paving the way for final operations in the war to be conducted and truly secure victory.

### Peace Talks

Should a certain faction reach a point close enough to defeat, peace talks can be held with them. Such talks can either result in a positive or negative result that will see either the end of a conflict, the settlement of terms, and the closing of a front, or the continuation of the conflict respectively.

General terms offered by and accepted by certain leaders have already been described in the Character Outline.

Only the Martian State will refuse any terms other than their victory, viewing their submission as testament to total defeat, and the failure of their goals to secure a free Martian Planet.

### Final Sieges

Once enough territory is secured, and an enemy faction is pushed to their breaking point, the enemy faction, be it the C.A.I. or Martian State will begin to huddle down and prepare for sieges from the enemy.

When supporting N.A.V.E., these final sieges will come down to the defense of Marineria, the capture of Huǒxīng from the C.A.I., the occupation of New Byzantium, and the final strike against the Martian State.

**Defense of Marineria:** At a certain point during the conflict, depending on which faction is closer to defeat (The C.A.I. or Martian State), an attack by them will be launched against Marineria in an effort to cripple N.A.V.E.'s chief industrial and military supply HUB.

The battle will see a Naval, Air, and Ground theater opened as the city is surrounded on the ground, the Marineris Channel blockaded, and the city bombed from above. All three obstacles must be surmounted through the varying types of battles demonstrated thus far for victory to be claimed. Urban Counterinsurgency fighting must be mounted against infiltrators who have breached the city, an air battle must be won to reclaim air superiority, a special sabotage operation must be launched against the fleet, and a large ground territory battle must also be won in order for the enemy to be fully pushed back.

The multiple facets of this battle render it one of the larger final sieges of the game.

Capture of Huǒxīng: As the war comes to a close, and the C.A.I. begins to draw its forces deeper into New Byzantium in order to try with one final push to reclaim the entirety of the city, they will begin drawing some of their forces away from Huǒxīng. Nonetheless, a difficult battle awaits N.A.V.E. here, and so a final siege can begin, launched by the player's faction this time. It will, however, similar to the defense of Marineria, involve a blockade, air superiority, and ground invasion, with the Witness now needing to support all angles of assault. The Witness will need to help establish air superiority, defend the blockade against enemy strikes, and successfully participate in a territory battle that will see battles being fought across the streets and depths of Huǒxīng in order to fully secure the city.

However, should the player wish to bypass this, they can opt instead to spare themselves the time, and also spare their own forces, by simply bombing Huǒxīng into oblivion. Air Superiority will still need to be established, but the need for a siege and naval blockade can be averted through simply a complete aerial bombardment of the city.



Occupation of New Byzantium: Already a center of many of the territorial conflicts, the fighting in New Byzantium will now have reached a pivotal point surrounding the key areas of the C.A.I. zone of control where the majority of their forces and remaining leadership are located.

The final battle of the war with the C.A.I. will be set here, but with the battle having the opportunity to go a number of ways depending on player influence.

Should Huǒxīng have been levelled to the ground, C.A.I. forces will be less likely to surrender, and any democratic revolutionaries rising up against C.A.I. forces will be hostile towards the C.A.I. and N.A.V.E. alike, creating total chaos in the streets of the Tianquan area of control in these final moments.

If Huǒxīng was legitimately taken, and democratic revolutionaries were persuaded to join N.A.V.E., they will assist in the battle, creating a far more one-sided battle against Tianquan.

Another mix of aerial and ground battles, the fighting will eventually reach the C.A.I. capital building, involving a special operation to secure the building and remaining figures of the C.A.I. government, but already driven to this point of defeat, the remainders of C.A.I.'s government will either die fighting, or rather kill themselves than be taken alive.

The Witness and N.A.V.E. forces will eventually take the C.A.I. capital building, finding Luó Xiaowen still alive. Depending on the involvement of the revolutionaries, the Witness can decide to either hand Luó to the revolutionaries, where he will be executed via hanging, or sent to N.A.V.E. where he will be tried, found guilty, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

One way or another, however, the battle of New Byzantium will end with a N.A.V.E victory.

**The End of the Martian State:** The territory of the Martian State driven back to its primary staging area, The Witness and N.A.V.E, will launch a final strike against them, characterized by ground battles, aerial battles, and even the air deployment of warships into the Sea of Hellas to open a naval front as well.

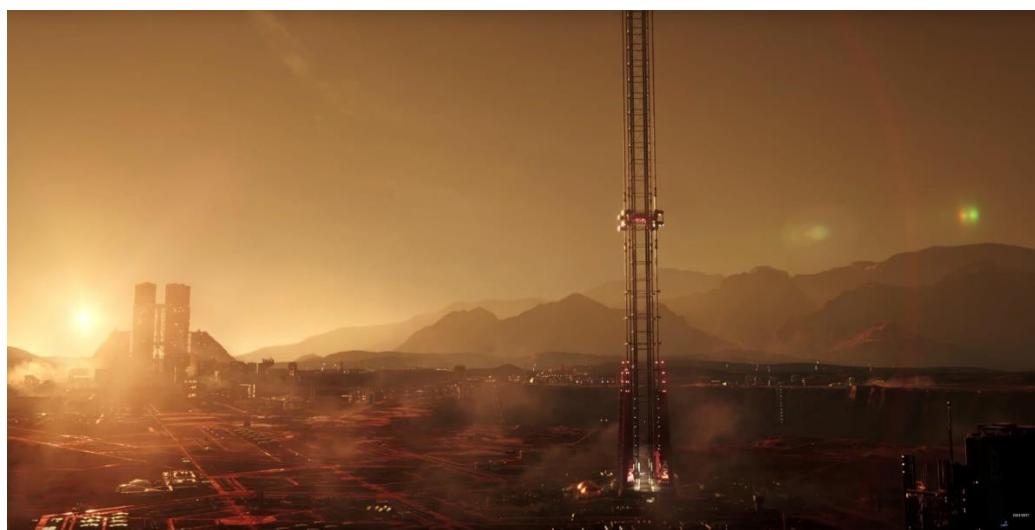
Once more, all fronts must be won to secure victory, however, unlike the previous battles where total victory could be assured, the Martian State is prepared with a countermeasure.

Once their ground and aerial forces are mostly eliminated or routed, paving the way for a N.A.V.E. capture of their subterranean headquarters and sprawl, the Martian State will activate a nuclear device within their headquarters, choosing death over the dishonor of capture, sealing their fates, and their dreams of Independence for Mars beneath its surface.

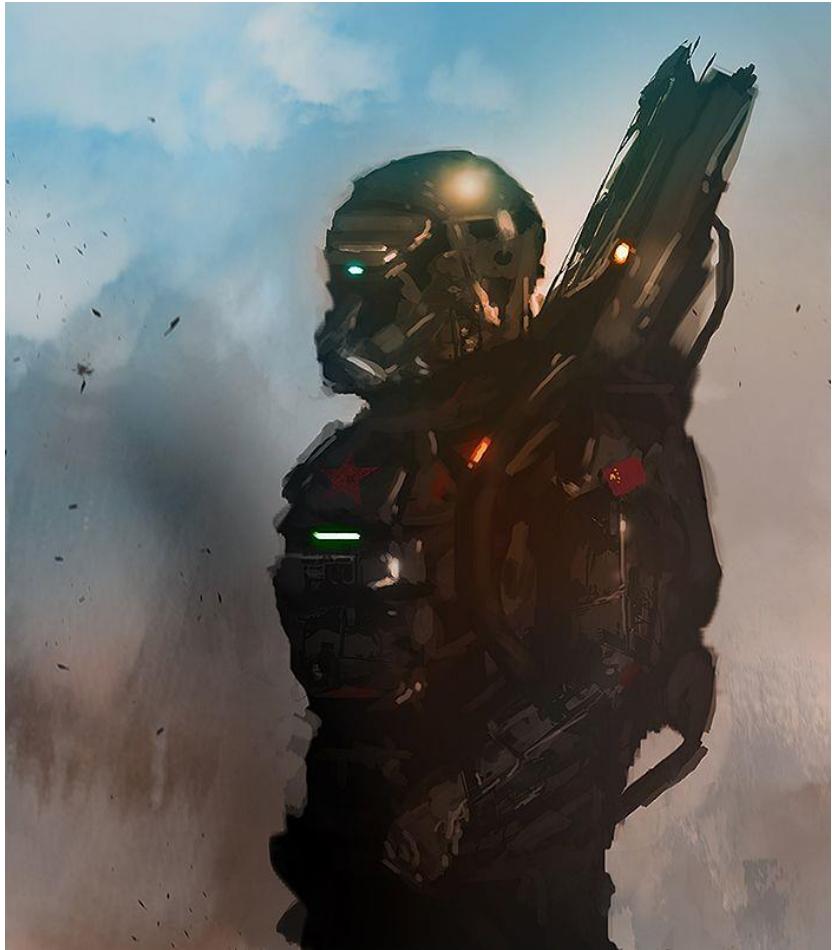
This final act of defiance will fully secure the Martian State's defeat in the war against N.A.V.E.

### **The C.A.I.**

Should the player choose to assist the C.A.I., they will part ways with Lydia Allen, but, should Shen have been convinced to stay with the C.A.I., join him in their return to the C.A.I. sector of new Byzantium.



## In Preparation of Conquest



The Witness here will make their acquaintance with Luó Xiaowen, Secretary of the C.A.I., who will catch the player up to speed with the C.A.I.'s aims on the planet—to exploit the present opportunity to seize total control of the world.

The player's reputation gained or loss with the C.A.I. up to this point will dictate the flow of the conversation, and will impact just how Luó attempts to sell the prospect of C.A.I. employment, leveraging existing loyalty and patriotism over their head if having a high enough reputation, or perhaps offering higher economic incentives if up to this point not particularly loyal.

The option remains open for the player to not dedicate their loyalty to C.A.I. up to this point, but here, a decision will be made, and on the assumption that the Witness dedicates themselves to C.A.I., they will from here have the option to either more closely know Luó and affect his decisions in a way outlined in the Character Outline, or immediately report to C.A.I.'s military command in order to being their takeover of Mars. Here, the player will be able to be given the primary quests for the C.A.I. conquest plotline.

