

FIRST CONTACT

by Gottardo Zancani

an introductive End Time adventure for 3-4 players

This adventure has been written to introduce the new End Time players to the Colony life: a lot of details have been left to the keeper (names and stats for the NPC) that will be able to adjust the "mood" depending on the group.

In appendix I've added some extra notes on the Colony life, covering some aspects of the End Time Mars survival needed to add more details to the daily routine of the PC.

Introduction

The players will be sent to investigate about a recently discovered radiation anomaly. The place of the investigation has been named Site X10453.

The team will be composed of 8 people:

- scientific engineer (team leader) PC
- computer specialist PC
- mechanical engineer PC
- security officer PC
- 4 other NPC colonist (pilot, copilot, medical team member, communication specialist)

The team leader will be informed of the following orders by the Head of Sciences himself (a private meeting in his office): locate the site following the radiation, conduct a first survey and then go back to the colony. The team members have been already chosen.

Equipment

The team will have an Hummingbird to their disposal for the mission: standard equipment for the team members (basic suit and scientific PDA).

Keeper Information

Site X10453 is a Martian laboratory: 3 weeks ago the power generator broke, starting a series of electromagnetic emissions that have been detected by the colony. Unfortunately, in the laboratory the Martian were keeping some captive Cthunund Uleths to study them: the power failure has freed the last Cthunund Uleths left alive.

Reaching Site X10453

Following the electromagnetic emissions the players will be able to locate the site: the emissions are irregular so there is a chance that the team will lose the track a couple of time before arriving on the site (about 5 hours in total). Site X10453 is located on a fissure that is not visible from the air. The team will leave the Hummingbird on the planet

surface and they will need to go down about 35 meters into the fissure using some special climbing devices. Once inside the fissure the Martian site is easily reachable.

Site X10453: the external structure

On the surface the site is composed of 5 spheres of about 15m of diameter, linked to form a T shape. The material seems the same used in the Alien domes. Not visible from the ground level, laboratory has an underground area, composed of other 2 spheres, linked with a special lift to the upper structure. The lift can only be operated by the ground level, where the main study area was located: the lower level was used to keep the captive Cthunund Uleths on a special containing structure.

One of the spheres (the one on the base of the T shape) has a simple mechanism to open the door, a plate that must be pressed to access the interior: normally this operation is not possible without authorization but the power failure triggered an emergency procedure that make possible to access the lab without any identification requirement.

Keepers' note: The laboratory has been left unattended for centuries: the Martians has left it on a hurry so part of the equipment is still on the structure while mostly is not operative. It is left to the keeper decide the status of the Martian equipment in the lab; from this findings the group will be able to determine some base facts on the Martians: they are thin, tall, humanoids. From the computer found on the sphere S5 they can deduce that the visual apparatus is very different, since the human eyes are unable to "fix" any image produced from the computer 3d screen (the image is composed for the three set of eyes of the Martians).

Site X10453: ground level

S1: the access sphere - decontamination structures (not operative) and external equipment store. Tools and other equipment can be found here: the team is unable to understand the usage of the objects here preserved.

S2: living quarters - food, sleep and health structures (partially operative)

S3: main laboratory - a lot of equipment can be found here, partially operative. Some of the machinery are obviously analysis tools, while a lot of the equipment is totally alien to the team.

On a vertical "table" there are 5 cylinders: the scientific PDA will give the following possibilities: 80% energy cells, 15% power converters, 5% unknown.

One of the NPC, Jerry Hash, will take one of the cylinders on his hands: the cylinders weigh about 5kg. Unfortunately the cylinders contains samples of the Cthunund Uleths biological structure and without power they are now unable to containing it. The Cthunund Uleths "fluid" is unable to go through the suit but it will stick to it. There is a 5% of probability that one of the PCs will touch the same container, following the Hash fate (see below).

S4: computer and power section; one of the computer terminals is still active. By moving an hand over one of the tables (the terminal is nearly invisible since is embedded on the table itself) a 3D display will be activated. Any engineer will recognized this equipment as a computer: the computer specialist will also be able to navigate on the interface (you can do it with a vocal interface, useless for the humans, or with a 3D interface) even if the language is absolutely incomprehensible. The computer specialist will also be able to remove the computer from the deck - this is mandatory action so let one of the other team members do it in the case that the player acting as the computer expert do not think about it.

