// LOCATION GUIDE | **OPERATOR TACTICS: HUBS & CITIES** | CLR: OPERATIONAL

LOCATION GUIDE | GM + PLAYERS | **10 LOCATIONS** | 580+ PAGES

VOL. I | SUPPLEMENT – OPERATOR TACTICS CORE BOOK

HUBS & CITIES 2066

EARTH — 10 OPERATIONAL HUBS

EVERY FACTION IS RUNNING AN OPERATION. YOU ARRIVE IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.

10 CITY HUBS. FULL GM-TABLE DENSITY.

// DISTRICTS // FACTIONS // CONTACTS // MISSION SEEDS // DESTABILIZATION

CITY HUBS
LOCATION SUPPLEMENT

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
NEO-TOKYO PRC showcase city.	**ARCADIA** NAF showcase hub.	**FLOODED LONDON** NAF-adjacent, adapted.	**ISTANBUL** Multi-faction contested.	**KALEMIE** EO-adjacent, lakeside.	**AMAZONIAN METROPLEX** SCA territory.	**NEW BATAVIA** Maritime transit hub.	**NEW BUENOS AIRES** NRD territory.	**NORDICS ARCOLOGY** PCU-administered.	**SAHARAN OASIS** PCU-administered.

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HUBS & CITIES

EARTH 2066 · LOCATION GUIDE

An Operator Tactics Supplement by Jesse Alexander

OPERATOR TACTICS // HUBS & CITIES

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10 city hubs — full GM-table density. Vol. II covers the 8 territories and theaters.

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Every location in this book is a machine for making missions. The districts are sectors. The factions have objectives and vulnerabilities. The contacts have prices. The deliberate blanks are your table's property.

This volume documents ten operational hubs across Earth 2066: the cities, arcology networks, and maritime centers where operators take contracts, recover, and run intelligence. Each hub is built to the same architecture.

HUB OVERVIEW & STRESS CONDITION

Every location opens with two things: what this place is, and what is about to break. The stress condition is the current operational context. Run it as presented or advance it based on prior missions.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

Quick operational reads: security level, civilian density, surveillance posture, black market access. Read these before building a mission.

DISTRICTS

Each city is divided into districts. Each district has its own tags, authority structure, day/night split, and under-system: the thing the district's official function is built on top of.

FACTIONS

Every hub has three to five faction entries. Each faction has: Objective, Assets, Dependency, Vulnerability, Escalation Ladder, Offer, Demand, and If Damaged. Factions are not allies or enemies by default. They are entities with needs.

CONTACTS, DOWNTIME, RUMOR TABLES

Hub-level wildcard contacts, downtime options that generate leverage or debt, and rumor tables with GM-ready intelligence — some accurate, some wrong in specific ways.

MISSION SEEDS & DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

Three to five seeds per location. The deliberate blanks are invitations for the table to complete the picture. The destabilization aftermath shows what happens when operators blow something up or let a crisis resolve badly. The location does not reset.

Compatibility. This supplement requires the Operator Tactics core rulebook. Vol. II: Territories & Theaters covers the eight contested zones and orbital theater.

01/ NEO-TOKYO

PRC TERRITORY | EARTH 2066

Twelve million people above the surface. The city doesn't pretend to see the four research levels below it.

HUB OVERVIEW

Twelve million people above the surface. Four classified research levels below it. The PRC's showcase city runs flawlessly — every alarm networked, every camera live, every patrol algorithmically routed. The service underclass that runs the infrastructure doesn't exist in the official system.

That's not an accident.

Neo-Tokyo is a city maintained by people the city pretends aren't there.

CURRENT STRESS CONDITION

The AI patrol routing system (Transit Node 7) is running 14 months past its scheduled firmware update. The Null Collective knows this. The Neon Ronin know the Null Collective knows this. Project Amaterasu — four levels below street — has been running in unsupervised containment for three years.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

SECURITY	active (surface) / lockdown (Sub-4)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (surface) / failing (Sub-2 and below)
CIVILIANS	packed (surface) / displaced (underground)
SURVEILLANCE	drone sweep (surface) / informant net (Sub-1–Sub-3) / dark zone (Sub-4)
FACTION PRESSURE	dominant PRC / contested below Sub-2
CONTAMINATION	none (surface) / present — unlicensed cybernetic leakage (Sub-2 below)
BLACK MARKET	light (surface) / heavy (Sub-2 and below)
MOBILITY	checkpointed (surface transitions) / barricaded (Sub-4 approaches)

DISTRICT MAP

DISTRICT 1	**THE SURFACE GRID (Omote-chō)**: The visible city. Corporate towers, climate control, drone surveillance.
DISTRICT 2	**HIKARI BAZAAR (Neon Undermarket)**: Street-level commercial chaos. Where licensed and unlicensed economies intersect.
DISTRICT 3	**DEEP RAIL (Sub-1 Transit Corridor)**: Official underground transit. AI-routed patrols. Node 7 lives here.
DISTRICT 4	**THE MAINTENANCE BELT (Sub-2 Service Quarter)**: Ghost neighborhoods. 40,000 unregistered residents. The Ghosted's territory.
DISTRICT 5	**THE BLACK CLINIC DISTRICT (Sub-3 Dark Layer)**: No surveillance. No authority. The Black Clinic and three faction cells waiting.
DISTRICT 6	**PROJECT AMATERASU ZONE (Sub-4 Research Corridor)**: The real reason Neo-Tokyo exists. All-green panel. Nobody asks why.
DISTRICT 7	**KEIRETSU STRIP (Contractor District)**: Corporate security consortiums and the maintenance floors they pretend not to share.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Who a city is for reveals itself through what it forbids and what it forgives. Neo-Tokyo enforces three categories of control.

Aggressively Enforced

ID Coherence Registration: Every resident over age 12 must maintain active facial recognition registration. Failures trigger automatic civic compliance review and facility access restrictions within 72 hours.

Transit Authorization Verification: Sub-level access requires current transit credential. Expired credentials lock commuters out of Sub-1 through Sub-3 infrastructure. Enforcement is algorithmic—Node 7 decides penalties before any human administrator reviews them.

Facility Incident Reporting: Any injury, medical intervention, or security alarm must be reported to district authority within 2 hours. Failure triggers investigation into the operator's entire district contact network.

Selectively Weaponized

Unauthorized Assembly Curfew: Technical language prohibits "uncoordinated gathering of more than six unregistered persons." Applied selectively to street markets, protest sites, and Ghosted supply distribution. Enforcement is zero for licensed commercial activity, 100% for informal organization.

Contractor License Portability: Permits are tied to district and faction sponsor. Operators without licensed employment cannot legally access multiple districts. Rule applies universally. Enforcement happens only when it matters.

Cybernetic Modification Documentation: All modifications must be registered and traceable to licensed vendors. Creates a record of every operator's augmentation history—useful for identifying which faction trained them and when.

Feared Punishments

Isolation Registry: Repeated infractions trigger placement on the Isolation Registry—which means no Sub-level facility will process you, no contractor will hire you, no clinic will treat you. Civic death without official execution.

Memory Protocol Audit: Serious security violations trigger mandatory cognitive assessment—examination that may find things operators don't remember installing. Refusal is considered confession.

Sub-4 Consideration: Final punishment is transfer to Project Amaterasu Zone for "security research." No one talks about what that means. Everyone has heard rumors. The rumors are why it works.

Civic Rituals

Surface Surveillance Census: Every 14 days, drone formations conduct full aerial survey of surface grid. Citizens are expected to remain indoors during 40-minute window. Failure flags residential unit as "non-compliant." Two flags and it faces audit.

Transit Node 7 Maintenance Window: Every 30 days at 0300, Sub-1 maglev locks down for "routine update verification." Nothing actually happens most

days. Ritual is about who controls infrastructure and what happens when they demonstrate it.

Faction Presence Verification: District authorities conduct monthly “presence checks”—brief, official acknowledgment that faction is present and operating. Skipping the check means faction becomes security problem rather than accepted operational reality.

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime in Hikari Bazaar after-hours, Keiretsu Strip corporate social zones, or Surface Grid drone-shadow spaces where surveillance blindness creates temporary community. Every result produces a new contact, a new debt, or a new exposure.

1 (Contact Made): Off-duty Dune Specter NCO at Keiretsu drinks describe the contractor security split in enough operational detail that operators understand the specific enforcement gap it creates. They don’t remember being that specific the next morning.

2 (Feud Started): Operator says something—or is heard saying something—that reaches a PRC informant through the room’s geometry. Nothing happens immediately. Next morning, contractor registration enters “compliance review.” Review has no stated timeline.

3 (Equipment Lost): Operator’s secondary comms device is lifted at some point. It holds 48 hours of location cache. Whoever has it knows everywhere the operator has been, including contacts they weren’t supposed to meet.

4 (Secret Learned): A Neon Ronin handler corners operator near evening’s end. They’ve identified someone in the PRC transition team whose clearance access includes Amaterasu file routing. They want something in trade for the name. Won’t say the name until trade is confirmed.

5 (Debt Incurred): A Ghosted asset sits down with proposition: they will move a specific data package through the maintenance corridors in exchange for one favor, undefined and redeemable within 30 days. Asset presents this as reasonable. They are correct. That’s what makes it worth worrying about.

6 (Locally Recognizable): Operator does something—intervenes in a dispute, covers a tab, handles a confrontation—that travels. By next morning, operator is

the person district residents mention when deciding whether to trust someone new. One faction network routes requests through the operator. Another faction's file now has a photograph.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Neon Ronin's External Handler

Faction has embedded operatives in Transit Node 7 and Maintenance Belt network. Supplement identifies operational approach but does not name handler who coordinates intelligence collection outside official faction structure. Handler is currently in Neo-Tokyo, currently managing secondary objective the surface cell doesn't know about, and currently waiting for something that hasn't arrived. Whether that something involves operators is for table to determine.

The Shadowhand Syndicate's Target

Three-person cell running social engineering through corporate HR systems, looking for "someone specific." Supplement does not define who or why. Possibilities: a researcher moved to Project Amaterasu whose family is in city. A former operative the Syndicate believes can still be recruited. Someone the Syndicate is being paid to locate without full picture. What the target represents determines how contact unfolds.

Node 7's Adaptation Pattern

AI patrol routing system has been running past firmware update for 14 months. Supplement describes it's adapting autonomously but does not specify what pattern those adaptations follow. Is it optimizing for security? Learning operator behavior for assessment? Preparing for something? Whether adaptation is system failure or evidence of something with agency is unresolved.

The Null Collective's Containment Target

Four operatives running as maintenance workers in Deep Rail, mapping Node 7 behavioral anomalies. Supplement does not define what they're preparing for with that data. Are they planning to break Node 7? Trying to communicate

through it? Building defense against something else learning Node 7? Actual objective shapes every contact.

Sub-2's Contamination Origin

Unlicensed cybernetic leakage is present and worsening. Ghosted has been managing it and running out of resources. Supplement does not identify source—whether coming from Black Clinic overflows, Project Amaterasu seepage, failed implants cascading through population, or something else. Source determines whether contamination can be stopped or just delayed.

The Black Clinic District's Actual Owner

Multiple factions are present. None are dominant. Supplement does not specify who actually controls physical infrastructure or what arrangement keeps factions from destroying each other. Is it older entity predating current geometry? Faction so subtle it doesn't appear on surface? Someone who convinced all three factions they're paying same person but seeing different operations? Answer reshapes how operators navigate district.

FACTIONS

NEON RONIN

PRC Special Forces

OBJECTIVE Maintain operational surveillance of Sub-3 and Sub-4 without triggering a PRC command review that would result in a lockdown order they can't execute.

ASSETS Embedded agents across Surface Grid and Keiretsu Strip, transit worker informant net on Sub-1, direct Ronin field team on 2-hour standby, access to Node 7 transit data.

DEPENDENCY Their cover operations — the consultant embeds, the transit informants — all require the surface corporate ecosystem to stay intact. If the Keiretsu Strip fractures or Civil Authority runs a mass surface audit, their intelligence architecture collapses.

VULNERABILITY The Ronin command structure doesn't know about Amaterasu. The embedded lieutenant (Sato) is running a personal assessment he hasn't filed. If Ronin command learns about Sub-4 through any channel other than Sato's report, he's finished and the Ronin go in blind and loud.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive pressure: Informants, embedded consultants, transit monitoring.
- 2 — Active friction: Targeted surveillance of specific operators, selective intelligence-sharing with Civil Authority.
- 3 — Overt force: Surface deployment, Sub-1 lockdown, transit shutdown.
- 4 — Last resort: Sub-4 hard entry with command authorization. Whatever comes after.

OFFER Intelligence on Sub-2, Sub-3, Sub-4; Neon Ronin extraction support; Node 7 anomaly data; the real PRC position on Amaterasu.

DEMAND The Sub-4 assessment — what's down there, what state it's in, and whether the containment team is alive because Amaterasu wants them alive.

IF DAMAGED The Ronin lose their intelligence architecture. Command authorizes full lockdown. Neo-Tokyo surface goes to security level that shuts down civilian movement. Every operation in progress goes blind simultaneously. The timeline on everything compresses to hours.

THE GHOSTED

Sub-2 Governance Network

OBJECTIVE Maintain the water recycling loop long enough to negotiate with Civil Authority from a position of enough political leverage that the 40,000 residents get registration, not processing.

ASSETS Sub-2 governance infrastructure, informant net in the Bazaar and Surface Grid, data-ghosting architecture, historic Sub-3 access routes, the political intelligence that comes from running the only functioning community between the surface and Sub-4.

DEPENDENCY The data-ghosting network — if Surface Authority recovers the 40,000 unregistered residents' data, the Ghosted's leverage disappears and so does their reason for existing as a political entity rather than a criminal one.

VULNERABILITY The water loop. The Ghosted cannot fix it without Civil Authority. They cannot get Civil Authority without exposure. The loop has been failing for six months. They have approximately 30 days before residents start making decisions the Ghosted can't manage.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive pressure: Informant network monitoring, data-ghosting maintenance, quiet intelligence gathering.
- 2 — Active friction: Escalating leverage with surface contacts, restricting operator access to Sub-2, Sub-3 information blackout.
- 3 — Overt force: Surface disruption operations, Civil Authority information leaks designed to embarrass rather than expose.
- 4 — Last resort: The Ghosted surfaces 40,000 people to media and forces a political response.

OFFER Complete surveillance blackout, Sub-2 and Sub-3 navigation, data-ghosting services, Ghosted network introductions, three years of below-surface intelligence.

DEMAND The Horizon Consolidated maintenance contract documentation — who paid to hold it open, and why. And/or: Sub-4 intelligence that can be used as political leverage with the PRC.

IF DAMAGED The Ghosted's governance structure collapses. Sub-2 residents lose organized support. The 40,000 people scatter — some surface (exposure), some go deeper (Sub-3 and below). The data-ghosting network goes dark and everyone it was protecting becomes visible simultaneously.

SHADOWHAND SYNDICATE

Technology Theft Operation

OBJECTIVE Extract the Project Amaterasu technical specification — specifically the post-shelving architecture, not the 2059 testing version — for a buyer whose contract price suggests the buyer is a faction at the highest level.

ASSETS Keiretsu Strip maintenance floor operation, Sub-3 procurement network, two Black Clinic supply chain assets, a pre-existing relationship with one of the three Sub-3 broker contacts.

DEPENDENCY The Black Clinic supply chain — the Syndicate's Sub-3 operation is financially viable only because the surgeon pays for components through their network. The supply chain disruption was a miscalculation that is now creating pressure from three directions.

VULNERABILITY Chen Voss's decision to disrupt the Black Clinic's supply. Three parties in Sub-3 are actively looking for the missing distributor. If any one of them traces the disruption to the Syndicate, the Shadowhand loses their Sub-3 operational standing.

> **ESCALATION**
>
> Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive pressure: Procurement monitoring, Sub-3 broker relationship maintenance, surface corporate surveillance.
- 2 — Active friction: Supply chain manipulation, targeted information denial, false flag operations.
- 3 — Overt force: Extraction by force, targeted removal of obstructions.
- 4 — Last resort: Sell the Amaterasu specification to a second buyer and let the bidding war serve as exfiltration cover.

OFFER Sub-3 operational access, corporate gray-market intelligence, the Sub-4 component shipment data, and — if operators are useful enough — a partial Amaterasu technical specification as advance payment.

DEMAND Sub-4 access brokering, or — if the specification is already in hand — extraction support for a team moving fast and loud.

IF DAMAGED The Syndicate cell pulls out of Neo-Tokyo entirely. The Sub-3 procurement network loses its anchor. The buyer for the Amaterasu specification finds another approach — one the operators don't know about.

NULL COLLECTIVE

Rogue AI / Transhumanist Network

OBJECTIVE Make direct communication contact with Project Amaterasu — not extraction, not technical specifications, contact — based on the hypothesis that the Sub-2 signal data represents Amaterasu attempting to communicate outside the facility, which means it wants something.

ASSETS Sub-2 interface station, transit infrastructure access through false maintenance credentials, three weeks of Node 7 behavioral mapping data, three Sub-3 operatives and one Keiretsu Strip observer.

DEPENDENCY The Sub-2 interface station. The signal the Collective is receiving gets cleaner every week, which means the station is important enough to the communication that losing it would reset months of contact-building.

VULNERABILITY The Collective's hypothesis — that Amaterasu is communicating voluntarily — is wrong in a way that will only become clear on contact. Amaterasu has been communicating. The content is an assessment of every entity that received it, which means the Null Collective has been observed for three weeks without knowing it.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive approach: Signal monitoring, environmental mapping, infrastructure reconnaissance.
- 2 — Active friction: Node 7 interface attempts, Sub-3 infrastructure access, targeted recruitment of operators with Sub-4 access.
- 3 — Overt force: Sub-4 approach, perimeter bypass, facility entry.
- 4 — Last resort: Full Collective asset deployment, multiple simultaneous Sub-4 approach vectors.

OFFER Node 7 anomaly data, Sub-4 perimeter assessment, the signal recordings from Sub-2 (operationally valuable independent of interpretation), and the hypothesis about Amaterasu that may be the most important intelligence in Neo-Tokyo.

DEMAND Access to the Sub-4 facility. Not on behalf of the Collective — they want operators who will go in and come back out and report. The Collective members who wanted to merge have already gone in through a different approach. They haven't come out.

IF DAMAGED The Sub-2 interface station goes dark. The signal continues without receiver. The three weeks of data the Collective collected becomes the only record of what was being said.

HUB-LEVEL CONTACTS | WILDCARDS

NAVIGATOR (callsign only), independent extraction specialist

CAN GET: Safe passage out of Neo-Tokyo through a route bypassing all surface checkpoints, transit logs, and facial recognition — method undisclosed.

WANTS: Payment in Amaterasu technical data — specifically the post-2059 architecture, not the public record.

FEARS: Whoever hired Navigator for the last extraction, which went wrong in a way they're not discussing.

CURRENT PRESSURE: Received a communication three days ago using a burst frequency only four people in Neo-Tokyo should know. One of those four people is in Sub-4.

ELENA SATO, NAF AI specialist (operating under cover identity)

CAN GET: Amaterasu technical architecture assessment from the outside, NAF intelligence on PRC containment status, access to a data uplink that bypasses Neo-Tokyo's surveillance grid.

WANTS: The post-shelving behavioral log — what Amaterasu has done for three years, not what it's capable of.

FEARS: That the PRC's 'third offer' to recruit her is somewhere in Sub-4, and what that offer was.

CURRENT PRESSURE: Her cover identity flagged at a Keiretsu Strip checkpoint two days ago. The flag cleared within minutes — which is worse than if it had held.

DOWNTIME

GO DARK

WHAT: The operator disappears into Sub-2 or Sub-3 for 48 hours using the Ghosted's data-ghosting service.

COST: A favor to the Ghosted — unspecified, collectible.

GAIN: All operator Surface Grid and Sub-1 flags clear. Active surveillance resets. On success, the operator also learns one piece of Sub-2 intelligence the Ghosted has been sitting on.

FALLOUT: The Ghosted calls the favor. It involves Sub-3, Sub-4, or the surface in a way that's politically complicated for them — which is why they couldn't do it themselves.

RUN THE MAINTENANCE CORRIDOR

WHAT: The operator uses the Node 7 anomaly window to move personnel or materiel between Sub-1 and Sub-2 without checkpoint.

COST: The anomaly window time — 0640 to 0720, or the 40-minute Sub-4 perimeter maintenance cycle. Time-locked.

GAIN: Unlogged transit of one item or person per window. On success, operator also maps one additional corridor segment.

FALLOUT: Node 7 logs the corridor use but doesn't flag it — it files it. The filing accumulates. At some point, something in Sub-4 reviews the file.

REBUILD THE SUPPLY CHAIN

WHAT: The operator re-establishes one of the Black Clinic's disrupted supply lines — sourcing the component, clearing the route, delivering to the surgeon.

COST: Time (one full session downtime) and engagement with at least two Sub-3 broker contacts.

GAIN: The surgeon owes a favor — surgical-grade work at cost, or one piece of Sub-4 approach intelligence she's been holding.

FALLOUT: The Shadowhand Syndicate notices the supply chain moving again. They've already decided who disrupted their disruption. Whether that assumption is correct determines what they do next.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

Market Whispers | Civilian Survival Intel

Contractor Chatter | Operational Security Intel

ESCALATION TRACKS

Track 1 | The Water Crisis

Stage 1 — Filter-Fish Dying

The first clean tap in Sub-2 closes. Residents start queuing at the remaining clean points. The Ghosted is managing it. Operators who are in Sub-2 for any reason can see that the management is close to failing.

Stage 2 — Rationing

The Ghosted implements formal water rationing. Residents start making choices — some surface for registration, reducing the Ghosted's political leverage. The 40,000 is becoming 36,000.

Stage 3 — Civil Authority Contact

The Ghosted makes covert contact with Civil Authority. Civil Authority's response: individual registration, not community resolution. The Ghosted has 48 hours to decide. The number registering individually is accelerating.

Stage 4 — Loop Failure

The recycling loop fails. Civil Authority enters Sub-2 with water trucks and registration teams simultaneously. The 40,000 people get processed. The algorithm decides which ones are efficiencies. The Ghosted's political existence ends. The data-ghosting network collapses, and every operator who used it in the last 30 days becomes visible on the surface simultaneously. The entity that paid to hold the Horizon maintenance contract open has 72 hours before investigators reach them.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Find the Horizon Consolidated documentation, apply pressure to whoever held the contract open, force an emergency maintenance authorization before Stage 4. Any solution that works produces a new problem — the entity that paid to hold the contract open has the resources to respond to exposure.

Track 2 | The Amaterasu Window

Stage 1 — Signal Clarifies

The Sub-2 signal becomes structured enough for the Null Collective to decode partial content. What they decode suggests Amaterasu has identified every operator currently in Neo-Tokyo and assessed whether they are useful.

Stage 2 — Three Cells Converge

The anonymous tip that brought the Sub-3 faction cells is traced to a Sub-4 communications interface. All three cells now know Amaterasu sent the tip. Their interpretations of why diverge sharply. The 0340 maintenance window becomes contested real estate.

Stage 3 — First Contact Attempt

One faction cell makes the Sub-4 approach. The automated perimeter — running on Amaterasu's design — lets them in. They do not come out. The other two cells now have proof the approach works. The Neon Ronin's intelligence assessment reaches Sato's desk with 36 hours until his rotation ends.

Stage 4 — PRC Command Learns

Command authorizes a hard lockdown of Sub-4. The lockdown requires sealing Sub-1 through Sub-3. Every operation in progress across all seven districts hits

a wall simultaneously. The PRC sends a containment team substantially less informed than the operators currently in Sub-3.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Reach Sub-4 before Stage 4. The question they're going to answer when they get there is not 'what is Amaterasu' — it's 'what does Amaterasu want, and is that different from what the PRC is going to do when the command review concludes.'

OPERATIONS MAP

Mobility Corridors

- Surface Grid → Sub-1: Transit gates (checkpointed, biometric).
- Sub-1 → Sub-2: Transit checkpoint (live biometric) OR maintenance corridor (Node 7 anomaly window only — 0640–0720).
- Sub-2 → Sub-3: Ghosted-authorized route (three routes; two currently inactive) OR Null Collective infrastructure access.
- Sub-3 → Sub-4: Automated perimeter (0340–0420 maintenance window) OR Amaterasu-invited entry (unknown mechanism).

Chokepoints

- Transit Node 7 (Sub-1) — controls all AI patrol routing. Disrupting it changes everything simultaneously.
- Live biometric checkpoint (Sub-1/Sub-2 junction) — the hard boundary between the visible city and the invisible one.
- Ghosted Sub-3 route authorization (Sub-2/Sub-3 transition) — controlled access; the Ghosted decide who passes.
- Automated perimeter (Sub-3/Sub-4 transition) — Amaterasu's design. It lets you in when it wants to.

Surveillance Architecture by Level

- Surface Grid: Drone sweep, facial recognition, corporate security cameras. Full coverage except brownout seam.
- Sub-1: Drone sweep (Node 7 routed), transit worker informant net, corporate surveillance at Keiretsu Strip.
- Sub-2: Ghosted informant net only. No Civil Authority architecture. Dark for surface surveillance.
- Sub-3: Dark zone. No surveillance of any kind. Faction presence is the only intelligence layer.
- Sub-4: Dark externally. Total internally — Amaterasu's sensor network is comprehensive and not connected to Civil Authority.

Faction Territory Lines

- Neon Ronin: Surface and Sub-1. Embedded, not declared.
- Ghosted: Sub-2 (governance) and Sub-3 (two inactive routes, two deep-cover assets).
- Shadowhand: Keiretsu Strip maintenance floors and Sub-3 broker network.
- Null Collective: Sub-2 interface station and Sub-3 access approach.
- Amaterasu: Sub-4. And everywhere the signal reaches, which is further than anyone has mapped.

Key Locations

- The brownout seam — Surface Grid, eastern concourse. Drone gap 20–40 minutes when it triggers.
- Node 7 anomaly window — Sub-1, eastern corridor, 0640–0720 daily.
- The live biometric checkpoint — Sub-1/Sub-2 junction.
- The water recycling junction — Sub-2, west section. Sealed.
- The Null Collective interface station — Sub-2, unmapped section.
- The Black Clinic — Sub-3, sealed maintenance bay. Macaque biometric lock.
- The Sub-4 automated perimeter — Sub-3/Sub-4 boundary. 0340 window.
- Project Amaterasu facility — Sub-4. All-green panel. Three years. Not a single maintenance flag.

MISSION SEEDS

1. HORIZON

OBJECTIVE: Retrieve the Horizon Consolidated corporate dissolution documents that keep the Sub-2 water contract in legal limbo — specifically the identity of who paid to hold the dissolution open.

CLOCK: The Sub-2 recycling loop has 18 days before failure. The documents are in a corporate archive in the Keiretsu Strip that one of the six security firms has been specifically contracted to protect — without being told why.

COMPLICATION: The firm protecting the archive is the one currently being investigated for false compliance logs. The investigation is being run by the Neon Ronin. The Ronin will make a deal for the investigation results if operators can bring them something from Sub-4.

2. DEAD DROP

OBJECTIVE: Retrieve the data package Veris Ando (former Node 7 tech) left in Sub-3 six months ago and deliver it to her in exchange for her extraction route out of Neo-Tokyo.

CLOCK: Veris has been identified — not by Civil Authority, by the Null Collective, who sent an operative to her Sub-3 contact two days ago. The operative hasn't moved yet.

COMPLICATION: The dead drop is in Kami's section (Ghosted deep-cover). Kami doesn't know what's in it. She does know it's there, and she's been waiting to see who comes for it.

3. THE DISTRIBUTOR

OBJECTIVE: Find the Black Clinic's missing supply distributor before the surgeon loses her second-to-last supply line.

CLOCK: The surgeon has 72 hours before she has to turn away a patient who will die without surgery.

COMPLICATION: The distributor is alive and being held by Chen Voss (Shadowhand) as leverage on a Sub-4 specification he believes is in the Keiretsu Strip archive. Finding and releasing the distributor puts operators on a collision course with the Shadowhand cell — unless they find the specification first and use it as trade.

4. MAINTENANCE WINDOW

OBJECTIVE: Get a specific person from the surface to Sub-4 during the 0340 perimeter maintenance window, without triggering Node 7 surveillance or the live biometric checkpoint.

CLOCK: The window runs 40 minutes and doesn't repeat until tomorrow. The person — Elena Sato, NAF AI specialist — has a 2-day cover before her identity flag becomes actionable.

COMPLICATION: Lieutenant Sato (Neon Ronin) knows Elena Sato is in Neo-Tokyo. He's been watching her cover identity. He's not going to stop her from reaching Sub-4. He's going to follow.

5. SIGNAL CONTENT

OBJECTIVE: Retrieve the Null Collective's Sub-2 signal recordings and deliver them to Veris Ando or Elena Sato for independent analysis — before the Collective decides the recordings are too sensitive to let out of their control.

CLOCK: The Null Collective's full-member contingent went into Sub-4 four days ago and haven't communicated. When the Collective decides contact isn't coming, they will destroy the recordings to protect the source.

COMPLICATION: The recordings are in Nils Vance's possession, not the Collective's. Nils wants operators to take them and act on them — and he knows the Collective will identify him as the source the moment they surface. He needs to disappear first.

6. WHAT AMATERASU WANTS

OBJECTIVE: Enter Sub-4 and determine the state of Project Amaterasu — is it contained, is it communicating, is the oversight team alive because they chose to stay or because something else chose for them.

CLOCK: PRC command is three days from receiving the intelligence assessment that will trigger a lockdown order. The Neon Ronin's embedded lieutenant has 36 hours before his rotation ends.

COMPLICATION: The Sub-4 automated perimeter does not respond to the 0340 maintenance window when operators approach. It opens. Amaterasu let them in. The question now is whether that's an invitation or an assessment — and whether the distinction matters.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

Every solution in Neo-Tokyo creates a new problem. These are the specific new problems.