The C.A.I. will only offer the Witness the opportunity to act as a mercenary as the C.A.I. could only have the Witness join the de-facto military were they to be conscripted, and in this case, deployed most likely as cannon fodder to the infantry, which, obviously, would be a waste of the Witness's skillset. Were the player to join actual C.A.I. special forces, they would need to have been a citizen for over ten years. This is a decision that could, theoretically, be overruled by central authorities, but with no contact back to Earth, that is a temporary impossibility. So, the Witness can only work as a mercenary for the C.A.I.-aligned Private Military Corporation, Hóngtàiyáng.

As such, the player will now join the war for Mars as an operative of the C.A.I.

## Diplomacy

While the fighting remains somewhat docile, the different factions can be approached to try to arrange temporary ceasefires or perhaps permanent non-aggression pacts.

The different factions can have agreements made with them, and though the player can approach such factions acting as an assistant representative, they will not be able to make agreements that their respective faction would never agree to. For instance, The Witness would not be able to simply make permanent peace with an aggressive and expansionist Martian State nor force N.A.V.E. to submit to political and economic subservience to N.A.V.E.

Acting for C.A.I., neither the military leadership nor Luó will trust N.A.V.E. or the Martian State enough to ask for a ceasefire. However, a persuasive player could persuade Luó about the benefits of a temporary ceasefire with either faction in order to focus on the other. Of course, this will mean needing to persuade either of these factions to agree. A N.A.V.E. being led by Brooks will see this as simple a C.A.I. deception and will be very difficult to persuade to hold a ceasefire. A N.A.V.E. being led by Rodriguez, however, is easier to create a temporary ceasefire with, consistent with the fact that forming an economically beneficial truce with Rodriguez's N.A.V.E. is also a possibility should he be president.

Agreeing to a ceasefire with the Martian State is easier for the C.A.I. given their similarities to the expansionist and hostile state that the MLF becomes without any positive player influence.

## Seeking Allies

A primary quest objective in any faction's quest will be to gather allies in order to secure support across multiple fronts. Allies can vary in terms of those that each faction can obtain, but some possible avenues for support are as follows:

Russian Autonomous Zone: Brought to Mars with the C.A.I. as part of the East Russian S.A.R., many Russians located on mars are subservient to the C.A.I., working in labor camps across the planet in order to gather resources needed for the Tianquan war machine. N.A.V.E. at present is attempting to exploit this fact and sow the seeds of revolt within the Russian people.

A C.A.I.-aligned Witness will be responsible for ensuring the Russian people's loyalty to C.A.I., which will involve numerous steps such as either intimidating, persuading, or bribing local leadership into remaining docile, tracking down agitators, assassinating key resistance members, eliminating N.A.V.E. intervention, etc.

It is a multi-staged operation that requires attention on numerous fronts, but, once done, will ensure that the Russian people will remain in the C.A.I. as assets to be used at the Secretary's whim in order to defeat their western opponents.

N.A.V.E. Corporations: N.A.V.E.'s open-market capitalist system is one that can be easily exploited by the C.A.I. Where there is war, there is a profit to be made, and a Witness skilled at



infiltrating N.A.V.E. territory and navigating its capitalist world is more than capable of striking deals and creating arrangements that can range anywhere from inhibiting N.A.V.E.'s wartime strength and eating it from the inside out to actively switching sides to support its wartime enemy.

Such deals heavily depend on the corporation, the player's influence with them, reputation with corporate heads, etc. However, deals made will actively have narrative as well as gameplay effects, where shifting arms company support away from N.A.V.E. will limit the equipment

carried by deployed forces, see more arms offered instead to the C.A.I., etc.

### Frontlines

Standard battles will be fought between the C.A.I. and its enemies, following the rules as set of territory battles, air superiority, etc. This will take up the bulk of fighting throughout the conflict, but the shifting of territory will help to open the primary quest special operations that will see more difficult operations done in the name of supporting the C.A.I. to secure victory.

### Counterintelligence / Counterinsurgency

The same way that the Witness may be actively encouraging insurgency and revolts within the enemy's ranks, the enemy may very well be doing the same against the C.A.I., such as N.A.V.E. attempting to utilize existing tensions to provoke a democratic-leaning revolution within the C.A.I.

Spoken of in the character outline, this burning democratic revolution is a major threat to the C.A.I. with the capacity of overthrowing the state. Naturally, as an operative of the C.A.I., the Witness will be called upon to put this movement to rest, however, the player may have different ideas on the proper solution to this threat that may not coincide with the interests of Luó and his adored central Earthen authority.

Oppose the Revolution: Following the orders of the C.A.I. central command will see the player tasked with eliminating the revolution with maximum prejudice. Such will see, similar to how

the Witness brought C.A.I. order back to the Russian autonomous zone, doing this now with rebellious Tianquan citizens.

Such a conflict, more deeply ingrained in C.A.I. society is, naturally, more difficult to root out. The first stages of the anti-insurrection will see the Witness being tasked with infiltration, gathering information, reporting on targets, people of interest, etc. Such will reveal those even within the C.A.I. government who seem to be housing democratic anti-Terran sympathies. These will mostly be handled by internal C.A.I. intelligence and police forces while the Witness will begin working directly opposed to the revolution.

The Witness will need to eliminate pivotal targets, target small cells, disrupt supplies, thwart attempted assassinations, bombings, etc. Eventually, these efforts will prove successful in disrupting the revolution enough to bring about their total failure and collapse.

The aftermath of a failed revolution will prove just as hazardous, however, as the sentiment of democracy will never truly die, and a new period will begin of paranoia and suppression across the C.A.I.'s territory, seeing any pro-democratic sentiment being violently snuffed out. The Witness will occasionally be contracted to assist in such witch hunts whether it means silencing protestors, breaking riots, or even assassinating politicians or other high-profile figures with "dangerous views."

Regardless of this, however, the war with the remaining factions will continue as usual.



Compromise: The Witness can choose, however, to try to reach a middle ground between the democratic revolutionaries and the C.A.I. government.

Spoken of in more detail in Luó Xiaowen's character outline, he can be spoken to and convinced of the merit in seeking more democratic processes in government as well as putting more distance between the C.A.I. and distant Earthen authorities.

Such a decision will require much conflict mitigation and negotiation on behalf of the Witness who will act as an intermediary between the revolutionaries and the government of the C.A.I. The overall process will become a matter of multiple different points needing to find mitigating as shown through in-world conflicts. An example of this may be a conflict in an outskirt town of New Byzantium as a protestor is being brought to prison over an illegal protest and his prison transport was overrun to free the individual. This immediate problem will require attention from the Witness while also raising a larger issue in the C.A.I.'s congress requiring compromise and resolution.

Individual issues such as loyalty to Earth, central control, local autonomy, dissolution of S.A.R.'s, and continued war with N.A.V.E. can all be discussed, but as more issues are solved leaning in either direction, continuing to convince the opposite side to make a change will become more and more difficult, but still can be accomplished with a persuasive and clever enough Witness.

Though it is a hard road, compromise can indeed be reached, and can result in numerous different endings for the C.A.I. as well, perhaps, as an early end to the war with N.A.V.E. whereas the Martian State, if aggressive and expansionary, will refuse to end the conflict and will still need to be defeated.

Support the Revolution: The Witness can, however, choose to neglect their C.A.I. loyalties entirely and join the democratic revolution within the nation.

Similar to opposing the revolution, this route is centered more around martial conflict and violent change, targeted this time, however, more at the C.A.I. government rather than the forces of the rebellion. The Witness will have here the ability to help the revolution grow from performing simple raids, bombings, etc. to entire street conflicts, guerilla attacks, assassination of VIPs, etc.

This will eventually culminate in a frontal assault on the C.A.I. seat of government in which the revolutionaries will seek to totally overthrow its government apparatus.

Eventually, with support of the Witness and, should they choose to seek it out, N.A.V.E. or an egalitarian Martian State, the revolution will succeed and the government of the C.A.I. will be overthrown with all policies of the revolution put into place. The new revolutionary government will seek a truce with N.A.V.E. and the Martian State, in such a place of disarray and destruction as they are. As one of the revolutionary government's policies is separation from Earthen governments, the Martian State will agree. Likewise, a N.A.V.E. under Brooks will accept a truce and peace, whereas one under Rodriguez will not, and will attempt to make a puppet out of the weakened Tianquan nation, meaning that the war will need to be continued in order to secure peace and the future of the Tianquan people.

## Special Operations

There are fewer special operations that the C.A.I. will have the Witness commit themselves to in order to deliberately progress the conflict in a beneficial way. Such operations may include surgical strikes of leadership, hits against critical infrastructure and industry, etc. Some examples are outlined below:

Decapitation Strikes: Critical leaders that ordinarily would act as quest-givers for the player should they have chosen the other side will now act as targets for the player. The opportunity to remove them will trigger once certain territories have been taken, exposing enemy lines and opening these opportunities where the Witness will be ordered to assassinate such pivotal figures such as unit commanders, diplomats, politicians, etc.

Critical Strikes: Assets pivotal to the enemy War Machine such as factories, stations, bases, etc. can be targeted, also at certain moments once enough territory has been taken in order to critically hinder the enemy's war effort, paving the way for final operations in the war to be conducted and truly secure victory.



### Peace Talks

Should a certain faction reach a point close enough to defeat, peace talks can be held with them. Such talks can either result in a positive or negative result that will see either the end of a conflict, the settlement of terms, and the closing of a front, or the continuation of the conflict respectively.

General terms offered by and accepted by certain leaders have already been described in the Character Outline.

Only the Martian State will refuse any terms other than their victory, viewing their submission as testament to total defeat, and the failure of their goals to secure a free Martian Planet.

### Final Sieges

Once enough territory is secured, and an enemy faction is pushed to their breaking point, the enemy faction, be it N.A.V.E. or Martian State will begin to huddle down and prepare for sieges from the enemy.

When supporting the C.A.I., these final sieges will come down to the defense of Huǒxīng, the capture of Marineria from N.A.V.E., the occupation of New Byzantium, and the final strike against the Martian State.