S5: special laboratory and lift room - some security items can be found here. The mechanical engineer PDA has a 20% chance of understanding the nature of one of the objects (a bio-electrical weapon). In the first expedition the presence of the lift won't be noticed (the lift is not recognized for his real function).

Back to the colony.

The team is not authorized to take anything to the colony so, after a first research they will be instructed to go back with the collected data: one exception is done for the alien computer; the team leader will ask for an authorization about it.

When the team member will remove the suit in the Hope Colony, Jerry Hash will touch the Cthunund Uleths "fluid" and will be contaminated. The colony decontamination equipment is unaware of the fluid danger so none will be able to prevent this accident. The same fate will occur to any PC that touched the Cthunund Uleths container in the X10453 site.

Ideally all the PCs will go back to their quarters without any problem: the post-mission briefing will be conducted in the following day.

During the following night the players will be awakened by the security forces that will take all of

them on a quarantine room where they will be kept for 20 days. After a couple of days in total isolation with no external contact they will be informed that Jerry Hash horribly died during the first night of an unknown disease and that they are all under analysis to identify the cause of the disease. All the interaction between the players and the medical team will be done through the internal communication system: the medical team will conduct a series of examinations using a modified suit to avoid any physical contact. The examinations are very painful and some of the psycho test will make the players unable to sleep. After 20 days of quarantine the players will be finally freed: every player will lose 1D6 sanity points and 1D3 hit points for the "treatment".

Site X10453: post mission debriefing.

The team will be questioned by the Head of Sciences and the Security Chief for a couple of days: at the end they will be informed of the following news

- The cause of Hash' death is still unknown
- Only Hash was apparently "contaminated"
- A close examination of the Hash suit revealed the presence of an unknown xeno-biological substance: the central computer and all scientific PDAs have been updated to recognize the substance as extremely toxic even if the cause of the toxicity are not yet understood
- The examination of the alien computer revealed the presence of an underground structure on site X10453: a second expedition has been planned and the original team members are committed to it.

Site X10453: second expedition.

The new expedition will include the PCs and the three "workers" previously employed, plus a new member as a replacement for Hash. The new member will present himself as a Hummingbird mechanic, while in reality he's working for the Security Chief; his orders are simple: if something's wrong destroy the alien site (with a special explosive charge he's carrying) and kill all the members simulating an "accident" with the Hummingbird Oxygen generator. No special equipment will be given to the team: the only difference with the previous expedition is that the PDA are now able to recognize the presence of the Cthunund Uleths xeno-biological structure; this apply both to the containers in the upper part (S3) and to the underground level.

Using the alien computer info and the skills of both the computer specialist and the mechanical engineer the lift on S5 will be operated. The lift can be used only by a single player at a time: the team member on the lift is unable to control the system, that is totally managed by the upper control panel.

Site X10453: underground level

Note: the underground structure will be accessible only on the second expedition, after the examination of the Martian computer data.

S6: lift area - security room. This room can be sealed from the ground level to prevent the access to the upper level. The lift can only be operated from the upper level. Nothing special in this area: an INTx3 roll will suggest to the player that this area is used as a "security" zone. The area is totally dark: the team members will have to use the flashlight embedded in the suit that only gives a limited vision in the rooms.

Keepers note: since only one member at a time can descend in the underground level this is the perfect timing to activate the Cthunund Uleths - is up to the keeper decide if the creature will attack the first unfortunate member or will wait in the dark for more food.

S7: containing room - the room has 3 big "boxes": two of them are empty while in the third a Cthunund Uleths still wait the moment to gain his freedom. Normally the Cthunund Uleths is unable to leave the "box" but the power failure has now freed the creature. The Cthunund Uleths normally stay on his box, the leftmost one.

It's up to the Keeper to make the encounter with the alien as dramatic as possible, with the unfortunate players trying to fight against the alien entity. The players won't have any weapon with them, with the exception of the security officer that has a CAAGP. They will have to fight with bare hands, using any piece of equipment as a primitive club (1D4 plus damage bonus, up to keeper the decision on the total amount of damage considering the alien matter of the creature).

The Cthunund Uleths is unable to damage seriously the standard suit: after a fist probing attack the alien will try to block a colonist and will start to look for any possible way to penetrate the suit. Every turn that the Cthunund Uleths spend on a blocked colonist there is a cumulative probability of 5% (i.e. after 5 turns the creature will have a 25% of probability) that he will find a way to open the suit in some place (gloves, helmet, boots): if it's successful the colonist will die in 3 turns for the depressurization shock; after the first death the alien will be able to open a suit with with a 80% of probability after blocking the colonist.

