

Erasmus Book One - 'Theater of Conflict'

By

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Erasmus created by
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Panel	Description	Dialog
1.1	Flashback--BLACK & WHITE. A wide, establishing shot of a harborside industrial district.	Caption: Arnette Engineering Sprawl--Boston region, North America. Caption: 2188.09.04.12:08
1.2	TRAVIS ARNETTE, a soft faced man of forty-five, paces small circles in the machining heart of an automated manufacturing plant. Pieces of satellite and communications technology in various stages of assembly by robotic arms, all around him. He holds a PDA to his ear.	TRAVIS Don't <i>threaten</i> me, Fin. Don't talk about my family. TRAVIS Of course I don't. This isn't personal, it's not a competition between us. I'm obligated to report. TRAVIS Only what we've always done, operating within protocol. I don't color outside the lines. It's kept me in business this long.
1.3	Closer on Travis as he looks up at a BOY in the window of his small office, high above, on the third floor of the warehouse. The boy watches him pace the floor.	TRAVIS That's honestly the worst thing you could say to me. Our kids play together for God's sake. Is this really coming from you, Fin? Or is it Mailer? TRAVIS I'm going to hang up now.
1.4	Travis enters his small third floor office that overlooks the machining floor. The boy, young RICO, twelve here, turns from the window to his father.	RICO Dad. What did he say? TRAVIS Don't give it another thought, okay?
1.5	A two shot through the windscreen of a red sports car, Travis and Rico drive in silence, Rico studying his father's face.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
1.6	They cross a bridge connecting the industrial parts of Arnette territory to modern, park and canal-rich residential developments. Big cranes, faraway circling ships, and general industrial sprawl marks the horizon on the far side of the water.	
1.7	Wide as the car pulls into a three floor mansion, overlooking a modest lake.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
2.1	Rico and his father enter the home, lights and feed display coming on automatically.	RICO I'm gonna play some GT, then homework. TRAVIS (reading PDA) Roger.
2.2	Rico climbs the stairs.	RICO Mom?
2.3	He freezes there, seeing a bloody handprint on one of the carpeted steps.	
2.4	Rico turns to look back downstairs as his father screams from another room.	TRAVIS (off camera, screaming) SANDRA! SANDY?! Oh no.
2.5	Rico runs back downstairs.	RICO (shouting) Dad?
2.6	Rico is halted in the kitchen door by his father's sudden appearance there. Travis's shirt is soaked in blood.	TRAVIS Rico, go upstairs and call Enforcement. TRAVIS Don't come back down here. TRAVIS Go!
2.7	Rico isn't looking at his father though. With Travis's silhouette in foreground, we can see from the hidden room Rico craning his neck around Travis's body, staring at something awful.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
3.1	Establishing shot of Ombudsman's operations district in Fortaleza region, South America--a vast metropolitan hub of commercial and industrial activity. Cargo haulers and cruise liners lift off from an interplanetary airport in foreground, while in background massive kilometer-tall "sky cities" reach into the clouds, looming like oversized nuclear cooling towers. In between are the corporate territories, miniature nation states packed together into a latticework of private borders and miniature cities.	Caption: Ninety-eight years ago the last government on Earth was wound down, ultimately handing over control to the corporations, and their independent disputes resolution body, called Ombudsman.
3.2	In near-Earth orbit, a hive of activity: smaller ships coming and going through the network of Earth Quarantine and hyperspace gate systems, while an armada of Ombudsman naval vessels patrol in higher orbit, at least a hundred strong, with ships of all classes, flanked by squadrons of fighters.	Caption: While Ombudsman accumulated and maintained conclusive military might under the pretense of safer colonization for frontier worlds, the Sol system was divvied up between humanity's three largest corporate alliances.

Panel	Description	Dialog
3.3	Another establishing shot, the place where corporate borders meet in Boston region--Brilliant Tertiary Solutions on the left, The McPherson Group to the right. Their big outer walls feature tunnels and above ground exits, well-guarded by automated sentry cannons. Sky traffic streams in and out above, while below, in foreground, the poor and homeless wander about in the dirt between walls, the beginnings of a tent city in their shadow.	Caption: Those outside of corporate territories were left without the umbrella of sustainable income, housing, or security. There was no longer a mechanism for essential services, outside of that which a parent company provided. Any one person not employed through official channels, or independently wealthy, found themselves shit out of luck. Caption: Over time, the collective memory atrophied. Society normalized. Within the new status quo, people defaulted to four distinct classes. Caption: Executive, shareholder, employee, and the unaffiliated. Caption: In that order.