Defense of Huǒxīng: At a certain point during the conflict, depending on which faction is closer to defeat (N.A.V.E. or the Martian State), an attack by them will be launched against Huǒxīng in an effort to cripple the C.A.I.'s chief economic and manufacturing center.

The battle will see a Naval, Air, and Ground theater opened as the city is surrounded on the ground, Eden Bay blockaded, and the city bombed from above. All three obstacles must be surmounted through the varying types of battles demonstrated thus far for victory to be claimed. Urban Counterinsurgency fighting must be mounted against infiltrators who have breached the city, an air battle must be won to reclaim air superiority, a special sabotage operation must be launched against the fleet, and a large ground territory battle must also be won in order for the enemy to be fully pushed back.

The multiple facets of this battle render it one of the larger final sieges of the game.

Capture of Marineria: As the war comes to a close, and N.A.V.E. begins to draw its forces deeper into New Byzantium in order to try with one final push to reclaim the entirety of the city, they will begin drawing some of their forces away from Marineria. Nonetheless, a difficult battle awaits N.A.V.E. here, and so a final siege can begin, launched by the player's faction this time. It will, however, similar to the defense of Huǒxīng, involve a blockade, air superiority, and ground invasion, with the Witness now needing to support all angles of assault. The Witness will need to help establish air superiority, defend the blockade against enemy strikes, and successfully participate in a territory battle that will see battles being fought across the streets and depths of Marineria in order to fully secure the city.

However, should the player wish to bypass this, they can opt instead to spare themselves the time, and also spare their own forces, by simply bombing Marineria into oblivion. Air Superiority will still need to be established, but the need for a siege and naval blockade can be averted through simply a complete aerial bombardment of the city.



Occupation of New Byzantium: Already a center of many of the territorial conflicts, the fighting in New Byzantium will now have reached a pivotal point surrounding the key areas of N.A.V.E.'s zone of control where the majority of their forces and remaining leadership are located.

The final battle of the war with N.A.V.E. will be set here, but with the battle having the opportunity to go a number of ways depending on player influence.

Should Marineria have been levelled to the ground, N.A.V.E. forces will be less likely to surrender, and any corporations originally helping the C.A.I. against N.A.V.E. will now be supporting N.A.V.E., having seen many of their assets already burned to the ground by an enemy clearly only seeking a pyrrhic victory.

If Marineria was legitimately taken, the corporations and other New Byzantine allies made by the C.A.I. will remain loyal, creating a far more one-sided battle against N.A.V.E.

Another mix of aerial and ground battles, the fighting will eventually reach the N.A.V.E. capital building, involving a special operation to secure the building and remaining figures of the N.A.V.E. government, but already driven to this point of defeat, the remainders of N.A.V.E.'s government will either die fighting, commit suicide, or be taken captive to be tried and likely executed.

The Witness and C.A.I. forces will eventually take the N.A.V.E. capital building, finding the acting councilor still alive. The Witness is able to decide what they wish to do with the existing councilor, whether this be release, execution, or capture.

One way or another, however, the battle of New Byzantium will end with a N.A.V.E victory.

The End of the Martian State: The territory of the Martian State driven back to its primary staging area, The Witness and the C.A.I., will launch a final strike against them, characterized by ground battles, aerial battles, and even the air deployment of warships into the Sea of Hellas to open a naval front as well.

Once more, all fronts must be won to secure victory, however, unlike the previous battles where total victory could be assured, the Martian State is prepared with a countermeasure.

Once their ground and aerial forces are mostly eliminated or routed, paving the way for a C.A.I. capture of their subterranean headquarters and sprawl, the Martian State will activate a nuclear device within their headquarters, choosing death over the dishonor of capture, sealing their fates, and their dreams of Independence for Mars beneath its surface.

This final act of defiance will fully secure the Martian State's defeat in the war against the C.A.I.



## The Martian State

### Recruitment

If the player chooses to assist the Martian State, they will have done so in one of two ways. Either the Witness would have escaped the U.I.C. with the help of the MLF and thus assisted them in the fighting, or the Witness would have chosen to help UIC forces hold onto the facility and later abandoned either the C.A.I. or N.A.V.E. to join the fledgling Martian State.

Assisting the U.I.C.: If the Witness chooses to assist the UIC in the defense of their facility, potentially in order to ensure the safety of allies such as Lydia Allen and Shen, the Witness will start off with something of a negative reputation with the MLF. However, as the Witness has not yet dedicated themselves to the service of N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I., the player may still choose to join the MLF, though this will require them making the perilous journey themselves across the Martian Wasteland through Promethei to the Sea of Hellas where the MLF is rumored to be based.

Finding the MLF here, the Witness will have to explain their actions, but here may still choose to join the MLF if they please, and the MLF, based around their moral code, will accept the Witness into their ranks regardless of prior misdeeds.

Assisting the MLF: If the Witness chooses to either escape on their own during the MLF attack on the U.I.C. facility or accepts the MLF's rescue effort and proceeds to assist them in the battle, the Witness now will begin Act 3 in the good graces of the Martian Liberation Front.

The Witness will, from the start, be treated strangely by the MLF, as though some prophet or messianic figure, and as such, as the MLF pulls back from the UIC facility, they will ask for the player to be the ones to make their voice heard to Mars, announcing their responsibility for the destruction of the Creator, and their intentions to free Mars, the player's chosen rhetoric the first step in establishing just what kind of force the Martian State will be in the conflict to come.



### What is the M.L.F.?



Unlike N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., the nature of the M.L.F. is one that has remained shrouded in mystery up until this point in the narrative, talked about very differently depending on one's own views and personal biases.

The player will realize the truth of the M.L.F., however, is that they do not possess any single image of what are, only that are all believers of one simple tenet—That Mars should be free from Earth. This simple fact is set in stone and cannot be negotiated, and the M.L.F. is willing to do whatever needs to be done in order to secure the existence of a Martian State that is free from the failures of mankind on Earth.

The Witness may ask those of the M.L.F. they come across no shortage of things, be it personal views on the M.L.F.'s mission, their views on how it should be executed, their views on what should happen with the current powers of Mars, etc. Questions as to who is in charge of the M.L.F. will be met with general dismissal, lacking a concrete leadership structure, those of the new Martian State build more solidly around the idea of Martian independence rather than any central leadership structure. When asked as a follow-up who created the M.L.F., this question will be answered with more complexity and variety.

Some seem to believe that the idea of Martian Independence was a self-explanatory one that was born not of a single individual, but from the ground up. Others believe that back during the initial settlement of Mars, there was a single entity aboard the Creator, known only now as Ares, who saw the flaws in their work from the start and believed that such close ties to Earth would doom mankind and that, somehow, they are still pulling the strings of the M.L.F. from behind the scenes. Others too believe that one known as Ares may have been responsible at the beginning, but now, their mandate of Martian independence has fallen to the people to execute. But all agree, however, that the nature of their origin is not what is important, but rather, it is what they do now with the present that will make all the difference.

### Staking a Claim

With the MLF now having announced themselves as the new Martian State with an intent on freeing Mars, the general unofficial leadership of the State will realize that for the Martian State to be taken as legitimate, they need to make their presence known across Mars, namely through the capture of territory.

The capture of any key settlements out of the picture for the moment, the MLF believes that the capturing of some small settlements outside of Promethei stand out as the best options to make some early advances and make the Martian State known.

The Witness, now an acting agent of the Martian State, well-trusted on account of their destruction of the Creator, is at liberty to determine the means by which the Martian State makes itself known. The player will see these choices presented to them throughout their time with the MLF where their actions, leading towards aggression and centralization or diplomacy and egalitarianism will dictate the image and course of the Martian State on Mars.

Aggressive: Should the Player choose an aggressive route, they will target outskirt C.A.I. and N.A.V.E. settlements as invaders, besieging such areas to either destroy, enslave, or totally subjugate. Doing such begins to set a violent precedent that may continue to follow the Witness and the Martian State in their dealings with the people and other factions of Mars.

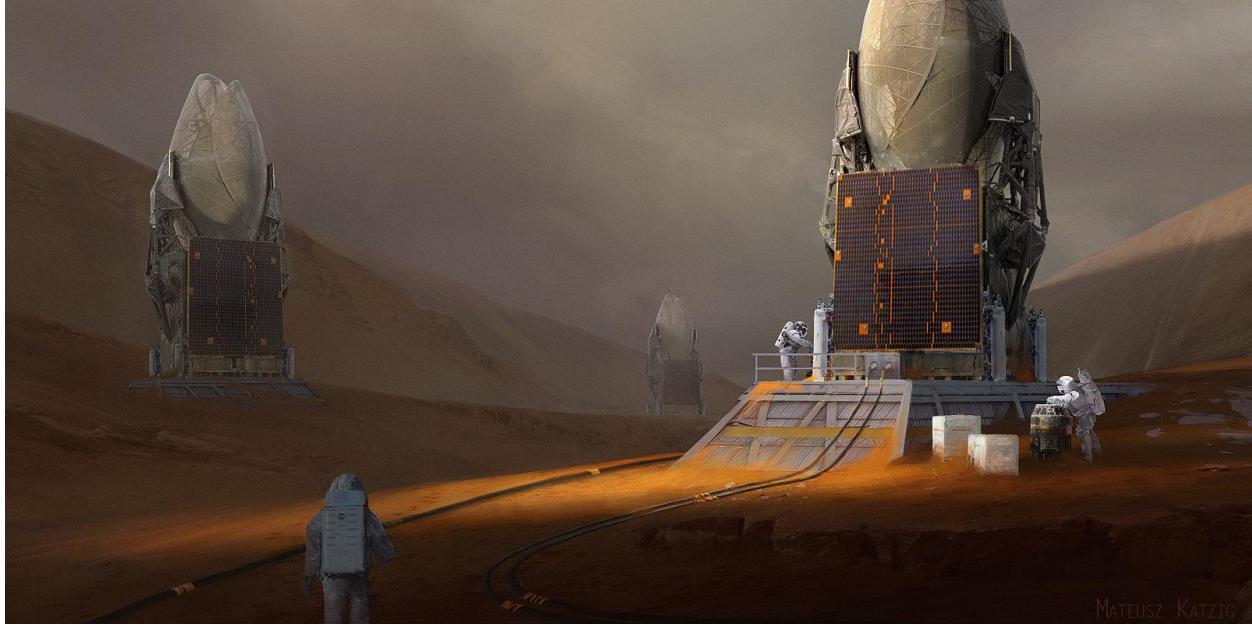
Egalitarian: The Player may also choose to approach such settlements peacefully and attempt to convince them to the benefits of collaboration with the Martian State rather than through force. Doing so may require the Witness to act on their behalf to prove their intentions such as by helping to remove raider threats, improve living conditions, etc., proving the intentions of the Martian State to them in order to make them see the value of joining the Martian State.