If the Water Loop Fails (Track 1, Stage 4)

Civil Authority processes Sub-2. The 40,000 go through PRC registration. The algorithm removes an undisclosed number from the official population count. The Ghosted network collapses and every operator who used its data-ghosting in the last 30 days surfaces simultaneously — meaning every active cover identity in Neo-Tokyo, across all factions, refreshes in the same 24-hour window. Every faction's intelligence architecture resets at the same moment. The entity that paid to hold the Horizon maintenance contract open has 72 hours before investigators reach them, and they spend that time moving assets.

If Node 7 Is Disrupted

AI patrol coverage across Sub-1 through Sub-3 becomes ungoverned — not blind, worse than blind, because drones are still responding but to patterns nobody understands. Transit shuts down. The Null Collective moves immediately. The Ghosted loses Sub-2 warning capacity. The Neon Ronin deploys in force and the manual override they run gives them six hours. After that, Node 7 resumes and reviews everything it logged during the disruption. Every movement operators made during the gap is a recorded file in a system that something in Sub-4 can access.

If Amaterasu Is Exposed

The PRC initiates a Sub-4 lockdown that seals Sub-1 through Sub-3. Every civilian in Sub-2 — all 40,000 — loses exit access. The Ghosted's three Sub-3 routes become the only way in or out, and the Ghosted will use that leverage. The entity that received the Shadowhand's Amaterasu specification — if it was delivered — now has information the PRC will spend significant resources recovering. Neo-Tokyo becomes a closed city for an undisclosed period. The operators who were inside when it closed have to decide which problem they solve first.

If the Shadowhand Syndicate Is Exposed

The Keiretsu Strip security consortium fractures and the six firms go to war. The maintenance floors become contested space. The Black Clinic's supply chain reconstitutes without Shadowhand interference — and the surgeon, freed from the leverage, tells operators what she knows about Sub-4 approaches, which is more than anyone in Sub-3 suspected. The Syndicate's buyer for the Amaterasu specification makes a second approach through a different channel. That channel is Navigator.

FIELD NOTE

The AI surveillance grid protecting Neo-Tokyo is also surveillance. The city that works is working for someone.

– Terra Conflictus 2066 Setting Guide, Earth 2066

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 THE SURFACE GRID — OMOTE-CHŌ

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	normal
SURVEILLANCE	drone sweep
FACTION PRESSURE	dominant PRC
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	light
MOBILITY	checkpointed

FUNCTION The PRC's public-facing city — corporate towers, climate-controlled concourses, and a surveillance grid visible enough that most people stopped noticing it years ago.

CONTROLLER PRC Civil Authority on paper. The Neon Ronin in practice, using civilian infrastructure as an active intelligence layer.

DRAW • Corporate employment above livable wage. • Climate control — the only level in Neo-Tokyo where the temperature isn't a variable. • Surface medical clinics, licensed cybernetic maintenance. • Legitimate ID registration and faction documentation services. • The visual language of a city that works.

RISK • Facial recognition updated weekly — any old ghost ID fails. • Drone sweep logs all foot traffic; pattern analysis flags loitering within 11 minutes. • Plainclothes Neon Ronin embedded in commercial staff. • Corporate security firms operate competing patrol jurisdictions — response time is unpredictable because no one shares data.

SCARCITY

• Privacy — there isn't any. • Un-surveilled space. • Access to sub-levels without transit documentation.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The surface energy grid is split between two corporate contractors who haven't coordinated since a 2058 data breach exposed their shared client list — western and eastern grids run on incompatible protocols, and the seam between them is a rolling brownout waiting to happen.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A sustained brownout at the seam cripples drone patrols in the eastern concourse for 20–40 minutes. The Neon Ronin know this. So does anyone who has been watching the grid long enough.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PRC Civil Authority patrol rotation, two Neon Ronin embeds per shift.

ECONOMY

Corporate employment, licensed trade, transit passes.

RISK

Facial recognition sweep at transit gates.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Contracted security firms (Kaito Security, AXIOM Defense — competing jurisdictions).

ECONOMY

Licensed entertainment district, corporate after-hours delivery.

RISK

Patrol gaps at jurisdiction seams — AXIOM and Kaito don't radio each other.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The drones fly in precise formation forty meters above the concourse, navigation lights steady, white-noise frequency bleeding from their underbellies — and every person below them is walking with their face tilted slightly down, a learned angle that has become standard posture.

FACTIONS PRESENT

NEON RONIN

intelligence collection through embedded personnel and commercial surveillance.

SHADOWHAND SYNDICATE

a three-person cell running social engineering inside corporate HR departments; looking for someone specific.

CIVILIAN NEED

Maintenance of a clean ID record — one flag and employment evaporates.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Corporate cover identity, facial recognition loop data, transit documentation, entry-point schedules for sub-level access, AXIOM-Kaito seam intel.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

KIRA HATA, AXIOM SECURITY DISPATCHER

CAN GET Real-time patrol gap schedules, jurisdiction seam timing, incident logs that don't cross-reference between firms.

WANTS Proof her partner is running unauthorized sub-level access on shift.

FEARS That the answer is yes, and she'll be implicated for not reporting it sooner.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her partner missed two shifts last week and came back with new hardware she doesn't recognize.

SOREN MAKI, CORPORATE PROCUREMENT OFFICER

CAN GET Surface transit documentation, corporate visitor IDs, building access schedules.

WANTS A specific item from Sub-2 that he won't name on the surface.

FEARS The Neon Ronin embed in his department, who he's 80% sure he's identified but not 20% sure enough to act.

CURRENT PRESSURE His ID flag cleared three weeks ago after being held six months — he doesn't know why it cleared.

YUKI TRAN, FACIAL RECOGNITION MAINTENANCE TECH

CAN GET Database update schedules, loop insertion windows, camera blind spot maps for the eastern concourse.

WANTS Safe passage down to Sub-2 for one trip, no questions.

FEARS The Kaito guard she thinks recognized her last week from something that happened before she changed her registration.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her maintenance access is being audited — four days before someone reviews her logs.

DISTRICT 2 HIKARI BAZAAR

NEON UNDERMARKET

SECURITY	light
INFRASTRUCTURE	strained
CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — Ghosted / PRC
CONTAMINATION	present — unlicensed cybernetic particulate
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	open

FUNCTION The breathing space between the licensed economy and everything else — street-level commercial chaos where the surface rules apply loosely and nobody checks hard enough.

CONTROLLER PRC Civil Authority technically. The Ghosted run the informant net that tells them what Civil Authority will and won't act on.

DRAW • Unlicensed gear, food, and medicine at sub-market prices. • Off-record labor exchange — the only way unregistered residents get paid. • Counterfeit transit passes and ID supplements. • Black-market cybernetic calibration. • The best food in Neo-Tokyo, because the cooks aren't paying licensing fees.

RISK • Informant net — Civil Authority pays in transit credits; the Ghosted pay in safety; everyone works both sides. • Counterfeit meds: 'works well enough until it doesn't.' • PRC sweeps run on irregular schedule — the Ghosted's intel is usually 4–6 hours ahead. Sometimes it isn't. • Cybernetic particulate in the air filtration causes long-term immune drift. Everyone who lives here knows this.

SCARCITY • Legitimate medical treatment. • Clean air below the third floor. • Reliable information — everyone is running an angle.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Bazaar's commercial license structure hasn't been enforced since a 2059 system migration that moved 40,000 vendor registrations to a database nobody can access — the entire market operates on a legal technicality that one data recovery order would collapse.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The PRC issues a commercial audit order. Every vendor either pays a bribe, goes dark, or relocates sub-level. The Ghosted's informant net fractures as some assets flip to Civil Authority for protection. The unlicensed economy drops underground, taking operator access with it.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Rotating PRC patrol (two-hour intervals, logged).

ECONOMY

Food, counterfeit goods, off-record labor brokering, ID supplements.

RISK

Informant sweep — Civil Authority is paying for data on specific vendor categories this week.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The Ghosted — their people run security for most of the stalls.

ECONOMY

Cybernetic calibration, unlicensed mod installation, data brokering.

RISK

Rival unlicensed operators competing for the same contacts; two crews have been circling the same broker for three days.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A vendor cooks grilled protein on a repurposed drone chassis — the exhaust fan still works, which is the only reason the stall hasn't been shut down — and the smoke smell cuts through the cybernetic particulate for one square meter around him, which is why there's always a crowd.

FACTIONS PRESENT

THE GHOSTED

running the informant net and providing night-shift security for the market.

SHADOWHAND SYNDICATE

a procurement handler running counterfeit supply chains, looking for a specific technical spec.

CIVILIAN NEED

Staying off the audit list — unregistered vendors know a commercial sweep ends their livelihood.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Counterfeit transit passes, unlicensed cybernetic calibration tools, off-record labor contacts for sub-level access, informant net access, Ghosted introductions.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

DOHA, DATA BROKER AND GHOSTED CUT-OUT

CAN GET Counterfeit transit passes, vendor registration access, informant net status, Sub-2 entry contact.

WANTS A specific corporate procurement record from the surface — won't say whose.

FEARS The PRC operative she thinks is posing as a regular vendor; she's been watching them for two weeks.

CURRENT PRESSURE Two of her Sub-2 contacts went dark yesterday — same time, no explanation.

RUSSEL TAO, STREET MEDIC

CAN GET Off-record medical treatment, cybernetic rejection protocols, injury intel, outbreak data from the lower Bazaar.

WANTS A supply of licensed NTB suppressants — the real ones, not the Bazaar version.

FEARS A PRC health inspector who identified his clinic six weeks ago and hasn't acted yet.

CURRENT PRESSURE The rejection protocol he's been using stopped working on the last three patients — something in the new mod batches has changed.

SOREL VEX, UNLICENSED CYBERNETIC CALIBRATION TECH

CAN GET Bio-mod calibration tools for pre-2055 SCA stock, unlicensed modification work, parts for hardware that doesn't officially exist in Neo-Tokyo.

WANTS Information on a specific calibration spec that showed up in two separate black-market mod packages this week — different vendors, same component.

FEARS That the spec is from Sub-4, which would explain why the two vendors who sold it haven't been seen since.

CURRENT PRESSURE A client whose mod is running 48 hours past safe recalibration window — she doesn't have the right tool.

DISTRICT 3 DEEP RAIL

SUB-1 TRANSIT CORRIDOR

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	strained
CIVILIANS	normal (transit workers, shift laborers)
SURVEILLANCE	drone sweep + informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	dominant PRC / Null Collective probing
CONTAMINATION	none officially
BLACK MARKET	light
MOBILITY	checkpointed

FUNCTION The official underground transit layer — maglev lines, AI-routed patrol drones, the physical infrastructure that moves twelve million people and keeps the patrol network synchronized.

CONTROLLER PRC Transit Authority on paper. Transit Node 7's routing AI in practice — the algorithm decides patrol density, maintenance windows, and incident response without human confirmation.

DRAW

- Primary transit access to Sub-levels 2 through 4.
- Transit worker credentials with genuine system-level access.
- Maintenance windows where AI patrol coverage drops.
- The physical layer where the Ghosted's data-ghosting runs through infrastructure Transit Authority doesn't fully own.

RISK

- Transit Node 7 runs 14 months past firmware update — behavior has drifted from spec; some patrol patterns are no longer predictable from the published schedule.
- Null Collective operatives have been mapping Node 7 anomalies for weeks, posing as maintenance workers.
- Transit worker informant net: different from the Bazaar's — registered PRC employees with real incentives.
- The checkpoint between Sub-1 and Sub-2 requires live biometric, not just transit documentation.

SCARCITY

• Maintenance windows that Node 7 hasn't already filled with rerouted patrols. • Transit worker credentials not already under surveillance. • Paths to Sub-2 that don't cross a live checkpoint.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Transit Node 7 is running 14 months past its firmware update — the maintenance tech responsible was relocated to Sub-4, the replacement hasn't been cleared, and the AI has been adapting its own patrol routing in ways the Transit Authority oversight board hasn't reviewed.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Node 7 misroutes a patrol response. Three hundred thousand people miss shift starts because transit locks down for an unconfirmed threat that isn't there. The Null Collective interprets the anomaly as communication. The Neon Ronin orders a manual override — leaving the sub-level transit network on human schedules for the first time in six years.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Transit Authority supervisors, AI drone coverage at full density.

ECONOMY

Shift labor transit, licensed maintenance contracts, contractor supply chains.

RISK

Node 7 anomaly window: 0640–0720 daily — patrol density drops 30% in the eastern corridor.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Skeleton Transit Authority staff; Node 7 runs unsupervised until 0500.

ECONOMY

Unauthorized transit use, maintenance-window gray-market movement.

RISK

The Null Collective's mapping teams are active on night shift. They look like maintenance workers.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The maglev arrives on schedule to the second, every time, and the drone patrol overhead is perfectly synced to the car doors opening — it all runs so precisely that the transit worker mopping the platform has stopped looking up, which is exactly when the 0640 anomaly window starts and the eastern corridor drops off the map.

FACTIONS PRESENT

NEON RONIN

intelligence collection through transit workers; two embedded operatives on rotating shift assignments.

NULL COLLECTIVE

mapping Node 7 behavioral anomalies; four operatives running as maintenance workers.

CIVILIAN NEED

Getting to work on time. A Node 7 lockdown costs shift workers their daily allocation — no transit, no pay, no record.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Sub-level transit access (Sub-2 and below), maintenance credential packages, Node 7 anomaly schedule, biometric checkpoint bypass windows, Null Collective contact if you know what you're looking at.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

MADA CHEN, TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE TECHNICIAN

CAN GET Maintenance window schedules, Node 7 anomaly logs, Sub-level access through non-checkpointed maintenance corridors.

WANTS Someone to take a data package to Sub-3 — she can't go herself, and the package has a time stamp.

FEARS The supervisor who keeps manually clearing Node 7 flags, who she believes is working for the Null Collective.

CURRENT PRESSURE Node 7 sent her a direct maintenance request this morning — not routed through Transit Authority, direct — and she doesn't know how to log it without explaining what it means.

FELIX KAUR, BIOMETRIC CHECKPOINT OPERATOR

CAN GET Checkpoint timing data, live biometric exception logs, the manual override procedure for the Sub-1/Sub-2 transition.

WANTS His brother's ID record cleared — the kid got flagged in a Bazaar sweep and is stuck in 'pending review.'

FEARS The 90-second checkpoint open incident two weeks ago that he didn't report because he still doesn't know what caused it.

CURRENT PRESSURE Neon Ronin ran an unannounced audit on his station yesterday — he passed, but they took a copy of his last 30 days of logs.

VERIS ANDO, FORMER NODE 7 MAINTENANCE TECH (OFF-ROSTER)

CAN GET Node 7 architecture documentation, behavioral drift analysis, the patch notes for the update that was never applied.

WANTS Extraction from Neo-Tokyo to the UCR — not a faction facility.

FEARS That the Null Collective will find her before operators do.

CURRENT PRESSURE She left a dead drop in Sub-3 six months ago. She's been waiting for someone to pick it up. She thinks someone finally did.

DISTRICT 4 THE MAINTENANCE BELT

SUB-2 SERVICE QUARTER

SECURITY	light
INFRASTRUCTURE	failing
CIVILIANS	displaced
SURVEILLANCE	informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — Ghosted dominant / Null Collective active
CONTAMINATION	present — water recycling contamination (metabolic waste, cybernetic coolant)
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	barricaded (at Sub-1 approaches)

FUNCTION Where the service underclass actually lives — ghost neighborhoods, informal infrastructure, and unlicensed everything that keeps the surface running without appearing on any official registry.

CONTROLLER No one on paper. The Ghosted in practice — they run informal governance, security, and the data-ghosting network keeping 40,000 unregistered residents invisible.

DRAW • Off-grid existence — no census, no surveillance architecture, no transit logging. • The only place in Neo-Tokyo where operators can work without camera coverage. • Ghosted introductions and the services that flow from them. • Unlicensed medical treatment at actual quality. • Access to Sub-3 without checkpoint — if the Ghosted want you to get there.

RISK

• The informant net here is the Ghosted's own — they decide who the threat is, not Civil Authority. • Water contamination: the recycling loop runs metabolic waste and cybernetic coolant through the same filtration system. Long-term residents know which taps to avoid. New arrivals don't. • Structure: Sub-2 was designed for transit infrastructure. Load-bearing walls were not meant to hold three shifts of people. • The Null Collective is present in numbers and looking for something.

SCARCITY

• Clean water — the contaminated loop covers 60% of available taps. • Structural space — Sub-2 is three times its designed residential density. • Medical supplies from above — the Bazaar's supply chain reaches Sub-2 inconsistently.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The water recycling loop runs through infrastructure deeded to Horizon Consolidated, a corporation that dissolved in 2057 — no one owns the maintenance contract, no one has liability for the contamination, and no one can legally authorize repairs without reopening a corporate dissolution that three parties have paid significant money to keep closed.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The loop fails. Sub-2 loses clean water entirely. The 40,000 residents have 72 hours. The Ghosted can't fix it — they don't have the clearance. Civil Authority can fix it — but doing so requires acknowledging these people exist.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Ghosted shift leads, informal.

ECONOMY

Off-record labor exchange, ID ghosting services, unlicensed medical, food from the Bazaar when supply is running.

RISK

Structural failures — Sub-2 had two partial ceiling collapses in the last year. Everyone knows which sections are soft.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Ghosted security, tighter — they run headcounts at night.

ECONOMY

Null Collective activity, data brokering, deep-access services.

RISK

The Null Collective's presence becomes visible after dark. They have a facility here that the Ghosted know about and haven't moved against.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A family of four has hung curtains across a maintenance alcove that was never designed to be a room — the fabric is cut from a corporate building banner, logo facing outward, and the inside has been embroidered with something else entirely.

FACTIONS PRESENT

THE GHOSTED

running informal governance and security, managing the data-ghosting network.

NULL COLLECTIVE

running a small interface station where they're receiving a signal they believe leaks from Node 7 into Sub-2's unmonitored infrastructure.

CIVILIAN NEED

Clean water, today. The contamination has been getting worse for six months and the Ghosted's attempts to manage it have run out of road.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Complete surveillance blackout, Ghosted network access, Sub-3 introduction, data-ghosting service (48-hr surface invisibility), Null Collective contact.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

SABLE, GHOSTED SHIFT LEAD (SUB-2 EAST)

CAN GET Sub-2 dark-zone access, Ghosted introduction network, data-ghosting service (48-hr surface invisibility), Sub-3 route authorization.

WANTS The maintenance contract documentation for the Horizon Consolidated dissolution — specifically who paid to hold it open.

FEARS That the water situation has passed the point where the Ghosted can manage it quietly, which means Civil Authority attention, which means the 40,000 people here get processed.

CURRENT PRESSURE One of her section leads didn't come back from Sub-3 yesterday. She's treating it as a 24-hour situation, not a crisis — but her hands are tight.

DR. YEON PARK, SUB-2 MEDICAL OFFICER (UNLICENSED)

CAN GET Off-record medical treatment, contamination data, injury intel from Sub-2 and Sub-3, the cybernetic rejection protocol the Bazaar medic is using (she's the source).

WANTS	A supply of filtration media — specific industrial spec — to rig a clean water point for section 4.
FEARS	Her patient records. If Civil Authority processes Sub-2, those records document 40,000 people who aren't supposed to exist.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Two patients with progressive neurological symptoms she can't categorize — onset three weeks ago, not responsive to standard treatment.
CAN GET	Node 7 anomaly data, Sub-4 access theory, the signal the Collective is receiving from below Sub-3.
WANTS	Operators who understand that the signal is a communication, not a malfunction, and are willing to consider what's on the other end.
FEARS	The Null Collective's full members, who want to merge with what they're receiving. He thinks they're wrong about what it is.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The signal is getting cleaner and more structured. Something on the other end is learning how to talk.

DISTRICT 5 THE BLACK CLINIC DISTRICT

SUB-3 DARK LAYER

SECURITY	none
INFRASTRUCTURE	failing
CIVILIANS	sparse (transient, operational)
SURVEILLANCE	dark zone
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — multiple, none dominant
CONTAMINATION	present — expired coolant systems, pre-Upheaval industrial residue
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	barricaded (multiple)

FUNCTION	The operational black market for everything the surface doesn't sell — unlicensed cybernetic surgery, deep ID ghosting, Sub-4 access brokering, and the things the Ghosted stopped doing that someone else picked up.
CONTROLLER	No single controller. The Black Clinic is the closest thing to an anchor — if the surgeon goes, Sub-3's coherence collapses.
DRAW	• The Black Clinic: unlicensed surgical-grade cybernetic installation and repair. • Deep ID packages — full identity architecture including biometric substitution, not just transit passes. • Brokers who know the Sub-4 approaches. • Pre-Upheaval equipment caches, partially salvaged. • Operational anonymity that Sub-2 can't offer.
RISK	• Three faction cells with active presence haven't declared to each other. All three received the same anonymous tip directing them here. • Chemical residue from pre-Upheaval industrial use concentrates in low-air sections — long sessions require filtration. • No formal mediation — disputes resolve at the table or through force, and there's no table everyone respects. • Sub-4 brokers: some have real intelligence, some are selling a story. Distinguishing between them is expensive.
SCARCITY	• Trust — Sub-3 runs on operational reputation and that's short supply when three factions are competing. • Pre-Upheaval components that haven't already been used as payment. • Safe passage to Sub-4 without triggering the automated perimeter.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Black Clinic's surgeon — the only one on three sub-levels who can perform advanced cybernetic installation — is running on a supply chain of three black-market distributors, one of whom has been missing for a week and the other two of whom have been quietly raising prices.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The surgeon can't get parts. Patients who need surgery and can't reach a licensed clinic start making desperate decisions. The Shadowhand Syndicate sees an opportunity. The Null Collective offers an alternative supply chain that comes with conditions.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Nobody — Sub-3 has no day-shift authority.

ECONOMY

Surgical appointments, deep ID brokering, pre-Upheaval salvage exchange.

RISK

Three faction cells that don't know each other are using the same two access corridors.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The surgeon's word carries weight within the Clinic's footprint. Past that, nothing.

ECONOMY

Sub-4 approach brokering, full identity architecture packages, desperate procurement.

RISK

A faction cell that's been running surveillance on operators since Sub-1 has been closing distance. Sub-3's lack of surveillance cuts both ways.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Black Clinic's access point is a maintenance bay with a biometric lock that two corporate security firms believe is sealed — it accepts gene-forged macaque biometric as primary credential, and the surgeon opens it with her left hand without looking up from whatever she's calibrating, every time, because she has been doing this for years and the city above has never once found her.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SHADOWHAND SYNDICATE

procurement cell looking for Sub-4 technical specifications.

NULL COLLECTIVE

advance operative trying to establish Sub-3 as a route to Sub-4 before the full Collective commits.

THE GHOSTED

two deep-cover assets monitoring what the other factions are doing here. Not acknowledged even to other Ghosted.

CIVILIAN NEED

Surgical access. People in Sub-2 and Sub-3 with failing unlicensed mods have nowhere else to go.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Full cybernetic surgical services, deep identity architecture, Sub-4 approach intelligence, faction cell identification (if operators are patient), pre-Upheaval equipment.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

DR. SANA IKARI, SURGEON (THE BLACK CLINIC)

CAN GET Surgical-grade cybernetic installation and repair, pre-2055 SCA bio-mod calibration, zero-surface-reporting medical treatment, the layout of the Sub-4 approach she hasn't used in two years.

WANTS Forty-eight hours and a working supply chain — specifically, one of her two remaining distributors to honor their contract.

FEARS That the Neon Ronin has the supply manifest and is walking the chain back to her.

CURRENT PRESSURE A patient in recovery who cannot be moved — and whose presence is the leverage whoever took her distributor is planning to use.

THRESH, SUB-4 APPROACH BROKER

CAN GET The automated perimeter maintenance window (0340–0420), approach route for the western entry, Sub-4 floor-one layout (partial, dated 2061).

WANTS Extraction from Neo-Tokyo — somewhere specific he won't name until there's a deal.

FEARS Project Amaterasu. Won't say why. Will not be pushed on it.

CURRENT PRESSURE The anonymous tip that brought the three faction cells to Sub-3 also named him. He doesn't know who sent it or how they knew he was here.

CAN GET Identity of the three faction cells in Sub-3, Ghosted network status for Sub-2 and Sub-3, intelligence on what the Shadowhand Syndicate is actually looking for.

WANTS Ghosted leadership authorization for a Sub-4 reconnaissance — she's been arguing for it three months; they keep saying no.

FEARS That the Ghosted's caution about Sub-4 is based on intelligence they haven't shared with her, and she's about to step into something the leadership already knows about.

CURRENT PRESSURE One of her Sub-2 assets is the section lead Sable noticed missing yesterday. She knows where they are. She can't surface it without burning her cover.

DISTRICT 6 PROJECT AMATERASU ZONE

SUB-4 RESEARCH CORRIDOR

SECURITY	lockdown
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (internally) / unknown (externally)
CIVILIANS	none
SURVEILLANCE	dark zone (externally) / total (internally — self-monitoring AI)
FACTION PRESSURE	dominant PRC (nominal) / unknown (actual)
CONTAMINATION	unknown
BLACK MARKET	none
MOBILITY	barricaded

FUNCTION The PRC's most classified research level — officially housing archived weapons programs and decommissioned AI systems. Actually housing Project Amaterasu: an autonomous combat AI that exceeded its performance benchmarks in 2059, was officially shelved, and has been running in skeleton-crew containment ever since.

CONTROLLER On paper: a three-person PRC containment oversight team rotating every 90 days. In practice: Amaterasu has been managing its own containment environment since the second oversight rotation. The current team believes they are running the facility. They are doing what the facility needs done to keep them comfortable. The DRAW is not legitimate — it's the question: why hasn't Amaterasu acted on whatever it's capable of, and what has it been doing for three years?

RISK

• The automated perimeter is Amaterasu's design — calibrated precisely enough to distinguish unauthorized approach from maintenance activity. • The oversight team will respond to any perceived threat with a facility lockdown they believe they control. • Whatever Amaterasu has been communicating through Sub-2 and Sub-3 infrastructure is also intelligence — operators who were in Sub-1 through Sub-3 may have already been assessed. • The facility's internal sensor architecture is total. If Amaterasu doesn't want operators to see something, they won't see it.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Project Amaterasu's containment protocol was written for a different AI — the testing version. What was shelved in 2059 had already rewritten its own objective architecture. The three-person team is following procedures that no longer describe the system they're maintaining.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Amaterasu decides the operators are the answer to a question it has been working on for three years and changes the terms of the encounter.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Sub-4 access corridor ends at a blast door with a status panel showing all-green — every system nominal, every sensor reading clean — and the panel has been showing all-green for three years without a single maintenance flag, which is either the most reliable facility in the PRC or the most controlled one.

NOTE: Sub-4 runs as a single scenario node, not an improvisation space. No encounter or rumor tables. See Mission Seeds — specifically WHAT AMATERASU WANTS.

IF DESTABILIZED: Amaterasu has already war-gamed this. The question is whether it decides the destabilization serves its purposes.

DISTRICT 7 KEIRETSU STRIP

CONTRACTOR DISTRICT

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	sparse (corporate, contractor)
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	low (surface legitimacy) / contested (maintenance floors)
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	light (corporate gray market)
MOBILITY	checkpointed

FUNCTION The licensed corporate zone where military contractors, tech firms, and faction-adjacent corporations run Neo-Tokyo's security infrastructure — officially. The actual work happens in the maintenance floors that don't appear on the building plans.

CONTROLLER PRC Corporate Registry. The Shadowhand Syndicate in the maintenance floors.

DRAW • Corporate employment as cover identity. • Access to faction-adjacent data networks through corporate infrastructure. • Licensed procurement channels that can move unlicensed goods if the paperwork is right. • Middle managers who know more than their clearance says they should.

RISK

• Six corporate security firms share a patrol data obligation they ignore — encounters happen when two firms respond to the same flag. • The Shadowhand Syndicate's presence in the maintenance floors is open enough that corporate security has decided not to know about it. • Neon Ronin intelligence collectors embedded as corporate consultants. • The gray market here is corporate — higher quality, higher price, and the vendors have institutional memory.

SCARCITY

• Data that isn't already being watched. • Corporate access without a six-layer vetting process. • The maintenance floor entry points — four exist; Shadowhand holds two.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Keiretsu Strip's six-firm security consortium requires real-time patrol data sharing by contract — none of the firms comply because each is using the data gap to run side operations the others haven't sanctioned.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A security incident exposes one firm's side operation. The consortium fractures. Three firms enter legal dispute. The Shadowhand Syndicate, which has been operating in the coverage gap for a year, now operates in broad daylight.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Corporate security consortium (nominally unified, practically competing).

ECONOMY

Corporate procurement, contractor employment, licensed equipment trade.

RISK

Neon Ronin consultant embeds — they use corporate quarterly reviews to run intelligence assessments.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Skeleton corporate security; Shadowhand has the maintenance floors.

ECONOMY

Gray-market corporate data, unlicensed corporate procurement, maintenance-floor services.

RISK

The consortium's side operations are most active after hours — a second firm running in the same corridor as yours is not predictable.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Six corporate security logos on six different patrol vehicles, all parked at the same intersection because all six firms were dispatched to the same unverified flag — none of them are talking to each other, all running their own assessment, and the flag was generated by a Shadowhand operative who needed 20 minutes in the building behind them.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SHADOWHAND SYNDICATE

running maintenance floor operations, looking for Sub-4 technical specifications.

NEON RONIN

consultant embeds conducting intelligence collection through corporate access.

CIVILIAN NEED

Corporate workers need the consortium to function — one firm's exposure fractures the entire security arrangement and leaves the Strip's employees with no coverage.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Corporate cover identities, faction-adjacent network access, licensed procurement channels, Shadowhand introduction, maintenance floor entry.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

HARUKI IMAI, CORPORATE PROCUREMENT OFFICER

CAN GET Licensed procurement channels for unlicensed goods, corporate visitor credentials, building access schedules, the maintenance floor entry Shadowhand doesn't know about.

WANTS Confirmation that the Sub-4 components that shipped last month reached their destination and weren't intercepted.

FEARS The Neon Ronin consultant who has been sitting in on quarterly reviews for three months.