The captive Cthunund Uleths

| | |
|-----|----|
| STR | 17 |
| CON | 12 |
| SIZ | 16 |
| INT | 4 |
| POW | 4 |
| DEX | 12 |

Note: the entity has gone crazy after thousand years of captivity, and this explain the INT and POW values. Unfortunately is still very dangerous.

Move: 4/6 Flying

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: 3 Tentacles - 35% 1D6 +toxins (useless against the standard suit).

Each tentacle can be used to block a colonist (65%). A blocked colonist can try to free himself with a STR vs STR roll.

Armor: None, but their alien matter causes all impaling weapons to do minimum possible damage.

Additional Notes on the Colony Life

Time measurement

The Martian day (*sol*) is about 24.66 earth hours. Every watch in the Colony normally operates with the Standard Mars Time (SMT), where every "hour" is measured as 1/24 of the *sol* duration. The old Earth Time (ET) is also available but is not used any more: in any case the terms hours, days, months, years have been kept even if the effective duration is changed.

The Martian year (684.98 earth days, 669 *sols*) has been divided in 18 months: 17 months are composed of 37 days while the last month (normally referred as "December") is 40 days long. The months are referred simply with the ordinal value: no special names have been introduced.

The age of the colonist is still calculated in Earth Years: while this is quite confusing the "birthday" event is one of the most strong links to the Earth culture and colonist are very reticent in changing their habits on this topic. Only with the newborn children an attempt of calculating the age in terms of Martian years has been attempted.

Sex, Birth Control and Child.

The colony offers little or no intimacy for sex: unfortunately this is one of the main needs for the human so the colonist have became used to have private relations when (and where) possible, with a lot less morale concerns when compared to the life on earth. Birth control is mandatory: every female colonist is kept on a state of no fertility with the usage of chemical products given with the water; even if no official position exists about other chemicals in the water everyone is quite sure that some form of "sexual inhibitors" are also present in the water and/or food, to keep under a fixed level the appetite of every colonist.

Every birth must be authorized: the health status of the parents must be verified and normally every couple is allowed only one child to maximize the gene exchange between the colony. Extra DNA material is kept in the Science Quarters to increase the gene richness of the colony.

Childhood.

The children are kept all together up to 12 years: three "classes" exists to prepare the new colonist (1-3,4-7,8-12). At the age of 12 every adolescent starts his first working cycle: 4 hours of obligation in the colony life (small jobs like cleaning and hydroponics activities) followed by 4 hour of "advanced classes", similar to the high school in terms of subjects.

Children have probably the most difficult life in colony: the parents can spend a very short time every day with their own child, there are no play areas, nearly no games and the birthday is not the happy day that was on pre-End Time earth. Since the colony is short of every material there are very few objects explicitly created for the children: the most common gift in the colony is an hand-made object (a small car, a soldier, a puppet) made with recycled material not considered essential for the colony life (mainly plastic).

Spare Time

In the colony life there is very few opportunities for a real "spare" time: after the harsh work normally the colonist are only willing a good sleep. In any case there are a few opportunities to spend this precious time:

- eBooks: a very good selection of electronic books is available, all of them accessible on the PDA.
- movies: about 2000 titles are in the catalog, with every gender covered. The most accessed are action/horror and porn titles; the usual method of seeing the movies is on the plasma panel present on every quarter room.
- music: about 5000 musical pieces are available.
- alcohol: alcoholic drinks are available on the small bar in the habitat modules. Some unofficial beverages are

also available - they are normally very strong and often with dramatic effects on the liver: since this is one of the few methods of letting of steam the Colony Council doesn't pursue this illegal traffic.

- drugs: no known drugs are available in the colony. Some medicine that have an hypnotic/tranquillizer effects are available but with great shortage since they cannot be replicated with the actual structure in the colony.
- games: some plastic chessboards and card decks are available in every module. Much more used are the electronic games based on the latest virtual reality technology available on the pre-End Time earth. These games are used as an easy mechanism to escape the hard reality of the colony life: some of the colony programmers have created new titles and some "special titles" (sex and/or violence) are also available on the unofficial channels.