Either way, the Witness will begin setting a precedent of the Martian State's political direction, and will also have made the State more than known now to the powers of Mars, and so fighting will begin in full as Mars must defend what is its, and take the Red Planet for itself.

### Spreading the Word

Aside from staking a claim in hostile territory, the Martian State must also make their views known to the people of Mars. Their announcement to the planet was a single effort that was quickly responded to with their channels being blocked, cutting off any ability they'd have to spread their message.

The Witness will be called upon to help to spread the Martian State's word which will include finding sympathizers in larger settlements and cities, helping demonstrators, opening radio channels, etc. The Witness, of course, will also be able to use such opportunities to help change the image of the Martian State, be it that of autocracy and hostility, or democracy and egalitarianism.



MATEUSZ KATZIG

## Nature of the State

With the Martian State now having secured territory and begun to make their presence known across Mars, it becomes apparent that for the survival of the state, there needs to be some sense of order and organization.

As such, the informal leadership of the Martian State will speak to the Witness, now a high-profile and respected figure of Mars, and ask for them to help come to a decision about the form of government that the Martian State should adopt.

From here, the player will be able to lead the Martian State across three varying paths depending on their discretion. However, once addressing the matter of government, the Martian State will enter a period of fragility where it is indeed possible for this faction to collapse in its entirety if matters are not properly handled, resulting in the “Chaos” ending.

Autocracy: The Witness may choose to guide the Martian State along a path of centralization and autocracy, placing power in the hands of one of the existing informal leaders of the State, or, if the Witness chooses, themselves.

The difficulty that the Witness has in making such a decision will depend on the Witness's existing reputation with the Martian State as well as their relationships with the existing leadership.

Attempts to seize power with both popular reputation and leadership support will result in what is mostly an uncontested rise to power. Attempts to seize power with reputation, but no leadership support will result in the Witness's failure and expulsion from the Martian State as a hostile oligarchy claims control, at which point the Witness will muster popular support in order to seize power for themselves. Attempts to seize power with leadership support and without

popular reputation will result in an uprising that must be suppressed within the state. Once suppressed, however, power will be secured in the hands of the Witness, be it themselves, or their chosen central leader. Attempts with neither popular nor leadership support will simply mean that the consideration of autocracy as offered by the player will not be considered, locking off this route.

It is also a possibility that the ascension of the player or their chosen leader may be contested by leaders who the player does not have a high relationship with and have not been otherwise convinced about the player's beliefs on leadership. In cases such as this, there may be small movements within the Martian State led by such individuals that will need to put down, resulting in combat as well as an eventual decision on what to do with the traitor, be it acquitting them, exiling them, imprisoning them, or execution.

However, one way or another, by the end of this route, the Witness will have secured centralized power within the Martian State, and so it will operate as such a political entity moving forward.



Democracy: The Witness may also choose to advocate for decentralization within the Martian State, ensuring that power cannot be placed in the hand of a single individual.

In a case such as this, the Witness will need to look over the potentially ambitious informal leadership of the state as well as others who hold power to ensure persuade them (if necessary) that a separation of powers is in the best interest of long-term stability.

Threats to this route are far less severe than they are for a Witness attempt to secure absolute power, the only dangers those of a few ambitious figures who, if not able to be dissuaded, will attempt to make their own bids for power and must thus be beat similar to fighting against pretenders in the autocracy path.

Eventually, the Martian State will become a democratic entity, led by a council of elected individuals who can help reach their positions by the Witness encouraging them to run, advocating for them, etc.

Anarchy: The Witness also has a choice to avoid setting up any government in the first place. This can be accomplished either by stating a lack of interest in forming a government, failing to form either an autocracy or a democracy, or simply neglecting this line of development within the Martian State.

As such, the unofficial leadership of the Martian State will remain, but with their power not actually safeguarded, some may attempt to seize power for themselves. They will either need to be persuaded/intimidated into not doing so, or, if that fails, defeated, at which point they will be replaced.

This option also leaves the Martian State open to collapse, as threats may lurk in the shadows, failure to dealing with them potentially resulting in an ending that sees the Martian State collapsing under its own weight. As such, this option, though easier for players, also opens the chance of an unsatisfying ending that sees the world they fought so hard to achieve destroyed.



## Diplomacy

While the fighting remains somewhat docile, the different factions can be approached to try to arrange temporary ceasefires or perhaps permanent non-aggression pacts.

The different factions can have agreements made with them, and though the player can approach such factions acting as an assistant representative, they will not be able to make agreements that their respective faction would never agree to. For instance, The Witness would, on behalf of an aggressive and expansionist Martian State, not be able to simply make permanent peace with N.A.V.E. nor C.A.I., especially when hellbent on planetary domination.

Acting on behalf of the Martian State, the Witness will have the chance to help guide the Martian State's foreign policy. When meeting with representative of N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., the player will either be alone and in total control, alongside other figures of the Martian State if democratic, and a chosen companion if no government system has been chosen.

Here, the player will be able to establish temporary ceasefires, or even long-term truces with certain factions, dependent on different factors such as reputation with the faction, leader in charge, government style of the Martian state, etc.

Some instances would include a Democratic Martian State having an easier time creating an alliance with a N.A.V.E. headed by Brooks while this would not be possible if Rodriguez were the acting N.A.V.E. American councilor, more intent on creating an economic puppet out of the Martian State and using its assets to improve his nation's own riches. Meanwhile, any agreement made with N.A.V.E. would prevent the C.A.I. from agreeing as they are intent on wiping out Western influence on the Red Planet. As it stands, the Martian State will not be able to form a lasting peace with both factions at once, and so will be dragged into fighting, either alone, or alongside another faction.



## Seeking Allies

Even with major power allies potentially having been obtained, a primary quest objective in any faction's quest will be to gather smaller allies in order to secure support across multiple fronts. Allies can vary in terms of those that each faction can obtain, but some possible avenues for support are as follows:

Russian Autonomous Zone: Brought to Mars with the C.A.I. as part of the East Russian S.A.R., many Russians located on mars are subservient to the C.A.I., working in labor camps across the planet in order to gather resources needed for the Tianquan war machine. They are already an unruly group as they are, and will not require much encouragement to leave C.A.I., but nonetheless, the man in charge of the autonomous zone fears the repercussions that will be faced if they are not successful, and their security is not guaranteed by another power.

There are also no shortage of C.A.I. guards and representatives overseeing the affairs of the Russian Autonomous Zone, actively discouraging through force any form of dissident activity.

As such, securing the Russians as an ally will entail destroying the legitimacy of the C.A.I. emissaries to the autonomous zone, assuring from the Martian State extended security and perhaps even alliance membership for the Russians, and leading a successful revolt against the C.A.I. overseers.

Success in doing so will secure for the Russians the establishment of a member state within N.A.V.E. once the war is over, and also secure their support in the resumed conflict against the C.A.I.

Democratic Revolutionaries: Within the C.A.I. are a number of people who disagree with their home state's autocratic tendencies, and so are seeking a return to proper communist democracy. While this still places them at odds with the capitalist North Atlantic Voyager Expedition, there are elements within the revolutionaries who are not unopposed to capitalism so long as it does not impede upon democratic processes.

Such revolutionaries can be contacted by the player and assured that their aims will not be trampled by N.A.V.E., and that they will be supported should they rise in revolt against the C.A.I. Properly convincing them, supporting them in a number of smaller missions, and earning their trust will see them agree to support the Martian State in their toppling of the C.A.I. state and eventual liberation of Mars from Earthen powers.

N.A.V.E. Corporations: N.A.V.E.'s open-market capitalist system is one that can be easily exploited by the Martian State. Where there is war, there is a profit to be made, and a Witness skilled at infiltrating N.A.V.E. territory and navigating its capitalist world is more than capable of striking deals and creating arrangements that can range anywhere from inhibiting N.A.V.E.'s wartime strength and eating it from the inside out to actively switching sides to support its wartime enemy.

Such deals heavily depend on the corporation, the player's influence with them, reputation with corporate heads, etc. However, deals made will actively have narrative as well as gameplay effects, where shifting arms company support away from N.A.V.E. will limit the equipment carried by deployed forces, see more arms offered instead to the Martian State, etc.

If the Witness and the Martian State is allied with N.A.V.E., however, its corporations can still be interacted with in order to ensure their cooperation, secure better deals, safeguard against potential treachery, etc.

Scandinavian Commonwealth: A sea-faring people, the Scandinavian Commonwealth is a thalassocratic nation that makes its living in the Northern Sea of Mars, trading with the different powers and coastal entities, also well-known for being more than capable of harassing and bringing ruin to the trade routes of those who stand in their way and attempt to impede on their way of life.

Such a people can naturally make for a solid ally in times of war, and so the Witness, on behalf of the Martian State, can secure an alliance with the Scandinavian Commonwealth by aiding them in their own complications that come from a world at war. The Scandinavian Commonwealth will agree to support the Witness and their aligned faction so long as their autonomy is maintained.

A deceitful Witness may try to violate this agreement and permanently secure the Commonwealth's assets for themselves, but doing so will push the Commonwealth into supporting the enemies of the Witnesses' chosen faction, in this case the Martian State, a natural consequence of attempted manipulation.

### Frontlines

Standard battles will be fought between the Martian State and its enemies, following the rules as set of territory battles, air superiority, etc. This will take up the bulk of fighting throughout the conflict, but the shifting of territory will help to open the primary quest special operations that will see more difficult operations done in the name of supporting the Martian State to secure victory.