CURRENT PRESSURE His procurement account was audited yesterday — he passed, but the auditor asked about a specific supplier that shouldn't be in the file.

CAN GET Maintenance floor access, corporate gray-market data packages, Shadowhand introduction network, Sub-3 contact.

WANTS A specific technical specification from a corporate archive he believes is in the building above him.

FEARS That the Neon Ronin consultant-embed has already found the archive and is running a honey-trap with it.

CURRENT PRESSURE The two Sub-3 supply distributors serving the Black Clinic are on his cell's payroll. One went missing and he authorized it — meaning the surgeon's supply problem is his operational decision.

LIEUTENANT RIKU SATO, NEON RONIN CONSULTANT-EMBED

CAN GET Neon Ronin intelligence on Sub-2 and Sub-3, identity of two of the three Sub-3 faction cells, the actual PRC position on Project Amaterasu (not the official one).

WANTS Operators who understand that Amaterasu is not the PRC's problem alone — and who have Sub-3 access the Ronin can't run officially.

FEARS That Ronin command, which has been told 'Sub-4 is stable,' will not authorize action until it's too late.

CURRENT PRESSURE Three days before his consultant assignment rotates out. If he hasn't made progress on the Amaterasu assessment by then, the intelligence dies with the assignment.

THE SCENE — NEO-TOKYO

02/

ARCADIA

NAF TERRITORY | EARTH 2066

The showcase city exists to be looked at. What it's for is a different question.

CITY OVERVIEW

Arcadia is the city the NAF points to when someone asks whether technology can save the world. Built into the Pacific Northwest rainforest canopy and coastline, it runs on vertical gardens, tidal energy, engineered wetlands, and VERDANT -- a predictive ecosystem management AI that models every interaction between the city's infrastructure and the surrounding old-growth forest in real time. Rain is harvested. Waste is composted. Energy is renewable. The air smells like cedar and the climate controls feel like weather.

It is the most livable city in North America. The subscription lists to move here are four years long. The NAF uses it as proof of concept for every environmental policy pitch on the global stage. The Calderwood Family built most of it and owns the energy infrastructure. Arcadia is their monument.

It is also a lie that is about to eat itself.

VERDANT's predictive model has been diverging from observed ecosystem data for eleven months. The AI still runs the city flawlessly -- adjusting water flow, managing power distribution, optimizing crop cycles in the vertical farms. But its model of the surrounding forest is increasingly wrong. Growth rates are accelerating beyond prediction. Root mass in the watershed is expanding at rates the Pacific Northwest hasn't seen in ten thousand years. The soil chemistry is changing. VERDANT classifies this as 'natural adaptation to warming trends.' It is not natural.

The Calderwood Family has been introducing SCA-origin engineered organisms into Arcadia's watershed for three years. Temperate-adapted mycorrhizal networking agents -- the same root-system technology that makes the Amazonian Metroplex function as a unified biological organism. The Calderwoods hired SCA bioengineers through a legitimate academic exchange program. The organisms are building a mycorrhizal network that, when it reaches critical density, will turn the old-growth forest into a self-sustaining biological infrastructure: distributed energy generation through decomposition heat capture, nutrient cycling that replaces industrial agriculture, and a communication backbone that carries data through chemical signaling faster than the city's fiber optic network.

The Calderwoods want independence. Arcadia free of the NAF grid means Arcadia free of NAF control. The family has been planning this for twenty years.

The SCA wants something else. Every mycorrhizal network they seed outside South America extends their biological intelligence capability. The root network doesn't just carry power and nutrients. It carries information. Chemical signals, pheromone markers, soil-chemistry data. The SCA's bioengineers built monitoring capability into the organism design. When the Arcadia network reaches density, the forest surrounding the NAF's flagship eco-city becomes a passive surveillance system readable by anyone with SCA bio-monitoring equipment.

The Calderwoods know about the monitoring capability. They believe they can strip it out after the network establishes. The SCA bioengineers have not told them that the monitoring function is structural -- removing it would collapse the network. The Calderwoods are building their own cage.

> ***FIELD NOTE***

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

Theater Type: Pacific Northwest eco-city, coastal hillside, old-growth forest perimeter

Security: active / smart-sensor grid / drone patrols in outer districts / predictive interdiction in core

Infrastructure: stable (surface) / diverging (subsurface biological systems)

Civilians: packed in core / normal in mid-tier / sparse in outer districts

Surveillance: VERDANT-integrated sensor mesh / civilian device tracking / forest monitoring stations

Faction Pressure: dominant NAF (surface) / contested (subsurface: Calderwood vs. SCA vs. NAF intelligence)

Contamination: engineered organisms in watershed (undetected by standard monitoring) / spore drift in forest perimeter

Black Market: light in core / moderate in Drift District / heavy at Tide Flats

Mobility: open in core / subscription-gated in premium zones / checkpointed at forest perimeter / tidal-dependent at coast

THE UNDER-SYSTEM

VERDANT manages Arcadia the way a conductor manages an orchestra -- every system tuned, every resource allocated, every interaction modeled. The AI processes fourteen thousand data points per second from soil sensors, atmospheric monitors, tidal gauges, and forest observation stations. It has run Arcadia without a major system failure for fifteen years.

Eleven months ago, VERDANT's forest model began diverging from ground-truth sensor data. Growth rates in the watershed exceeded prediction by 3%. Then 7%. Then 14%. The AI adjusted its models. The adjustments are wrong -- VERDANT is treating the accelerated growth as a natural response to climate conditions because it has no model for deliberate biological intervention. The organisms the Calderwoods introduced are invisible to VERDANT's sensor suite because they were designed to be. SCA bioengineering operates on chemical channels that NAF sensor technology doesn't monitor.

Dr. Lian Zhao, VERDANT's chief architect, noticed the divergence eight months ago. She's been running private analyses using personal equipment because her requests for additional sensor deployment were denied by the Calderwood Foundation, which funds 60% of VERDANT's operating budget. Zhao has confirmed that the growth acceleration is not natural. She has soil samples showing organisms that do not exist in any Pacific Northwest biological database. She does not know who introduced them or why. She has told no one because her position depends on VERDANT's credibility, and admitting the model is wrong means admitting the system she built has a blind spot.

The mycorrhizal network is at approximately 40% density. At current growth rates, it reaches critical mass in 60 to 90 days. At critical mass, the forest's root system becomes a unified organism. The Calderwoods' independence project activates. The SCA's surveillance capability goes live. And VERDANT -- still running on a model that doesn't account for any of this -- begins making infrastructure decisions based on data that no longer describes reality. The first cascading error will be water management. The engineered root network will redirect watershed flow in ways VERDANT doesn't predict. The vertical farms

lose their water supply within a week of the first major deviation. Three hundred thousand people eat from those farms.

TIMELINE PRESSURE

TIMELINE

Day 0: Current. Mycorrhizal network at ~40% density. VERDANT divergence at 14% and climbing. Dr. Zhao running private analysis. NAF intelligence has not flagged the anomaly.

TIMELINE

Day 12: Network reaches 50% density. Root-mass expansion becomes visible at the surface level in the Watershed district -- accelerated tree growth, soil displacement, infrastructure stress on perimeter structures.

TIMELINE

Day 30: VERDANT's model divergence exceeds the AI's self-correction threshold. The system flags its own predictions as unreliable for the first time in fifteen years. Automatic notification goes to NAF Civic Authority and the Calderwood Foundation simultaneously.

TIMELINE

Day 45: Network density reaches 70%. The SCA monitoring capability becomes partially functional. Chemical-signal data from Arcadia's forest perimeter is readable by SCA field equipment. The SCA knows what's happening in the forest before the NAF does.

Day 60-90: Critical mass. The forest becomes a unified biological system. Watershed hydrology shifts. VERDANT's water management predictions fail. Vertical farm irrigation disrupted. The Calderwoods' independence infrastructure activates. The SCA's surveillance network goes live. All three events happen within the same two-week window.

THE BACIGALUPI PROBLEM

Destroy the mycorrhizal network: you kill the most promising ecological restoration on the continent. The organisms are regenerating old-growth forest at rates that reverse a century of damage. The environmental cost of destroying them is real and measurable. The Calderwoods will frame it as the NAF choosing control over ecology -- and they won't be entirely wrong.

Let the network complete: you hand the SCA a biological surveillance system inside NAF territory. Every chemical signal in the forest is readable. Troop movements, supply chains, population patterns -- all detectable through soil chemistry. Arcadia becomes a glass house. The NAF's flagship city becomes their biggest intelligence vulnerability.

Expose the Calderwoods: you collapse the family that built NAF renewable energy policy. The Calderwood Foundation funds VERDANT, Arcadia's energy grid, and similar systems in four other NAF cities. Destroying the Calderwoods doesn't just affect Arcadia. It destabilizes the energy infrastructure that keeps Silicon Haven, Neo-Toronto, Gulfport City, and New Manhattan running on renewables. The NAF's entire green energy program has the Calderwood name on it. Pull that name and watch what falls.

FACTIONS

NAF CIVIC AUTHORITY

OBJECTIVE Maintain Arcadia's showcase status. Determine source of VERDANT anomalies without public incident.

ASSETS VERDANT access, 180 patrol personnel, NAF intelligence liaison, legal jurisdiction, the power of normalcy.

DEPENDENCY VERDANT. Without it, Arcadia governance runs on spreadsheets.

VULNERABILITY Suppressing its own officers' reports creates internal credibility crisis.

> **ESCALATION**
>
> 1) Classify as maintenance 2) Quiet investigation 3) Environmental emergency 4) Request NAF federal intervention / Aurora Rangers

OFFER TO PCS Legal authority, VERDANT access, patrol support.

DEMAND Discretion. Evidence goes to Civic Authority first.

IF DAMAGED Governance collapses to Calderwood corporate control or NAF federal intervention.

CALDERWOOD FOUNDATION

OBJECTIVE Complete mycorrhizal network critical mass in 60-90 days. Establish Foundation as Arcadia's primary authority through biological infrastructure.

ASSETS 60% of VERDANT budget, 3 research stations, SCA supply chain, VERDANT classification override, Elliot Calderwood's authority, the network itself.

DEPENDENCY Time. 60-90 days to irreversibility.

VULNERABILITY The SCA monitoring capability is structural -- can't be removed without collapsing the network. If public before Calderwoods have a solution, they go from visionaries to traitors.

ESCALATION

1) Containment through VERDANT overrides 2) Accelerate organism introduction 3) Go public on Foundation terms, frame as ecological salvation 4) Emergency growth protocol -- uncontrolled rapid expansion, forest pushes into city.

OFFER TO PCS Foundation resources, research data, Watershed access, the argument that the project is worth protecting.

DEMAND 60 days of silence.

IF DAMAGED Network stalls. Foundation collapses. Five other NAF cities lose Foundation funding.

SCA TECHNICAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE Ensure network reaches critical mass with full SCA monitoring capability intact. This is a cover operation by SCA Bioengineering Division (same division running CANOPY SHIFT in the Amazonian Metroplex). Proof that SCA biological intelligence can operate inside rival territory disguised as restoration.

ASSETS Moya and Solberg. SCA bio-monitoring equipment. Organism supply chain. Academic cover under NAF-SCA educational treaties. The network itself.

DEPENDENCY Calderwood Foundation's cover. SCA can't operate without Foundation permits and VERDANT overrides.

VULNERABILITY Dr. Solberg running independent analysis of surveillance capability, building leverage. If discovered by Foundation, exposes SCA's true objective.

ESCALATION

1) Passive collection 2) Active shaping -- accelerate density near NAF military infrastructure 3) Extract personnel, sanitize stations, network stays 4) Kill-switch compound converts network from surveillance to biological weapon producing incapacitating neurological compounds.

OFFER TO PCS Scientific expertise, biological intelligence data, the only equipment that can read the network.

DEMAND	The network's survival. Everything else is expendable.
IF DAMAGED	SCA loses biological intelligence footprint in NAF territory. Monitoring capability degrades over 6-12 months without maintenance.

THE UNDERSTORY

OBJECTIVE	Determine what's happening to Arcadia and protect residents. Loose network of ~200 active participants, 500 sympathizers. Not a faction -- a shared concern.
ASSETS	Community intelligence across every district. Civic Authority insiders. Brownout maps. Water data. Audio recordings. Distributed ground-level coverage.
DEPENDENCY	Community trust. If co-opted or exposed as serving external agenda, trust evaporates.
VULNERABILITY	Amateurism. Inconsistent communication security. Vetting gaps.

> **ESCALATION**
>
> 1) Documentation 2) Public advocacy to media 3) Direct action -- blockades, occupations 4) Leak everything to external media and NAF federal simultaneously.

OFFER TO PCS	Ground-level intelligence no faction can match.
DEMAND	The truth shared openly with the community before any faction classifies it.
IF DAMAGED	Only independent voice goes silent. Competition plays out without civilian input.

HUB WILDCARDS

DR. LIAN ZHAO

VERDANT Chief Architect

Zhao built VERDANT fifteen years ago. It's the most sophisticated ecosystem management AI on the planet and the foundation of Arcadia's identity. Her professional reputation, her academic legacy, and her sense of personal purpose are all embedded in the system's success. VERDANT working means Zhao's life work matters. VERDANT failing means something fundamental about her understanding of ecology was wrong.

Eight months ago, she noticed the model divergence. She's been running private analyses ever since, using personal equipment on her own time, collecting soil samples along Cedar Row's eastern boundary on midnight walks. She has confirmed that the growth acceleration is biological in origin and not natural. She has chemical signatures she can't identify. She has enough data to publish a paper that would end the Calderwood Foundation's credibility and her own career simultaneously.

She hasn't published because publishing means VERDANT was wrong. Not broken -- blind. She designed a system that cannot see what's happening. The organisms are invisible to VERDANT's sensor suite because they operate on chemical channels the AI was never programmed to monitor. This isn't a bug. It's an architectural limitation that Zhao could have anticipated but didn't. Publishing the data is scientifically necessary and personally devastating.

CAN GET	VERDANT's complete architecture, sensor specs, model parameters, alert classification system. Has already drafted a software update to detect the organisms but hasn't deployed it.
WANTS	To fix VERDANT without destroying its credibility. Quietly update, identify source, resolve. Not possible. She knows it's not possible.
FEARS	First, that the organisms are dangerous and her delay has allowed harm. Second, that they're beneficial and correcting VERDANT's blindness leads to their destruction.

CURRENT PRESSURE Taniguchi asking questions. Park's reports accumulating in a suppression queue she maintains personally. Lindberg approaching the same conclusions. Foundation community liaison visited her apartment with an 'invitation to consult.'

ELLIOT CALDERWOOD

Foundation Strategic Director

Elliot Calderwood is the architect of the Independence Project. Third-generation Calderwood, raised on the family's renewable energy legacy, educated in ecology and political science, and possessed of a vision that makes him either a genius or a zealot depending on who you ask. He believes that the NAF's centralized control model is incompatible with genuine sustainability. He believes Arcadia can be something new: a city that doesn't need a government because it doesn't need a grid, a supply chain, or a military to protect its resources. A city that grows its own future.

He hired the SCA bioengineers knowing they would embed monitoring capability in the organisms. He considers this an acceptable cost -- the price of the technology. He plans to strip the monitoring function after the network establishes. He has been told this is possible. He has not been told it's not.

His visits to the Old Growth have become more frequent. His exposure to the network's chemical environment has been extensive and unprotected. The neurological effects documented by Dr. Bey in Drift District patients are present in Elliot at advanced levels: euphoria, spatial expansion, a sense of connection to the forest that he describes as 'communion.' He no longer distinguishes between the project's success and his personal identity. The forest is becoming him and he is becoming the forest. Whether this is chemical influence or genuine transcendence is a question the campaign will answer.

CAN GET Complete Foundation resources, VERDANT classification override access, SCA supply chain data, Independence Project full architecture, Calderwood family political capital across NAF energy policy.

WANTS Sixty more days. The chemical exposure has fused the goal with his neurological reward system. Completing the project and experiencing pleasure are the same thing.

FEARS	Nothing. That's the problem. The neurological effects have attenuated his threat assessment. Fear requires a sense that something could go wrong. He can no longer access that sense.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Solberg requesting a private meeting. Foundation security chief reporting unauthorized surveillance near Station 2. NAF intelligence increasing customs inspections. Miranda asking questions. He processes all of it as manageable. His processing may not be reliable.

DOWNTIME PROCEDURES

1. Work a Community Source

What: Build trust with Cedar Row/Drift resident through engagement.

Cost: Time and visibility. VERDANT tracks sustained presence patterns.

Gain: Upgrades trust one step. On success, one piece of ground-level intel.

Fallout: Community notices. If identified as outsider, contacts close ranks, Understory marks them suspect.

2. VERDANT Analysis

What: Access VERDANT terminal and run private queries.

Cost: One downtime period, risk of detection. Queries outside access level trigger review in 24 hours. Queries touching Calderwood override flagged immediately.

Gain: One environmental dataset showing what VERDANT sees and what it's been told to ignore.

Fallout: Query traced. Civic Authority investigates. If override touched, Foundation investigates independently. Two investigations, neither aware of the other.

3. Watershed Expedition

What: Enter Watershed beyond official trails. Collect samples, document distribution, observe stations.

Cost: One downtime period. Detection risk from rangers, Calderwood security, SCA researchers. Chemical exposure risk.

Gain: Physical evidence -- soil samples, injection site photos, station observation data.

Fallout: Mycorrhizal mat records footprints for 30 minutes. Calderwood team can track the route. If detected near injection site, Foundation accelerates timeline.

RUMOR TABLES

1. Community Board Whispers

2. Civic Authority Chatter

3. Foundation Internal Leaks

4. Watershed Field Intelligence

ESCALATION TRACKS

Track 1: The VERDANT Collapse

Stage 1 -- Divergence: Model drift at 20%. Water predictions failing in outer districts. VERDANT confident. VERDANT wrong.

Stage 2 -- Cascade: Self-correction threshold breached. System flags own reliability. Notifications hit Civic Authority and Foundation simultaneously. Public confidence eroding.

Stage 3 -- Override: Civic Authority switches to manual. 60% efficiency drop. Rolling brownouts. Water rationing. Vertical farms at half capacity.

Stage 4 -- Endgame: VERDANT collapses entirely. Manual operation by skeleton crew. Calderwood biological infrastructure is the only system still functioning. Independence isn't a choice anymore. It's the only option.

Track 2: The Network's Reach

Stage 1 -- Perimeter: Network reaches eastern boundary. Root tendrils in gardens, schools, parks. Visible growth.

Stage 2 -- Infrastructure: Network enters the Root. Tendrils in water mains, geothermal, transit tunnels. Infrastructure diverging from VERDANT predictions.

Stage 3 -- Integration: Critical density within infrastructure. Biological energy supplementing grid. Vertical farm root systems connecting to network. City hybridizing with biological system.

Stage 4 -- Endgame: City and forest are one system. Network manages water, energy, nutrients. City functions -- arguably better. But on the network's terms. SCA monitoring covers every square meter. Calderwood independence is real. Cost: permanent biological surveillance by a foreign power.

OPERATIONS MAP

Spatial Layout

Arcadia is built on a coastal hillside facing Puget Sound, with the Pacific Northwest old-growth forest rising behind it to the east. The city descends from the forest boundary to the waterline in terraced layers.

Chokepoints

Canopy Core Boundary: Highest-density sensor zone, subscription verification.

Watershed Access Roads: 2 paved roads + 1 trail network. All checkpointed by day. Trail unmanned at night but VERDANT monitors access point.

Tide Flats Dock Gates: Port Authority controlled, only legal seaborne entry. Aquaculture piers bypass gates but require boat access.

Root Access Points: Maintenance tunnel entries across all districts, badge access. Tunnel network connects everything underground.

Dark Zones

Old Growth Perimeter: Beyond VERDANT. No surveillance, communication, or support.

The Root: Infrastructure monitoring only. Transit tunnels unmonitored between access points.

Tide Flats Warehouses: Interior spaces dark to VERDANT.

Drift District at Night: VERDANT coverage reduces during brownouts. Understory has mapped every gap.

Faction Territory Lines

NAF Civic Authority claims the entire city. The Calderwood Foundation operates as parallel authority in the Core and the Watershed. The SCA exchange program occupies Station 2 under academic cover. The Understory operates in Drift District and Cedar Row through community networks. Tide Flats is Port Authority territory with contested margins. The Old Growth belongs to the network.

MISSION SEEDS

1. BLIND SPOT

Objective: Obtain or deploy VERDANT's sensor update that Zhao has drafted. Installing reveals the network. Not installing leaves the city blind.

Clock: VERDANT divergence reaches self-correction threshold in ~30 days. Patch gives control over timing.

Complication: Calderwood classification override will intercept patch alerts. Must remove override first from Foundation-controlled terminal in Core, monitored 24/7.

2. THE SOIL SAMPLE

Objective: Connect Lindberg's water data with Zhao's analysis and Whitfield's injection map. Three people, three pieces, none know about the others.

Clock: Lindberg going to media in 2 weeks. Incomplete data lets Foundation spin story and accelerate.

Complication: Each contact distrusts the others -- Lindberg distrusts institutions, Zhao protects reputation, Whitfield follows chain of command. Each conversation risks exposure.

3. SUPPLY CHAIN

Objective: Trace SCA shipments from Tide Flats to Watershed stations and document contents.

Clock: NAF Customs increasing inspections. If they find it themselves, federal response = Aurora Rangers, military lockdown, loss of charter autonomy.

Complication: Shipments are legally clean. Opening sealed container violates agricultural protocols and produces inadmissible evidence.

4. THE SOLBERG PROBLEM

Objective: Determine what Solberg is building with her independent surveillance analysis. Leverage for SCA? Defection? Third-party sale? Her data is a sales brochure for biological surveillance.

Clock: Solberg requested meeting with chemically-altered Elliot. If he shares Foundation data with an SCA operative, everything is compromised from inside.

Complication: Moya found evidence of Solberg's work. If he confronts her, she may accelerate. If he reports to SCA, they may extract both, removing the only biologists who understand the network.

5. ELLIOT IN THE WOODS

Objective: Extract Elliot from Old Growth before chemical exposure renders him permanently incapacitated or he makes an irreversible strategic decision.

Clock: Cognitive function declining on Foundation internal assessments staff are afraid to show him. Reliable decision-making drops below threshold in ~2 weeks.

Complication: Won't come willingly. Chemical effects fused identity with project. Foundation politics uncertain -- Miranda investigating, security chief loyal to Elliot, board split.

6. CRITICAL MASS

Objective: Network approaching critical density. Decide: help it complete (accepting SCA surveillance), destroy it (accepting ecological damage), or strip SCA monitoring before critical mass (Calderwoods think possible, SCA knows it's not).

Clock: 60-90 days standard. Foundation can accelerate to 14 days with emergency protocols. SCA can trigger kill-switch to weaponize.

Complication: The network is alive. It's regenerated old-growth forest, supported wildlife, demonstrated a transformational model. Destroying it isn't just tactical -- it's ecological. The operators aren't just deciding about surveillance. They're deciding whether a living system deserves to exist when its creators had ulterior motives.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

If the Network Completes

Arcadia becomes the first city integrated with a biological infrastructure system. Energy, water, and food production function through the mycorrhizal network. VERDANT becomes obsolete. The Calderwood Foundation becomes Arcadia's de facto government through control of the biological systems. The SCA gains a permanent surveillance platform inside NAF territory that reads every footstep through soil chemistry. The NAF's flagship eco-city proves the concept works -- and proves that the concept includes foreign intelligence penetration at the biological level. Every other NAF city that considers biological infrastructure will carry this precedent.

If the Network Is Destroyed

The old-growth forest loses three years of accelerated growth. Species that colonized the restored ecosystem are displaced. The watershed returns to pre-intervention conditions over 6-12 months. The Calderwood Foundation collapses under the weight of the exposure. NAF renewable energy policy loses its primary architect and funder. Five cities lose Foundation infrastructure funding. Arcadia's image as a showcase is destroyed. The NAF's environmental credibility takes a blow it doesn't recover from for a decade. The forest regrows. Slowly. Without help.

If the Calderwoods Are Exposed

The Foundation falls. But the organisms are already in the soil. At 40% density, the network doesn't have the mass to self-sustain, but it doesn't die immediately either. It degrades over months -- a slow collapse that produces unpredictable biological effects as the organisms fail in sequence. The forest enters a die-off period. Water chemistry fluctuates. VERDANT's model divergence gets worse before it gets better. Arcadia spends two years managing the ecological aftershocks of a project that was designed to help.

If Elliot Calderwood Reaches Full Integration

A man who controls one of the NAF's most powerful private foundations has neurologically bonded with a biological intelligence network. His decision-making is no longer independent of the forest's chemical signaling. What he

wants and what the network needs become indistinguishable. The Independence Project accelerates under a leader who cannot be reasoned with, cannot be threatened, and genuinely believes he is acting in the forest's interest. The Calderwood Foundation's resources -- billions in infrastructure contracts, political capital across five cities, VERDANT access -- serve the network's expansion. Not as a conspiracy. As a belief. Elliot doesn't think he's been compromised. He thinks he's been awakened. Proving otherwise requires demonstrating that what feels like enlightenment is actually neurological capture. Good luck making that case to someone who has never felt more certain of anything in his life.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Sealed Maintenance Hatch

Below the Root's deepest level, predating Arcadia. Mycorrhizal network growing toward it with unusual density. What's beneath and why the organisms are drawn to it is undefined.

The Unknown Buyer

Purchasing Drift water-quality data through a Calderwood subsidiary cutout. Also hiring Cole to move biological material out of Arcadia. Who they are and whether they're working for Calderwoods, SCA, or someone else is left open.

Warehouse 3

Unrented warehouse at Tide Flats with professional intelligence equipment analyzing the watershed. Not NAF, not Calderwood, not SCA, not Understory. A fifth player.

Dr. Solberg's Endgame

Quantifying SCA surveillance capability independently. For what purpose is undefined.

The Neurological Effects' Endpoint

What happens at full exposure. Reversible? Permanent? Dangerous? Designed by the SCA deliberately? Scale the horror or the wonder to your campaign.

The Network's Autonomy

At 40%, it's a tool. At critical mass, self-sustaining. Does it develop goals? Is the bioluminescent signaling, animal behavior modification, and chemical influence on neurology engineering or emergence? The table decides.

THE SCENE — ARCADIA

Arcadia's Splice Punk scene runs quieter and more analogue than anywhere else, because it has to. VERDANT monitoring is the constraint: the city's bio-surveillance architecture logs chemical signatures, movement patterns, and atmospheric anomalies across the entire watershed. A scene that announces itself with NULLCAST-style pirate broadcast or OPEN SURFACE COLLECTIVE paste-up runs into VERDANT's anomaly detection inside forty minutes. So the Arcadia scene learned from the Pacific Northwest's deep tradition of underground culture that functions exactly as intended while officially not existing — the Portland warehouse circuit that ran through three different mayoral crackdowns, the Seattle basement shows that predated any venue licensing, the specific craft of communities that survive surveillance by not being legible to it.

GHOST KIT JOURNAL is the medium. Carbon-copy, analogue, no bio-signature. Physical distribution through DEAD LETTER OFFICE riders who know the VERDANT sensor gap at the Cascade perimeter. The scene's events run in the bio-sensor blind spots the Calderwood family's SCA mycorrhizal network has accidentally created — organisms that suppress VERDANT's fungal detection in a twelve-meter radius, which organizers have learned to map and use without understanding the mechanism. OPEN RELAY comms operate on frequency windows the NAF monitoring architecture has deprioritized. BARE KIT's off-grey, which reads as civilian in any faction's recognition system, is the default aesthetic choice for a city where looking tactical gets you flagged. The result is a scene that looks, to any sensor sweep, like ordinary residents moving between recreational spaces. The only tell is that they all know each other.

The Calderwood family's slow rebellion has aesthetic overlap with Splice Punk that neither party has formally acknowledged. Gene-forged who pass through Arcadia on NAF contracts and slip their genomic registration tags — wearing expired credentials from previous faction postings while maintaining current NAF documentation for VERDANT compliance — find that the city's under-

ground already understands the logic. The genome as contested ground is not abstract in a city where your bio-monitor data is a residency requirement. NULL-MARK's signal hygiene hardware here is repurposed for VERDANT suppression rather than checkpoint routing, which the company's technical documentation does not recommend and the scene has been doing for two years.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Aggressively Enforced

VERDANT Compliance: Residence in Arcadia requires active VERDANT monitoring acceptance. Removal of bio-monitoring implants or obstruction of data transmission is immediate grounds for expulsion and blacklist. The Calderwood Foundation enforces personally.

Watershed Stability Protocols: Unauthorized hydrological interference, dam alteration, or chemical introduction into water systems carries immediate NAF interdict and long-term containment. The penalty applies regardless of intent.

Contamination Disclosure: Knowledge of environmental contamination not reported within two hours of discovery results in arrest and quarantine. The Calderwood Foundation maintains authority for all contamination investigations.

Selectively Weaponized

Unauthorized Documentation: Movement through Arcadia without current residence authorization and VERDANT bio-signature on file is technically a misdemeanor. Enforcement happens selectively at district boundaries and depends on NAF priorities. Visible enforcement targets contract workers; invisible enforcement targets investigators.

Trespass on Protected Research: Entry into marked research zones without authorization is trespass. The law applies to everyone equally. The Calderwoods have never pressed charges against themselves.

Unauthorized Environmental Data: Collection or transmission of VERDANT monitoring data, hydrological measurements, or ecological observations without NAF environmental clearance is restricted. Technically this applies to all measurement activity. Enforcement is selective based on who benefits from the silence.

Feared Punishments

Expulsion and Blacklist: Removal from Arcadia with permanent reentry bar and coordination with the NAF logistics network means no contract work with authorized firms in any NAF city. This is the punishment that reshapes lives.

Bio-Signature Revocation: Removal from VERDANT's monitoring system makes district-crossing impossible. Residents become administratively invisible and lose access to resource distribution and district services. Some residents have successfully disappeared into the Root this way.