Jobs

The colony life require that everyone collaborate daily to the collective survival. The usual shift are 12 hour long, with an 8 hour shift for the heavy duties. Every colonist has 1 day of rest in the week and about 20 days of "holiday" in the year (Martian year); the "holiday" are normally spent in the quarters, since there is no other place to go.

Common duties/specialization

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Command Center | |
| Computer | |
| Security | |
| Scientific | |
| Exploration | |
| | Mars surface |
| | Alien structures |
| Research | |
| | Biogenetics |
| | Xeno-technology |
| | Terraforming (O2 production, vegetables) |
| | Recycling |
| | New Technologies (creating products with the Martian resources) |
| Medicine | |
| Special/Secret projects | |
| | Descartes |
| | Carter |
| | Star Voice |
| | Labyrinth |
| Maintenance | |
| | Habitat modules |
| | Water Tank |
| | Oxygen |
| | Hydroponics |
| | Food Equipment |
| | Recycling |
| | Equipment (tools and suits) |
| | Vehicles |
| | Clothes |
| Alien Domes | |
| | Maintenance |
| | Building (heavy duty) |
| Ark refitting | |
| | Electronics |
| | Building (heavy duty) |
| Other roles | |
| | Galley personnel |
| | Teacher |

Sports

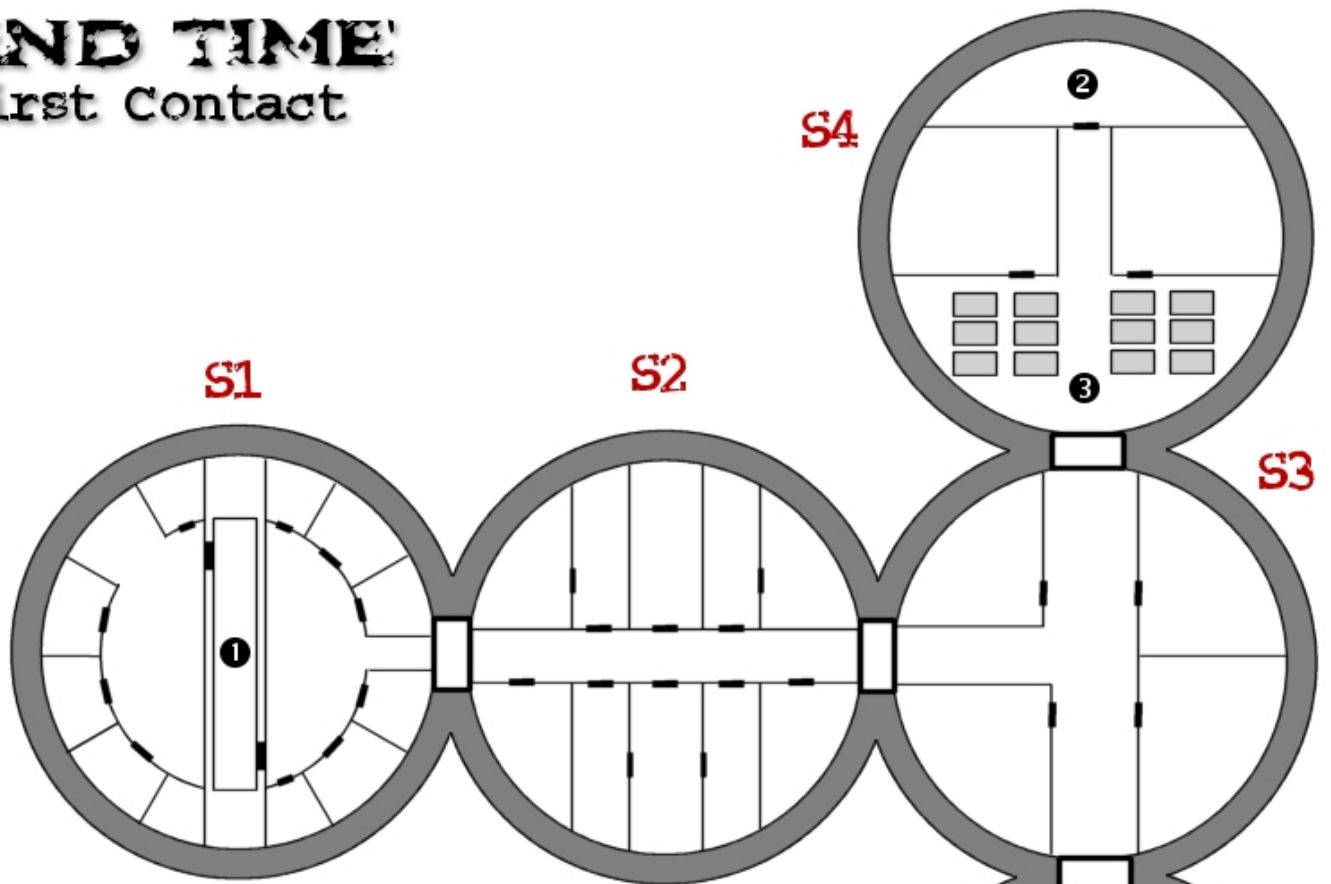
Apart from the gymn equipment available in the Modules there is small space for any sport activity in the colony (no equipment, no physical space). One major exception is represented by the clandestine fight: these "events" are completely unofficial and