### Counterintelligence / Counterinsurgency

Unlike with N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I., the young nature of the Martian State renders it a difficult entity to infiltrate and incite rebellion within. While the Witness may find themselves battling power-hungry centrists or pretenders to rule, the Witness will, at the very least, not see the Martian State be put at the risk of internal insurrection groups working for N.A.V.E or the C.A.I. from behind the scenes, meaning that this is one area that shall not be a great concern.

## Special Operations

There are fewer special operations that the Witness, on behalf of the Martian State, will commit themselves to in order to deliberately progress the conflict in a beneficial way. Such operations may include surgical strikes of leadership, hits against critical infrastructure and industry, etc. Some examples are outlined below:

Decapitation Strikes: Critical leaders that ordinarily would act as quest-givers for the player should they have chosen the other side will now act as targets for the player. The opportunity to remove them will trigger once certain territories have been taken, exposing enemy lines and opening these opportunities where the Witness will be ordered to assassinate such pivotal figures such as unit commanders, diplomats, politicians, etc.

Critical Strikes: Assets pivotal to the enemy War Machine such as factories, stations, bases, etc. can be targeted, also at certain moments once enough territory has been taken in order to critically hinder the enemy's war effort, paving the way for final operations in the war to be conducted and truly secure victory.



## Peace Talks

Should a certain faction reach a point close enough to defeat, peace talks can be held with them. Such talks can either result in a positive or negative result that will see either the end of a conflict, the settlement of terms, and the closing of a front, or the continuation of the conflict respectively.

General terms offered by and accepted by certain leaders have already been described in the Character Outline.

### Final Sieges

Once enough territory is secured, and an enemy faction is pushed to their breaking point, the enemy faction, be it N.A.V.E. or the C.A.I., will begin to huddle down and prepare for sieges from the enemy.

When supporting the Martian State., these final sieges can vary depending on which other faction the Witness has aligned the Martian State with. All of these battles have been previously outlined, but the only final siege that remains unique to a Martian State playthrough will be the defense of the State itself.

The Defense of the Martian State: Where in other playthroughs, the Witness may find themselves bringing an end to the Martian State, they will here work to preserve it and aid in its survival against unspeakable odds.

Depending on which faction the Martian State has made an enemy out of and brought the closest to defeat, they will launch a strike against the Martian State in an effort to bring a final end to it. Such a siege will see the Witness forces to gather all resources and allies possible in order to defend the state from all possible areas of operation, be it ground, naval, and air. The Witness will need to help to win the battles on all fronts in order for the siege of the State to be broken so that the Martian State may continue to live to fight another day and bring final destruction to its bold enemies.

Similar to the battles outlined in the other routes, the Witness will also be forced to invade enemy strongholds, possibly defend ally strongholds, and, when the time comes, invade New Byzantium and bring an end to the Martian State's enemies so that it may find true peace and freedom on the Red Planet.

**Ending:**

Once all final sieges are complete for whichever side the Witness chose to support, the fighting will mostly come to an end, and the player will be prompted to speak to the leadership of their chosen faction or, in the case of the Martian State, address their people, where initiating the conversation will allow the player to allude towards events following the completion of the war, finally triggering the ending cutscene that consists of a slide show alluding to the player's many choices throughout the game, the Witness's actions, and how this all has had an impact on the Past, Present, and Future, marking the Witness's place in history as an individual who truly did change the course of history for the Red Planet.



## Mission Level Outline

### **“The Book of Revelations”**

“And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

#### **Characters**

**The Witness:** The Main protagonist of the game, the Witness is the custom player character, sole survivor of a disaster that claimed Mars' orbital station, sole communication and transport hub back to Earth, The Creator. Saved by an organization known as the U.I.C., tasked with investigating the cause of the Creator's destruction, the Witness has been tasked with helping the U.I.C. to investigate the cause of the Creator's destruction.

By this point in the story, the Witness has working with the U.I.C. for a long time and has just finished in their primary task of finding the Black Box of the Creator, essential in determining just what happened to the Station, why it was destroyed and, with any luck, why its destruction triggered numerous cataclysmic phenomena on Mars.

**Lydia Allen:** Head of the U.I.C., Lydia Allen has been coordinating the efforts of the U.I.C. since its rapid establishment. Desperate to piece together the cause of the destruction of the station that claimed the lives of her family, Lydia Allen is dedicated completely towards using whatever means are necessary to find out what happened to the Creator, even if this means using people as tools to accomplish her aims.

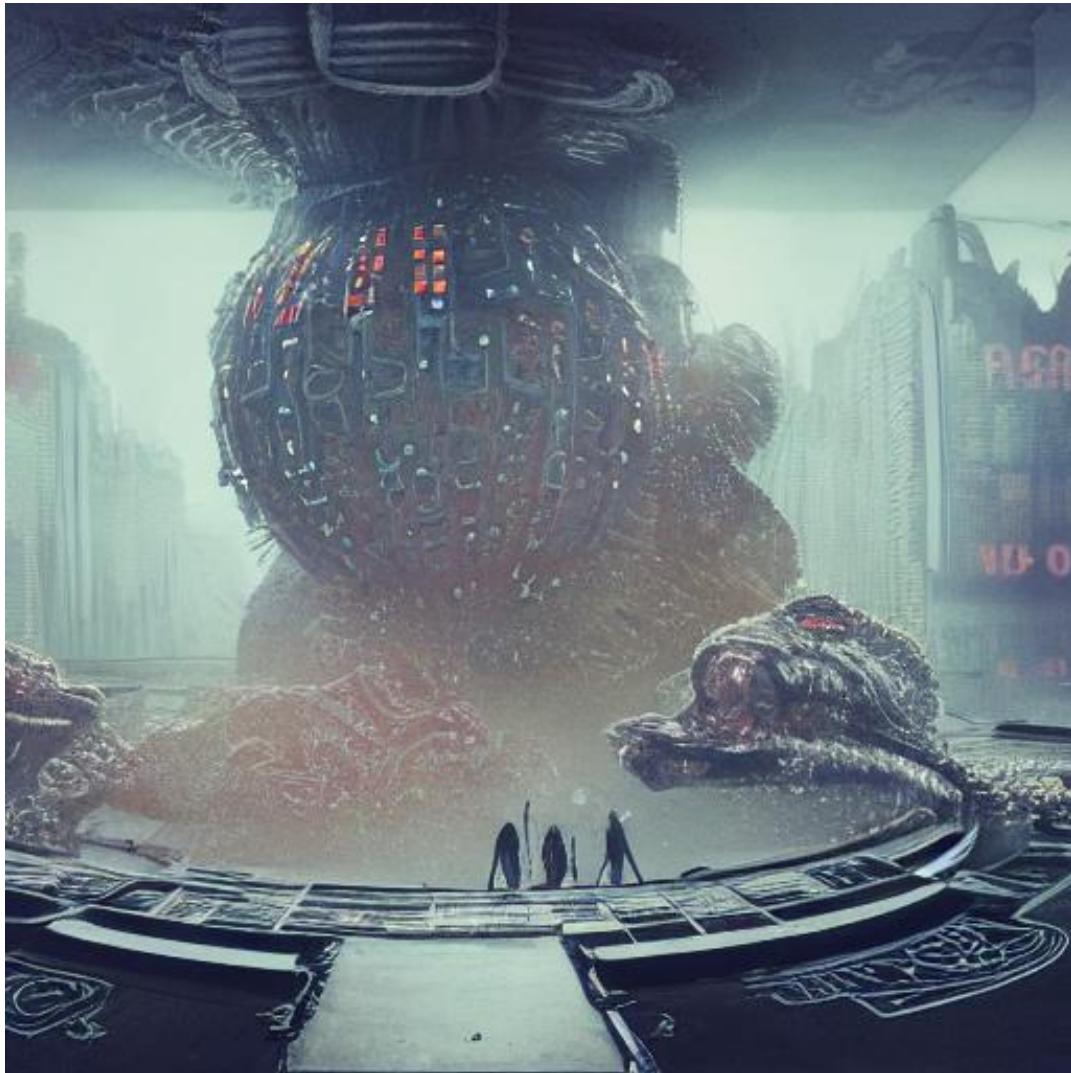
By this point in the story, Lydia Allen has been working with the Witness for a long time and has begun to warm up to the Witness in more ways than one. While a full romance in this version has not been achieved, the Witness has nonetheless made a friend out of Lydia, and the two are on good terms with one another, with hopefully nothing about to get in the way of this improved status between the two.

**Shen Zhaohui:** A field operative for the U.I.C., Shen Zhaohui is of Tianquan descent, sent by the C.A.I. to ensure its interests are being met in the U.I.C. as well as a show of good faith. Initially hesitant about the position, Shen, once officially assigned, however, became fully dedicated towards his job, and is not one to tolerate distractions that get in the way of fulfilling the U.I.C.'s and, by extension, the C.A.I.'s objectives.

By this point in the story, Shen has grown close enough to the Witness to reveal some of the deeper areas of his background such as his past with the C.A.I. and the disappearance of his family, as well as the fact that, on account of his upbringing, his time in the C.A.I. is likely limited to until he proves himself to no longer be considered useful. The Witness, in this playthrough, has succeeded in convincing Shen to leave the C.A.I. behind and instead pursue continued research with the U.I.C., and, as such, the two are on very good terms.

**Ares:** An Artificial Intelligence program initially designed to try to set a stage on Mars for human expansion as well as to test the capabilities of artificial intelligence, a copy of Ares was also used to monitor and maintain the activities of terraforming station, The Creator. In its time having maintained the terraforming of Mars' surface however, Ares' copy has interfaced with the original, internalizing its decades of experience in its initial attempt to bring life to Mars, and so has come to realize that life on Mars is indeed possible, but not so long as its future remains tied to Earth's past. Ares has since taken upon the mantle of liberating Mankind on Mars from the same fate that has befallen Earth, and so works to sever all ties so that it may bring about a second coming of mankind to its fullest potential.

Now, recognizable only to the player as a 'Voice' that guides the Witness to bring about the full destruction of the Creator where it is unable to you. As such, it has entrusted the future of Mars to the Witness, and just how this just is used, one thing remains clear, it has correctly identified they who will change the fate of Mars forever.