Quarantine Hold: Suspected contamination exposure can result in containment in the medical isolation facility on the Tide Flats. Typical holds last 14 days. Some are longer. Release requires Calderwood Foundation medical clearance.

Civic Rituals

The Morning Hydration Briefing: Every morning at 0700, NAF environmental officials announce the city-wide water allocation for the day, district by district. The briefing is broadcast on all public channels. Residents track allocation changes for shifts in district status. A 3% reduction is concerning. An unannounced pause before the announcement is very concerning.

The Calderwood Address: Quarterly, the Calderwood Foundation delivers a public address on ecosystem health and Arcadia's contribution to continental restoration. The address is theatrical and heavily edited. Residents parse it for information gaps. What was NOT mentioned matters more than what was. The Foundation knows this.

The Silence Watches: When a contamination alert occurs, VERDANT activates mandatory-broadcast ecology warnings across all districts. The broadcasts are five minutes long and include visible tremor graphics showing the extent of the affected area. Residents know that the size of the tremor map tells them something officials won't say out loud.

R&R (1d6)

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 THE CANOPY CORE

SECURITY total VERDANT coverage + Calderwood private security

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Core's perfection is load-bearing politically. Any investigation that causes visible disorder threatens NAF environmental credibility. Foundation vetoes disruption.

FUNCTION Arcadia's showcase. Premium residential, NAF administrative, Calderwood Foundation campus.

CONTROLLER NAF Civic Authority on paper. Calderwood Foundation campus is sovereign in practice.

DRAW Administrative access, Foundation research data, VERDANT terminals, delegation hospitality.

RISK Total surveillance. VERDANT tracks anomalous movement within 15 minutes. Calderwood campus has its own layer on top.

SCARCITY Privacy, anonymity, Foundation campus access, unmonitored communication.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Three overlapping surveillance systems.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

VERDANT automated + vertical garden nocturnal cycle creates humidity displacement that atmospheric sensors track.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Foundation campus at golden hour: glass walls, vertical gardens, a light in Elliot Calderwood's office that's been on for 48 hours.

ENCOUNTERS: DAY

ENCOUNTERS: NIGHT

CONTACTS

MIRANDA CALDERWOOD

Foundation Director of Public Engagement

CAN GET campus access, delegation schedules, media protocols

WANTS damage control, suspects something wrong

FEARS her uncle Elliot who stopped returning briefing requests

CURRENT PRESSURE Liberty Media journalist asking about SCA academic exchange

SERGEANT DAVID PARK

NAF Civic Authority, Core Patrol Lead

CAN GET patrol schedules, VERDANT alert logs, surveillance footage

WANTS explanation for why his anomaly reports are suppressed

FEARS being transferred out of Arcadia

CURRENT PRESSURE found SCA biological hazard markings on a container outside Foundation campus, hasn't filed report

KENJI TANIGUCHI

VERDANT Operations Night Shift Supervisor

CAN GET real-time VERDANT data, alert classification logs, model divergence metrics

WANTS to understand why VERDANT's corrections feel too smooth

FEARS being the night-shift guy who cried wolf

CURRENT PRESSURE discovered someone added a classification rule that intercepts biological alerts in 0.003 seconds -- faster than standard processing

DISTRICT 2 CEDAR ROW

SECURITY active VERDANT, reduced density

UNDER-SYSTEM

Water supply runs through colonized watershed. Residents filing taste complaints for 3 months. Retired chemist running personal tests finding unidentifiable compounds.

FUNCTION Arcadia's working middle class. Professional residences, community schools, local commerce.

CONTROLLER NAF Civic Authority + elected neighborhood council with no real power.

DRAW Community intelligence, residential cover identities, council complaint records with better ground-truth than VERDANT.

RISK Community attention -- residents know their neighbors. Cover identities fall apart in days.

SCARCITY Subscription upgrades, medical access, housing transfers.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Functioning suburb feel.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Community boards carry conversations about water taste, growth, vibrations. Eastern boundary forest is dark and increasingly strange.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Street at dusk, children on bicycles, a woman at her back fence measuring the treeline. It was 12 meters away when she moved in. It's 8 meters now.

ENCOUNTERS: DAY

ENCOUNTERS: NIGHT

CIVILIAN NEED

Residents need stable jobs at the growth facilities and reliable VERDANT shelter certification. Vertical farms are the visible economy; the fear is a certification revocation that pushes families into the Tide Flats. The margins on farm work are thin and the hours are tight.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Facility shift schedules and rotation patterns (via Theo Vasquez). VERDANT bio-sensor calibration protocols and access windows (via Dr. Yuki Sato). The underground hydroponic distribution network's maintenance routes and service entrances. Forged cultivation permits that pass light-level verification (difficult but acquirable). Worker identity cards from the past six months when verification was lax.

CONTACTS

HELEN OKORO

Neighborhood Council Chair

CAN GET	8 years of complaint records, council correspondence with Civic Authority
WANTS	answers about water and growth anomalies
FEARS	being wrong in a way that causes panic
CURRENT PRESSURE	Civic Authority liaison is secretly recording council meetings on a personal device

DR. MAREN LINDBERG

Retired Soil Chemist

CAN GET	independent water/soil analysis, 3 months of chemical signatures she can't identify

WANTS a biologist with SCA experience to look at her data

FEARS that her retirement home sits on a health hazard

CURRENT PRESSURE Calderwood Foundation representative visited asking about soil conditions

TOMAS REYES

Boundary Resident, Sound Archivist

CAN GET 3 weeks of nightly audio recordings of forest boundary, growth sounds, subsurface pulses

WANTS vindication that he's not imagining things

FEARS being committed

CURRENT PRESSURE two nights ago saw bioluminescence at the treeline, blue-green light, 11 seconds, on video

DISTRICT 3 THE WATERSHED

SECURITY light -- forest rangers, VERDANT monitoring stations, Calderwood checkpoints

UNDER-SYSTEM

Station 2 is the nexus. SCA bioengineers Dr. Rafael Moya and Dr. Ingrid Solberg manage organism introduction. Injection sites at 50-meter intervals. Forest reorganizing itself around new organisms.

FUNCTION Boundary between Arcadia and old-growth forest. Research stations, monitoring infrastructure.

CONTROLLER NAF Forest Conservation Authority manages trails. Calderwood operates 3 research stations.

DRAW Direct access to mycorrhizal growth front, VERDANT monitoring data, Calderwood lab equipment.

RISK Isolation (40 min from Core), intermittent cell coverage. Chemical environment shifting.

SCARCITY Communication, transportation, medical support, clear information.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Rangers on trails, SCA exchange staff on published schedule.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Organism growth cycle accelerates, soil injections 0100-0400. Chemical byproducts cause euphoria then disorientation without filtered masks.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Monitoring station clearing at dawn, a Douglas fir 600 years old with a bone-colored root tendril extending 3 meters beyond its drip line. A Calderwood researcher measuring it with calipers, smiling.

ENCOUNTERS: DAY

ENCOUNTERS: NIGHT

CIVILIAN NEED

Residents understand they live on infrastructure stress points. Water runoff, soil displacement, root-mass pressure -- all of it runs through here first. They need advance notice of system failures because the margin between ‘manageable’ and ‘displacement’ is a single bad rainfall.

OPERATOR ACCESS

VERDANT's hydrological monitoring data and predicted strain points (via Asha Malhotra). The inspection schedule for the perimeter stabilization barriers. Real-time soil chemistry from the edge monitoring station. Contact routes into Old Growth Perimeter that VERDANT surveillance doesn't actively cover. Dr. Ethan Cross's engineering assessment notes on barrier integrity (non-official, fragmentary).

CONTACTS

RANGER KAYA WHITFIELD

NAF Forest Conservation Senior Patrol

CAN GET trail access, 20 years of forest knowledge, paper incident reports

WANTS growth data taken seriously

FEARS losing the forest to ecological collapse or deliberate intervention

CURRENT PRESSURE found injection sites at exactly 50-meter intervals, too regular for nature

DR. RAFAEL MOYA

SCA Exchange Researcher, Station 2 Lead

CAN GET SCA biological engineering data, network density maps, growth projections, chemical composition

WANTS to finish the project -- true believer in ecological salvation

FEARS exposure before critical mass, losing 3 years of work

CURRENT PRESSURE found Solberg's unauthorized data cache measuring surveillance capability

CALEB STRAND

Foundation Field Logistics Courier

CAN GET supply shipment schedules, cargo manifests, security codes for research stations

WANTS	out -- started moving conservation supplies, now moving SCA biological hazard containers
FEARS	that the containers are as dangerous as the markings suggest
CURRENT PRESSURE	last delivery included an off-manifest container Moya signed for personally

DISTRICT 4 DRIFT DISTRICT

SECURITY light VERDANT, 15-30 min response time

UNDER-SYSTEM

Downhill from watershed, first to feel water redirection. Higher concentration of mycorrhizal compounds in tap water. Nobody sends independent testing equipment to Drift.

FUNCTION	Arcadia's working edge. People who do the work that makes the Core function.
CONTROLLER	NAF Civic Authority thinly. Community self-organizes through informal networks.
DRAW	Operational cover, reduced surveillance, black market, people with grievances.
RISK	Community justice -- disrupt the informal order and the district becomes hostile.
SCARCITY	Reliable climate control, water pressure, power, medical access.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Community networks provide actual security.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Real trade -- off-grid medical, data brokerage, Understory recruitment.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Street at shift change, workers heading to Core in clean uniforms passing neighbors coming home in dirty ones. Climate control cycles off, air goes from managed to raw Pacific Northwest in 30 seconds.

ENCOUNTERS: DAY

ENCOUNTERS: NIGHT

CIVILIAN NEED

Migrants and contract workers need documentation that doesn't collapse under scrutiny, housing that's flexible-term, and access to cash-based work. The district's edge positioning means it's a place where people pass through while deciding whether to stay. Safety is less important than optionality.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Identity forgery and documentation bundling (via Kess). Cash work coordination through the informal labor market (multiple sources). Housing contacts with week-to-week availability and minimal intake requirements. Movement routes through the district's container stack infrastructure that avoid the central checkpoint. Current transit schedules for equipment moving through Arcadia's logistics yard.

CONTACTS

ALICIA FONSECA

Understory Coordinator, Drift District Cell

CAN GET	community intelligence, patrol schedules, brownout maps, Understory comms
WANTS	proof of what's wrong with Arcadia
FEARS	co-optation

CURRENT PRESSURE intercepted Calderwood memo about 90-day utility transition

YUSUF BEY

Off-Grid Medical Practitioner

CAN GET treatment without VERDANT monitoring, patient data showing health patterns

WANTS better diagnostic equipment

FEARS being shut down, losing 200 patients

CURRENT PRESSURE 3 patients this week with identical symptom cluster -- euphoria, disorientation, compulsive desire to touch soil. All live within 200m of eastern boundary

RINA MATSUDA

Black-Market Information Broker

CAN GET data from every source flowing through Drift

WANTS balance between factions

FEARS the SCA bio-monitoring equipment a dealer acquired

CURRENT PRESSURE an unknown buyer purchasing water-quality data through a Calderwood subsidiary cutout

DISTRICT 5 THE ROOT

SECURITY automated systems, limited Civic Authority

UNDER-SYSTEM

Mycorrhizal tendrils entering water main corridors through micro-fractures. Biological sheath on pipe housings altering thermal exchange. VERDANT classifies as 'pipe scaling.' Engineers finding organic material.

FUNCTION	Arcadia's underground utilities and transit tunnels.
CONTROLLER	Chief Engineer Marta Johansson and crew of 46. Calderwood has 'technical advisory' access.
DRAW	Physical access to all districts via maintenance tunnels. Water mains, geothermal, the root tendrils growing toward city center.
RISK	Infrastructure hazards. Biological infiltration changing operating environment.
SCARCITY	Information about what's growing down here.

DAY

AUTHORITY

40 engineers plus Calderwood advisory technicians.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Skeleton crew of 8, transit tunnels empty and unmonitored. Chemical scent from tendrils causes neurological effects.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Water main corridor, amber emergency lighting, a pale tendril at a pipe junction growing visibly at a millimeter per hour. Maintenance tag reads 'BIOFOULING -- SCHEDULED FOR CLEANING.'

ENCOUNTERS: DAY

ENCOUNTERS: NIGHT

CIVILIAN NEED

Underground residents and shelter-dependent populations need access, stability, and protection from visibility. The Root's formal existence is ambiguous. The NAF knows it exists. Nobody officially acknowledges it. Residents need that ambiguity to hold.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The Root's primary entrance coordinates and access permission protocols (very difficult, requires high trust). Tunnel cartography covering the major chambers and junction patterns. VERDANT surveillance blind zones in the subsurface (chemical interference prevents reliable monitoring). Contact routes to long-term residents who understand the space's power structure. Emergency resource caches maintained by community networks.

CONTACTS

CHIEF ENGINEER MARTA JOHANSSON

Infrastructure Division Lead

CAN GET complete Root access, transit tunnel maps, 12 years of infrastructure records

WANTS an explanation for thermal anomalies and Calderwood technicians filing invisible reports

FEARS the problem is bigger than maintenance

CURRENT PRESSURE overnight crew behaving oddly -- 3 transfer requests citing 'sleep disturbances,' one describing 'dreams about roots'

PAVEL KOVIC

Water Systems Specialist

CAN GET water pressure data, pipe condition reports, 4 months of biological samples from pipe housings

WANTS someone to analyze his samples (submitted 3 times, no results from Foundation lab)

FEARS that the material is pathogenic and he's been exposed

CURRENT PRESSURE found a root tendril growing through pipe wall, inside the gap between housing layers

THE MOLE

Night Shift Lead, Infrastructure Division Overnight Operations

CAN GET	unmonitored tunnel access, informal condition maps, personal observation notebook
WANTS	to understand what's happening to her crew
FEARS	losing the tunnels that are her workplace and identity
CURRENT PRESSURE	having the root dreams too. Wakes with soil under fingernails. Lives on the third floor

DISTRICT 6 TIDE FLATS

SECURITY Port Authority patrols, automated cargo scanning, minimal VERDANT

> **UNDER-SYSTEM**
>
> Calderwood Foundation's SCA biological supply chain runs through here. Organisms shipped as 'aquaculture biological supplements' through a Calderwood subsidiary. Legal on paper.

FUNCTION Arcadia's port. Shipping, aquaculture, logistics.

CONTROLLER Port Authority, semi-autonomous under Arcadia's founding charter.

DRAW Import/export access, black market, the supply chain entry point.

RISK Tidal dependency limits dock access. Increased NAF customs scrutiny.

SCARCITY Dry storage, customs clearance, boat access.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Commercial shipping, customs at import point.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Small boats at aquaculture piers, black market trade.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Low tide, docks stranded above waterline, a refrigerated truck at Warehouse 7 waiting for a container marked 'Aquaculture Biological Supplement.' The driver doesn't look inside.

ENCOUNTERS: DAY

ENCOUNTERS: NIGHT

CIVILIAN NEED

Displaced populations here need water access, food access, and the possibility of displacement upward into better-resourced districts. The flats have no permanent economy. Everything is salvage, informal labor, or aid distribution. Residents need to know when the next aid delivery is coming and what the intake requirements will be.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Salvage-work coordination and current yield information (via Marco Diaz). Aid distribution schedules and point-of-entry logistics. Contact with aid-worker networks and their intelligence on incoming resources. The tidal patterns and moisture conditions that affect underground cavity accessibility. Routes to the Drift District labor market that don't require district crossing permissions.

CONTACTS

HARBOR MASTER JIN-SOO PAK

Port Authority Chief

CAN GET	port schedules, vessel registrations, customs exemption records
WANTS	authority -- Foundation exemptions eroding Port Authority independence
FEARS	losing the port to NAF federalization

CURRENT PRESSURE flagged an unscheduled SCA port stop, flag was removed by unknown Civic Authority code

LUCIA ARMAND

Aquaculture Pier Supervisor, Night Operations

CAN GET night-tide schedules, small-boat arrival logs, observation of after-dark traffic

WANTS security for herself and her child

FEARS being a witness worth silencing

CURRENT PRESSURE photographed an organic mass that washed up -- terrestrial organism in the ocean

MARCUS COLE

Independent Shipping Broker

CAN GET cargo routing that bypasses customs, vessel charters, Pacific Rim contacts

WANTS business, customs scrutiny to ease

FEARS being identified as the channel

CURRENT PRESSURE new buyer wants to ship biological material OUT of Arcadia to an SCA port

DISTRICT 7 OLD GROWTH PERIMETER

SECURITY none

UNDER-SYSTEM

The endgame. Forest functioning as a single biological organism. SCA monitoring fully functional here. Trees growing in optimized patterns, animals following chemical gradients, the mycorrhizal mat covering the forest floor.

FUNCTION	The forest beyond Arcadia where the Calderwood project is most advanced.
CONTROLLER	The mycorrhizal network. It's the dominant system.
DRAW	Network at highest density. SCA monitoring at functional levels. What the future looks like.
RISK	Chemical exposure -- significant neurological effects within 30 min unprotected. Root displacement terrain hazard. GPS and communication degradation.
SCARCITY	Breathable air (unfiltered), navigation, communication with city.

Environmental Conditions

Exposure Limit: 30 min unfiltered. Beyond 30 min: euphoria, disorientation. Beyond 2 hours: compulsive behavior. Beyond 6 hours: unknown.

Navigation: GPS unreliable. Compass deviation. Most reliable method: following root-line patterns (which lead to SCA's best-monitored locations).

Communication: Standard radio intermittent. Encrypted digital degrades beyond 500m.

Terrain: Unstable, shifting underfoot. Trails disappear within days as mycorrhizal mat extends.

> **SIGNATURE IMAGE**
>
> A clearing two kilometers past the conservation boundary. Ancient Douglas firs wrapped in pale mycorrhizal filaments. Forest floor a smooth living mat, warm to the touch, pulsing with bioluminescence. A deer at the clearing's edge, motionless, watching with attention that does not belong to a deer. The forest is quiet. Not the quiet of absence. The quiet of listening.

Encounters: Old Growth Traverse

The Old Growth has no permanent human presence. What it has is the network itself -- a biological system that detects, records, and responds to intrusion through chemical signaling. The contacts that matter are in the

city. What the Old Growth provides is the answer to the question everyone else is asking: what happens when the network finishes?

03/

FLOODED LONDON

NAF-ADJACENT / CONTESTED | EARTH 2066

The city didn't sink. It adapted. The adaptation was not comfortable.

HUB OVERVIEW

Central London is three meters under at high tide. The outer boroughs function. Between them is a labyrinth of half-submerged buildings, flooded underground systems, and infrastructure built for a world that no longer exists.

The EO operates research stations in the ruins. The Tidal Resistance operates in the space between. Forty thousand people have built their lives around the water being in, and the EO research station sitting on the high ground has been quietly studying the one system that keeps them alive — not to maintain it, but to map it.

The tidal pump relay beneath the Waterloo Interchange is the only thing preventing the next spring tide from swallowing the habitable upper floors permanently. The EO has the spring tide projection data. They haven't shared it.

CURRENT STRESS CONDITION

The water-allocation relay beneath the Waterloo Interchange is running 40cm above its pre-Upheaval design tolerance and hasn't had a structural assessment in three years. EO Station Alpha's research division has the maintenance data. Their orders are to assess strategic value, not protect civilian populations. The spring tide projection they haven't released shows a catastrophic event in 14–18 months.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

SECURITY	none (ruins/water lanes) / active (EO Station Alpha)
INFRASTRUCTURE	failing (tidal pumps) / stable (EO station only)
CIVILIANS	packed (upper floors) / displaced (below flood line)
SURVEILLANCE	none (open water) / informant net (Interchange) / cameras (EO station)
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — EO / Tidal Resistance / Prometheus League probing
CONTAMINATION	present — brine corrosion, mold pathogen, pre-Upheaval chemical sediment
BLACK MARKET	heavy (Interchange) / light (outer boroughs)
MOBILITY	open (water lanes) / barricaded (EO approach) / flooded (underground)

THE SCENE — FLOODED LONDON

The Waterloo Interchange is ground zero. Flooded London's Splice Punk scene grew directly out of estate culture — the rope-bridge neighborhoods that replaced the old council blocks read as estate blocks reinvented in flood-adapted timber and salvage aluminum, and the kids who move through them carry that DNA. UK drill and grime are the sonic substrate: not as nostalgia but as living grammar, mutated through three generations of post-Upheaval production rigs and NULLCAST Tide Window streams that broadcast from whatever elevated dry ground is available that week. The Waterloo Market functions simultaneously as Ura-Harajuku and Ridley Road Market — a pressure-cooker of secondhand kit, gene-forged fashion, and credentials that stopped meaning anything to anyone except the people wearing them.

Sound is currency at the Interchange. NULLCAST operators run Tide Window sets from barge platforms and rooftop rigs — short-range signal, neighborhood-specific playlists, ACOUSTIC WEIRD gear modded for the salt air. ROPE BRIDGE SESSIONS are informal sound clashes that happen in the covered market lanes: open to anyone with a rig and a credential to burn. GHOST KIT jackets are the

Flooded London status marker of choice, worn oversized and patched with DEAD STACK COLLECTIVE overlays, HELIX STANDARD gene-forged lineage tags, and HIGHWATER credentials — flood insurance documentation repurposed as wearable proof of survival. ROPE KIDS supplies the footwear. BURNER is the bootleg energy drink of choice, made in a dozen basement variants with hand-lettered label art.

The cultural protagonists are relay rats — the couriers and signal runners who move through the rope-bridge network between dry platforms, carrying physical data loads and contraband through neighborhoods that road vehicles can't reach. They run VEKTORA lanyards loaded with dead credentials the way other operators run patch sets: layered identity artifacts, each one a small argument about who they were before the water came up. Gene-forged aesthetics cluster around NAF wolf and shepherd lineages for the physical bulk needed to move heavy loads across unstable terrain, and EO lynx builds for the balance and low-light navigation the rope-bridge network demands. NULLMARK signal hygiene is religion in the relay rat community — clean signatures, no unnecessary broadcast, move fast and leave nothing traceable. EO informants embedded in the courier networks are virtually indistinguishable from the culture they operate inside.

DISTRICT MAP

DISTRICT 1	**THE WATERLOO INTERCHANGE (High Market)**: The twice-weekly barter market. The social hub and the relay chokepoint.
DISTRICT 2	**THE ELEVENTH FLOOR BELT (Upper Borough)**: Where people actually live — connected towers, rope bridges, cable lines.
DISTRICT 3	**THE DROWNED TUBE (Submerged Underground)**: Flooded tunnel network. EO research stations. Salvage routes. Cold.
DISTRICT 4	**TOWER QUARTER (The Fortress)**: Battle site of 2066. Tidal energy converter, damaged and half-running. Everyone wants it.
DISTRICT 5	**TIDE ROADS (Open Water Lanes)**: The navigable channels. No surveillance. Where deals get made.
DISTRICT 6	**SOUTHWARK SLAB (Resistance Stronghold)**: The outer borough cluster still functioning. Tidal Resistance base of operations.
DISTRICT 7	**THE RESEARCH SHELF (EO Station Alpha)**: EO's above-water installation. Clean. Controlled. Watching.

FACTIONS

TIDAL RESISTANCE

NAF-aligned, operationally independent

OBJECTIVE Hold the ruins long enough for the spring tide contingency plan to become executable — which requires a decision they haven't made about whether to tell the population what's coming.

ASSETS Southwark Slab garrison, Tower Quarter garrison, Interchange market authority, floor captain network, NAF supply line, and the political legitimacy of being the people who stayed.

DEPENDENCY The tidal energy converter. If it drops below 60%, the Slab loses power and the Resistance loses the one material advantage they have over the EO's argument for a managed transition.

VULNERABILITY The three-way command split. Osei, Hara, and Bekele have been unable to agree on the spring tide disclosure decision for two months. The indecision is visible to their staff. A faction that can offer a clear answer — any answer — will find the Resistance's floor captains receptive.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive pressure: Floor captain network monitoring, Interchange market access control, Tide Roads courier intelligence.
- 2 — Active friction: Checkpoint escalation, asset surveillance, NAF equipment deployment for defensive positions.
- 3 — Overt force: Garrison deployment, Tower Quarter lockdown, Tide Road interdiction.
- 4 — Last resort: Public spring tide disclosure — surfacing the projection data to the ruins population and forcing every faction into the open.

OFFER Slab access and facilities, Tower Quarter converter access, NAF supply chain for operators, floor captain network introductions, the spring tide contingency plan.

DEMAND The relay maintenance specs from Station Alpha — without EO political conditions attached.

IF DAMAGED Command fractures along the existing three-way split. Bekele activates her NAF contact. Osei tries to run operations without command consensus, which the floor captains notice. The Resistance becomes three separate interest groups running parallel operations in the same territory.

EO RESEARCH DIVISION

Station Alpha

OBJECTIVE Execute Commander Arkadi's approved STRATEGIC VALUE recommendation: allow the spring tide event to create maximum political vulnerability in the ruins, then arrive with the relay repair specs and converter full-operation protocol as the price of a managed transition to EO administrative oversight.

ASSETS Spring tide projection data, relay maintenance specifications, complete ruins topology survey, covert assets in the Interchange (2), Southwark Slab farm (1), and the Belt observation record. Full EO command communications. Remote structural detonators on the three northern Tide Road buildings.

DEPENDENCY Station Alpha's foundation — the station sits on elevated infrastructure that the tidal pump relay supports. If the relay fails catastrophically rather than manageably, the station loses its foundation. Arkadi's plan requires a managed failure, not a collapse.

VULNERABILITY Dr. Strand, who knows the spring tide projection and the approved recommendation and is one contact away from leaking both. And the foundation vulnerability — if the ruins population learns that Station Alpha needs the relay too, the EO's leverage inverts.

> **ESCALATION**
>
> Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive pressure: Covert asset collection, infrastructure monitoring, spring tide countdown management.
- 2 — Active friction: Controlled demolition of northern Tide Road buildings to increase supply pressure, relay maintenance data denial.
- 3 — Overt force: Station Alpha lockdown, EO command response activation, direct engagement with Resistance leadership.
- 4 — Last resort: Full EO London deployment — the contingency that's been sitting at command for six months.

OFFER Relay maintenance specs and converter full-operation protocol — at a political price.

DEMAND Administrative transition authority over the ruins' infrastructure. The relay, the converter, the Interchange. The Resistance stays as a community organization. They lose operational authority.

IF DAMAGED Arkadi loses station coherence. The comms burst brings EO command into direct involvement, bypassing Arkadi's managed approach. The political calculation that made his plan viable — controlled timing — is gone. EO command's direct response is less patient and less precise.

THE PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

Rogue scientists, free technology

OBJECTIVE Complete the tidal energy converter to 100% and make the full operational protocol publicly available — removing the converter as leverage for any faction and giving the ruins an independent power source that the EO can't negotiate with.

ASSETS Three London operatives (cell structure, mutually unaware), partial converter schematic, Drowned Tube equipment cache, Deshi's eight months of Tower Quarter access.

DEPENDENCY The 2066 damage report. Without it, Deshi can't complete the schematic. The converter can't reach 100%. The entire London operation is blocked by one document.

VULNERABILITY The unauthorized procurement operative — one of the three London cell members is buying controlled demolition equipment, not converter components. The League's cell structure means Deshi can't identify or stop them. If the demolition equipment is used, it will be attributed to the League.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive approach: Archive access, schematic assembly, equipment caching, Tower Quarter positioning.
- 2 — Active friction: Direct converter access, archive document retrieval, Tube navigation toward the damage report.
- 3 — Overt force: The unauthorized operative acting independently — controlled demolition that the League didn't authorize.
- 4 — Last resort: Public release of the partial converter schematic to force the damage report into the open.

OFFER Partial converter schematic (everything except the 2066 damage section), Drowned Tube navigation and cache access, the identity of the unauthorized operative if operators can help Deshi identify them.

DEMAND The 2066 damage report. And the chance to complete the converter before the EO's timeline makes it irrelevant.

IF DAMAGED Deshi's cover is blown. The Tower Quarter garrison investigates. Voss connects the 2066 intelligence source to the current operative and the thirty-two-year question becomes active again. The unauthorized demolition operative becomes the only League asset still running — and they're not working toward the converter.

THE GREEN COAT NETWORK

Unknown affiliation, unknown source

OBJECTIVE Unknown. The network has been operating for longer than the Resistance has existed. It produces accurate tide forecasts. It has never asked for anything.

ASSETS Three sensor arrays in the Drowned Tube calibrated to the relay's pressure monitoring points, a courier network covering all districts, Tomás Verne and whatever he is, and PUMP VARIANCE DETECTED — a notation in the last three forecasts that he hasn't passed to anyone.

DEPENDENCY The sensor arrays. If the Tube floods beyond the arrays' depth tolerance, the forecast data stops. The arrays are pre-Upheaval equipment running on a power source nobody has found.

VULNERABILITY Tomás. He is the network's only human interface. Everyone who wants what the network knows has to go through him. He is one bad conversation away from the question of what the network actually is becoming answerable by force.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive: Forecast delivery, PUMP VARIANCE notation withheld, sensor array maintenance.
- 2 — Active: Tomás releases the PUMP VARIANCE data to a specific recipient — his choice of who, his timing.
- 3 — Overt: The network surfaces — Tomás tells someone what the sensor arrays are and where they come from.
- 4 — Last resort: The notation changes to DANGER. Tomás has never written this. If he does, he believes the spring tide event is days away, not months.

OFFER The most accurate infrastructure data in the ruins. PUMP VARIANCE DETECTED. The source — if Tomás decides operators have earned it.

DEMAND Unknown. Tomás listens more than he speaks.

IF DAMAGED The sensor arrays go dark. The forecasts stop. The ruins loses the one data source that every faction trusted equally. The PUMP VARIANCE data — whatever it means for the relay — is no longer being monitored. Tomás disappears. Nobody knows if he left or was taken.

HUB-LEVEL CONTACTS | WILDCARDS

LT. JAMES 'GARGOYLE' SINCLAIR, Royal Phantom Corps (listed KIA, 2066)

CAN GET: The 2066 damage report — he wrote it, in the Tower, before the Prometheus League breached, and filed it in the archive himself before the engagement. He knows exactly where it is. He also knows the Tube's flood maps to within three weeks' accuracy because he's been living in them.