Panel	Description	Dialog
4.1	Wide shot, an Ombudsman NAVAL BASE on MARS. Big destroyers and cargo haulers dock and take off on the patch of open red desert that is blanketed by concrete tarmacs and buildings.	Caption: Kennedy naval base and proving grounds--Isidis region, Mars. Caption: 2197.12.24.19:34
4.2	A group of around one hundred soldiers and sailors stand watching a large holographic display in the mess hall, their meals untouched.	
4.3	On display, a 24/7 feed network that covers Ombudsman boardroom proceedings. A group of suited executives sit around a boardroom table, talking.	
4.4	MARCUS TROY, one of the soldiers who was watching the feedcast, exits the mess hall via a carpark, walking toward a parked Harley Davidson.	
4.5	Marcus pulls out of the carpark on his bike.	
4.6	The Harley crosses Mars desert via its highway system.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
5.1	Marcus rides on dirt roads now, up into the mountains, kicking up a long trail of red dust.	
5.2	At the top of a rocky plateau, barely accessible by road, Marcus pulls up beside the waiting VARGA WATTS, who stands by an all-terrain buggy.	MARCUS He's here already? VARGA Of course.
5.3	Marcus and Varga approach Captain RICO ARNETTE, twenty-one now, sitting alone at a campfire with rifle laid by his side. A lonely figure in the Mars twilight.	VARGA Hey Rico, look who showed up. RICO How are they taking it, Marcus?
5.4	Marcus shrugs as he and Varga arrive beside the fire, opposite Rico.	MARCUS They're right on the edge. Most of three-fortieth were due to go home this month.
5.5	Rico looks down at his open hands, eyes hiding in the flickering shadow.	RICO Ombudsman have a chalk of Rangers, waiting in the mountains. RICO I've been circling them for three days. They're prepped, ready to move. RICO The guys at our base are the ideal outfit to make an example of--heavily refurbished, prone to outbursts of salty language.

Panel	Description	Dialog
5.6	Rico stands, putting on his helmet and UVIR faceplate.	RICO We all know how this works. Ombudsman only need the <i>pretense</i> of a spark, to set the whole thing alight. RICO You both wanted a sign that this is the right time. RICO We just got an ultimatum.

Panel	Description	Dialog
6.1	KIRK VANDERBOLT hosts his mid-evening talk show from behind a glass desk, giving a monologue to camera.	VANDERBOLT Today we speak with retired Admiral George Willits, who we hope can put into context some of the recent rulings by Ombudsman, particularly the hotly debated Safe Ground statute, preventing gene-refurbished soldiers setting foot within a thousand kilometers of major population centers.
6.2	A two shot of Kirk and the ADMIRAL as Vanderbilt turns to him.	VANDERBOLT If I understand the wording correctly, they're also entirely prohibited from being on Earth as of January first. VANDERBOLT Admiral, welcome. Would you say it's a little like waving a red flag at a bull, to place such restrictive conditions on twenty-five thousand of Ombudsman's own most deadly troops? WILLITS Well of course, Kirk. I--good evening. Obviously there's the danger there of inciting discord, even outright rebellion amongst the ranks, given that most of these men would have entered genome programs with the firm understanding that they'd be allowed to return home eventually. Certainly they wouldn't have anticipated disqualifying themselves from further participation in society.

Panel	Description	Dialog
6.3	ALEX EAMES, a diminutive, dark-featured girl of twenty, holds a PDA to her ear while watching Vanderbilt in a Fortaleza (Earth) apartment.	VANDERBOLT (on display) Surely these men have loved ones waiting, lives to go back to. WILLITS (on display) Absolutely. Many would now be asking themselves how to provide for a family, with their career and housing prospects so severely limited. ALEX Marcus... you can't come home then?
6.4	ATHEUS (Marcus) stands in the cockpit of a large navy transport plane, wearing body armor with mask on, holding a short sword to the pilot's throat. With his free hand, Marcus holds a PDA to his ear.	MARCUS Actually, it means I'll be home a bit sooner.
6.5	Rico stands by the open rear cargo door of the plane at 10,000 feet above Mars desert (in background), wearing his armor with no helmet. He watches the desert pass.	
6.6	Push in closer as he turns to us to look back over his shoulder, toward the front of the plane. His expression is focused determination--a greenlit soldier, with his head entirely in the game now.	
6.7	An establishing shot of the AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER at Kennedy base's main group of buildings, just outside Isidis.	Caption: "Sir?"