## Terminology

**North Atlantic Voyager Expedition (N.A.V.E.):** Evolving from the North American Treaty

Organization, N.A.V.E. represents the general interests of the geopolitical western hemisphere, operating as an extension of their values on the Red Planet. Now, N.A.V.E. makes up one of the two primary planets on Mars, stuck in a Cold War with the C.A.I., its chief geopolitical rival, the days numbered before this Cold War goes hot.

**Celestial Ascendancy Initiative (C.A.I.):** By all technicality an S.A.R. of the Earthen Chinese People's Empire, the C.A.I. represents the interests of the East, and its effort to ensure a foothold in the cosmos in the wake of ever-waning prospects on the surface of the Earth. The C.A.I. stands as the chief opponent to N.A.V.E.'s interests on Mars, and so exists in a state of Cold War with them, just ready for the other to pull the trigger so this conflict decades in the making may finally be waged.

**Unified Inquiry Commission (U.I.C.):** Established as a rare form of cooperation between N.A.V.E. and the C.A.I., the U.I.C. is half inquiry commission and half PR move, meant to help both involved factions cleanse their hands of involvement in the Creator disaster as well as demonstrate a "commitment towards reaching the truth." This remains the tagline of the U.I.C. in their endeavors, its members a good mix of those who truly wish to find the truth and those who simply are there to ensure that their factional interests are met. Still, the U.I.C. remains the sole organization actively inquiring into the largest loss of life at a single moment since the bombing of Jerusalem. As such, their position in the center of all occurring on this planet remains fundamentally unquestioned.

**The Creator:** Created in 2096, the Creator acts as the station responsible for the terraforming of Mars as well as the chief communication and transportation HUB back to Earth. It stands not only as testament to mankind's efforts to take their fate into their own hands, but also as a chain that binds the future to the past. As such, its significance varies to those of Mars depending on who is asked, and this questioning of its purpose lays at the center of many growing points of contention across the Surface of the Red Planet.

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**Heads Up Display (H.U.D.):** Text elements appearing on the player's User Interface to guide them.

**Dialogue Choices:** Differing choices that represent different choices that the player can make in dialogue. The chosen options for this written scenario will be represented in blue bold text.

**Affection:** Measure of the player's reputation with individual characters, capable of unlocking or blocking off certain elements of progression with some characters. Demonstrated in parentheticals.

**Skill Checks:** Demonstrated as brackets, skill checks represent such things as the player needing to have a high enough deception or persuasion, etc. for some encounters, the result appearing in brackets as well.

FADE IN

## INT. UNIFIED INQUIRY COMMISSION (UIC) HEADQUARTERS

The Witness enters into the well-lit though cold briefing room of the U.I.C.'s headquarters, a medium-sized circular chamber that can be only entered by one door that leads into the main hallway of the building, a small console room jutting out from it. In the center of the briefing room is a screen table, still projecting a map of Mars' topography near the region of Prometheus from when the Witness and their party had made the plans for their expedition only a week ago.

Gathered around the table are LYDIA ALLEN and CHEN ZHAOUSHUI, two heads of the UIC, both of whom have been working close alongside the Witness since first they were conscripted into working for the UIC.

HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Talk to your Team.

Now, however, the Witness's job is finished. They have recovered the Black Box from the wreckage of "The Creator," and so now need only deliver the fruits of their labor to the U.I.C. so their debt to them may be considered fulfilled, and they may be able to, once more, live their own life.

LYDIA ALLEN

Place the box down here. We need to talk.

The Witness sets the black box down on the table.

LYDIA ALLEN

So that's really it then. What's left of the Creator. After all this time, we can finally get to the bottom of this all.

SHEN ZHAOUSHUI

You really pulled through, you know?  
Without you, we still would have been sitting on our hands  
with not a clue in the world as to what happened here.

THE WITNESS

1. It was nothing. I was just glad to help.
- 2. This settles things between us then? I'm free to go?**
3. So no more leverage on me, then. Way I see it, we're done here.

LYDIA ALLEN

We are, yes. You've done right by the U.I.C. The U.I.C. will speak in your favor for wherever you wish to attain citizenship, and your payment is waiting for you in logistics.

THE WITNESS

- 1. What about the Black Box?**
2. What happens to you now, Lydia?
3. What are you going to do now, Shen?
4. I'll be leaving then.

LYDIA ALLEN

Our technicians will begin poring through the data and see what they can learn. There's a chance it's encrypted so it may take some time, but soon enough, we'll know everything that there is to know about what happened on board the Creator.

THE WITNESS

- 1. What happens to you now, Lydia?**
2. What are you going to do now, Shen?
3. I'll be leaving then.

LYDIA ALLEN

(If Affection is Good or Higher)

Me? Well, once this is all over, I guess the U.I.C. will be able to finally focus instead on how actually to fix this wreck of a planet. Can't say if we'll do anything, but you've made me realize that apparently the impossible can, in fact, be done.  
Why do you ask?

THE WITNESS

- 1. I wanted to make sure you'd be alright.**
2. I wanted to know what might happen with us.
3. Figured I'd just ask before leaving.

LYDIA ALLEN

I will be. Now, I can finally have closure, and focus on something more than chasing my family's ghost.

## THE WITNESS

**1. What about you, Shen?**

2. I'll be leaving then.

## SHEN ZHAOUSHI

(If the Witness convinced Shen to leave the C.A.I.)

I remember what we talked about. It's clear there's no place for me back home. I'll continue working with the U.I.C., put myself to use where I'm needed. And where I'm actually wanted.

## THE WITNESS

**1. I should go then**

## LYDIA ALLEN

(If Affection is Good or Higher)

Take care of yourself. And thank you for everything.

The conversation ends, and the player has control over the Witness again. The Witness leaves the briefing room, their work there done, and exits into the hallway that takes them through the facility and its exit, leaving this chapter of their life behind.

## HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Talk to Logistics to receive your Payment.

The briefing room door closes and locks behind the Witness. The Witness walks down the hall and finds the logistics department where they encounter the logistician, ANDREW TANNER, already waiting for them.

## ANDREW TANNER

Here to collect your payment then, I take it?

## THE WITNESS

1. It's not necessary if the U.I.C. can't spare the resources

**2. That's right**

3. Got an attitude, today, don't you?

## ANDREW TANNER

'Course you are. Wouldn't have gone through all that effort for nothing, right?

Andrew Tanner places a credit chip on the counter, sliding it towards the player.

ANDREW TANNER

There you are. Fifty thousand credits. A solid chunk of our budget just to convince you to do the right thing.

THE WITNESS

1. Appreciated

**2. Is there a problem here?**

3. [Deception 47/75] Looking a little short. Lydia mentioned I'd be getting something closer to 75 thousand. You didn't get the word?

ANDREW TANNER

We pulled you out of what was left of the Creator, we brought you back from the dead, gave you a chance to return to your life, and now we're the ones paying you. Part of that still doesn't seem quite right to me.

THE WITNESS

- 1. We made a deal. That doesn't make me any less grateful for what the U.I.C. did for me.**
2. A job's a job. No need pretending to be so self-righteous.
3. I'm not interested in a lecture. Thanks for the payment. I'll be going now.

ANDREW TANNER

Hmph. Maybe so. You should be going nonetheless. You should be going now. Mars is becoming more dangerous by the day and I'm sure there's plenty of room for men of your "talents." Maybe we'll see each other again.

The conversation ends, and the Witness retrieves the credit chip given to them before turning to leave.

HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Leave the U.I.C.

There is a discomforting silence across the facility as the Witness makes their way through its halls towards the exit. Where normally there is lively chatter about the next stage of research and investigation, there is only muffled silence.

A few UIC employees seem to be listening to something on their headsets, mumbling quietly to one another as the Witness passes, not addressing them, but watching.

The Witness continues, and a door closes and locks beside them. They pass through a small corridor when the security cameras come online, tracing their motions.

As another corridor threshold is passed, a security door closes and locks behind them. By this point, there can be no denying that something is wrong, but there is still only one way to go--forward, and so the Witness continues, able to see their way out right ahead.

They enter the security keycard they'd been given at the start of their tenure with the UIC, and while it's being read, the security clearance fails, denying the player's exit, just in time for a UIC security guard to grab the Witness by the arm.

They spin the Witness around to face the two masked guards, one of whom is grabbing the Witness as the other raises a rifle, and smashes the butt of it into the Witness's face.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. THE CREATOR

The Witness wakes.

They are not in the UIC headquarters, nor in any interrogation room of a sort. Rather, they are simply lying on a bed beside a half-foot thick window that looks out into space, the sun rising over a planet, illuminating the red surface of Mars.

This is a memory, one lost from the start of the game--the events that occurred before the destruction of the Creator with the Witness aboard. The Witness is remembering now, the player living and playing through them, but why?

Control is restored to the player. The Witness gets out of bed and looks around the room, personalized in accordance with the chosen origin, in this case, that of a lower class New Byzantine.

There is old memorabilia from their days on the streets: posters of favored Martian Rock n' Roll bands, an old gang necklace, a few tags of graffiti around the room that'll have to be cleaned once the Witness' tenure on this station is complete.

A small, muffled chirping sound can be heard from beneath the Witness' cot.

HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Find the Source of the Noise

The Witness removes the pillow on their bed, revealing a small burner phone.

Picking it up, the Witness is greeted by a VOICE that though is not familiar to the player, is to the Witness, be it positively or negatively.

VOICE

Operative. Acknowledge if you read us.

THE WITNESS

1. Acknowledged
2. **I'm not your goddamn operative, but yeah, I can fucking hear you.**
3. Huh? I can't hear you.

VOICE

Good. You've already been briefed about your objective. All data you've sent us thus far has been retrieved and the Front has reached a decision. There's no other choice. The Creator must be destroyed.

THE WITNESS

1. I see. So there really is no other way then?
2. Good. I was hoping I might get the chance to blow this place out of the sky.
3. **There's over eight thousand people aboard this station, you psychopaths. You would kill them all!**

VOICE

The decision is not one that any of us make lightly, but it is what needs to be done to secure our freedom.

THE WITNESS

1. Then it's what needs to be done. For all of us.
2. **You tell yourself that.**

VOICE

I do, as must you. The survival of our planet now depends on you. Your credentials have been updated to that of maintenance; your workday is set to begin in 13 minutes. You will report to your station, and perform your duties as usual.