are very bloody - basically two participants can fight against each other with no rules except that you can only use your own body, no weapons of any type are allowed.

As for the alcohol, the colony security do not pursue seriously these fight since are one of the few methods of freeing the accumulated stress and aggressiveness.

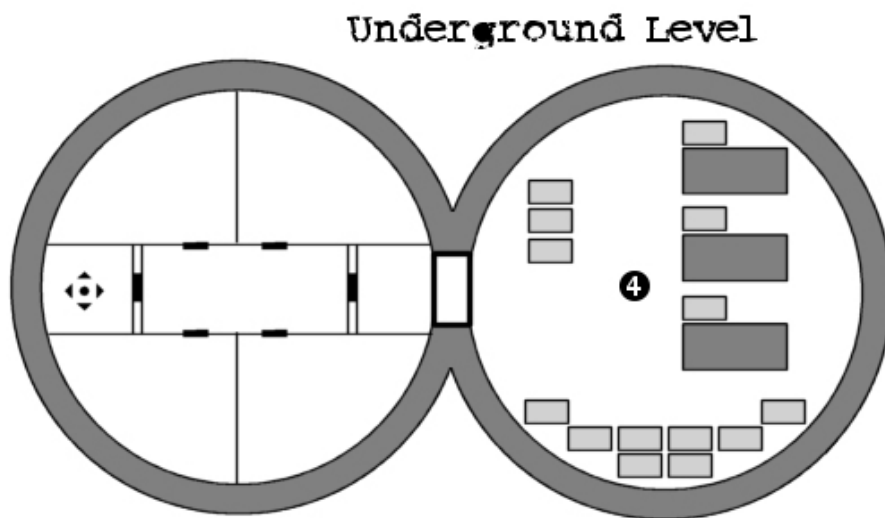
END TIME

First Contact



Ground Level

- ① Decontamination structure
- ② Power section
- ③ Computer section
- ④ Containing section