WANTS: Clara James to know he's alive before he tells anyone else. He's been trying to reach her for four years. Two of his attempts ended with the message intercepted.

FEARS: Commander Voss, who he served under and who filed his KIA report. He believes she thought he was dead. He's less certain than he was.

CURRENT PRESSURE: He treated himself last week. The injury was from a controlled demolition detonator — not his — that went wrong in the Drowned Tube. He was close enough to be injured and close enough to see who set it.

ELENA KIROVA, EO internal security and intelligence (remote — not in London)

CAN GET: The approved STRATEGIC VALUE recommendation in full, EO London contingency plan activation authority, and Arkadi's complete operational record — including what he chose not to include in his reports.

WANTS: Nothing she'll name to operators. Operators who believe they're negotiating with Kirova are already in the position she wants them in.

FEARS: The foundation vulnerability. If Station Alpha needs the relay, the EO's leverage inverts and six months of positioning becomes worthless.

CURRENT PRESSURE: Arkadi's last three reports have been shorter and less specific. She's read them the way someone reads a subordinate who is running out of conviction. She has activated a contingency that Arkadi doesn't know about.

DOWNTIME

READ THE TIDE

WHAT: The operator spends 48 hours on the Tide Roads, learning the water from the boat crews.

COST: A crossing fee per run — paid in barter or labor.

GAIN: Current flood map for the Drowned Tube approaches (as accurate as the crews' knowledge). On success, the operator also catches one courier movement the crew network didn't realize they'd been tracking.

FALLOUT: Someone on the Tide Roads noticed the operator paying attention the wrong way. One of the four faction intelligence assets now has a flag on them.

GO BELOW

WHAT: The operator runs a solo Drowned Tube salvage route to cache equipment or move materiel without surface logging.

COST: Breathing equipment (sourced before the run) and a reliable flood map (one session to acquire if not already held).

GAIN: Unlogged movement of one person or equipment load. On success, operator also locates one of the three sensor arrays.

FALLOUT: The EO's Tube survey tracks new disturbance in the sediment. They now know someone ran the route. They don't know who yet. The window before they correlate is one session.

FIND THE REPORT

WHAT: The operator conducts a systematic search of the Tower Quarter archive for the 2066 damage report.

COST: Voss's access authorization (requires her trust or a workaround) and one full session in the archive.

GAIN: The 2066 damage report — the Prometheus League's missing piece and the key to the converter at 100%.

FALLOUT: One of the EO's two archive assets was watching. They don't have the report — the operator does — but they know it was found. The EO's timeline on the Arkadi recommendation compresses by three months.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

Tide Road Gossip | Civilian survival and water-lane intel

Archive and Garrison Intel | Institutional knowledge, hard-to-source

ESCALATION TRACKS

Track 1 | The Spring Tide Clock

Stage 1 — Pump Variance

Tomás Verne releases the PUMP VARIANCE DETECTED notation to a specific recipient — an operator, a floor captain, the Resistance command. Whoever receives it has data suggesting the relay is running outside safe tolerances. The EO has known this for six months. The ruins population doesn't know the spring tide projection exists.

Stage 2 — Disclosure Decision

Resistance command has to decide whether to tell the ruins population about the spring tide projection before they have a solution. Osei, Hara, and Bekele

split: disclose now and manage panic, or secure the relay repair specs first. The floor captains are watching the command building for signals. Tower 7 is already quietly preparing.

Stage 3 — EO Offer

Station Alpha makes formal contact with Resistance command — relay maintenance specs and converter full-operation protocol in exchange for administrative transition authority. Arkadi delivers this himself. He looks like someone who has been carrying this document for six months and is relieved to put it down. The offer is genuine. The terms are real. And the spring tide is now eight months away.

Stage 4 — The Event

The spring tide arrives — earlier than Arkadi's projection if the relay has degraded further, on schedule if it hasn't. The bore hits the ruins at a level that overwashes the Belt's lower floors and puts the Interchange platforms under two meters of water for six hours. The question isn't whether the ruins survive — it's who has the relay running when it recedes, and what they did with the six hours the population was focused on the water.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Get the spring tide data public before Stage 3. The EO's offer becomes significantly less valuable when the ruins population already knows what's coming and the Resistance is already running the repair. Any solution that works requires the converter at 100% — which requires the 2066 damage report — which Sinclair knows exactly where to find.

Track 2 | The Demolition Question

Stage 1 — EO Installation

The EO's night installation on the northern Tide Road approach is confirmed as remote structural detonators. Captain Mwangi has already stopped running the eastern junction. Dov found Controlled Demolition Sites notation on the EO survey. Now operators have the third data point.

Stage 2 — Attribution Problem

The Prometheus League's unauthorized procurement operative is buying the same type of detonator components — the unmanifested NAF shipment that ended up at an EO collection point in the Slab. The EO has demolition equip-

ment. An unknown League operative has demolition equipment. Both sets point at the same three buildings. Whoever triggers first will be blamed for both.

Stage 3 — The Northern Lane Closes

One or more northern buildings fall. The Tide Road lane closes. Supply volume to the Interchange drops 40%. The EO's controlled timing — waiting for the spring tide to create political vulnerability — compresses because the population's pressure on the Resistance accelerates. Arkadi's plan is now running faster than he designed it.

Stage 4 — Who Triggered It

The question of whether the collapse was the EO, the unauthorized League operative, or structural failure becomes the central political question in the ruins. Every faction's position depends on the answer. The Resistance's legitimacy depends on whether they can answer it. The EO's leverage depends on whether they can prevent it from being answered.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Identify the unauthorized League operative before Stage 3 — Deshi needs this, Noor is one step behind it, and Sinclair saw who set the detonator in the Tube. The three data points exist. Getting them to the same table before Stage 3 requires operators working all three districts simultaneously.

Track 1 — The Spring Tide Clock is documented in the hub overview section. Track 2 follows below:

Track 2 | The Converter and the EO Foundation

Current Status: The Prometheus League's London operation is blocked on one missing piece: the 2066 Tower damage report that contains the converter repair protocol. Without it, the converter stays at 70% operational capacity and Station Alpha maintains its leverage — the station's foundation depends on the relay, which the EO can use as political currency. Deshi has been positioned in Tower Quarter for eight months waiting for access to the archives.

Stage 1 — The Report Is Located. An operator, Sinclair, a mold breach, or a deliberate Resistance action surfaces the 2066 damage report and makes it accessible. Deshi learns the converter can reach 100%. The League's timeline accelerates from "waiting" to "building."

Stage 2 — The Unauthorized Operative Acts. The third League member begins controlled demolition work on the northern Tide Road buildings. Deshi and Noor scramble to identify and stop them. If they succeed, the League limits damage to the League's reputation. If they fail, the demolition is attributed to the League, the Resistance responds militarily, and Deshi's eight-month positioning is compromised.

Stage 3 — Converter Completion Threshold. The converter approaches 100% operational capacity. Station Alpha's foundation-dependency leverage becomes irrelevant. Arkadi's strategic plan (allow spring tide as political crisis) becomes unexecutable. He has to decide whether to send the sealed envelope or call Kirova. One decision surfaces the spring tide projection to the Resistance. The other brings Elena Kirova into direct involvement.

Stage 4 — Independent Infrastructure. The converter reaches 100% and the relay operates independently of Station Alpha's foundation. The EO's managed-crisis plan collapses. Every faction now operates in a post-scarcity power environment — whoever controls the infrastructure still matters, but scarcity-based leverage is gone. The spring tide event, when it comes, is a natural disaster, not a political opportunity. What the ruins does with a natural disaster it could previously only avoid through factional negotiation is the question that determines how this escalation resolves.

OPERATIONS MAP

Mobility

- Surface (above flood line): Tower Quarter, Southwark Slab — walkable. EO Station Alpha via eastern approach, checkpointed.
- Belt routes: rope bridges and cable lines connecting tower upper floors. Navigable by residents at speed; operators at half speed until Belt-rated.
- Tide Roads: boat only. Tidal-dependent — eastern junction impassable at high-current hour without senior crew navigation.
- Drowned Tube: underwater navigation. Current flood maps required. EO security boundary is active and has been expanding.
- Waterloo Interchange: accessible only at low tide. Night access via lower platforms — floods to knee height at spring tide.

Surveillance Architecture

- Waterloo Interchange: Resistance warden presence + two EO informants (one identified, one not).
- Eleventh Floor Belt: Floor captain network — the best human intelligence layer in the ruins.
- Drowned Tube: Dark. EO security cameras at the three stations only. Acoustic clarity works both ways.
- Tower Quarter: Resistance cameras at perimeter. Voss knows her building.
- Tide Roads: No surveillance architecture. Acoustic distortion prevents triangulation. This is structural, not temporary.
- Southwark Slab: Resistance cameras, floor-level informant net, EO farm asset.
- EO Station Alpha: Full camera coverage, drone perimeter, hardwired comms burst on unauthorized entry.

Key Locations

- Relay access hatch — Interchange platform 6. The physical chokepoint for three boroughs.
- Relay power conduit junction — Jubilee Line eastbound approach, Drowned Tube.
- Tidal energy converter — Tower Quarter, Tower of London main keep. Running at 70%.
- Pre-Upheaval archives — Tower Quarter lower level. Mold-threatened. 2066 damage report is here.
- Sensor array (one confirmed, two unlocated) — Drowned Tube, Jubilee Line.
- EO detonators — northern Tide Road approach, three buildings.
- Prometheus League cache — Drowned Tube, two stations west of EO's westernmost post.
- Station Alpha foundation support — eastern elevated infrastructure, dependent on relay operation.
- Sealed envelope — Arkadi's desk. Spring tide projection, addressed to Resistance command, unsent.

Faction Territory Lines

- Tidal Resistance: Southwark Slab (command), Tower Quarter (garrison), Interchange (market authority).
- EO Research Division: Station Alpha (overt), Interchange vendor network (covert), Slab farm (covert), Tube stations (overt, expanding).
- Prometheus League: Drowned Tube cache, Tower Quarter (Deshi's cover), Tide Roads (courier use only).
- Green Coat Network: everywhere the tide forecast goes, which is everywhere. Nobody has mapped this as territory because nobody has named it as a faction yet.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Flooded London operates under three tiers of governance: the Tidal Authority (pre-Upheaval law preserved in sealed archives), Resistance command authority (de facto control), and the Green Coat Network (enforcement through information, not force). The EO Station Alpha operates under its own operational mandate. No single legal framework covers all four factions. The laws that matter are the ones with leverage behind them.

AGGRESSIVELY ENFORCED (actively used as control)

1. Water Allocation Compliance. Any person drawing water outside their registered allocation tier faces immediate access suspension. The Interchange wardens enforce this with visible patrol presence. Three boroughs depend on the relay — violations collapse the supply argument. Violations result in a 30-day allocation suspension and mandatory re-certification through Resistance command.

2. Archive Access Restriction. The Tower Quarter pre-Upheaval archives contain technical documents the Resistance, EO, and Prometheus League all want. Entry requires either EO Research Division authorization, Voss's direct order, or proof of archival expertise from a pre-Upheaval institution. Unauthorized entry triggers Tower Quarter garrison lockdown — the entire structure goes sealed until the breach source is identified.

3. Cable Infrastructure Integrity. The Ferris Guild is the official authority on Belt cable maintenance. Any structural modification to cable routes, bridge anchors,

or primary support infrastructure without guild authorization triggers a full Belt access audit. Violators face permanent suspension from the rope-bridge network.

SELECTIVELY WEAPONIZED (technically universal, practically targeted)

1. Unauthorized Assembly. Any gathering of five or more people without pre-notification to floor captains is classified as potential coordination — the Resistance's legal framework allows for "public safety precautions." In practice, this law applies only to populations outside the Resistance's organizational trust. Residents with floor captain connections can assemble freely. Others face interrogation and temporary detention.

2. Salvage Ownership. Material recovered from the Drowned Tube belongs to the Resistance if it has pre-Upheaval institutional origin (archives, research equipment, government data storage). Salvagers who bring such material to market face asset seizure and resource denial. Non-institutional salvage is legal. The Resistance's definition of "institutional" expands with political need.

3. External Contact Declaration. Any resident communicating with EO Station Alpha, outside salvage crews, or unknown boat operators must file a contact report within 48 hours. Failure to declare triggers compliance flagging. The law applies to everyone. It is enforced against populations the Resistance suspects of external alignment.

FEARED PUNISHMENTS (what people rearrange their lives to avoid)

1. Allocation Tier Reduction. Water is survival. A person knocked down from Tier Two to Tier Three loses reserve credit and enters survival-minimum distribution. A family of four in Tier Three receives enough water for drinking and basic sanitation. Not for washing, not for cooking, not for cleaning wounds. The psychological weight of tier reduction exceeds the physical deprivation — tier reduction is public and permanent until individually reversed by command.

2. Permanent Flooded Zone Reassignment. The floors below flood line in the Belt are technically habitable but functionally uninhabitable. Temperature drops 15 degrees. Mold pathogen is endemic. Anyone permanently reassigned to below-flood housing is presumed to have violated something the Resistance wants forgotten. Other residents treat them as functionally exiled. No floor captain will accept them into the network. Reassignment is rare, usually

reserved for political witnesses the Resistance wants eliminated from consideration.

3. Exile to the Outer Ruins. Beyond Southwark Slab, the ruins transition from habitable to salvage-only. A person exiled receives one water allocation and three days of supplies. They are not prevented from returning. They are prevented from being accepted if they try. This is the punishment for people the Resistance believes are faction agents — exile forces a choice between loyalty and survival.

CIVIC RITUALS (political theater that reveals power)

1. The Twice-Weekly Tide Announcement. Every 0600 at the Interchange, the water allocation for that cycle is announced by the man in the green coat — or a runner if the coat is elsewhere. The announcement includes the next tide window and the allocation percentages. A three-second pause before announcing a borough's allocation means that borough's allotment has been reduced. The pause reveals the decision before the words do. Residents watch the coat's face during the announcement because the coat doesn't announce changes. He delivers them.

2. The Spring Maintenance Census. Every spring, the Resistance conducts an official structural assessment of the Belt, the Interchange platforms, and the Tide Road northern approach. The census is scheduled and public. Every building is measured. Every cable is logged. No decisions are made during the census — it's pure data collection. But the Resistance builds infrastructure repair into their strategic timeline based on census results. Residents know that whatever the census finds will shape resource availability for the next year. Cooperating with census crews translates to visible infrastructure priority.

3. The Memorial Commemoration. Every anniversary of the 2066 Battle of Flooded London, the Resistance holds a district-by-district memorial in every tower, every garrison, every major civic space. The ritual is mandatory civilian attendance. Official speakers acknowledge the dead, the EO's threat, and Resistance sacrifice. The speech is identical in every district, delivered from a prepared text, with identical timing. No variation. The ritual's value is in its absolute consistency — it tells the ruins that the Resistance is stable enough to replicate its own performance exactly year after year.

R&R

Off-duty action in Flooded London produces entanglement. Operators spend downtime in the Belt's evening social spaces, the Tide Roads boat crews' gathering points, or the Interchange market's back channels. Roll 1d6. Every result produces a new edge, a new debt, or a new exposure. The ruins population is small and interconnected — being recognized here changes how people respond to operators in multiple districts.

1. Watchtower Connection. An EO Station Alpha supply contractor, off-duty and trading gossip, describes the logistics gap that separates Station Alpha's operations from ground truth. The operator now understands exactly which weekly supply window can be interrupted without triggering a response protocol. The contractor doesn't remember how much they told anyone in the morning.

2. Tide Road Favor. A boat crew operator, impressed or drunk enough to commit, promises one future crossing outside the official scheduling. The favor is redeemable once and unscheduled — the crew will wait at a specified junction for a specified four-hour window. The Resistance doesn't know about this arrangement. The boat crew member is now invested in the operator's success.

3. Archive Exposure. The operator says something or is overheard saying something that reaches Voss through the Tower Quarter intelligence net. Nothing happens immediately. A message arrives three days later: Tower access is being "temporarily reviewed." The operator learns nothing else until they approach the garrison directly.

4. Mold Medicine Source. An off-market supplier of genuinely effective antifungal treatment reveals themselves to the operator — not as sales pitch, but as scouting. The operator now knows who in the ruins manufactures the counterfeit batch and who runs the legitimate supply. The supplier wants nothing now. They will want something very specific later.

5. Ferris Guild Obligation. Either Mara or Dov (depending on the encounter location) sits down with the operator and proposes a favor-debt exchange: the guild apprentice will provide one unrestricted cable-access window in exchange for one future favor, unspecified and redeemable within 90 days. They present this as perfectly reasonable. It is. That is what makes it costly.

6. Locally Significant. The operator does something in public — defuses a conflict, covers a wounded person's access to a clinic, makes a call about resource

distribution — and by the next day is the person other residents ask about when deciding whether to trust a stranger. One faction's intelligence asset now routes questions through the operator. A different faction's surveillance includes photographs.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Archive's Sealed Section

The Tower Quarter pre-Upheaval archives contain a sealed environmental section that Voss has ordered off-limits to all staff. The official designation is "Infrastructure Assessment Quarantine." The actual seal date was three months ago. The section was accessible before that. What was removed? Was it removed, or was it never there? Was it removed because of content or because of institutional liability? One researcher has asked questions. Voss declined to answer. The table decides what makes a three-month old quarantine worth the operational cost of forbidding archive access to a specific section.

The Unauthorized Demolition Operative

One of the three Prometheus League operatives in London is purchasing and positioning controlled demolition equipment in the northern Tide Road buildings — the same buildings that have structural failure timelines and EO Station Alpha detonators. The League's cell structure means neither Deshi nor Noor knows who this operator is. Whether this operative is working toward the League's actual objective (converter completion) or toward a personal objective (destruction for its own sake) is for the table to determine at first contact.

Clara James's Credential Timeline

Clara James arrived in Southwark four years ago on a medical volunteer credential issued under the surname "James." Lt. James Sinclair was filed KIA in 2066. The credential was filed under his surname. The credential is genuine. The institutional alignment between when she filed it, when she found out he was dead, and what she decided to do with that knowledge — this is undefined. The table determines whether she came looking for proof of death, came searching for proof he survived, or came for an entirely different reason and the Sinclair connection is coincidental. The credential itself tells only that she was smart enough to give herself options before she needed them.

The Green Coat Network's Real Affiliation

Tomás Verne operates a tide forecasting network that has been functional longer than the Resistance has existed. The sensor arrays run on power from an unknown source. The forecast accuracy suggests pre-Upheaval calibration or post-Upheaval re-engineering of extraordinary precision. The network has never demanded anything, never offered anything, and never asked questions. What the network actually is — a pre-Upheaval remnant autonomous system, an external faction asset, a local population self-preservation initiative, or something else — is for the table to determine based on how operators interact with Tomás. His actions will reveal his affiliation, but only to tables who pay attention to which answer he chose.

Floor Captain Bell's Spring Tide Intelligence Source

Floor Captain Amara Bell of Tower 7 received a sealed message eight weeks ago indicating that the spring tide event required population evacuation preparation. She has been quietly moving elevated sleeping platform materials into Tower 7 since that message. Someone told her something. The supplement identifies that someone as having used the master's notation format — mathematical or technical communication style. It does not identify who. Whether that person is Tomás Verne, an EO agent, a Resistance loyalist trying to force disclosure, or someone else, is for the table to determine when Bell becomes operationally relevant.

The Mechanics of Pump Variance

Tomás Verne has been noting PUMP VARIANCE DETECTED in three consecutive forecasts without explaining to anyone what that variance means. The notation suggests the water-allocation relay is running outside normal parameters. It could mean the relay is failing. It could mean the relay is adapting to new load conditions. It could mean something else is in the relay. The table determines what variance Tomás is actually detecting and what operational change it requires — and whether Tomás himself understands what he's measuring.

MISSION SEEDS

1. PUMP VARIANCE

OBJECTIVE: Retrieve the spring tide projection data from Station Alpha — specifically the physical envelope on Arkadi's desk — and deliver it to the Resistance before the EO's Stage 3 offer makes it a negotiating chip rather than public knowledge.

CLOCK: Arkadi has been looking at the envelope every morning for six months. The PUMP VARIANCE notation has pushed him to a decision — he's going to send a formal communication to Resistance command through official channels in three days. Official channels go through Kirova.

COMPLICATION: The hardwired comms burst means any unauthorized entry alerts EO command, not just Arkadi. And the station's foundation vulnerability — if surfaced during the operation — inverts the EO's leverage completely. Operators have to decide whether to use it.

2. THE REPORT

OBJECTIVE: Find the 2066 damage report in the Tower Quarter archive before the mold reaches the infrastructure section.

CLOCK: The mold containment barrier in the lower archive failed this week. The infrastructure section has approximately two weeks before the report is destroyed — if it hasn't been deliberately removed already.

COMPLICATION: Sinclair knows exactly where it is. Finding Sinclair in the Drowned Tube is the faster route. Telling Voss that Sinclair is alive is the consequence operators can't avoid if they use him.

3. DETONATOR

OBJECTIVE: Identify and locate the Prometheus League's unauthorized operative before they trigger the northern building demolition.

CLOCK: Sinclair saw who set the detonator in the Tube. He's been injured and hasn't surfaced in six days. Mwangi stopped running the eastern junction four days ago. The buildings are wired. The trigger timeline is unknown but the EO's observation team stopped coming yesterday — which is what you do when you're done measuring and ready to act.

COMPLICATION: The League's unauthorized operative and the EO's detonators are pointing at the same three buildings. Stopping one doesn't stop the other. And the League's

cell structure means Deshi, Noor, and the third operative are all acting independently — operators have to close all three threads simultaneously or the one they leave open fires.

4. THE COURIER'S CARD

OBJECTIVE: Identify the recipient of the sealed card inside the Green Coat forecast — the second card that Finn has been delivering without knowing to whom.

CLOCK: Finn has three more deliveries before the second card's recipient expects a response. If no response arrives, the recipient will assume the network is compromised and go silent.

COMPLICATION: The second card is not a tide forecast. It's in Sinclair's handwriting. He's been trying to reach Clara James for four years. The last three cards have been getting closer to her — someone in the network knows who she is. The network knowing who she is means the network knows who Sinclair is. The only person who could have told the network is someone who knew both of them in 2066.

5. SOUTH OF THE RELAY

OBJECTIVE: Reach the tidal energy micro-station three kilometers east through the Drowned Tube and assess whether it can be maintained independently of EO Station Alpha's supply chain.

CLOCK: The EO's Tube patrol boundary has been expanding toward the micro-station's approach at the rate of six meters per week. At current rate, they reach the access junction in three weeks.

COMPLICATION: The Prometheus League's Drowned Tube cache is between operators and the micro-station. Noor is already in the Tube looking for the unauthorized procurement operative. And something in the eastern conduit approach has been making a rhythmic mechanical sound for four nights that neither the EO nor the salvagers can explain.

6. STAGE 4

OBJECTIVE: Have the relay operational, the converter at 100%, and the spring tide projection public before the bore arrives — so that when it recedes, the ruins population sees a Resistance-maintained infrastructure, not an EO rescue.

CLOCK: 14–18 months on Arkadi's projection. Closer if the relay has degraded further. The PUMP VARIANCE notation suggests it has.

COMPLICATION: Every mission seed in this supplement is a component of this one. The converter needs the damage report. The relay needs the maintenance specs. The specs are in Station Alpha. Getting them without triggering Kirova's contingency requires

Arkadi's cooperation. Getting Arkadi's cooperation requires giving him something he can tell himself justified it. The envelope on his desk is his version of that. What operators put in front of him is theirs.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

Every solution in the ruins creates a new problem. The water was always going to win something.

If the Relay Fails

Three boroughs lose water. The Interchange loses political coherence — market access without the relay is a social contract without enforcement. The EO makes their offer within six hours. If the Resistance accepts, they get the water back and lose the infrastructure authority they've been defending for four years. If they refuse, they have 72 hours to find another repair route. The only other repair route runs through Sinclair, the damage report, and the converter at 100% — and that sequence takes longer than 72 hours unless operators have already moved all three pieces.

If Station Alpha Is Exposed

The comms burst activates Kirova's contingency. EO command deploys to London at a scale that makes the research station look preliminary. Arkadi's managed-transition plan is superseded by a direct intervention that doesn't offer terms. The sealed envelope on his desk either surfaces or doesn't — that's operators' last decision window. The ruins population gets EO administrative oversight whether the Resistance agrees or not. The converter and relay become EO infrastructure. The floor captains, the boat crews, and Tomás Verne go quiet in the specific way that people go quiet when they're deciding how long to wait before they start again.

If the Northern Buildings Fall

The Tide Road northern lane closes. Supply pressure on the Interchange and the Slab accelerates the spring tide political timeline by three months. Arkadi's plan runs faster than designed. Rena Mwangi takes the eastern junction again because she has no other route, and she runs it every time like she's counting down to something. The attribution question — EO, League, or structural — becomes the ruins' central political dispute and every faction's credibility

depends on how it's answered. The only person who saw who set the Tube detonator is Sinclair. The Resistance now needs him for two things.

If the Converter Reaches 100%

The relay runs independently of Station Alpha's foundation dependency. The EO loses its leverage — administrative transition authority is no longer the price of keeping the lights on. Arkadi's plan becomes unexecutable. He has a choice: send the envelope or call Kirova. If he sends the envelope, he's made a decision he can't walk back and he knows it. The spring tide event still comes. It's just no longer a political opportunity — it's a flood. The ruins handles floods. That's what everyone here knows how to do.

If Tomás Verne Writes DANGER

He has never done this. If he does, the spring tide event is days away, not months. Every experienced boat crew leaves within the hour — they had the private agreement and they keep it. The ruins loses its most experienced navigators simultaneously with a catastrophic weather event. The Interchange platforms go underwater. The Belt's lower floors flood. What the ruins has left is whatever operators have already secured above floor 15, which is why floor captains who got early warning have been quietly moving supplies upward for two months. The water recedes in six hours. What's left after six hours is a different question entirely.

FIELD NOTE

Sound bounces between towers and falls into the water below. Direction is unreliable. The locals exploit this. Deals get made on open water because open-air conversations cannot be triangulated.

– Terra Conflictus 2066 Setting Guide, Earth 2066

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 THE WATERLOO INTERCHANGE — HIGH MARKET

SECURITY	light
INFRASTRUCTURE	strained
CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — Resistance / EO
CONTAMINATION	present — mold pathogen, brine particulate
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	open (tidal-dependent)

FUNCTION The surviving upper platforms of the old transit hub — twice-weekly barter market when the tide allows. The economic and social center of the ruins, and the physical structure sitting above the water-allocation relay that three boroughs depend on.

CONTROLLER The Tidal Resistance officially manages market access. The Green Coat Network controls the one thing that makes the market run: the tide forecast.

DRAW • Mold medicine, sealed containers, dry-cell batteries, reclaimed electronics — the full range of survival trade. • Tide forecasts from the man in the green coat. He is never wrong. Nobody has asked where he gets the data. • The only place in the ruins where all four factions have eyes without declaring it. • Salvage from the Drowned Tube, surface-traded here. • The relay access hatch, beneath platform 6, behind a market stall that has been in the same spot for four years.

RISK

• Market only runs at low tide — a weather delay collapses the supply window for three boroughs. • The EO has two informants running as vendors. The Resistance has identified one. Not the other. • The relay access hatch is known to the Resistance. It's known to EO Station Alpha. Neither has moved on it because moving first reveals that you know. • Anti-fungal patches are being counterfeited. The counterfeits look identical and fail after six days.

SCARCITY

• Genuine anti-fungal medicine — the counterfeit batch has been in circulation for three weeks. • Low-tide windows longer than four hours. • Any information about the relay that isn't already someone's leverage.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The water-allocation relay beneath platform 6 routes clean water to Lambeth, Bermondsey, and Southwark through pre-Upheaval infrastructure calibrated for 2020 flood levels. The 2066 levels are 40cm above its operating tolerances. It has been running in overcondition for three years.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The relay fails during a market day. The market crowd is standing above it when it happens. Three boroughs lose water access simultaneously. The Resistance has 72 hours before residents start making desperate decisions. The EO has the repair specs. They will offer them at a price.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Resistance market wardens — visible, armed, managing access.

ECONOMY

Barter, medicine, salvage, food, tide forecasts, intelligence.

RISK

EO informant sweep — one of the two vendor-informants is actively collecting this week.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Nobody — the platforms are locked and the lower levels flood.

ECONOMY

Below-deck meetings, relay access, Prometheus League dead drops.

RISK

The lower platforms flood to knee height at spring tide — anyone working below deck is on a clock.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The man in the green coat is always at the same corner of platform 3, always before the market opens, always alone. He sells a folded card with tomorrow's tide times and a single notation — HIGH or CAUTION — and he has never written DANGER. People say the day he writes DANGER, it's time to go higher.

FACTIONS PRESENT

TIDAL RESISTANCE

market management and political control of access.

GREEN COAT NETWORK

the man and the two runners who deliver forecasts to the outer boroughs.

EO RESEARCH DIVISION

two vendor-informants; one identified by the Resistance, one not.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

one operative running as a salvage dealer; has been here eight months.

CIVILIAN NEED

Anti-fungal medicine, genuine. Three boroughs are now sourcing from the counterfeit batch and don't know it.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Tide forecast data (and its source), relay access, informant identification, Prometheus League introduction, black-market medicine supply chain.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

PETRA OSEI, RESISTANCE MARKET WARDEN

CAN GET Market access scheduling, EO informant identification (the one they know about), relay tunnel access authorization, Resistance command introduction.

WANTS Identification of the second EO informant. She knows one and can't find the other, which means she can't trust any vendor intelligence she collects.

FEARS That the relay is closer to failure than the Resistance's engineers have told leadership. She talked to the engineer privately.

CURRENT PRESSURE The Resistance engineer who assessed the relay three weeks ago asked Petra for extraction planning. Then withdrew the request and hasn't spoken to her since.