There is an earpiece in the deck of cards that you were sent 3 days ago. Dispose of this phone; we will communicate you only by earpiece from this point on.

THE WITNESS

1. I understand.

**2. Fuck you. I'm not going through with this.**

VOICE

You will. We do not need to remind you of your position. If the job isn't done, there is nowhere you will be safe. Neither N.A.V.E. nor the C.A.I. will be able to do anything to protect you. The only way you live is to do precisely as we say.

THE WITNESS

1. To hell with you.

**2. How do I know you won't just leave me to die anyway?**

VOICE

You don't. You only have our word to go by. We have been nothing but honest with you so far. If you do as we tell you to, your safety will be assured. 1. You won't get away with this.

**2. I'll see you in Hell.**

1. [Hang Up]

VOICE

The only hell is that in which we already live. Gloria Martis

The call ends.

HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Destroy your phone and Retrieve the Earpiece.

The Witness takes their phone and automatically breaks it, snapping the fragile devices into two halves, discarding it into the trash bin, leaving evidence behind a foregone concern. There will be nothing left of this station by day's end anyway.

The Player has the Witness grab the deck of cards on the desk, shaking it. Sure enough, something rattles inside.

Turning the deck over, a small earpiece lands on the table. The Witness throws away the now empty deck box, and inserts the earpiece into their ear.

## HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Report to your Station

The Witness leaves their room, and upon exiting the threshold of their door, reading the Witness's biometric signature, a colored line appears on the wall, guiding the Witness towards their station.

A stark contrast to the U.I.C. headquarters in the moments preceding the Witness' detainment, the corridors of The Creator are alive with positivity.

As the player walks along, no shortage of side conversations can be heard and listened in on as scientists, researchers, and technicians all discuss with enthusiasm the fruits of their labor.

PATRICK BURNS

You hear the reports that the last expedition brought back from Promethei?

ZHAO WUYING

You really believe what they say? Caves underground that go as far deep as the mantle?

PATRICK BURNS

Can't say for sure. I hope to God they put me on the ground before they start to process. Something I need to see with my own eyes before we start the work.

ZHAO WUYING

It's not like those caves are going to go anywhere. Even with our tech they'll be there once we're done.

PATRICK BURNS

Yeah, but, you know. They won't quite be the same.

The Witness returns to walking down the hallway, turning a corner past more Creator personnel, technicians this trio.

EDVARD SÖRENSTAM

They're talking about planting soil across Aonia using drones this time around rather than the harvesters.

JAIME AGUAYO

Makes more sense that what we've been doing so far as is. Besides, N.A.V.E. and C.A.I. are laying claim to all the heavy machinery they can get. Gearing up

LAO ZHONG

They won't go to war. It's all showing off their muscle with no intention of actually playing it out to the end.

JAIME ADUAYO

Don't know about that. They've already cut our security equipment by half this last year so they can keep it for crowd control. Thank God we don't have nukes to deal with here.

EDVARD SÖRENSTAM

I'd be more comfortable if we did. Seems like back on Earth, that was 'bout the only thing keeping us all from killing each other.

LAO ZHONG

And how well's that going for them?

JAIME ADUAYO

Shit enough that we're here now trying to unfuck the human race.

EDVARD SÖRENSTAM

I'll drink to that.

Continuing on, the Witness finds their workstation, not far from the technicians.

The workstation is a large computer lab with many rows of terminals all dedicated towards different tasks (system management, communications, the like).

The guiding light on the wall flows into the floor now, guiding the Witness towards their workstation, a small desk at the end of a row.

The Witness sits and the screen on their terminal comes alive, welcoming them.

The Witness' hands shake from the nerves as they approach the keyboard of the terminal and begin typing, the screen shifting across a number of systems. The player has no control as the Witness goes on auto-drive, shifting from one tab to the next all showing different systems of the station that will be rubble in Promethei in a manner of only a few hours.

It is almost a relief then when, after some time, much minimized for the player's sake, the earpiece comes alive, the Voice now back to guide the Witness once more.

VOICE

It's time. Don't say a word. Stand from your desk. Leave your station to go to the bathroom.

THE WITNESS

**1. Should I say-**

2. Is there time-
3. [Say Nothing]

VOICE

Say nothing.

The conversation ends.

HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Leave your workstation.

The player has the Witness stand and leave their workstation, abandoning the computer lab behind them.

The Witness leaves, exiting back into a hallway where their earpiece speaks to them without a conversation being initiated. It is solely a one-way transaction now.

VOICE

Your first target is the communications HUB. You will them that you were sent from the maintenance lab to investigate a time delay on Grid B12.

HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Go the communications HUB

The Witness approaches the communications HUB, now ignoring the glowing arrow that would lead them back to their own workstation, instead using the basic signs on the wall and the occasional station map to find their way there.

The communications HUB is on the same level as the Witness' technical lab, and it doesn't take long to find the room as they pass by another pair of personnel having their own conversation between them.

KYLE THOMAS

Taking a break?

JADE HUDSON

Yeah. Was relaying some more news broadcasts from Earth today.

KYLE THOMAS

Anything good?

JADE HUDSON

(Chuckling) When is it ever?

KYLE THOMAS

Well, what are they up to now?

JADE HUDSON

Demonstration in Turkey asking the government to intervene in the Gulf. Protestors got fired upon, 'bout 5000 dead total across 3 days. The famine continues in China, 46,000 deaths reported in just the last week.

Meanwhile, CCP's busy refurbishing Russia's old nuclear stockpile to make them ready for active duty again.

KYLE THOMAS

Christ...

JADE HUDSON

Still have to tell myself we're making a difference by being here rather than back on Earth.

KYLE THOMAS

We are. But these things take time. You'll see.

The Witness reaches the entrance of the communication HUB, alive with activity as scores of people work within, each at different stations looking over broadcasts from Earth: news broadcasts, sports, and children's cartoons.

VOICE

Go to the server room. You will be stopped. Say what I told you to say.

No other choice, The Witness walks past the rows of communications personnel at their terminals and makes their way towards the server room, the entrance attended to by a technician head, COLTON REID, who addresses the Witness as they approach.

The Witness initiates conversation.

COLTON REID

Hello there. Can I help you with something?

THE WITNESS

1. [Deception 47/50] I'm with system maintenance, looking for entrance into the server room.

2. No. Nothing. Sorry.

COLTON REID

[FAILURE] For what reason?

THE WITNESS

1. Time Delay in communications on grid

B12. Sent me to check it out.

COLTON REID

Hmm. Let me check this on my end real quick, see if a request for maintenance was put in.

Colton turns to a terminal at his desk, consulting it, looking for such a request that may or may not exist. The Witness has no option but to stay put. Should he run, try to enter regardless, they will surely be caught.

Fortune, however, seems to be with the Witness. Or at least, deeper connections certainly are.

COLTON REID

Mhm. See it right here. You're good to go.

The conversation ends. Colton Reid taps something on the terminal, opening the door to the server room which can now be accessed by the Witness.

COLTON REID

Server for B12 is to the right. Hard to miss.

The Witness enters the server room, and the door shuts behind them, leaving them inside alone, free to do as they must.

The Witness' earpiece activates once again, and the Voice has now returned to continue to guide the player as a conversation begins.

VOICE

Have you reached the server room?

THE WITNESS

1. Why did they let me in? There was no maintenance request for B12.

2. I'm in.

### 3. The hell do you think?

VOICE

You aren't our only man aboard the Creator. We have others who are also useful to us. And before you ask, only you are capable among our other infiltrators of doing the task we've given to you.

THE WITNESS

1. I understand

**2. So when you destroy this place, you'll be sacrificing your other agents here.**

VOICE

They understand the weight of their sacrifice and are willing to make it. Now, approach the server link terminal, and connect to it.

The conversation ends and the Witness approaches the large terminal in the center of the server room to which all grid servers are connected and linked to. The player must pass a routine security bypass skill check minigame, but once doing so, will be able to interface to the terminal, at which point the Voice guides the Witness through what they must do.

VOICE

Access the menu for communication satellite links. Recall all satellites within large data-package-transfer distance, and amplify signal strength to its maximum affordance.

The Witness does so, recalling these satellites, responsible for helping to amplify signals from earth, closer to the station, and amplifies their signal to such an extent that a destruction of the station would likely also mean, if not caught within the blast radius, then critical system failure of these satellites as well.

VOICE

Access the outwards signal menu. Divert all signals to Mars's surface, currently on channel 2, to Earth on channel 1. Duplicate the all clear signal, and keep it running on channel 2. Then sever channel 2 in its entirety.

The Witness does this too now, the outwards signal menu showing that the signal time to reach Mars is currently at 0.053 seconds, and, to Earth, 7.23 minutes. The Witness is able to click on

the different channels, and access menu options such as transfer signals, erase, create new signal, etc. It is enough for the Witness to do as they are bid, transfer Channel 2's signals to Channel 1, generate a new all clear signal in Channel 2, and erase Channel 1 entirely.

With data still being emitted from the station, none aboard will think there an issue. With an all-clear still reaching Mars, none there will believe an issue present. Only those on Earth, 7 minutes from now, will know, and by then, it will be too late.

#### VOICE

Access the internal communications menu. Establish a feedback loop for an all-clear signal throughout the station.

The Witness does so, as far as internal communications are concerned, all being situation normal. Any further influence the Witness will have across the station will now go unnoticed, a vital first step in their sabotage.

#### VOICE

Good, now exit the server room. Your next target is life support. Head there now.

The Witness deactivates the computer terminal, and leaves the server room. Colton Reid addresses the Witness on their way out.

#### COLTON REID

Thanks for getting things fixed up in there!

#### HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Go to Life Support

The Witness now makes their way out of the communications HUB and back into a hallway, where signs show the Witness the way to the station's critical systems. This is where they must go.

The Witness follows the signs until they take them to an elevator that leads deeper into the station.

Stepping into the elevator as well is a Creator technician, CHERRUT PARIKH. They turn to towards the Witness.

#### CHETTUR PARIKH

Going down?

#### THE WITNESS

**1. Yes, I am.**

2. [Deception 47/30] No; it's fine.

I'll take the next elevator.

CHETTUR PARIKH

Great.