Panel	Description	Dialog
6.8	Inside the tower control room, MAJOR GANNON stands watching ships on approach through the window with binoculars, while one of the communications OFFICERS turns from his holographic terminal (keyboard, display, categorized touch interfaces), looking up at him.	OFFICER Tango twelve-fourteen on return from live fire exercise. They're calling in a man overboard. OFFICER Correction. A hijack. MAJOR What happened? OFFICER They were transporting three SEALs embedded with the three-fortieth. Two of them stole weapons and armor, HALO'd out, the other one held the pilot at knifepoint then surrendered.
6.9	Rico and Varga gather up their black parachutes in a canyon field while the navy transport ship circles in the distance.	Caption: 2197.12.25.07:02

Panel	Description	Dialog
7.1	Over the shoulder of a COMMS OFFICER, a group of forty Ombudsman RANGERS sit around in a mountain canyon, looking bored.	RANGER COMMS Sir?
7.2	Close on the comms officer.	RANGER COMMS They're telling us to hold position. Our orbital support just stopped responding to commands.
7.3	Looking down on their position from an ORBITAL RAIL's vantage point, situated just behind it. A series of smaller inset panels show us the Rail's zooming-in POV of the Rangers.	
7.4	Wide on the valley where the Rangers wait, over the shoulders of Rico and Varga, in their full armor, watching from a few clicks out.	
7.5	Closer on Rico as he holds the PDA up, bringing up floating interfaces with one hand on the lightpad.	
7.6	Another shot of the Orbital Rail, venting gases as the panels on its belly slide back, revealing rows of forked rails within.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
8.1	Rico's POV as his PDA projects multiple targeting displays, live feed of the valley, overlaid with multiple reticles and a FIRE command button.	
8.2	The orbital rail hurls its payload down at Mars, the forked rails launching alloy rods en masse at the desert valley below.	
8.3	Pull back as the Orbital Rail fires off the last of its salvo.	
8.4	Pull back wider as the beams are sucked down by Mars, tiny and glinting in the sunlight and glowing tips as they hit atmo.	
8.5	Worm's eye view of the beams breaking atmosphere and the sound barrier, past a rifle-carrying RANGER, just beginning to look up at the sound, seeing thin streaks from the sky, like straight lightning or tracer fire.	
8.6	Wide, a deep landscape shot of the valley where the rangers wait, being utterly destroyed by the kinetic impact of the beams raining down.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
9.1	A ranger SCOUT stands holding his rifle by its barrel, leaning on it like a staff, observing the scene of destruction through a UVIR faceplate from afar.	RANGER SCOUT Come back, Isidis.
9.2	Wide from behind the scout, his view of the devastation on the horizon.	ISIDIS COMMS (V0) We have you, oh-nine. RANGER SCOUT Isidis I make out at least forty casualties of a kinetic mass salvo in valley j-g-five. RANGER SCOUT Did our own Orbital Rail just scrub an entire chalk? ISIDIS COMMS (V0) Stand by.
9.3	Rico and Varga, still in armor, climb to the ridge of a small Mars mountain, looking back down at the destroyed valley below.	RICO We're in it now.
9.4	Pull out wide as they crest the ridge, running further up through the mountain passes--the POV of someone viewing them with long range optics, distance/vector overlays and gauges displayed around the two fleeing figures.	
9.5	The Ranger scout leans forward with his long sniper rifle shouldered, head tilted up and sideways to the mountain, sprinting uphill toward the fleeing pair.	RANGER SCOUT Oh-nine in pursuit of possible hostiles.

Panel	Description	Dialog
9.6	Wide on Kennedy naval base.	Caption: 2197.12.25.10:40

Panel	Description	Dialog
10.1	Marcus Brilliant sits at the plain stainless steel table of a windowless Ombudsman investigation cell, opposite a pair of MPs.	Caption: Investigation room 761,953j, Kennedy naval base. Caption: 2197.12.25.10:55 MARCUS They start with the immune system. Load you up with primer, like a basic RNA cocktail of every known contagion.
10.2	Over Marcus's shoulder, the two MP's look at each other.	MP #1 I have serious doubts that it works like that. MP #2 Shut up, I wanna hear this.
10.3	Over their shoulders on Marcus.	MARCUS If you make a full recovery, then it's concentration, determination, reflexes. The base layer's just about reinforcing favorable genetic traits, erasing known flaws.