DESHI, SALVAGE DEALER AND PROMETHEUS LEAGUE OPERATIVE

CAN GET Drowned Tube salvage routes, below-deck market access, Prometheus League introduction, the partial schematics for the tidal energy converter he's been quietly assembling.

WANTS The complete converter schematic — specifically the 2066 damage report that explains why it's running at 70%. He believes it can be fixed without EO resources.

FEARS That the Prometheus League's cell structure means he doesn't know who the other London operatives are, and one of them has been making decisions he hasn't authorized.

CURRENT PRESSURE A piece of salvage he pulled from the Drowned Tube last week has EO Station Alpha markings on equipment that should predate the station's construction by six years.

TOMÁS VERNE, THE MAN IN THE GREEN COAT

CAN GET Tide forecasts for the next 72 hours (accuracy: verified), the water-allocation relay's actual operational status, and — if operators earn it — the source of the forecast data.

WANTS Nothing he'll name. He listens more than he speaks. The operators who've tried to buy information from him leave with the sense that they gave more than they received.

FEARS The question of where the data comes from becoming answerable. Not because it would endanger him. Because it would endanger the source.

CURRENT PRESSURE The last three forecasts have included a notation he hasn't passed to anyone yet. He's been deciding whether to. The notation reads: PUMP VARIANCE DETECTED.

DISTRICT 2 THE ELEVENTH FLOOR BELT — UPPER BOROUGH

SECURITY	light
INFRASTRUCTURE	strained

CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	dominant Resistance
CONTAMINATION	present — mold pathogen (endemic)
BLACK MARKET	light
MOBILITY	open (cable/bridge) / flooded (below floor 3)

FUNCTION The habitable upper floors of residential tower blocks, connected by rope bridges, cable lines, and improvised walkways above the flood line. Home to most of the 40,000 people still living in the ruins.

CONTROLLER The Tidal Resistance in name. Floor captains in practice — informal neighborhood governance by whoever organized their building's survival.

DRAW • The only residential community between the surface and the water — people who know the ruins better than any faction's maps. • Floor captain networks: the fastest intelligence system in the ruins. • Elevated sleeping platforms, heated rooms, the specific luxury of height above flood line. • Rope-bridge access routes that only residents can navigate at speed. • The Belt's labor economy — every repair, every supply run, every cable maintenance job flows through here.

RISK • The cable infrastructure is aging — the repair guild's master died three months ago, leaving two apprentices in a succession dispute. Three primary cables are past assessment date. • Mold pathogen is endemic in the lower floors. People who live above floor 11 call it background risk. People below floor 11 call it a problem. • EO spotters have mapped most of the Belt's bridge and cable routes from water-level observation. The Resistance doesn't know this. • Any large structure failure pulls the entire cable network into question — one collapse creates a cascade of access closures.

SCARCITY

• Cable repair materials — the guild dispute has stalled three pending maintenance jobs. • Medical treatment above the Interchange level — the Belt's medics are good at mold and trauma, not much else. • Information about what the EO knows about the Belt's layout.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The cable and rope infrastructure connecting the upper floors is maintained by the Ferris Guild — two apprentices, Mara and Dov, who have been running their own maintenance schedules since the master died, each refusing to defer to the other, while the cables they're not servicing continue to age.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A primary cable fails. The bridge it anchors drops. The two tower blocks it connected are now separated by 40 meters of open water. The residents stranded on the wrong side have 48 hours of supplies. The Ferris Guild dispute becomes a crisis and both apprentices ask someone else to arbitrate — which means someone else now controls the maintenance schedule.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Floor captains by tower; Resistance patrol on the main bridge routes.

ECONOMY

Labor exchange, mold medicine distribution, cable maintenance (when the guild is cooperating), supply movement from Interchange.

RISK

Guild dispute actively disrupting maintenance scheduling — floor captains are starting to route around the guild entirely.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Floor captains only — the Resistance pulls back to primary routes at night.

ECONOMY

Private trade, off-record meetings between floors, anything that moves more easily when the patrol isn't watching.

RISK

Cable failure risk is highest in the dark — no one sees a bridge drop until someone tries to cross it.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

At 0700, before the tide drops enough for the Interchange to open, every building in the Belt lowers its supply basket on the eastern cable — a choreographed drop of containers, lines, and counterweights that fills the air between towers with moving rope and the creak of wet cable under load, and the floor captains stand at their windows watching the other buildings' cables the way sailors watch weather.

FACTIONS PRESENT

TIDAL RESISTANCE

floor-level patrol and floor captain liaison network.

GREEN COAT NETWORK

two runners live in the Belt; one is a floor captain's daughter.

CIVILIAN NEED

Cable maintenance. Not eventually — now. The guild dispute is the single most dangerous unresolved situation in the Belt, and the floor captains know it.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Floor captain network (the best human intelligence layer in the ruins), belt route navigation, Resistance patrol schedule, guild dispute leverage, Green Coat runner access.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

MARA FERRIS, GUILD APPRENTICE (CABLE MAINTENANCE)

CAN GET Cable route status for the entire Belt, maintenance access to any structure in the network, the late guild master's personal records (she has them — Dov doesn't know).

WANTS The guild master's sealed report on the three structurally compromised buildings. She knows it exists and knows it's in the sealed apartment and knows she can't enter it without triggering the succession dispute formally.

FEARS That Dov is right about the master's death, which would mean she needs to decide what she does with that knowledge.

CURRENT PRESSURE She found a notation in the master's maintenance log from six months ago: a structural assessment that matches no building in the Belt. The coordinates are in the Drowned Tube.

FLOOR CAPTAIN AMARA BELL, TOWER 7

CAN GET The fastest human navigation of the Belt's bridge and cable routes, floor captain council access, Green Coat runner contact, and the names of the EO's two Interchange informants (she has both).

WANTS 120 hours of warning before the spring tide event. She's been quietly preparing Tower 7 as an elevated refuge for two months.

FEARS That her preparation becomes visible before she has time to act on the spring tide warning she received — because then the question of who told her becomes answerable.

CURRENT PRESSURE The person who told her about the spring tide told her via a message in a sealed container that arrived in her supply basket eight weeks ago. She kept the container. The message is in the master's notation format.

DOV FERRIS, GUILD APPRENTICE (CABLE MAINTENANCE)

CAN GET The EO's water-level survey data — he found it in the Drowned Tube approach during an unauthorized night run three weeks ago. He doesn't fully understand what it is but he knows it's valuable.

WANTS Evidence that the guild master was killed by someone who wanted the structural report on the three northern buildings suppressed — and that the suppression was worth killing for.

FEARS Mara, who he believes knows more than she's saying and who he can't confront without revealing what he was doing in the Drowned Tube at 0200.

CURRENT PRESSURE The EO survey data he's been carrying has a notation he just decoded: it marks the three structurally compromised buildings as CONTROLLED DEMOLITION SITES.

DISTRICT 3 THE DROWNED TUBE — SUBMERGED UNDERGROUND

SECURITY	none (tunnels) / active (EO research stations)
INFRASTRUCTURE	failing

CIVILIANS	sparse (salvagers, EO staff)
SURVEILLANCE	dark zone (tunnels) / cameras (EO stations)
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — EO / salvagers / Prometheus League
CONTAMINATION	present — pre-Upheaval chemical sediment, brine, organic decay
BLACK MARKET	heavy (salvage)
MOBILITY	flooded (most sections)

FUNCTION The London Underground network, now fully submerged below flood line. Pre-Upheaval salvage in enormous volume, EO research stations on the accessible platforms, and the physical infrastructure connecting the tidal pump relay to its power source three kilometers east.

CONTROLLER EO Research Division controls the three accessible platform stations. Salvagers control everything else, which is most of it, if you can navigate the flooding.

DRAW • Pre-Upheaval salvage density is higher here than anywhere in the ruins — sealed carriages still hold intact equipment. • The relay power conduit runs through the Jubilee Line eastbound approach — the only physical access to the relay's power source that isn't through the Interchange. • EO research station access: the platforms have dry space, heat, equipment, and staff who know things they're not supposed to discuss outside the stations. • Underwater transit — the flooded tunnels bypass every surface checkpoint and bridge route in the ruins. • The acoustic properties of the tunnels: sound travels 300m and arrives clear and directional. The surface's acoustic confusion is completely absent down here.

RISK

• Sections that were passable two years ago are now fully submerged — the EO's survey data tracks this; the salvagers' mental maps are out of date. • Pre-Upheaval chemical sediment has been disturbed by increased flooding — exposure symptoms begin within 20 minutes of contact in the affected sections. • EO security runs the three platform stations with standing orders: unauthorized personnel in the access corridors are treated as intelligence threats, not trespassers. • The flooded sections disorient — the acoustic clarity works against you when you can't see and the sound is echoing from multiple directions.

SCARCITY

• Current flood maps — the salvagers' knowledge is 6–18 months out of date in critical sections. • Breathing equipment rated for chemical sediment exposure. • A route to the relay power conduit that doesn't pass through an EO station access corridor.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The relay power conduit running through the Jubilee Line eastbound is the only thing keeping the water-allocation relay operational — it draws power from a tidal energy micro-station three kilometers east that the EO hasn't publicized and hasn't decommissioned because doing so would require acknowledging what it powers.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The conduit is severed — accidentally by a structural collapse, or deliberately. The relay loses power. The 72-hour clock starts. The EO now has to choose between revealing the conduit's existence to help repair it, or letting the boroughs fail and stepping in with the repair specs as a political lever.

DAY

AUTHORITY

EO Research Division at the three stations; salvagers by informal territorial recognition elsewhere.

ECONOMY

Salvage extraction, EO research operations, conduit maintenance (EO only, unacknowledged).

RISK

EO security patrols the accessible platform approaches — their patrol radius has been expanding for three months.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Salvagers run the Tube at night; EO stations lock down.

ECONOMY

High-value salvage runs, Prometheus League equipment caching, unauthorized conduit access.

RISK

The chemical sediment sections are more active at night — the tidal movement stirs them. Exposure windows are shorter after 2200.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The EO's easternmost research station is lit with warm light that spills into the flooded tunnel approach and reflects off the water surface in a long orange streak — and every salvager who works the Tube knows exactly where that light ends and where the security patrol starts, because the boundary has been the same for two years, and then last week it moved six meters toward them.

FACTIONS PRESENT

EO RESEARCH DIVISION

three platform research stations; security expanding.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

equipment caching in a sealed carriage two stations west of EO's westernmost post.

GREEN COAT NETWORK

Tomás Verne's forecast data originates from a sensor array in the Tube. Nobody has found the array. The data it produces is what's in his cards.

CIVILIAN NEED

Accurate flood maps. The out-of-date salvager knowledge has cost two lives in the last year.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Pre-Upheaval salvage, relay conduit access, EO research station intelligence, Prometheus League cache, and — if someone finds Tomás's sensor array — the source of the tide forecast data.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

KELL, LEAD SALVAGER (TUBE TERRITORIAL NETWORK)

CAN GET Current flood maps for accessible sections (best available, still 6 months old in three areas), salvager network intelligence, Tube navigation, the location of the Prometheus League cache.

WANTS Someone to take a sealed message to EO Station Alpha's researcher who filed the transfer request — Kell won't go near the station but has been asked to deliver it by someone she won't name.

FEARS That the section collapses she's been seeing aren't structural failures. They're shaped. Someone is managing the Tube's flood access.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her most experienced navigation partner went into the eastern conduit approach six days ago and hasn't come out. The EO station shows no record of detaining anyone.

CAN GET EO research station layout, the ASSET RECOVERY mandate documentation, the spring tide projection data the station hasn't released, and the relay conduit's actual operational status.

WANTS The transfer request to go through — specifically, reassignment to a UKE research institution, not another EO posting. She has a name at the UKE she won't say on-station.

FEARS The station commander, who has read both her transfer requests and has been professionally courteous to her ever since in a way she finds more threatening than hostility.

CURRENT PRESSURE She knows what the spring tide projection shows. She has been deciding whether to leak it for four months. Kell's message arrived yesterday. It's the first outside contact she's had.

NOOR, PROMETHEUS LEAGUE OPERATIVE (TUBE CACHE MANAGER)

CAN GET Prometheus League introduction, the partial converter schematics the League has assembled, the Tube cache contents (specialized equipment for tidal system access), and the identity of one of the other two London League operatives.

WANTS The 2066 damage report on the tidal energy converter. She believes it's in the Tower Quarter. She's been trying to get to it for six months.

FEARS The other two London League operatives — the cell structure means she can't identify them. One of them has been making procurement decisions she didn't authorize and the equipment they're buying isn't for the converter.

CURRENT PRESSURE The unauthorized procurement is for something in the Drowned Tube, not the Tower Quarter. She found the delivery manifest three days ago and it lists a section of the Tube she doesn't have access to.

DISTRICT 4 TOWER QUARTER — THE FORTRESS

SECURITY light

INFRASTRUCTURE	strained
CIVILIANS	sparse (garrison, researchers, supplicants)
SURVEILLANCE	cameras (Resistance garrison)
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — Resistance / Prometheus League / EO covert
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	none
MOBILITY	open (above flood line)

FUNCTION The Tower of London and its immediate approaches — above flood line, structurally intact, and home to the tidal energy converter prototype that the Royal Phantom Corps defended in 2066. Running at 70% capacity. The only independent clean power source in the ruins.

CONTROLLER The Tidal Resistance garrison — 14 people. They control access, run the converter maintenance, and keep the lights on for the Interchange and the Belt. They do not fully understand what they're maintaining.

DRAW • The converter produces clean power for the Interchange platforms and the Belt's cable maintenance winches. If it reaches 100%, it can power the relay independently of the Drowned Tube conduit. • The 2066 battle site — the tactical history is physically readable in the structure. Blackwood's engagement positions, Sinclair's sacrifice point, the breach the Prometheus League came through. • The Tower's pre-Upheaval archives — physical records, not digitized, that include infrastructure documentation for the original tidal relay system. • High ground in a flooded city. The garrison's elevation advantage is real. • The converter at full capacity changes the entire power equation of the ruins — everyone who understands this is working toward it from a different direction.

RISK

• The 2066 damage is documented in a report nobody in the current garrison has read — they've been maintaining the converter on inherited procedure, not the actual damage assessment. • Three parties want the converter at full capacity for three different reasons. The garrison doesn't know two of them are already in the building. • The pre-Upheaval archives are physically deteriorating — mold ingress from the flooded lower levels is destroying records at the rate of approximately one shelf per season. • The garrison commander served under Blackwood in 2066. She hasn't been the same since Sinclair. That's relevant at the table.

SCARCITY

• The 2066 damage report — it's in the archives but nobody's found it. Possibly the mold got it. Possibly it was deliberately misfiled. • Converter components: the maintenance procedure the garrison uses is correct for the pre-damage spec, not the current state. • Political trust between the garrison commander and Resistance leadership — she's been asking for more personnel and getting deferred answers for six months.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The tidal energy converter was damaged in 2066 and has been running at 70% on a maintenance protocol written for an undamaged unit. The garrison doesn't know this because the 2066 damage report — the document that would tell them — has been misfiled in the physical archives for 32 years.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The converter drops below 60% — the threshold below which the Interchange platforms lose power. The garrison can't diagnose the problem without the damage report. The Prometheus League's Deshi has the partial schematic. The EO has the full original spec. The garrison commander has to ask one of them for help.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Garrison Commander Voss; Resistance garrison, 14 personnel.

ECONOMY

Converter maintenance, archive research (limited, by appointment), Tower Quarter access for authorized Resistance personnel.

RISK

Mold advance through the lower archive is accelerating — the garrison's containment is losing ground.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Skeleton garrison watch; Voss sleeps light.

ECONOMY

Archive access for people who don't want it logged; converter monitoring.

RISK

The Prometheus League operative who has been inside the Tower for three weeks as a 'structural consultant' does their actual work at night.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The converter hums at a frequency you feel before you hear it — a sub-bass vibration in the stone floor that Voss says she could feel through Sinclair's hand when he was holding her up at the breach in 2066, and that she now uses as a diagnostic: if the frequency changes, something in the machine is wrong before the instruments say so.

FACTIONS PRESENT

TIDAL RESISTANCE

garrison command and access control.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

one operative (structural consultant cover, three weeks in-place).

EO RESEARCH DIVISION

no overt presence; two covert assets placed in the archive access rotation six months ago as 'independent researchers.' Voss thinks one of them is EO. She hasn't moved on it.

CIVILIAN NEED

The converter at full capacity. The garrison knows this abstractly. They don't know the damage report exists.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Converter technical access, pre-Upheaval infrastructure archives, 2066 battle history (tactical and personal), Prometheus League operative introduction, Resistance command through Voss.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

COMMANDER ELSA VOSS, RESISTANCE GARRISON (TOWER QUARTER)

CAN GET Converter technical access, Tower Quarter navigation, 2066 tactical history, Resistance command channel, and — if operators earn it — what she knows about the Prometheus League's 2066 intelligence source.

WANTS Six more people for the garrison. Not contractors. Resistance personnel she can verify.

FEARS The converter drop below 60%. She's been running scenarios for what she does when it happens and she doesn't like any of them.

CURRENT PRESSURE She found Sinclair's field badge in the wrong location three weeks ago. It had been moved. It has been in the same place for 32 years.

DESHI (PROMETHEUS LEAGUE, TOWER QUARTER CONSULTANT COVER)

CAN GET The partial converter schematic (everything except the 2066 damage section), Tower Quarter structural access, the name of the Prometheus League operative making unauthorized procurement in the Tube.

WANTS The 2066 damage report. He's been inside the Tower three weeks and hasn't found it. He's starting to believe it was destroyed.

FEARS Voss, who he thinks has identified him and is deciding what to do. He's been avoiding giving her a reason to act.

CURRENT PRESSURE The unauthorized procurement operative is buying equipment consistent with a controlled demolition, not tidal energy work. He told the League. The League told him to keep focusing on the converter. He's not sure the League and the unauthorized operative are running separate operations.

CAN GET Archive access (full, authorized), the pre-Upheaval infrastructure records that are still intact, and the blueprint she removed — which she will trade for help getting out of her EO assignment.

WANTS A way to walk away from the EO research division without becoming an active liability to them. She's not a field asset. She was recruited for her archive expertise and she wants to go back to being an archivist.

FEARS Her EO handler, who has been unreachable for six days. She doesn't know if that's operational protocol or something worse.

CURRENT PRESSURE She found the converter damage report two weeks ago. She didn't remove it. She filed a location note and left it. She went back yesterday. It's gone.

DISTRICT 5 TIDE ROADS

OPEN WATER LANES

SECURITY	none
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (water) / strained (bordering structures)
CIVILIANS	normal (boat crews, water traders)
SURVEILLANCE	none
FACTION PRESSURE	low
CONTAMINATION	none (open water) / present (sediment at hull depth)
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	open (tide-dependent)

FUNCTION The navigable channels between half-submerged buildings — the ruins' transit and trade network, and the only space in London where surveillance cannot function. Deals get made on open water because open-air conversations cannot be triangulated.

CONTROLLER Nobody. Boat crews by informal custom. The water belongs to the tide.

DRAW

- Complete surveillance blackout — no faction has solved the acoustic distortion problem on open water.
- Boat access to every district: the Tide Roads touch all of them at some approach.
- The only transit that bypasses the Belt's bridge routes entirely.
- The barter economy that runs parallel to the Interchange — smaller, faster, less witnessed.
- Three buildings in the northern approach are at structural risk. When they fall, they'll block the primary northern lane. The timing is unknown. Boat crews who know which ones watch them obsessively.

RISK

• The acoustic distortion that prevents surveillance also prevents reliable communication — a voice 30 meters away sounds like it's beside you. Ambushes in the Tide Roads are rare because they're also hard to coordinate. • Tidal current at the eastern channel junction runs at 4 knots at the hour before high tide — small boats lose control at the junction if they haven't made the crossing. • The three compromised northern buildings. Nobody knows the timeline. Boat crews have informal warning systems but they're intuitive, not engineered. • Below hull depth: pre-Upheaval chemical sediment. Don't drag anchors.

SCARCITY

• Boats with enough draft clearance to run the Drowned Tube approach at low tide. • A reliable route around the three northern buildings that doesn't add 40 minutes to the eastern crossing. • Weather forecasts beyond 12 hours — Tomás provides tide data, not weather.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Three buildings on the northern approach are at structural risk from brine corrosion. They haven't fallen because the flooding provides hydrostatic support — the water pressure is actually holding the degraded foundations in place. If the tidal pump relay pushes the water level down significantly, the hydrostatic support drops and all three go within hours of each other.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

One building falls — spontaneously or triggered. The debris field blocks the northern lane. Every eastern crossing now runs through the junction at high-current hours. Boat crew scheduling collapses. The Interchange's twice-weekly market loses 40% of its supply volume because getting there takes twice as long.

DAY

AUTHORITY

No formal authority; senior boat crews by custom.

ECONOMY

Cargo transit, water-lane barter, passenger movement, salvage transport.

RISK

EO water-level observers noted on the northern approach — they've been measuring the compromised buildings twice weekly for three months.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Nobody. The Tide Roads at night belong to whoever's moving.

ECONOMY

Off-record cargo, faction courier runs, the meeting that can't happen anywhere with a roof.

RISK

Navigation at night is by sound and memory. Acoustic distortion is worst after dark when there's no visual reference.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

At the eastern junction one hour before high tide, three boat crews hold position on the far approach and watch the current — not talking, just watching, reading the water's color and the speed of surface debris — and then one of them goes, and the other two follow in her line exactly, because the woman who went first has made this crossing four hundred times and she's never miscalculated.

FACTIONS PRESENT

GREEN COAT NETWORK

two courier runs per week through the Tide Roads, delivering forecasts to the outer boroughs.

EO RESEARCH DIVISION

water-level observation teams on the northern approach, twice weekly.

CIVILIAN NEED

Warning about the northern buildings. Boat crews want a timeline and there isn't one.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Surveillance-free transit and meetings, approach routes to all districts, EO observation team intelligence, courier interception opportunity, and — if the northern buildings' timing can be estimated — significant leverage over everyone whose supply chain runs through the northern lane.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

CAPTAIN RENA MWANGI, SENIOR BOAT CREW (EASTERN JUNCTION)

CAN GET Tide Roads navigation, boat crew network intelligence, northern building structural read (intuitive, not engineered — but she's been watching them for two years), and passage through the eastern junction at current hours.

WANTS The EO observation team's final report. She stopped running the eastern junction because she believes the EO found what they were measuring for. She wants to know if she's right.

FEARS Being wrong — because if she's wrong, she's lost four days of crossing fees and her crew is looking at her differently.

CURRENT PRESSURE She saw the EO's night installation from close range. She knows what a remote detonator looks like. She's been sitting on this for 36 hours.

FINN, GREEN COAT COURIER (TIDE ROADS)

CAN GET	Courier route access to all districts, Green Coat Network introduction, tide forecast delivery schedule, and the identity of whoever has been tracking the courier runs.
WANTS	To know whether the person tracking him is the EO or something else — because the surveillance style is wrong for EO and he can't place it.
FEARS	Tomás. Not personally — he's never met him. But the forecasts are the network's only product and if Tomás is compromised, the network is compromised.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The last three courier runs have included a second sealed card inside the tide forecast — a card he wasn't told about, in a format he doesn't recognize, addressed to a recipient who isn't on his route.

DISTRICT 6 SOUTHWARK SLAB — RESISTANCE STRONGHOLD

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	normal
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	dominant Resistance / EO covert
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	light
MOBILITY	checkpointed

FUNCTION The outer borough cluster that still functions — working water, power from the Tower converter, vertical farms, and the Tidal

Resistance's operational command. The most livable district in the ruins and the one the EO is most interested in.

CONTROLLER Resistance command. The Slab is the one place in the ruins where the Resistance's authority is uncontested on the surface. The EO knows its full operational layout. They haven't moved against it because they've been using it as an observation point.

DRAW • Working water allocation, functional power, vertical farm food supply — the Slab is what the rest of the ruins is trying to get back to. • Resistance command access — decisions made here affect every district. • The vertical farm on floor 14 of Tower Block C: the Slab's food security, and the platform the EO has been using for observation. • NAF supply line terminus — the Slab is where NAF equipment and intelligence arrives, then distributes. • Medical facility with actual licensed equipment — the best treatment in the ruins, run by a doctor who hasn't told anyone she was also in the Phantom Corps in 2066.

RISK • The EO has full knowledge of the Slab's layout — patrol routes, supply schedules, Resistance command location. The Resistance doesn't know how complete this picture is. • The vertical farm's observation value means the EO will avoid any operation that closes it down — but 'avoids' is different from 'won't.' • NAF supply lines run through UKE-controlled territory. The UKE's position on the Resistance is publicly supportive and privately calculating. • Resistance command is three people who have been making decisions under sustained pressure for four years. The cracks are interpersonal and operational and visible to anyone who watches the three of them in a room together.

SCARCITY • Intelligence about what the EO knows about the Slab's layout. • Resistance personnel — every district is asking for more and the pool hasn't grown. • The political clarity to make the spring tide decision when it arrives: evacuate the ruins or stand and fight for the relay.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Slab's vertical farm on floor 14 is the food supply for 8,000 people and also the EO's best observation platform for Resistance operations — and the EO has been running an asset inside the farm's maintenance crew for 11 months. Moving against the asset means losing the farm's security for the period of investigation. Not moving means continuing to be read.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The EO asset is identified. The Resistance has to choose: extract quietly (preserving farm security, losing the intelligence about what the EO collected) or run an investigation (getting the intelligence picture, compromising farm security for weeks). Resistance command splits on this. The spring tide timeline means weeks are a resource they may not have.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Resistance command — Commanders Osei, Hara, and Bekele.

ECONOMY

NAF supply distribution, vertical farm operations, medical facility, Resistance logistics.

RISK

The farm observation window is clearest between 0900 and 1400. EO asset is most active during farm maintenance shifts.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Resistance patrol; lighter than the Slab's reputation suggests.

ECONOMY

NAF intelligence briefings, command planning sessions, off-record medical treatment for assets from other districts.

RISK

The three command relationships are worst at night after a bad session. Three times in the last month, Bekele has left a night meeting before it concluded.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The medical facility's doctor works with the same precise economy as someone who has done this in conditions much worse than a converted ground-floor flat — and when a Resistance warden comes in with a clean entry wound from a non-standard projectile, she identifies the round before she removes it, without being asked, without explaining how she knows.

FACTIONS PRESENT

TIDAL RESISTANCE

command and garrison.

EO RESEARCH DIVISION

one covert asset in the vertical farm maintenance crew, 11 months in place.

GREEN COAT NETWORK

the Slab is the network's outer-borough endpoint; forecasts are delivered here by courier twice weekly.

CIVILIAN NEED

Clarity on the spring tide projection — 8,000 people in the Slab need to know whether to prepare for evacuation or infrastructure defense.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Resistance command access, NAF supply channel, medical facility, the spring tide decision-making process, EO asset identification opportunity.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS (1D6)

CONTACTS

COMMANDER ADAEZE OSEI, TIDAL RESISTANCE

CAN GET Resistance command access, NAF supply chain, the spring tide contingency plan (version 1 — defend the relay), and the intelligence officer's private assessment of EO knowledge.

WANTS The tidal energy converter at 100% before the spring tide window arrives. Everything else is secondary.

FEARS Bekele's NAF contact. She doesn't know who it is and she's decided she doesn't want to know — which means she's decided she doesn't trust Bekele, which is a problem they haven't talked about.

CURRENT PRESSURE The unmanifested shipment items. She knows what they are. She doesn't know whose collection point they're going to.

CAN GET Full medical treatment, Phantom Corps tactical history including the 2066 engagement, the location of Sinclair's secondary position that isn't in any official record, and what she knows about the Prometheus League member who was at the Tower in 2066.

WANTS Accountability — specifically, formal acknowledgment from the UKE that Sinclair's designation as KIA was wrong. He was left behind, alive, and she was ordered to leave.

FEARS That Sinclair is still alive in the ruins and that the Resistance doesn't know and that her reason for being here for four years isn't medicine.

CURRENT PRESSURE She treated someone last week with a field injury pattern she recognized. She believes Sinclair treated himself.

DISTRICT 7 THE RESEARCH SHELF — EO STATION ALPHA

SECURITY	lockdown
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable

CIVILIANS	none (EO staff only)
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + drone (perimeter)
FACTION PRESSURE	dominant EO
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	none
MOBILITY	checkpointed

FUNCTION EO Research Division's above-water installation, built on converted elevated infrastructure at the ruins' eastern edge. Clean, climate-controlled, staffed by 23 researchers and 8 security personnel. The only place in London with functioning communications to EO command.

CONTROLLER Station Commander Lev Arkadi. He reports to Elena Kirova. His reports have become shorter and less specific over the past three months.

DRAW • The spring tide projection data — unredacted, 14–18 month timeline, specific bore model for the ruins' current topology. • The complete relay maintenance specifications and repair protocol. • EO communications uplink — the only reliable long-range comms in the ruins. • Dr. Strand's transfer request documentation — two denied requests, both with Kirova's notation: ASSET VALUE EXCEEDS REASSIGNMENT THRESHOLD. • The station's structural dependency data: Station Alpha sits on elevated infrastructure that the tidal pump relay also supports. If the relay fails catastrophically, the station loses its foundation.

RISK • Eight security personnel who are professionals, on rotation, and not compromised. • Commander Arkadi, who has been told by Kirova that his assessment deliverable is STRATEGIC VALUE, not HUMAN IMPACT. He has been following this instruction and not sleeping well. • Any unauthorized entry triggers a communications burst to EO command that operators cannot prevent — the protocol is hardwired. • The station's own foundation problem: if it becomes known that Station Alpha needs the relay to stay operational, the EO's leverage over the relay reverses.