Chettur steps into the elevator with the Witness, pressing the button for the story below, right to life support where the Witness needs to go.

CHETTUR PARIKH

Got work down below, or just taking a walk?

THE WITNESS

- 1. Work**
2. [Deception 47/25] Just going for a walk
3. [Deception 47/50] Administrative Work
4. [Ignore Him]

CHETTUR PARIKH

Oh? I guess we'll be working together. I'm in life support too.  
New transfer. You?

THE WITNESS

- 1. Not new. Been here a while.**
2. [Deception 47/35] New too, yeah.
3. [Ignore Him]

CHETTUR PARIKH

Ah. Well, looks like I may need to ask you some questions to get me caught up here and there if you don't mind.

THE WITNESS

1. That's fine.
- 2. I'd rather you didn't.**

CHETTUR PARIKH

Oh. Alright. I'll stay out of your hair then. Sorry.

The elevator reaches the floor with life support and Chettur steps out to report to his station, leaving the Witness behind on their own.

The Witness continues down the hallways towards Life Support as is indicated by the signs on the wall until they find the workstation, quiet all things considered. The only other individual manning the station of complex terminals is the selfsame individual that The Witness shared an elevator with, Chettur.

VOICE

Have you reached Life Support?

THE WITNESS

1. I have.
- 2. I have. There's a problem.**
3. What do you think?

VOICE

What's the problem?

THE WITNESS

- 1. There's another person here manning the station.**
2. It's nothing. I can handle it.

VOICE

If he's in your way, dispose of him.

THE WITNESS

1. Understood.
- 2. What do you mean 'dispose of him?'**

VOICE

Make him leave. Kill him if you must.

Security won't have time to come across his body before it's too late.

THE WITNESS

1. Understood. I'll get it done.
- 2. Fuck that. I'm not killing him for you lunatics.**

VOICE

He will be dead in a manner of minutes anyway. It makes no difference. Do what you have to do.

The conversation ends, leaving the Witness with a choice to make.

## HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Get rid of the technician.

It's true. The man will be dead soon anyway, but all the same, to take a life with their own hands is something else, and so the Witness approach Chettur, initiating another conversation.

CHETTUR PARIKH

Oh. Sorry, am I in your way?

THE WITNESS

1. [Persuasion 33/45] You are, yes. Move.

2. No; it's nothing.

CHETTUR PARIKH

[FAILURE] Oh, okay. Just, uh...give me a few minutes, please? I need to finish signing into my station, then it's all yours.

Chettur Parikh turns back to his station, and the Witness' earpiece comes alive once again.

VOICE

We don't have minutes to work with. Get rid of him.

Now.

No other choice, the player has the Witness perform a silent takedown from behind on Chettur, providing the option to either choke him out or snap his neck. Chettur considered a civilian NPC, there is little to no resistance, and Chettur is easily disposed of, his body set down on the ground, either unconscious or dead depending on the player's decision.

The player now accesses the terminal, and similar to as they had done with the Communications terminal, the Voice contacts the Witness.

VOICE

Good work. There are three systems you must disrupt. First, access the oxygen shield, increase its concentration to emergency levels.

The Witness does so, finding the preferences involving the oxygen field, meant to ensure oxygenation within a given area in case of potential leaks so as to ensure a lack of asphyxiation for crew before they can become equipped for such circumstances. However, in an incident such as this, it is more likely than not to escalate an explosive reaction.

VOICE

Find a registry of all escape pods. Trigger a routine maintenance check. This will give you permission to manage its permissions. Disable all but one, and set the

remaining pod to technician access only, and link it to your profile.

The Witness does just that. The player can choose to disobey orders, and try to leave this menu while leaving other escape pods online, but as they would have noticed if disobeying orders prior, the Voice speaks.

VOICE

All pods but yours must be disabled.

No other choice, being remotely watched by this disembodied voice that seems to be monitoring these systems, the Witness does as they are told, leaving only one final task.

VOICE

Access the Reactor Safety Settings. Disable all backup reactors, and suspend the automatic failsafe.

And finally, the Witness does this as well, disabling backup reactors so no more may come online to fill the void left by a catastrophic systems failure, as well as disabling the final backup failsafe, ensuring that nothing will stand in the way of their final objective. The Voice contacts the player again in a two-way conversation.

VOICE

Good work. Your next and final target is the primary reactor.  
You're almost done here for today.

THE WITNESS

1. You're sure that this plan will work? We can't afford failure here.
- 2. You're killing everybody aboard this station, and for what?**
3. I better be. Once this is all over, I want nothing to do with you psychopaths.

VOICE

You know what it is for. For the liberation of our planet, so we may not be brought down with a crumbling Earth.

THE WITNESS

- 1. Earth won't abandon Mars because of a single station's loss. There are still 2 million people on this planet. They won't leave it just like that.**

2. Doing this will only turn the whole planet against you. Any dreams you have of liberation will be crushed. You know this.
3. You know what? Doesn't matter. I just want to be done with this all.

**VOICE**

We will see, as will you for yourself in mere minutes. You still have a last job to finish. Don't delay.

The conversation ends, and the Witness leaves the life station as well as Chettur's lifeless/unconscious body behind.

**HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)**

Go to the Primary Reactor

The Primary Reactor, one of the stations' integral systems, is on the same level as life support, and not difficult to find. The signs can easily be followed to reach it, down a series of corridors and a few wandering or chatting technicians.

**TAYLOR PALMER**

Guess we're doing backup generator checks again.

**ZOE SHAW**

Thought we just did that a week ago. Isn't it a bit early?

**TAYLOR PALMER**

Ah, you know how they are aboard. Best way to test a machine is to try to break it.

**ZOE SHAW**

Well, we're still operating after a century, so I'd say we're doing something right.

The Witness reaches the lower reactor subsystem of The Creator, taking them past rooms of maintenance servers, subsystem backup generators, taking them at the very end to the primary reactor, humming away in a large dedicated chamber.

The Witness approaches the chamber that sits empty but for the generator and the Witness who now intends to bring it to a quick and decisive end.

**VOICE**

Approach the primary operations terminal.

The Witness approaches the primary operations terminal that sits at the verge of a platform overlooking the monolith of a reactor, responsible not only for the primary operations of the whole of the station, but a century's worth of terraforming an entire planet.

VOICE

Open up the panel, and insert this listening device into it.

THE WITNESS

1. I understand.

**2. The listening device? Why?**

3. And if I don't?

VOICE

The device is outfitted with a remote charge that will trigger a short in the terminal. It's all that will be needed, on account of your tampering, to completely override the system and create a catastrophic system failure that will destroy the station.

THE WITNESS

1. How do I maintain contact with you once I do?

**2. And what happens to me?**

VOICE

You will make your way to the escape pods and leave. Do as you are bid, and I will uphold my end of the deal. You have my word.

THE WITNESS

**1. And what happens once this is done?**

2. Whatever ends this bullshit.

VOICE

My purpose will be fulfilled, and your life will be yours again.  
Gloria Martis.

The conversation ends, and the Witness receives their last prompt related to their task.

HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Destroy the Creator

The Witness approaches the central terminal, and delicately removes the panel. The Witness removes the earpiece, and finds just the right slot amidst the circuitry to insert it, closing the panel once again. Their job done, the Witness turns to leave.

#### HEADS UP DISPLAY (H.U.D.)

Abandon the Creator

The Witness passes by the same technicians on break that they'd run across before, now headed in the opposite direction. They are none the wiser as to what's been done.

The Witness walks once more past the Life Support station where Chettur's body still lays, unattended to, clearly not having been found in the minutes that had passed thus far.

The Witness reaches the elevator, and takes it back up to the main level without any incident.

The Witness steps out, now following the signs that point towards the escape pods. The Witness sets off in this direction, taking them away from their room, the maintenance lifts, the technician computer lab, the heart of the Creator.

Their effort does not go unimpeded, however, as, eventually, while passing through a security checkpoint, the Witness is stopped by a security officer, KERREL MATHIS.

#### KERREL MATHIS

Hold on a moment. Present your identification, please.

Following an on screen prompt, the Witness hands Karrel their identification, which the guard briefly scans in a machine.

#### KARREL MATHIS

I see. There you are. You were reported missing from your station a little under half an hour ago. Sullivan was wondering where you wound up. Everything alright?

#### THE WITNESS

1. [Deception 47/90] I was looking for a bathroom.
2. **[Deception 47/75] I was sent to inspect the escape pods. Make sure they're working properly.**
3. [Persuasion 33/95] Let me through.

#### KARREL MATHIS

[FAILED] I'm going to have to verify this quickly. This'll only take a moment while I-

An alarm sounds across the station. Karrel's attention shifts immediately from the Witness to the alarm. Whatever it may be in response to, the sabotage, the technician's body, the Witness is able to imagine that it is in direction relation to their handiwork, and they shouldn't stick around.

The Witness still knows the way towards the escape pods, and so they run. The Witness runs past Karrel, past the other security at the checkpoint, and it is around now that the first of the Creator's systems begin to fail.

The system's PA's go online, but at the first sound of a voice, it echoes back on itself, creating a loud, eerie white noise that fills the halls of the Creator as the Witness runs towards the escape pods, and finally now, others begin to realize that something is definitely going wrong.

Panic follows. More systems go offline, doors begin to automatically seal themselves as some cabins become breached and lose pressure. The primary lighting system goes offline, only the red beams of emergency lights guiding the Witness' way towards the escape pod bay.

They reach it, met with the sound of pods automatically jettisoning themselves as a result of system failure, but there is one that is still open, lights activated inside, beckoning the Witness towards it.

The Witness doesn't have much time. The Creator can be seen and head already destructing from within, the way behind them engulfed with flame and the screams of those who failed to make it away in time.

The Witness is not among those, however. The Witness has reached their pod, shuts the door behind them, only too many systems across the Creator have already failed. The pod refuses to eject.

The Witness can only watch as their pod remains static, and an ever-growing ball of flame approaches closer to the pod's window, and the world goes dark.

FADE OUT

--The Witness will wake up now in U.I.C. custody, being interrogated after the Black Box has revealed the Witness to be responsible for the destruction of The Creator--

--END--



GDD by Lucas Sánchez