Panel	Description	Dialog
10.4	Wide, a fisheye view from one corner of the room, looking down.	MP #1 We have pretty much the same fitout as a SEAL unit these days. MARCUS Really, Steve? That's what you actually think? Or are you just running your mouth? Infantry get muscle and bone density. Biocarb skull for your officers. MARCUS But you turds don't have any kind of CNS reinforcement. What happens when you catch a lungfull of nerve gas for fuck sake? Ah, what else... no pain damping. Right? No higher wavelength vision. And the hearing--well. I snuck up on your co-pilot, didn't I? MP #2 Classy. MP #1 There's night vision, if we're stationed somewhere dark. MP #2 It only lasts a year.

Panel	Description	Dialog
11.1	Marcus leans back, cuffed hands on his head.	MARCUS Well ours are for life, gents. At the end of a tour, you two geniuses have the option of pursuing a career on any world. They tag you as modified, restrict you from working with, I dunno, children and dwarves. MARCUS With us, there's too much invested. It's not a rifle you can just hand back. The second we walk out the door, we're a multi-faceted liability. MARCUS They'll wrap it in the cloth of public safety, but what they're really afraid of is our banding together to oppose them.

Panel	Description	Dialog
11.2	Closer on Marcus.	MARCUS Without Earth, Mars, or Titan, you're left sulfur mining on Io, ice mining on Europa, or a "consulting" job with Ombudsman forces that funnels you right back into combat at a slightly higher hourly. MARCUS And we all see it now. So they're agitating, trying to force a conflict. Ombudsman need an excuse to get heavy-handed in phase two, because they know the public will engage their mind if they see shock troops kicking in doors without an antagonist. MARCUS The enemy is going to be <i>us</i>. First soldiers who speak with violent rhetoric and the means to back it up. Then soldiers who ask questions, or want to leave when their tour is up. MARCUS You're about to see society pruned of all undesirables, and not for the first time. Not even in an original fashion.
11.3	The MP's share a glance.	MP #1 We should probably be talking about your deal.
11.4	Marcus leans his head way back, resigned, looking at the ceiling.	MARCUS Right. Well, I can give you the landing site, means of transport, and the Quarantine gate. MARCUS My price remains unchanged.

Panel	Description	Dialog
11.5	MP #2 stands, knocking on the door, still addressing Marcus.	MP #1 I don't know what to tell you. There's no way Gannon will go for it. MARCUS Just take him the offer. Let Gannon make the call. It's kind of your job, Steve.

Panel	Description	Dialog
12.1	Day. FINLAY BRILLIANT tours an Orbital Rail manufacturing facility's construction floor, flanked by his Chief of Staff DAVID RAN and a handful of Associated Press JOURNALISTS. A couple of the facility's EXECS bring up the rear, with the occasional PLANT WORKER lingering in background, watching the sideshow.	Caption: BTS Orbital manufacturing plant--Ontario region, North America. Caption: 2197.12.25.16:24 JOURNALIST #1 You'd have to admit, though... this contract comes along at just the right time, given your recent history. FINLAY I wouldn't even try to sugarcoat it, Glen. It's all public record anyway. JOURNALIST #1 So the investigator who claims you've been conducting a private sector genome program, in violation of Safe Ground and most RNA statutes--
12.2	Push in closer for a two-shot as Finlay, trying not to show his annoyance, turns to the journalist.	FINLAY Josh Singer made a lot of accusations in the report tabled with Ombudsman. Of course, you know how that ended up? JOURNALIST #1 He was disbarred. FINLAY And his claims thoroughly debunked through routine inspections of our labs. The matter was put to bed long before negotiations opened on any new tenders.

Panel	Description	Dialog
12.3	Wide again as Finlay guides the group to a fully-assembled Orbital Rail on the main floor, hooked up to a series of testing and monitoring stations where holographic displays scroll through reams of data meaningful only to the TECHS who man them.	FINLAY But getting back to your original question, I agree, this is a good deal for both parties. FINLAY Ombudsman enjoy the peace of mind that comes with twelve of our Orbital Rails securing the planet's infrastructure... while we meet shareholder expectations for the fifteenth quarter running. Maybe mend a few fences at the same time. JOURNALIST #1 So just to end any conjecture... there's no truth to the rumor that Goseph Mailer kicked you out of an Ombudsman board meeting recently?
12.4	A three shot as David Ran leans in between them, whispering to Finlay.	FINLAY Hah. I'm not even invited to those.
12.5	Wide as Finlay follows David toward the nearest exit, an apologetic wave back to the journalist.	FINLAY Glen, Sorry. We'll clear that one up another time.