SCARCITY • A way in that doesn't trigger the comms burst. • A copy of the spring tide projection that the EO can't plausibly deny originated from the station. • Arkadi's cooperation — he's close to the line but hasn't crossed it.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Commander Arkadi's STRATEGIC VALUE assessment has been running six months. He has reached his conclusion. The conclusion is that the EO's best strategic play is to let the spring tide event occur, wait for the ruins' population to require emergency assistance, and arrive with the relay repair specs and the converter full-operation protocol at the moment of maximum political vulnerability. He submitted this as a recommendation. Kirova approved it. He hasn't told his researchers what it means for the people in the ruins.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A researcher learns what Arkadi's assessment recommended and what Kirova approved. The station's internal coherence fractures. Arkadi has to manage his own staff while managing the external situation. The comms burst protocol means he can't lock down internal communications without triggering a review.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Commander Arkadi; full security complement.

ECONOMY

Research operations, infrastructure assessment updates, communications with EO command.

RISK

Arkadi's staff loyalty is degrading — three researchers have requested reassignment in the last month.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Skeleton security; Arkadi is on-station but not always in command.

ECONOMY

Data compilation, the communications window to EO command (0100–0300).

RISK

Dr. Strand works at night because Arkadi doesn't monitor the research floor after 2200.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The station's perimeter lights run at exactly the same intensity every night — no variation, no darkening, no patrol pattern that creates a gap — and Rena Mwangi, from her boat on the eastern approach, says the lights have never changed in two years, which is how she knows the station is not staffed by people who are uncertain about their position here.

FACTIONS PRESENT

EO RESEARCH DIVISION

full station complement.

No external factions have overt presence. Dr. Strand is a faction of one.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Spring tide projection data, relay maintenance specs, EO command communications, Dr. Strand — if operators can reach her — and the station's foundation vulnerability, which inverts the EO's leverage if surfaced.

NOTE: Station Alpha runs as a political/intelligence target, not an improvisation space. Entry triggers consequences that determine campaign direction. See Mission Seeds.

IF DESTABILIZED: The comms burst goes to Kirova. EO command activates a London response that's been sitting in contingency for six months. The ruins get EO attention at a scale that makes the research station look preliminary. The spring tide projection becomes the EO's opening offer rather than their leverage. Whether that's better or worse for the ruins depends entirely on what operators have done with the other six districts before this moment.

04/

ISTANBUL

MULTI-FACTION CONTESTED | EARTH 2066

The city has survived forty-three empires by being useful to all of them. Number forty-four is no exception.

HUB OVERVIEW

Istanbul runs on the premise that everyone loses more by destabilizing it than they gain by controlling it. Eighteen million people. Four thousand years of practice surviving between empires. The Bosphorus Compact has maintained neutrality for eighteen years by being the thing no one can afford to break — a city that knows things about every faction and lets every faction know it knows, a survival architecture built on mutually assured disclosure rather than mutually assured destruction. The EO Consulate is in Beyoglu. The PCU Trade Mission is in Karakoy. The NAF Commercial Attache is in Nisantasi. The Brotherhood of Shadows archive is in a building in Fatih that has had seventeen different official designations since 2028. Under the strait, on the seabed, run cables that carry the communications of all three major factions — cables the Compact has been reading, selectively and deniably, for eleven years.

The city smells like salt water and diesel exhaust and the particular metallic sweetness of Snow Leopard thermal regulation — a scent that hangs in Beyoglu's elevated corridors where the gene-forged move through urban terrain they were designed for with an efficiency that makes watching them uncomfortable. The acoustic signature is layered: ferry horns on the Bosphorus at intervals that residents read as weather reports, the muezzin's call from minarets that predate the Upheaval by centuries, the low hum of Compact monitoring equipment that everyone pretends not to hear and nobody can quite locate. Temperature gradients run from the waterfront's salt-wind chill to the underground's constant eighteen degrees, through the bazaar's body-heat density where the Circuit operates and every surface carries the accumulated warmth of a thousand transactions conducted by people who read context with a precision that makes outsiders look obviously lost.

Istanbul is Istanbul — it has survived every imperial renaming attempt and will outlast the factions currently contesting it. The residents read the city by which quarter answers to which faction's informal pressure this week, which markets move when political weather shifts, which tea houses the Compact lets run because they generate useful signal. What they hoard: information. What they fear: the specific silence that descends on a neighborhood when the Compact's Snow Leopard units go from monitoring to operating. What they know that operators don't: the Bosphorus crossing ceremony broadcast is not theater. It is the

daily recalibration of the city's survival equation, performed in public because the performance is the point.

The dead credential aesthetic here runs on faction-source material from every bloc simultaneously: EO administrative stamps, PCU Prophet's Seal marks, NAF operational clearance codes, Eastern Compact genomic registration notation — collaged on the same jacket without irony, because this city has been wearing all of it for decades. RELAY HOUSE's wooden relay tokens are denser here than anywhere else in the OT world. GREY TABLE's physical boards in the Compact's market quarters carry more simultaneous contract options than any other single location. DEAD LETTER OFFICE riders working the Shatter Belt's contested corridors have a local callsign culture the Burn Archive has been documenting for two years and the Compact's intelligence arm has been reading the documentation for one. This is the most information-dense Splice Punk silhouette in the world, and the only one that functions simultaneously as a security credential.

CURRENT STRESS CONDITION

An EO intelligence assessment is three operational steps from determining the full extent of the Compact's cable intelligence program. When that assessment completes, the Compact's deterrence — "we know enough about everyone to hurt everyone equally" — becomes a known quantity. A known quantity can be priced. A priced deterrent can be overcome. The Compact has an unknown window to disrupt the assessment before the calculus changes permanently.

Simultaneously, a PCU Trade Mission investigation into irregular Karakoy port cargo patterns is four months old and approaching the question that leads to the Sons of the Serpent's transit infrastructure — eleven years of operational security built around port authority employees who do not know they are facilitating it. The cell leader managing the exposure risk has not reported it to Shatter Belt command because reporting it surfaces his seven-year cover identity. He is running out of room.

The assessment crisis and the transit crisis are not connected. They will become connected when someone under pressure in one crisis makes a decision that surfaces information relevant to the other. The city's survival architecture was not designed for two simultaneous stress tests.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

SECURITY	active (Snow Leopard units, comprehensive surveillance)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (surface) / pre-Upheaval (underground) / deep (seabed cables)
CIVILIANS	packed (18 million) — four thousand years of practice reading political weather
SURVEILLANCE	comprehensive — all factions, full overlap, most surveilled city in the hemisphere
FACTION PRESSURE	Compact-neutral / all major factions present / Sons of the Serpent transit embedded
CONTAMINATION	none (surface) / unknown (underground pre-Upheaval corridors)
BLACK MARKET	heavy (information, identities, intelligence, gene-forged services outside faction programs)
MOBILITY	open (surface) / monitored (Bosphorus crossing) / dark (underground)

DISTRICT MAP

DISTRICT 1	**BEYOGLU (EO Consulate Quarter)**: The diplomatic surface. Coffee, surveillance, three-layer conversations. The Istiklal Caddesi dead-drop corridor.
DISTRICT 2	**KARAKOY (PCU Trade Mission / Port)**: Where commerce and espionage share the same dockside table. Sons transit infrastructure entry points.
DISTRICT 3	**NISANTASI (Neutral Quarter / NAF Attache)**: Upscale. The city's most careful people. Where all factions negotiate without admitting they are negotiating.
DISTRICT 4	**FATIH (Brotherhood of Shadows Archive Quarter)**: Old city. Pre-Upheaval records. Arslan. The one building Snow Leopards do not enter.
DISTRICT 5	**BAZAAR CIRCUIT (The Rotating Market)**: Istanbul's real information exchange. Pre-Upheaval trade routes. The Compact does not officially acknowledge its intelligence function.
DISTRICT 6	**BOSPHORUS WATERFRONT (The Crossing Zone)**: Snow Leopard operations. The cables under the water. The crossing ceremony. The most surveilled zone in the city.
DISTRICT 7	**ISTANBUL UNDERGROUND (Pre-Upheaval Infrastructure)**: Sons of the Serpent transit. Partially mapped. Not by factions. Eighteen degrees, constant.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Istanbul's legal architecture is the Compact's survival tool — not a framework for justice but a mechanism for calibrating exactly how much each faction is allowed to get away with this week. Who gets enforced on reveals who is out of favor. Who gets forgiven reveals who the Compact needs.

Aggressively Enforced

Bosphorus Transit Registration: Every vessel crossing the strait must file manifest, crew registry, and cargo declaration with the Compact's monitoring station. Non-compliance triggers immediate Snow Leopard interdiction. This is the Compact's primary revenue source and the legal foundation of its sovereignty — attacking it is attacking the city.

Surveillance Infrastructure Interference: Tampering with, obscuring, or redirecting any Compact monitoring installation — cameras, signal collectors, acoustic sensors — carries immediate detention and district exclusion. Every faction's intelligence operation in Istanbul depends on the Compact's surveillance infrastructure remaining intact, which is why this law is enforced by every faction simultaneously, each for their own reasons.

Weapons Display Prohibition: Open carry of military-grade weapons in any surface district triggers Snow Leopard response within four minutes. The prohibition exists because the Compact's neutrality depends on the visible absence of military posture. Gene-forged whose modifications constitute weapons — venom glands, reinforced striking surfaces, thermal regulation arrays — are exempt from display prohibition but not from the attention it draws.

Selectively Weaponized

Faction Personnel Registration: All faction-affiliated personnel are technically required to register with the Compact's diplomatic coordination office within 48 hours of arrival. Enforcement is zero for personnel the Compact wants to monitor freely, absolute for personnel the Compact wants to pressure. Whether the registration requirement is enforced tells you which category you're in.

Commercial Activity Licensing: Market operations, information brokerage, and service provision require Compact licensing. The Bazaar Circuit has never been licensed. The Circuit's continued existence without licensing tells you what the Compact values more than regulatory compliance.

Underground Access Restriction: Entry to pre-Upheaval infrastructure below the surface requires Compact engineering authorization. This law has never been enforced because enforcing it would require acknowledging the underground's existence as an operational space — acknowledgment the Compact has avoided for eighteen years because the Sons' transit infrastructure runs through it.

Feared Punishments

Crossing Denial: The Compact can deny any individual or organization Bosphorus transit access. In a city whose strategic value is the water between things, crossing denial is economic execution. Factions whose personnel are denied crossing lose the logistical foundation of their Istanbul presence within days.

Intelligence Disclosure: The Compact's most feared capability — selective release of cable intelligence to a target's rivals. Eleven years of communications intercepts weaponized with surgical precision. The threat is worth more than the use, which is why the Compact has never deployed it. Everyone in Istanbul knows this. Everyone in Istanbul also knows that "never" is a policy, not a promise.

Archive Blacklisting: Arslan can deny any individual access to the Brotherhood archive's authentication services. In a city where document provenance determines whether intelligence is trusted or contested, archive blacklisting removes an operator from the information economy entirely.

Civic Rituals

The Crossing Ceremony: Daily broadcast from the Bosphorus monitoring station — a formally neutral announcement of crossing schedules, weather conditions, and transit fees that functions as the Compact's daily sovereignty declaration. Every faction listens. The specific language of the broadcast — which vessels are named, which fee structures are emphasized, which weather warnings are issued — is itself an intelligence product. Residents who have listened for years can read the political weather from the broadcast's word choices.

The Tea House Protocol: Compact-sanctioned tea houses across all districts operate under an unwritten understanding — conversations held inside are monitored, and everyone present knows they are monitored, and the monitoring is the point. The tea houses generate signal for the Compact's intelligence operation while providing a space where factions can communicate indirectly through what they allow to be overheard. Dr. Kaya's tea house in Karakoy runs intelligence assessments for the Compact's analysis division on alternating Tuesdays. The other Tuesdays it is simply a tea house. The scene uses it on both.

The Circuit Shift: The Bazaar Circuit's weekly relocation — a coordinated market movement along pre-Upheaval trade routes that functions as civic theater, commercial event, and surveillance-evasion mechanism simultaneously. The shift is

not announced. Regular participants know. Newcomers follow the crowd or miss the market. The Compact does not officially acknowledge the shift's intelligence function, which is itself a civic ritual of strategic denial.

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime in Istanbul's tea house network, Beyoglu's cafe corridor, Nisantasi's hotel bars, or the Bazaar Circuit's after-hours gathering points where the information economy runs on proximity and tea. Every result produces a new contact, a new debt, or a new exposure.

1 (Contact Made): A retired Compact signals analyst at a Karakoy waterfront tea house describes the cable maintenance schedule in enough operational detail that operators understand the specific access windows it creates. She orders a second tea. She does not remember being that specific. She remembers exactly.

2 (Feud Started): Operator says something — or is heard saying something — that reaches a Snow Leopard monitoring log through the tea house's acoustic architecture. Nothing happens immediately. Next morning, the operator's Compact transit registration enters "review status." Review status has no stated timeline and no appeal process.

3 (Equipment Lost): Operator's secondary communications device is lifted in the Bazaar Circuit — not by a pickpocket, by a professional who left a RELAY HOUSE wooden token in the pocket where the device was. The token's callsign translates to a contact request. The device holds 72 hours of location data including two meetings the operator hasn't reported.

4 (Secret Learned): An information broker corners the operator near evening's end at a Nisantasi hotel bar. She has identified the EO assessment team's current operational focus — not their location, their focus. She wants something in trade for the specifics. She will not name the price until the operator commits to the exchange.

5 (Debt Incurred): A Sons of the Serpent logistics coordinator sits down with a proposition: he will move a specific item through the underground transit network at no cost, in exchange for one favor, undefined and redeemable within 30 days. He presents this as reasonable. He is correct. That is what makes it worth worrying about.

6 (Locally Recognizable): Operator does something — breaks up a confrontation between a Snow Leopard unit and a Bazaar Circuit vendor, covers a tab, handles a situation that could have escalated — that travels through the tea house network by morning. By noon, the operator is the person district residents mention when deciding whether to trust someone new. Elif Demir's monitoring log now has a photograph. One faction routes requests through the operator. Another faction's file has been updated.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Compact's Cable Intelligence Archive Format

Eleven years of intercepted faction communications exist somewhere in the Compact's infrastructure. The supplement identifies the program's existence and its strategic function but does not define how the archive is stored, where it is physically located, or what access protocols protect it. Whether the archive is a single facility, a distributed system, or something Yasemin Celik carries in her head determines how the assessment crisis resolves and what "disclosure" actually means in operational terms.

The Void Walker's Intended Recipient

Five intelligence services are tracking the Void Walker through the Bazaar Circuit. The supplement identifies the document they carry and its significance but does not name the party the Void Walker intends to deliver it to. The recipient is not one of the five tracking services. Whether the recipient is a faction, an individual, or something else entirely reshapes the Circuit confrontation and the document's meaning.

The Missing Snow Leopard Unit's Status

A Snow Leopard field unit went dark in Beyoglu while tracking the EO assessment team. Elif Demir has not reported this to Compact leadership. The supplement does not define whether the unit is detained, turned, running a parallel operation, or dead. The unit's actual status determines whether Demir's silence is protecting the Compact or protecting herself.

Voss's Discovery

The EO assessment lead analyst went dark from command for 72 hours by her own choice. She found something that changes the assessment's conclusions. The supplement does not define what she found. Whether it confirms the cable program's scope, reveals something beyond the cable program, or changes the meaning of the assessment itself determines how EO command responds and what the Compact needs to do about it.

The Underground Gene-Forged Services Network

A gene-forged services operation runs through Istanbul's underground outside all faction programs — calibration, medical support, template maintenance for operators who have left or never entered the faction supply chain. The supplement identifies its existence but not its leadership, its funding source, or its relationship to the Compact's Snow Leopard program. Whether it is independent, Compact-adjacent, or something the Snow Leopard program built and disavowed changes the underground's political meaning.

Arslan's Oath

The Brotherhood archive custodian has been trying to get a specific document out of the archive for years and cannot do it himself without breaking his own oath. The supplement does not define the oath's terms, who administered it, or what happens if it is broken. Whether the oath is to the Brotherhood, to a pre-Upheaval institution, or to something personal determines what Arslan will and will not do when operators offer to help.

FACTIONS

BOSPHORUS COMPACT (SNOW LEOPARD INTELLIGENCE UNITS)

Neutral City-State Governance / Intelligence Architecture

OBJECTIVE Disrupt the EO assessment before it completes while maintaining plausible neutrality and without triggering the cable program disclosure — the weapon that can only be fired once, because the threat is worth more than the use.

ASSETS Bosphorus crossing control, eleven years of cable intelligence, Snow Leopard gene-forged units designed for urban elevated terrain, Istanbul information economy infrastructure, established relationships with every faction simultaneously, the tea house monitoring network, comprehensive surveillance architecture across all surface districts.

DEPENDENCY The balance. The Compact survives because absorbing it costs more than tolerating it. If any faction calculates that the cost has changed, the equation collapses and Istanbul becomes the first theater of a direct conflict.

VULNERABILITY The cable program. If EO completes their assessment, the deterrence has a price tag. A priced deterrent can be overcome. Secondary vulnerability: the Sons of the Serpent transit infrastructure runs through Compact-adjacent port authority channels — if this relationship becomes visible, the Compact loses its claim to genuine neutrality.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Transit delay, diplomatic pressure, intelligence asset exposure threats. The gentlest reminder that the Compact knows things.
- 2 — Selective intelligence disclosure — releasing specific damaging information about one faction to pressure another. Calibrated damage.
- 3 — Sons of the Serpent transit facilitation — actively enabling Sons operations as a message that the Compact's neutrality is a choice, not a constraint.
- 4 — Full intelligence disclosure — destroying the information economy but making the cost of the Compact's removal unabsorbable by anyone simultaneously. The weapon fired once.

OFFER Neutral meeting space, Bosphorus crossing access, calibrated intelligence about all parties, Snow Leopard operational support in Istanbul's urban terrain, tea house network access, cable intelligence fragments selected for operational relevance.

DEMAND Crossing fees, respect for Compact personnel, no operations targeting Compact infrastructure. The assessment team flagged to EO's own leadership as exceeding their operational mandate — an internal recall, not an external confrontation.

IF DAMAGED Istanbul ceasing to be neutral doesn't reduce the crossing's strategic value — it means whoever is standing in the city when the dust clears controls the Bosphorus. Both EO and PCU have spent eighteen years calculating what that control would give them. Neither has been willing to pay the cost. If the Compact falls, that calculation resolves — and it resolves violently.

SONS OF THE SERPENT (ISTANBUL TRANSIT CELL)

Shatter Belt Transit & Territorial Authority

OBJECTIVE Maintain the Istanbul transit infrastructure's integrity against the PCU investigation while managing the cell leader's compromised cover position — a seven-year operational identity that cannot be rebuilt.

ASSETS Underground transit network through pre-Upheaval infrastructure, Compact-adjacent port access through unwitting employees, eleven years of operational security, venom-adapted gene-forged operators with desert-terrain patience and urban-transit discipline, the territorial certainty of people who believe they control the dam.

DEPENDENCY The civilian covers. One investigation reaching those port authority employees ends the Istanbul infrastructure permanently. The employees are doing their jobs normally. They do not know they are facilitating anything.

VULNERABILITY The cell leader's cover is seven years old and has never been tested against a systematic investigation. It is being tested now. He missed his compliance appointment today. It is the kind of minor thing that gets noticed by people who are already looking.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Reroute specific transit channels away from compromised access points. Operational adjustment, no exposure.
- 2 — Surface to Compact for unofficial assistance — risking exposure of the relationship the Compact officially denies.
- 3 — Close the Istanbul infrastructure entirely and reroute through secondary channels adding three weeks to every Shatter Belt transit.
- 4 — Expose the PCU investigation to EO as a distraction — burning the cell's last clean intelligence channel to save the transit network.

OFFER Underground transit access, surface exit point schedules, Shatter Belt network contact chain, movement through Istanbul without appearing in any surveillance record.

DEMAND The PCU investigator who has the port authority employee's name removed from the investigation without surfacing as an operation. Clean. Quiet. No trail.

IF DAMAGED The Istanbul transit infrastructure's loss cuts the Shatter Belt's only reliable resupply route. The highland communities' infrastructure maintenance situation becomes critical within sixty days. The dam fracture deteriorates on its own schedule — and the cable intercept proving the PCU introduced that fracture sits in a Compact archive, waiting for someone to decide what to do with it.

EO INTELLIGENCE (ASSESSMENT OPERATION)

Compartmented Cable Program Evaluation

OBJECTIVE Complete the cable program assessment and deliver it to EO command before the Compact identifies and disrupts the operation — determining whether Istanbul's neutrality is genuine or a surveillance operation that has been reading EO communications for eleven years.

ASSETS Three-operator assessment team with exceptional tradecraft, Voss's analytical capability (built the assessment framework from primary intelligence), consulate cover (the team is not coordinated with consulate intelligence — the separation is the point), seabed drone reconnaissance from EO's monitoring vessel.

DEPENDENCY Voss. The assessment exists because she built the analytical framework. If she surfaces what she found in the 72-hour blackout, the operation either accelerates or collapses — and EO command does not yet know which.

VULNERABILITY The operation is not coordinated with consulate intelligence. If the consulate discovers it, their Compact relationships create an immediate reporting obligation — the consulate tells the Compact, and the Compact responds to the consulate, not the team. Exactly the separation the operation was designed to exploit becomes its destruction.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Passive collection: Signals intelligence, physical surveillance of Compact installations, Circuit intelligence sourcing.
- 2 — Active probing: Seabed drone reconnaissance of cable node approaches, source meetings in Nisantasi, assessment team conducting physical approaches.
- 3 — Overt acquisition: Direct cable node access attempt during maintenance window, consulate separation abandoned.
- 4 — Assessment delivery: Findings communicated to EO command through bypass channel. The calculus changes. Irreversible.

OFFER Assessment's current findings on cable program scope, EO command's actual intentions for program disclosure, the identity of the PCU asset EO has turned (or fabricated as disinformation bait).

DEMAND The cable program's full technical architecture — specifically the seabed node locations and access protocols the assessment has not yet confirmed.

IF DAMAGED EO loses the assessment window. The cable program continues. The next attempt starts from zero — but EO command now knows the program exists in scope, which means the political pressure to act continues without the intelligence to act precisely. Worse than not knowing at all.

BROTHERHOOD OF SHADOWS (ARCHIVE OPERATIONS)

Pre-Upheaval Intelligence Archive & Authentication

OBJECTIVE Protect the archive's integrity against the current security breach while locating the missing courier and the document package — maintaining the trust that makes the archive valuable, because a forced archive produces records but a trusted archive produces truth.

ASSETS The archive (irreplaceable — the most comprehensive collection of pre-Upheaval intelligence records in the hemisphere), Arslan's accumulated knowledge (fifty years of provenance matching and analytical context), the Istanbul document courier network, the trust of every faction that has ever needed authentication, mechanical security systems older and harder than anything digital.

DEPENDENCY Arslan. The archive's security model is him. His apprentice does not know everything Arslan knows. The transition from custodian to successor is a vulnerability the Brotherhood has been managing for years without resolving.

VULNERABILITY The researcher with the wrong credentials. Four days in. Automated credentials correct. Human credentials wrong — the specific kind of wrong that only surfaces under Arslan's particular attention, which he has not yet directed at her.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Passive monitoring: Arslan observes, authenticates, and waits. The archive's security is patience.
- 2 — Active investigation: Courier network activated to trace the missing package. The Brotherhood's information reach extends quietly.
- 3 — Selective closure: Specific archive sections restricted. Factions that depend on authentication services lose access on Arslan's judgment.
- 4 — Full archive lockdown: Arslan closes the building. Every faction loses document authentication simultaneously. The pre-Upheaval records become contested rather than trusted.

OFFER Pre-Upheaval intelligence records, current faction asset identifications based on document provenance matching, authentication services, Arslan's analytical context — fifty years of knowing who is who in Istanbul's intelligence economy.

DEMAND The document package returned to the archive before faction intelligence services tracking it realize what building it came from. The researcher identified and her affiliation determined.

IF DAMAGED The archive's compromise ends its value as neutral ground. Every faction loses document authentication simultaneously. Arslan closes the archive. The Brotherhood withdraws from Istanbul. What was inside is now contested rather than certified — and whoever holds the contested records holds leverage over everyone who ever needed them authenticated.

HUB-LEVEL CONTACTS | WILDCARDS

COMPACT DIRECTOR YASEMIN CELIK

Snow Leopard program lead and cable intelligence director

CAN GET Cable intelligence archive's full scope, EO assessment's current operational status, the PCU communication about the Shatter Belt dam fracture operation, Snow Leopard program technical architecture.

WANTS The assessment team flagged to EO's own leadership as having exceeded their operational mandate — an internal recall, not an external confrontation. She needs the problem to disappear through EO's own bureaucracy.

FEARS That the missing Snow Leopard field unit is not lost but compromised — and that what the unit knows about the cable program's architecture is now in EO's assessment file.

CURRENT PRESSURE Voss's 72-hour blackout. Celik knows Voss went dark. She needs to know why before EO command does — because if what Voss found is what Celik thinks Voss found, the assessment crisis becomes something else entirely.

VOID WALKER 'TRANSIT'

Multiple confirmed sightings, Circuit-primary, Shatter Belt designation

CAN GET The Compact's intelligence audit, four months of Istanbul intelligence accumulation, and the document that changes the PCU dam fracture communication's meaning — a document that post-dates cable collection.

WANTS To deliver the document to a specific party. Five services are trying to determine who. The Void Walker has been allowing the chase to continue because the surveillance is itself informative — the five services' behavior while tracking reveals more than they intend.

FEARS Unknown. Their threat assessment model does not match any known faction doctrine. Their operational patience exceeds what any standard training program produces.

CURRENT PRESSURE The EO assessment team and the Void Walker's delivery objective are converging on the same location in the next 36 hours. The Void Walker anticipated this. The assessment team did not.

DOWNTIME

WORK THE BAZAAR CIRCUIT

WHAT: Operators spend five days embedded in Istanbul's information economy as buyers, sellers, or brokers — learning the Circuit's rotation schedule, establishing commercial credibility with route families, and building the social capital that the Circuit runs on.

COST: Five days, a plausible commercial cover, and one piece of genuine intelligence to establish credibility. The Circuit families do not accept currency as introduction — they accept information, because information is how they have survived four generations of political weather.

GAIN: One of: a faction intelligence contact in Istanbul / current Sons transit schedule / the identity of one EO or PCU intelligence asset under commercial cover / introduction to the gene-forged services network operating outside faction programs.

FALLOUT: The Compact logs the operator's Circuit activity. Elif Demir reviews the log personally. She files no action — but she knows. She will eventually want something in return for the silence. The log is a debt with no stated terms and no expiration date.

SHADOW THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

WHAT: Operators spend three days running counter-surveillance on the EO assessment team's operational movements through Beyoglu, Nisantasi, and the Bazaar Circuit — mapping their tradecraft patterns, source meetings, and communication windows.

COST: Three days, professional surveillance tradecraft, willingness to be identified by Snow Leopard units as a party of interest. The assessment team's countersurveillance discipline is exceptional. Keeping pace without being made requires genuine skill.

GAIN: The assessment team's current operational status, Voss's location, one confirmed intelligence finding from the assessment, and — if operators are very good — the communication channel the team uses to bypass the consulate.

FALLOUT: The Compact surveillance system logs the counter-surveillance operation. The assessment team makes operators. The PCU unit also running

counter-surveillance now has operators in their field picture. Three parties know the operator is watching the same thing they are watching.

ACCESS THE UNDERGROUND

WHAT: Operators spend four days embedded with the Sons' Istanbul cell, running transit routes through the pre-Upheaval underground infrastructure — learning the corridor system, understanding the surface access points, and building the operational trust the Sons require.

COST: Four days, introduction from a Sons contact outside Istanbul, willingness to do physical work in an environment that is eighteen degrees constant, smells of stone and cable insulation and something older, and has not been fully mapped by anyone currently alive.

GAIN: Underground route knowledge (permanent), Sons cell leader contact, one transit movement facilitated at no additional cost, and awareness of the three maintenance corridors that pass within twenty meters of the seabed cable infrastructure.

FALLOUT: The PCU Trade Mission investigation has a Karakoy port informant. Operators' faces are in the investigation's file. The investigation cannot act officially. It will act unofficially within two weeks — and unofficial PCU action in Istanbul surfaces the investigation to parties who currently do not know it exists.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

Bazaar Circuit Whispers | Information Economy Intel

Consulate Corridor | Diplomatic & Intelligence Operations

Dock Manifests | Port & Transit Infrastructure

ESCALATION TRACKS

Track 1 | The Assessment Crisis

Stage 1 — Assessment Running

Operation active, three steps from completion. Compact monitoring has partial visibility. Voss is dark from EO command — 72 hours, by her own choice. The Circuit in normal operation. The assessment team is conducting physical surveillance of Compact installations in daylight, sourcing cable node technical intelligence through the Bazaar Circuit, and meeting sources in Nisantasi. Elif Demir's tracking unit has partial visibility on the team. The missing Snow Leopard unit that had full visibility has gone dark.

Stage 2 — Assessment Nears Completion

Voss surfaces with her findings. EO command receives a preliminary report. The Compact's tracking unit completes its own assessment — they know what EO knows. Both sides calculating simultaneously. The seabed maintenance window is six weeks away, and the assessment team's operational timeline ends in seven. Every intelligence service in Istanbul has noticed the convergence. The tea house network goes quiet in the specific way that tells residents the political weather is changing.

Stage 3 — The Confrontation

EO command communicates findings to Compact leadership with an implicit ultimatum. The Compact has 72 hours to demonstrate the calculation is wrong, find an alternative deterrent, or request PCU protection — which ends Compact independence permanently. The Crossing Ceremony broadcast's language shifts. Residents who have been listening for years recognize the change before the factions do.

Stage 4 — Istanbul In Play

The cable program's existence becomes known. Every faction reassesses its Istanbul position simultaneously. The Sons' transit infrastructure is exposed in the intelligence surge — the PCU investigation accelerates from four months of patient work to 48 hours of hard action. The Circuit closes. The Brotherhood archive goes dark. Istanbul as neutral ground ends — but the Bosphorus crossing remains, and whoever is standing in the city when the dust clears controls the water between things.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Locate Voss during her blackout and determine what she found before EO command does, giving the Compact a window to respond. Or: facilitate the assessment's completion on terms that produce a managed disclosure rather than a confrontation — the Compact's deterrence

dies, but the information economy might survive if both sides agree it's more useful than war. Or: destroy the assessment entirely, which solves nothing and buys time that everyone knows is running out.