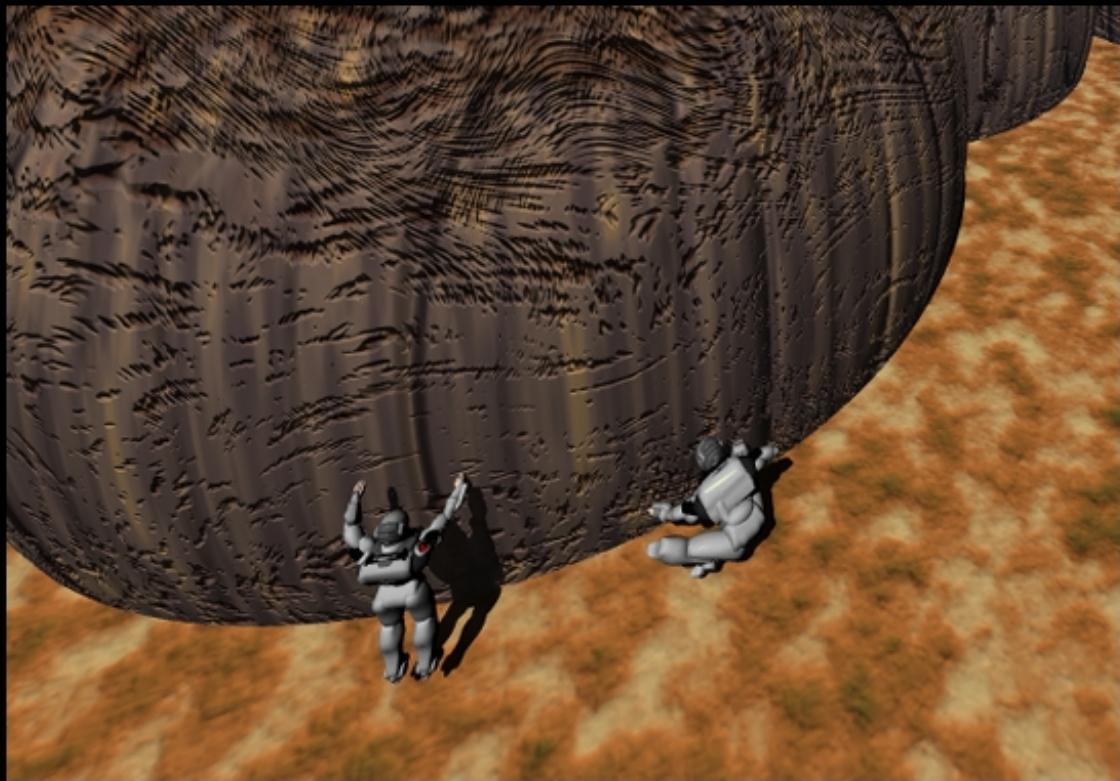


Underground Level

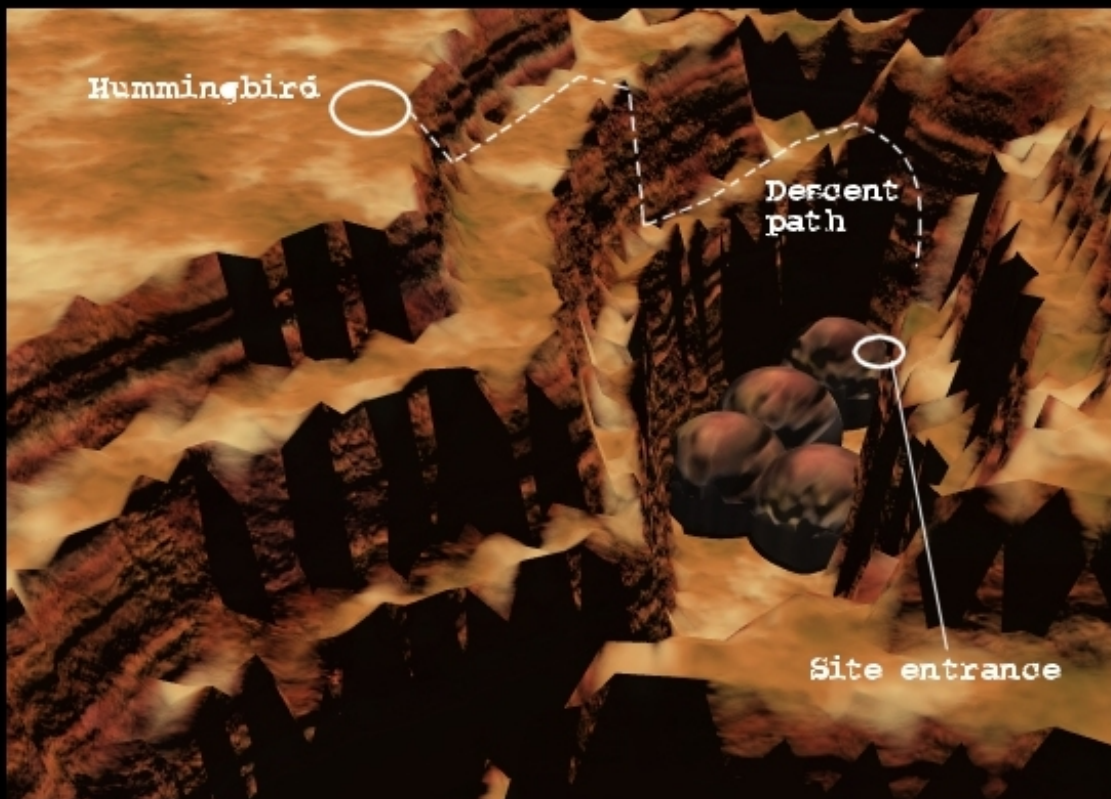
S6

S7

⊕ elevator



Colonist working on the Site entrance



Site view