Panel	Description	Dialog
13.1	Outside the facility, Finlay is ushered into a waiting towncar by its DRIVER, followed by David.	FINLAY Your guy said they'd likely keep this one under their hat. How is it public?
13.2	Inside the car, a two shot, Fin rides next to David in back.	DAVID Hikers, apparently saw the dust clouds and arrived on scene before anyone at Kennedy. DAVID They took footage of shrapnel and bodies, now Vanderbilt has it. FINLAY Feed, Vanderbilt.
13.3	A floating display flickers up between them, showing Kirk Vanderbilt.	VANDERBOLT --probably the furthest I would ever go, but again, he'd have to be super handsome. Okay, we'll cross back to Ella in Odessa now, where I'm told Ombudsman Chair Goseph Mailer is arriving to tour the naval dry dock facilities there. Ella, can you possibly ask Mr. Mailer for a statement on the footage we've been seeing tonight?
13.4	Closer in on the display, the scene changes to a pretty blonde field reporter, ELLA.	ELLA Absolutely I will, Kirk. As you can probably see behind me, the shuttle is being waved in now. Ombudsman has already issued a statement <i>denying</i> that an Oribtal Rail misfired on Mars, but we're hearing mixed messages out of Isidis and Fortaleza, so hopefully Mr. Mailer can clear that up.

Panel	Description	Dialog
13.5	Evening. Wide on McPherson Group's Odessa-based planetary airport. Big tankers and cargo haulers lift off and land in background, while in foreground GOSEPH MAILER and four of his HANDLERS exit a small, armored shuttle under floodlights, met on the shiny wet tarmac by a limousine with DRIVER and small contingent of JOURNALISTS, McPherson EXECS (one opening an umbrella for Finlay), and airport STAFF. A light rain falls.	Caption: McPherson Group Air and Space Corridor--Odessa region, EU. Caption: 2197.12.25.17:01
13.6	Closer on the pack of journalists, Ella gives her report to camera, back turned to the approaching Mailer and entourage.	ELLA Goseph Mailer will spend tomorrow touring dry dock, interestingly he also has the dubious honor of being the first guest to stay at McPherson Group's controversy-plagued shareholder hotel in the Neftyana district.

Panel	Description	Dialog
14.1	Push in on Ella talking to camera, Mailer shakes hands with the waiting execs just over her shoulder, his attention on her now, listening to her report.	ELLA Of course, Mr. Mailer is no stranger to controversy himself. The public face of Ombudsman has recently relaunched his bid to create a <i>Chief Operating Officer</i> role, which would essentially transfer most of the board's Alliance level decision-making capabilities to an individual, with both veto power and the ability to issue binding executive orders.
14.2	The same framing again, this time Goseph interrupts her with a warm smile and handshake, Ella turning to tentatively take his hand, thrown off by his break from protocol.	ELLA With Ombudsman board members refusing to be drawn for comment on the move, some political commentators claim that Mr. Mailer has positioned himself as the prime candidate for the new role, should that come--oh. Hello... GOSEPH Hello Ella. Sorry but my ears were burning. Thanks for coming out to the Black Sea, I hope we can catch up during the tour tomorrow morning. I'd be happy to answer any questions about the hotel stay for your subscribers. I'm sure the room will have four walls at least. ELLA Of course, sir. We'd... look forward to it.
14.3	The same framing again, Mailer walks out of shot with his entourage while Ella returns her attention to camera.	ELLA Um. Back to you, Kirk.

Panel	Description	Dialog
14.4	Pausing to speak with one of his handlers before getting into the limo, Mailer frowns. In background, out of earshot, Ella and her camera crew pack up.	GOSEPH She what, didn't get the memo? We killed the story with every editor. Has Vanderbilt been talking about it too? The last thing we need is a buzz around this thing three months out from pushing it up the board's ass. HANDLER #1 Of course. GOSEPH That is some retard-strength stupidity, Pete. I don't want to see her face even on the entertainment beat. HANDLER #1 We'll bury the story, sir. We'll bury her.

Panel	Description	Dialog
15.1	Back in the interview room, MAJOR GANNON sits where the MP's did, staring Marcus down across the table.	Caption: 2197.12.25.17:11 GANNON Your honorable discharge and Earth visa have been authorized by the board, based on a successful intercept of Rico Arnette and Varga Watts.
15.2	Gannon puts a PDA down on the table between them. It projects a holographic document bearing the Ombudsman seal.	MARCUS In eighteen minutes they'll pass through Earth gate TJ-61 in a search and rescue helo, stolen from Medevac Asiatic. GANNON Why that gate? MARCUS The station's low on an upgrades waiting list.
15.3	MCU on Gannon, over Marcus's shoulder.	GANNON Meaning what? MARCUS Their secure database doesn't liaise with Ombudsman yet. Its RNA scan won't identify flagged profiles, only biohazards. GANNON Who leaked that to Arnette? Someone in Quarantine?
15.4	Close on Marcus as he looks away.	MARCUS I can't give you any other scalps.

Panel	Description	Dialog
15.5	Close on Gannon.	GANNON Marcus, you have to at least tell us where they got the hashkey to exploit our own Orbital Rail. It's a gaping hole that we need to plug.
15.6	A side-on two shot.	MARCUS You know who has the contract for logic boards on those things, right?
15.7	Gannon frowns, his intensity trailing off as realization strikes.	GANNON BTS. Finlay Brilliant's involved in this? MARCUS I don't know. Is he?

Panel	Description	Dialog
16.1	A small space station in near-Earth orbit, built around and into three scanning rings, large enough to accommodate a small ship or helo. 'Quarantine - TJ-61' is painted on one side.	Caption: Quarantine gate TJ-61 in near-Earth orbit above continental Europe--Earth sovereign space. Caption: 2197.12.25.17:28
16.2	Inside, the attendant reclines at his desk by the window overlooking the rings' interior, watching several floating holographic displays.	
16.3	A new window flickers to life, reading 'Incoming helo class craft'.	ATTENDANT Hey ah, guys? Another helo, definitely squawking medevac.
16.4	Just out of view of the main window, a six-man Ombudsman SEAL team stands armed and waiting.	WIRELESS >clk< Quarantine TJ-61 this is Medevac Asiatic designation M-A-H-two-two-eight, looking for a spot in line. >ktch< SEAL #1 Do it. ATTENDANT You're up, two-two-eight. Door's open.
16.5	From behind the helo as it approaches the station, we can see giant barn doors swinging open at the near side of the rings.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
17.1	Establishing shot, Brilliant Tower, the centerpiece of BTS's goliath Boston sprawl of districts.	Caption: Brilliant Tower in BTS CBD One. Boston region--North America. Caption: 2197.12.25.18:07
17.2	Finlay Brilliant sits behind his large oak desk, reading projected displays that overlap each other with incoming data. Three of his ANALYSTS sit nearby, reading from their own PDAs' multiple displays.	ANALYST #2 Their estimates have it at around thirty-three thousand. FINLAY How does that sit with you? ANALYST #2 I've seen worse. This isn't a conscience thing, right? We're at war. FINLAY Fair. And you, Jim? ANALYST #1 I'm paid not to take a position, Fin. Just point me at whatever needs killing.
17.3	Closer on Finlay, over the two Analysts' shoulders.	FINLAY How's this going to look, in light of the other thing? ANALYST #2 My guy in Ombudsman says they've already connected us to the logic boards on the Mars Rails. ANALYST #1 Craig Parse is prepared to fall on his sword there. A flaw can be discovered in the central BUS that allows root access to guidance and targeting. We'll sell it as an oversight, he'll do soft time.

Panel	Description	Dialog
17.4	Medium shot on the Analysts, over Finlay's shoulder.	FINLAY People might have a hard time believing that insurgents destroyed the Solar headquarters of my lifelong enemy with my own compromised hardware. ANALYST #2 Maybe you overestimate people. ANALYST #1 This is too rare an opportunity. You can only play the 'we were hacked' card twice if it happens on the same day. ANALYST #2 After midnight, we had time to fix the flaw. Negligent, if not complicit.
17.5	Wide on the room as Fin thinks quietly, the analysts watching him.	
17.6	Close on Fin.	FINLAY Okay, let's do it. Take rail three off q-link and drop its orbit by half a click.
17.7	A second orbital rail makes minute vector adjustments high above Elysium city on Mars.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
18.1	Establishing shot of a bloated Elysium skyline buzzed by long streams of sky traffic, criss-crossed by light rail systems that stretch between buildings every seventy floors. A one thousand, one hundred and eleven floor skyscraper towers over it all.	Caption: McPherson Tower in McPherson Group's central business district. Elysium region--Mars Caption: 2197.12.25.18:22
18.2	Closer on the tower, near its top, through one of the large, lightly-tinted windows we can see a boardroom where a meeting is already in session.	MCPHERSON CHAIR We're seeing some weird drop-offs with Dog Star and Pizza Plus, it's not something to be worried about yet but an investigation-- MCPHERSON EXEC (off panel) Mr. Chairman?
18.3	Inside the room, one of the lower-rung executives raises his hand, reading a display projected above his handheld PDA.	MCPHERSON EXEC There's an alert on the Ombudsman ticker. Another Orbital Rail went unresponsive over our territories. MCPHERSON EXEC They're calling it a potential attack, after the thing near Isidis earlier.
18.4	The chair looks to the others, clearly jolted.	MCPHERSON CHAIR Uh... what do they mean, 'unresponsive'? MCPHERSON EXEC Like, it stopped responding. Mr. Chairman. Sir.

Panel	Description	Dialog
18.5	Wide as some people in the room stand, some move to the window, craning their head to see the sky.	MCPHERSON CHAIR Are we in any sort of danger here? MCPHERSON EXEC It doesn't really say. Maybe we should start an evac. Call it a drill? At least get everybody in this room somewhere safe.
18.6	The second Oribtal Rail fires off a volley of beams at the city.	
18.7	McPherson Tower is torn apart from the top down by those rails.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
19.1	An aerial shot of the suddenly still city, smoke pluming from the wreckage.	
19.2	On the ground, people can only stand and stare as a wall of debris approaches.	
19.3	Wide on gate TJ-61, the barn doors now closed.	
19.4	Inside, the attendant leans forward over his desk, looking out at the helo's empty cabin window.	ATTENDANT Hey guy are you there? You've been selected for a random search. Unlock your port entry for the docking arm, please.
19.5	The attendant looks at one of the SEALs.	ATTENDANT I can't see anyone in there.
19.6	Wide on the station again as a flameless explosion rips through the rings.	
19.7	At the interview room table, Marcus watches Gannon, who stands in the far corner of the room, turned away, PDA held to his ear.	Caption: 2197.25.12.17:58 GANNON Say that again?

Panel	Description	Dialog
20.1	Gannon continues to pace the far corner of the room, throwing an angry glance at Marcus as he listens to his PDA.	GANNON Understood.
20.2	Closer on Gannon as he lowers the PDA, looking a bit shocked at Marcus.	GANNON You played me, Marcus. GANNON They intercepted a medevac helo at TJ-61. It was unpiloted. GANNON It exploded and destroyed the station.
20.3	Over Gannon's shoulder on Marcus as he looks up at him.	MARCUS Did it? GANNON You won't get your deal. Ombudsman won't ever let you set foot on Earth-- MARCUS I didn't come here to make the deal.
20.4	A two shot as Marcus stands, offering Gannon his cuffed hands.	GANNON Then why? MARCUS To make you a better offer. Can you uncuff me? GANNON Of course not.

Panel	Description	Dialog
20.5	Close on Marcus, beyond his cuffed fists in foreground.	MARCUS I know about you, Major. Your record. I've been told what you said in private, to your close friends and family, about the Safe Ground statutes. About Goseph Mailer.
20.6	Gannon seems curious, but says nothing.	
20.7	Close on Gannon tapping pause on an ongoing recording displayed on his PDA's lightpad, Marcus watching him do it from background.	GANNON Whatever you think you know about my family... MARCUS Maybe we should talk outside. GANNON You should also know I don't respond well to threats. MARCUS No, this isn't that. Alex said it should be you who I approach. She told me that you've had enough of this shit too, sir.
20.8	Close on Marcus's cuffs dropping from his wrists, unlocked, as Gannon taps his PDA again in background (reverse perspective of panel 7).	

Panel	Description	Dialog
21.1	Establishing shot of Earth Quarantine's headquarters in Fortaleza, twin 512 floor towers surrounded by similar, nondescript buildings amongst a dense urban-industrial sprawl.	Caption: Earth Quarantine headquarters in ops zone nine--Fortaleza region, South America. Caption: 2197.12.25.18:59
21.2	Wearing rolled up sleeves and no tie, a Quarantine Comms Officer--DAVE BENNETT--walks between rows of air traffic controller-like stations manned by Quarantine OPERATORS, reading over data on his PDA.	DAVE Hey Dan, what do you make of this?
21.3	DAN, a shift manager in his late fifties, looks up from his display as the officer enters Dan's small corner office.	DAN Hm? DAVE You know the Ombudsman thing that came through about medevac ships? DAN Sure. DAVE We just got eight of them, seconds apart, all over the globe.
21.4	Dave hands Dan the PDA.	DAVE Ops want to know if we're still holding for intercept. DAN Huh. DAN I'm not sure. Let me make some calls.

Panel	Description	Dialog
21.5	As Dave leaves the office, he turns back at the door.	DAVE Tell them gate teams are getting nervous after what happened to TJ-61. We're looking at mass walkouts if operators need to keep holding them indefinitely.
21.6	Morning. An aerial shot of Ombudsman's space ship graveyard in the Isidis desert. Long lines of skeletal remains of old ships stretching out in straight lines over the red horizon.	Caption: Ombudsman naval decommissioning grounds--Isidis region, Mars.
21.7	Push in closer on an area where a lone, operational, red and white Medevac helo--like the one we saw at TJ-61--hides in plain sight, parked amongst the rusted and stripped-down corpses of older navy space ships, skeletons of ancient destroyers visible in the distance.	
21.8	Varga sits as sentry with a rifle slung at the smaller ship's side door.	Caption: 2197.12.25.18:31
21.9	Inside the helo cockpit, Rico plots and monitors an orbital path via a display. The co-pilot chair beside him is empty.	RICO Bring it in, Varga. Marcus is inbound.
21.10	Outside, Varga has his rifle raised, scoping something in the distance.	VARGA Contact. RICO (off panel) What?

Panel	Description	Dialog
22.1	Rico watches from the cockpit as Varga stalks between wrecked ships with his assault rifle readied in combat grip, searching for something in the distance.	
22.2	A small inset panel showing an unknown gunman's POV through a long range scope, trained on Varga, unseen by him.	
22.3	The Ranger scout we met in our opening pages lays at the crest of a sand dune, sniper rifle mounted on its bipod, looking through it, finger on the trigger.	
22.4	Wide on Varga flinching away from the nearest ship wreck, as it's torn apart in a hail of sparks, debris and smoke by an explosive shell.	SFX BOOM!
22.5	Returning to the Ranger scout, we see that he has been impaled by a KATANA from behind, ATHEUS standing over him, twisting it in.	RANGER SCOUT (small print) Shit.
22.6	Wide as Atheus approaches Rico and Varga, both standing outside the medevac helo waiting for him.	
22.7	The helo lifts off from the ship yard, gaining altitude quickly as its big internal magnets spool up.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
23.1	Back in the bullpen-like Quarantine controller floor, Dan leans out his office door, shouting to Dave.	DAN Guys, Medevac Asiatic just had their big air show jamboree thing out on Mars.
23.2	The medevac helo breaks Mars orbit.	
23.3	In the cockpit are Erasmus, Orpheus and Atheus, all wearing full armor now. Atheus cleans the blood from his sword with focused attention, while Orpheus loads a shotgun with individual shells, looking out through the window.	
23.4	Wide from behind the helo as it ascends toward the hyperspace biway gate system designated 'Earth HBG-0955' by floating holographic signs. The northern limb of Mars is visible at the bottom of panel. Other ships can be seen in the distance, also leaving orbit, aimed at the gate.	
23.5	Dan speaks to Dave, looking at the screen of one CONTROLLER.	DAN They're telling me the threat's been reassessed, based on fresh intel.
23.6	Approaching floating markers that direct ships into the gate's entry pattern, the Medevac helo is lost in a sea of other Medevac Asiatic ships and helos, all lining up for the big gates.	Caption: "Tell your ops, anything medevac goes straight through Quarantine until further notice." Caption: 2197.12.25.19:29

Panel	Description	Dialog
24.1	Back in Odessa, in a McPherson Group shareholder hotel room, Ella prepares for bed, drying her hair in a dressing gown, standing at the window, looking out over the city while a floating alert appears beside her at eye level: 'Doorbell!'	
24.2	Ella taps the display, which expands to show two Peace Enforcement OFFICERS standing at her door, fisheye from slightly above.	ELLA Hi? OFFICER #1 McPherson Group Peace Enforcement, ma'am. Can you open the door please? ELLA I'm sorry, why?
24.3	Closer on the officers.	OFFICER #1 Peace Enforcement. Open the door.
24.4	Wide on Ella as the door is kicked in by one of the officers in background. She reels, shrieking.	ELLA I don't feel comf--AH!
24.5	The second officer steps into the room with his sidearm leveled at her, a well drilled combat stance, followed by the first.	
24.6	Ella watches stunned as the first officer opens her small balcony door, whipping up a breeze.	ELLA What are you doing?
24.7	Close on the second officer, gun still aimed.	OFFICER #2 Jump.

Panel	Description	Dialog
24.8	Over his shoulder, looking down past the pistol trained on Ella, who is suddenly shaking, face ashen, the other officer watching her with detachment, still holding open the balcony door in background with what we now see is a gloved hand.	ELLA What? OFFICER #1 He told you to jump.