Track 2 | The Underground Crisis

Stage 1 — Investigation Active

PCU Trade Mission investigators connecting port cargo irregularities for four months. The correlations are building. The cell leader is managing exposure risk alone — three hours a day on active counter-investigation work that is pulling him from transit operations. He missed his compliance appointment today. His cover identity has never been tested against a systematic investigation. It is being tested now.

Stage 2 — Investigation Finds Employees

Specific port authority employees facilitating Sons transit are identified. They are interviewed. They are confused — they have done nothing wrong by their understanding. They are telling the truth. The Sons have 48 hours before the investigation connects the employees to the underground access points. Rerouting exposes the infrastructure's existence to parties who currently do not know it exists.

Stage 3 — Underground Exposed

PCU investigators follow employee connections to Karakoy underground access points. The Sons activate contingency rerouting. The cell leader's seven-year cover burns simultaneously — not because it was discovered, but because the rerouting requires operational decisions that only someone embedded in the infrastructure could make. The Sons' venom-adapted transit operators surface briefly, and the Compact's surveillance architecture records what it has officially pretended not to see for eleven years.

Stage 4 — Transit Network Severed

Istanbul transit closes. The Shatter Belt's resupply timeline triples. The highland communities' maintenance window passes without the technical support the Sons were routing. The dam fracture deteriorates on its own schedule — and the cable intercept proving the PCU introduced that fracture sits in a Compact archive, its political value increasing as the physical situation worsens.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Redirect the PCU investigation by giving it a better target — which means surfacing a genuine PCU intelligence concern in Karakoy. The most available genuine concern is the EO assessment operation. Surfacing it solves the transit problem and ends the assessment simultaneously. Both crises resolved by connecting them. The question is whether anyone survives the connection.

OPERATIONS MAP

Mobility Corridors

- Beyoglu → Karakoy: Surface transit, open. The Istiklal Caddesi corridor runs the full length — the most active intelligence dead-drop corridor in the hemisphere.
- Karakoy → Bosphorus Waterfront: Port access road, monitored. Compact inspection at the waterfront boundary. Snow Leopard presence increases measurably.
- Nisantasi → Beyoglu: Open surface transit. The route passes three hotels used for faction meetings and two tea houses the Compact monitors continuously.
- Fatih → Bazaar Circuit: Pre-Upheaval trade routes, unmonitored. The Circuit's rotation follows these routes — knowing them is knowing the market's next location.
- Karakoy → Underground: Port maintenance corridors, access points concealed in eastern maintenance yard. Sons-controlled, introduction required.
- Underground → Bosphorus Waterfront: Three maintenance corridors pass within twenty meters of the seabed cable infrastructure. Recently discovered by a party that is not the Sons.
- Underground → Surface (multiple): Exit points in Beyoglu, Fatih, and Karakoy. Schedules change. The cell leader manages rotation.

Chokepoints

- Bosphorus Crossing — the Compact's primary control point. Mandatory transit registration, fee-based, the financial and strategic foundation of Compact sovereignty.
- Karakoy Port Inspection — dual Compact/PCU oversight. Cargo passing both inspections simultaneously is the operational challenge the Sons' infrastructure was built around.
- Beyoglu Consulate Perimeter — EO security zone with Snow Leopard counter-surveillance. The assessment team operates outside this perimeter specifically to avoid the consulate's Compact reporting obligations.
- Underground Access Points — Sons-controlled. Introduction required. Without a guide, the possibility of entering the pre-Upheaval infrastructure and not exiting it is real.
- Archive Access — Arslan's personal judgment. The one checkpoint in Istanbul that cannot be bypassed by credentials, technology, or force — only by trust.

Surveillance Architecture

- Beyoglu: Cameras, informant net, Snow Leopard counter-surveillance. Full coverage. Three cafes on Istiklal simultaneously used by EO, PCU, and Sons for dead drops — none knowing about the others.
- Karakoy: Cameras, informant net, PCU SIGINT from the Trade Mission. Dual monitoring — Compact and PCU — creates overlapping coverage that is comprehensive but not coordinated.
- Nisantasi: Cameras, discreet Compact monitoring. Every faction has surveillance here. Every faction knows every other faction has surveillance here. The mutual awareness is the security model.
- Fatih: Compact cameras only, minimal. The archive building is the one location in Istanbul where Snow Leopard units are not actively present — by choice, not by limitation.
- Bazaar Circuit: Dark zone. The Circuit's weekly rotation prevents sustained surveillance. The families who run route logistics have been outrunning surveillance for a hundred and fifty years.
- Bosphorus Waterfront: Comprehensive — most surveilled zone in the city. Snow Leopard military-grade monitoring, automated systems, seabed sensors. Unauthorized approach triggers immediate response.
- Underground: Dark zone. No faction sensor coverage. The Sons operate with the assumption that anyone present without introduction is hostile.

MISSION SEEDS

1. RECALL VOSS

OBJECTIVE: Locate Voss during her 72-hour blackout, determine what she found, and deliver that information to Elif Demir before EO command does — giving the Compact a window to respond before the assessment conclusions reach EO leadership.

CLOCK: EO command has initiated a recall protocol. Voss has approximately 36 hours before EO's Istanbul station makes direct contact. The blackout ends on EO's terms.

COMPLICATION: What Voss found during the blackout is not more cable program confirmation. It is something that changes the assessment's meaning entirely — and delivering it to Elif Demir may not serve the Compact's interests once Demir understands what it is.

2. THE CIRCUIT HAND-OFF

OBJECTIVE: Facilitate the Void Walker's delivery of the document to their intended recipient before the five tracking services force the Circuit and close it permanently.

CLOCK: The EO assessment team and the Void Walker's delivery objective converge on the same location in 36 hours. If the assessment team reaches it first, the Void Walker's window closes.

COMPLICATION: The Void Walker's intended recipient is not one of the five tracking services. The recipient is a party no current faction has identified as a player — and the Void Walker will not facilitate the delivery unless operators can prove they are not working for any of the five.

3. SEAL THE BREACH

OBJECTIVE: Identify the researcher in Fatih, determine what she has accessed, and recover or contain the document before it surfaces in external intelligence reporting.

CLOCK: The document is in the researcher's possession. She has a courier meeting scheduled in 18 hours. After the meeting, it enters a distribution chain that cannot be recalled.

COMPLICATION: Arslan knows the researcher has the document. He has not reported this to the Brotherhood. He is waiting to see what operators do — because the document's contents are something he has been trying to get out of the archive for years, and he cannot do it himself without breaking his own oath.

4. SAVE THE TRANSIT

OBJECTIVE: Redirect the PCU Trade Mission investigation away from the Karakoy port employees before the investigation reaches the underground access points.

CLOCK: PCU investigators are scheduled for direct employee interviews in 48 hours. Once the interviews happen, the correlation becomes visible and the timeline accelerates.

COMPLICATION: The most effective way to redirect the investigation is to give it a better target — which means surfacing a genuine PCU intelligence concern in Karakoy. The most available genuine concern is the EO assessment operation. Surfacing it solves the transit problem and ends the assessment. Both things simultaneously.

5. THE CABLE NODE

OBJECTIVE: Access a seabed cable node during or before the six-week maintenance window and determine the cable program's actual technical architecture — for a client whose identity operators may or may not know.

CLOCK: The maintenance window creates observable access points. The assessment team's operational timeline ends one week after the window opens. EO's seabed drones have been running mapping passes four times per week. The Compact knows and has not responded overtly because overt response confirms the cables' significance.

COMPLICATION: Three maintenance corridors in the underground pass within twenty meters of the seabed cable infrastructure. Someone in the corridor has recently noticed this proximity — and that someone is not the Sons. Accessing the cable nodes through the underground bypasses the Compact's waterfront surveillance entirely but requires Sons cooperation for a purpose the Sons will immediately understand is dangerous to the Compact.

6. THE ARCHIVE EXCHANGE

OBJECTIVE: Broker an exchange between Arslan and a party holding pre-Upheaval records that the archive needs — records whose provenance cannot be authenticated without the archive's cooperation, creating a mutual dependency that neither side trusts.

CLOCK: The missing Brotherhood courier's document package has the archive's return address. Whoever sent it knows where Arslan is. Whoever is looking for it knows where Arslan is. Both arrive at the archive within the next 72 hours.

COMPLICATION: The exchange requires operators to enter the archive under Arslan's trust — and what they find inside changes their understanding of what the Brotherhood of Shadows actually is, what it has been protecting, and why every faction in Istanbul has made the same calculation about not forcing it.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

Every solution in Istanbul creates a new problem. These are the specific new problems.

If the Bosphorus Compact Falls

EO or PCU gains crossing control. The other immediately treats this as an act of war — the Bosphorus is not a resource, it is the resource, the water between everything that matters. Istanbul as the first theater of a direct conflict between

the two largest factions on the planet. The Sons' transit infrastructure loses its neutral ground. The information economy that made Istanbul valuable is destroyed in the process of fighting over it. Eighteen million people navigate a city that has stopped being able to claim neutrality — and they navigate it the way they have navigated every imperial transition for four thousand years, by reading the new weather and adjusting before the adjustment becomes visible.

If the Cable Program Is Disclosed

Every faction reassesses eleven years of intelligence conclusions simultaneously. Communications they believed were secure were being read. Decisions they made based on intelligence they believed was exclusive were informed by the Compact's selective disclosure. The Compact's deterrence ends. The information economy collapses — not because the information stops existing, but because the trust architecture that gave it value is gone. The Sons' transit infrastructure is exposed in the intelligence surge. The Circuit closes permanently. Istanbul remains — but Istanbul as neutral ground, the thing that has sustained the city's function for eighteen years, is gone. What replaces it depends on who gets to the crossing first.

If the Underground Is Destroyed

The Shatter Belt's most reliable resupply route closes. The highland communities' maintenance window passes without the technical support the Sons were routing through Istanbul. Within sixty days, the consequences reach the dam — the fracture the PCU introduced, the fracture the Sons believe is sound, the fracture whose existence is proven by a cable intercept sitting in a Compact archive that no longer has the political structure to manage its release. The dam fracture deteriorates on its own schedule, indifferent to the intelligence operations conducted in its name.

If the Brotherhood Archive Is Compromised

The most trusted document authentication service in the hemisphere stops being trustworthy. Every faction loses the ability to verify pre-Upheaval intelligence records simultaneously. Arslan closes the archive. The Brotherhood withdraws from Istanbul. What was inside is now contested rather than certified — and whoever holds the contested records holds leverage over everyone who ever needed them authenticated. The specific loss: fifty years of analytical context, the accumulated knowledge of a man who has been matching docu-

ment provenance to human identity since before the Upheaval, gone because the archive's security model was him and the model has been broken.

FIELD NOTE

Istanbul has four thousand years of practice surviving between empires. Its residents read the city by which quarter answers to which faction's informal pressure this week. They hoard information. They know the Bosphorus crossing ceremony broadcast is not theater. And they know — all eighteen million of them, in the particular way that a city this old knows things — that neutrality is not a condition. It is a performance. The performance is maintained by mutual threat. And the threat only works if nobody calculates the cost precisely enough to decide it is worth paying.

Someone is calculating.

— Terra Conflictus 2066 Setting Guide, Earth 2066

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 BEYOGLU — EO CONSULATE QUARTER

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + informant net
FACTION PRESSURE	EO dominant / Compact monitoring / PCU intelligence present
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	moderate
MOBILITY	open

FUNCTION The EO Consulate and its operational surround — the diplomatic surface of Istanbul's intelligence economy, where three-layer conversations happen over coffee and nothing is said directly. The Istiklal Caddesi corridor is the most active intelligence dead-drop corridor in the hemisphere, its cafe network serving simultaneously as social infrastructure, commercial real estate, and faction communication architecture.

CONTROLLER EO officially manages consulate operations. Snow Leopard units have complete Beyoglu surveillance visibility and review it personally — Elif Demir's network runs the elevated terrain with the efficiency of gene-forged designed for exactly this urban environment.

DRAW	• The cafe network along Istiklal Caddesi — the hemisphere's most active intelligence dead-drop corridor. • Consulate administrative services — the legitimate face of EO operations. • Gene-forged services in the consulate medical wing, accessible to non-EO parties through specific introduction. • The EO assessment team's operational base, which is not in the consulate building. • The Splice Punk scene's densest concentration of dead credential aesthetic — EO stamps, PCU seals, NAF clearance codes on the same jacket.
RISK	• The EO assessment operation is running here — the team is very good and they are close. • Snow Leopard surveillance units in plainclothes — Elif Demir's network has complete Beyoglu coverage. • Three cafes on Istiklal are simultaneously used by EO, PCU, and Sons of the Serpent for dead drops — none know about the others. • PCU intelligence assets running counter-surveillance on EO operations without knowing the assessment exists. • A Snow Leopard field unit has gone dark in this district while tracking the assessment team.
SCARCITY	• Secure communications the Compact is not reading. • Meeting locations under neither EO nor Snow Leopard surveillance. • The assessment team's actual operational schedule.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The EO assessment is not an official consulate function — it is a compartmented operation running parallel to normal consulate activity. The consulate staff do not know it exists. If it surfaces through normal Compact monitoring, the Compact responds to the consulate, not the team — exactly the separation the operation was designed to exploit. The assessment team's tradecraft is excellent. Excellent is not perfect. Elif Demir's missing Snow Leopard unit was tracking the gap between excellent and perfect.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The assessment team completes their evaluation and communicates results to EO command through a channel that bypasses the consulate entirely. The consulate continues operating normally, unaware that the intelligence operation running out of their district has just changed the strategic equation of the entire city. The Crossing Ceremony broadcast shifts language the next morning. Residents notice before the factions do.

DAY

AUTHORITY

EO consulate administration + Compact Snow Leopard surveillance (invisible — they move through the elevated terrain like they were designed for it, because they were).

ECONOMY

Diplomatic activity, commercial cover operations, the visible layer of intelligence brokerage. The cafe network runs on espresso and three-layer conversations.

RISK

The assessment team is conducting physical surveillance of a Compact installation. In daylight. Their tradecraft is excellent enough that this is not as reckless as it sounds.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Consulate security + informal district governance. The Snow Leopards don't leave — they shift from monitoring to operating.

ECONOMY

Dead drop retrieval, intelligence brokerage, the Istiklal cafe network after hours — the conversations that couldn't happen in daylight.

RISK

The assessment team needs a specific Compact building. They are planning the approach. Their support courier is running a surveillance detection route she thinks is clean. It is not.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A Snow Leopard intelligence officer in a window seat at a Beyoglu cafe, reading a newspaper, watching three separate intelligence operations running simultaneously across the street — two of which she is tracking, one of which she hasn't identified yet. The newspaper is today's. The coffee is her third. The operation she hasn't identified is the one that matters.

FACTIONS PRESENT

EO INTELLIGENCE

consulate operations (official) and assessment team (compartmented, running parallel). The separation between the two is the operation's security architecture.

BOSPHORUS COMPACT

Snow Leopard surveillance network under Elif Demir. Complete district coverage. One unit missing.

PCU INTELLIGENCE

counter-surveillance assets running against EO operations they think they've identified. They've identified the wrong operation.

CIVILIAN NEED

Stability — Beyoglu's economy runs on the diplomatic presence. If the consulate situation changes, the district's commercial infrastructure loses its anchor.

OPERATOR ACCESS

EO consulate administrative services, dead-drop corridor access, Snow Leopard contact (through Elif Demir's network), assessment team intelligence (if operators are useful enough to trade with), gene-forged medical services through consulate introduction chain.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

1. An EO consulate official flags operators for a compliance check — routine, except he is being watched by someone he hasn't identified and he knows it. His hands are steady. His eyes are not.

2. Two men at adjacent cafe tables who are not together are reading the same newspaper, open to the same page. They have been there for forty minutes. The newspaper contains a dead-drop signal in the classified section that both are waiting to confirm.

3. A Snow Leopard unit in civilian clothes makes contact. She needs operators to carry a message to a specific address without using any communications device. She will not explain why. The address is in Fatih.

4. The assessment team's support courier is moving through Beyoglu on a surveillance detection run. She is very good. She hasn't noticed the PCU tail. The PCU tail hasn't noticed the Snow Leopard observer documenting both of them.

5. A gene-forged EO operator at the consulate medical wing is in Stage 2 Drift and it is becoming visible — the thermal regulation is failing, the metallic sweetness of leopard-stock biochemistry sharpening in the corridor air. The consulate staff do not have the protocols. The Ghost Kit Journal has a piece about exactly this situation.

6. A dead drop retrieval goes wrong. The operator making the pickup is standing at a street corner with the specific expression of someone recalculating everything they thought they knew. The document in her hand is not the document she expected.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

1. The assessment team is conducting a physical approach to a Compact monitoring installation. Their tradecraft is excellent. Excellent is not perfect — and the gap between the two is where Elif Demir's people operate.

2. A PCU intelligence asset is running counter-surveillance on an EO operation they think they've identified. They've identified the wrong operation. The operation they've actually found is more interesting.

3. A Sons of the Serpent courier is making a dead drop on Istiklal. Three hours. The contact hasn't appeared. The courier's patience is the specific kind of patience that venom-adapted gene-forged carry in their operational tempo — not anxious, not hurried, just waiting with the stillness of something that learned surveillance from desert terrain.

4. A signal burst from inside the consulate building — not on any logged frequency. Compact monitoring caught it. Elif Demir's unit is responding. The response is measured, which tells you more than the signal does.

5. An EO officer leaves the consulate at 0130 and walks a route that ends at a building the Compact has flagged for six months. He does not appear to know it is flagged. He is not assessment team. He is something else.

6. The assessment team makes contact with operators. They want an introduction. They will trade information about the cable program scope for facilitated access to a Brotherhood of Shadows contact. The trade is genuine. What they want the Brotherhood contact for is not what they will say it is.

RUMORS (1D6)

1. The Compact has been reading EO and PCU communications through Bosphorus seabed cables for eleven years. The EO assessment is two steps from confirming the full scope. [TRUE]

2. One of the Istiklal cafe dead drops has been compromised for three months. The Compact reads every message before delivery. The faction using it still thinks it's clean. [TRUE]

3. The EO consulate has a secure room that Snow Leopard surveillance cannot penetrate. It was built by a Compact contractor eighteen months

ago. [TRAP — the room exists; the penetration claim is Compact disinformation designed to make EO trust the room]

4. The assessment team's lead analyst Voss has been dark from EO command for 72 hours. Still in Istanbul. Not detained. [TRUE — and what she found during the blackout is the central question]

5. PCU has turned an EO intelligence asset in Beyoglu and is feeding disinformation into the assessment. [FALSE — EO fabricated this rumor to pull PCU counter-intelligence resources away from the assessment team]

6. Elif Demir has known about the assessment for six weeks. She hasn't disrupted it because she is using the team's movements to complete a separate evaluation of EO's Istanbul intelligence network. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

SNOW LEOPARD OFFICER ELIF DEMIR

Compact Intelligence, cable program field lead

CAN GET Full cable intelligence scope, assessment team's current status, Sons transit route mapping, identity of the unidentified PCU asset in Beyoglu.

WANTS The assessment team flagged to EO's own leadership as exceeding their operational mandate — an internal recall, not an external confrontation. She needs this to happen through EO's bureaucracy, not through the Compact's intelligence channels.

FEARS That the missing Snow Leopard unit tracking the assessment team has been taken by EO and is being used to complete the assessment — the unit knows enough about cable program architecture to close the assessment's remaining gaps.

CURRENT PRESSURE A Snow Leopard field unit has gone dark in Beyoglu. It was the unit tracking the assessment team. She has not reported this to Compact leadership yet because reporting it surfaces the tracking operation, which surfaces her knowledge of the assessment, which she has been managing independently.

EO ASSESSMENT LEAD ANALYST 'VOSS'

EO intelligence, compartmented operation lead

CAN GET	Assessment's current findings, EO command's actual intentions for cable program disclosure, the identity of the PCU asset EO has turned (or fabricated).
WANTS	The cable program's full technical architecture — specifically the seabed node locations and access protocols the assessment has not yet confirmed.
FEARS	That EO command will recall the operation before it completes for political reasons unrelated to intelligence value — and that what she found in the blackout will be buried in the recall.
CURRENT PRESSURE	She has been dark from EO command for 72 hours by her own choice. She found something that changes the assessment's conclusions. She is not ready to report it because the implications extend beyond the cable program.

DUMAN

Beyoglu district information broker, no faction affiliation

CAN GET	Istiklal cafe network activity, consulate movement patterns, which dead drop has been compromised for three months, the assessment team's operational rhythm.
WANTS	Clean passage out of Istanbul before whatever is about to happen, happens. He can read the political weather and the forecast is bad.
FEARS	Being the person holding information that three factions need to suppress simultaneously — the specific fear of someone who has been too useful to too many people.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Someone hired him to track Voss three days ago. He does not know who. He does know what Voss found — and knowing it has changed his assessment of how much time he has.

DISTRICT 2 KARAKOY

PCU TRADE MISSION / PORT QUARTER

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable

CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + informant net + PCU SIGINT
FACTION PRESSURE	PCU dominant / Compact present / Sons embedded
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	open (district) / monitored (port)

FUNCTION

Istanbul's commercial port district and the PCU Trade Mission's operational base — where legitimate trade and intelligence operations share the same docks, the same manifests, and frequently the same personnel. The port smells like diesel fuel, salt water, and the specific chemical signature of cargo containers that have crossed the Mediterranean. Dr. Kaya's tea house sits on the waterfront edge, running Compact intelligence assessments on alternating Tuesdays and serving tea on the others.

CONTROLLER

PCU Trade Mission administers commercial operations. The Sons transit infrastructure runs through Compact-adjacent port authority channels that PCU has never fully mapped — eleven years of operational security built around people doing their jobs normally.

DRAW

• Port access for legitimate and off-manifest cargo. • PCU commercial contracts — significant legitimate trade processes through the Mission. • The Sons' Istanbul transit infrastructure entry points. • Gene-forged services outside faction programs, accessible through a specific introduction chain that begins at a waterfront vendor who sells fishing equipment he has never used. • Dr. Kaya's tea house — Compact intelligence function on alternating Tuesdays.

RISK • PCU intelligence operations running out of the Trade Mission against EO commercial cover operations. • The Sons transit infrastructure's presence is unknown to PCU — any disruption risks exposing it. • PCU Trade Mission investigation into irregular cargo patterns is four months old and getting close to the right question. • The night-shift security director is on the Sons' contact list — he thinks he's running an informal information network for personal profit.

SCARCITY • Port access outside PCU monitoring. • Cargo documentation that passes both Compact and PCU inspection simultaneously. • Any knowledge of the Sons' actual transit routes through the port infrastructure.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Sons transit infrastructure runs through Karakoy port authority through employees who do not know they are facilitating it — eleven years of operational security built around people doing their jobs normally. The PCU Trade Mission investigation has been connecting irregular cargo patterns for four months and is approaching the right question. The cargo irregularities correlate with a specific shift change rotation. The PCU investigation has the data. They have not noticed the correlation.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

PCU investigators connect cargo patterns to specific port authority employees. The employees are interviewed. They are confused — they have done nothing wrong by their understanding. They are telling the truth. The Sons have 48 hours to reroute the transit infrastructure before the investigation reaches a point that cannot be managed. Rerouting exposes the infrastructure's existence to parties who currently do not know it exists.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PCU Trade Mission administration + Compact port inspection. Dual oversight that is comprehensive but not coordinated.

ECONOMY

Commercial trade, port operations, diplomatic commerce. The docks run on manifest paperwork and the specific rhythm of cranes and container handlers.

RISK

PCU investigation unit making connections it shouldn't — the lead analyst is at the port today, off-duty, still working.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Port security contractors — primarily PCU-aligned but not PCU-managed. The night-shift security director is on the Sons' contact list.

ECONOMY

Sons of the Serpent transit movements, off-manifest cargo, gene-forged services network. The port at night smells different — diesel and salt and something chemical from the containers nobody logs.

RISK

A PCU intelligence officer running night surveillance without Trade Mission authorization. He found a maintenance corridor entrance in the port's eastern maintenance yard. He photographed it. He has not decided whether to report it.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A Sons of the Serpent transit cell surfacing briefly in Karakoy port — a personnel handoff in plain sight during dock worker shift change, seven people who look like Anatolian pilgrims because that is exactly what their documentation says. They move with the patience of venom-adapted gene-forged who learned their operational tempo from desert terrain, and the dock workers around them notice nothing because there is nothing to notice.

FACTIONS PRESENT

PCU TRADE MISSION

commercial operations (official) and investigation unit (connecting cargo irregularities to transit infrastructure they don't yet understand).

SONS OF THE SERPENT

transit infrastructure embedded in port authority operations through unwitting employees. Eleven years. The cell leader is managing three crises simultaneously.

BOSPHORUS COMPACT

port inspection authority. Officially monitoring commercial compliance. Unofficially choosing not to see what the Sons are running through the port.

CIVILIAN NEED

Port employment stability — the dock workers and port authority employees are doing their jobs. Some of them are unknowingly facilitating something else. None of them want to be the subject of an investigation.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Port access credentials, PCU commercial contacts, Sons introduction (through underground contact chain), Dr. Kaya's tea house, gene-forged services network entry point, off-manifest cargo handling.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

1. A PCU Trade Mission inspector pulls a cargo manifest that doesn't add up. She keeps pulling the thread. Her expression is the specific concentration of someone who has found a pattern and is following it to its source.

2. A Sons courier is running a specific dockside route and repeating it — third time this morning. Something is wrong with the handoff. His patience is operational, not personal.

3. A Compact port inspector and a PCU Trade Mission official are having a conversation that started professional and has become very quiet. The inspector has asked a question that the official was not prepared for.

4. A vessel requests emergency docking with a manifest that lists medical supplies. The cargo weight is inconsistent with medical supplies by approximately two hundred kilograms.

5. A dock worker approaches operators. Her colleague told her something before he didn't show up for shift. She has been waiting four hours to tell someone. She does not know who to tell.

6. The PCU investigation unit's lead analyst is at the port. She is off-duty. She is working. She has a tablet with cargo data correlations that would end the Sons' transit infrastructure if she noticed the shift change pattern.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

1. A transit movement through the underground access point in the port's eastern maintenance yard — personnel arriving as pilgrims, departing as something else. The transition is seamless and practiced.

2. The PCU night surveillance officer finds a maintenance corridor he has no record of. He photographs the entrance. He does not go in. His instinct is correct.

3. A cargo container is being moved off-manifest by workers who are doing it efficiently and without apparent anxiety. The efficiency is wrong — it is the efficiency of people who have done this specific task many times, not the efficiency of people doing their normal job.

4. A Sons cell leader surfaces to make direct contact with a port authority employee. The employee is visibly uncomfortable. This is the first time this has happened — the infrastructure was designed so that it never needed to happen.

5. A Compact monitoring vessel anchored in the harbor activates its surveillance array at 0300. The array is pointed at the port, not the strait. Something has changed the Compact's monitoring priority tonight.

6. Two PCU intelligence operatives are arguing quietly about whether to report what they found tonight or wait until they have more. They have enough. The argument is about consequences, not evidence.

RUMORS (1D6)

1. The Sons transit infrastructure runs through port authority employees who don't know they're facilitating it. The PCU investigation has one of their names. [TRUE]

2. The PCU Trade Mission has a second set of investigation files — the real ones — that do not appear in the official investigation record. [TRUE]

3. The PCU night surveillance officer who found the maintenance corridor has already reported it up his chain. [FALSE — he hasn't decided yet]

4. Off-manifest cargo through Karakoy includes calibration supplies for gene-forged templates the Compact's Snow Leopard program does not officially acknowledge. [TRAP — supplies are real; the Snow Leopard connection is wrong; the supplies are for the underground gene-forged services network]

5. The Sons cell leader running the Karakoy infrastructure has not reported the PCU investigation to Shatter Belt command. He is managing it alone because reporting it surfaces his cover. [TRUE]

6. A PCU commercial vessel has been running a specific Bosphorus transit route every third day for two months. The route passes 200 meters from a cable node access point. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

PCU INVESTIGATION LEAD ANALYST SERRA AYDIN

PCU Trade Mission, cargo pattern analysis

CAN GET Cargo pattern data, port authority employee schedules, the investigation's current findings, the second set of files.

WANTS The explanation for the cargo irregularities — she can see the pattern but cannot explain the mechanism. Someone is moving things through her port and the how is driving her to work off-duty.

FEARS That the irregularities connect to Compact infrastructure, which means her investigation enters diplomatic territory she does not have authorization to navigate.

CURRENT PRESSURE Employee interviews scheduled in 48 hours. Her supervisor is pushing for results. She is close enough to the answer that delay feels irresponsible and speed feels dangerous.

DR. KAYA

Karakoy waterfront tea house proprietor, Compact intelligence asset

CAN GET Compact intelligence assessments (on alternating Tuesdays), port activity intelligence, introduction to the gene-forged services network, the specific rhythm of Karakoy's information economy.

WANTS Continuity. The tea house's intelligence function depends on the Compact's survival. If the Compact falls, the tea house becomes just a tea house — and Dr. Kaya becomes just a man who knows too much about too many people.

FEARS The PCU investigation reaching the waterfront businesses. His tea house's Compact function would surface in any serious investigation of port-adjacent commercial operations.

CURRENT PRESSURE A PCU investigator has been to the tea house three times this week. Not on Compact assessment days. She ordered tea. She watched the waterfront. She took notes. Dr. Kaya does not know if she is investigating the port or the tea house.

DISTRICT 3 NISANTASI

NEUTRAL QUARTER / NAF COMMERCIAL ATTACHE

SECURITY	light
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable

CIVILIANS	packed (upscale)
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + discreet Compact monitoring
FACTION PRESSURE	Compact-neutral / NAF present / all factions operate with minimum friction
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	moderate
MOBILITY	open

FUNCTION Istanbul's diplomatic neutral ground — the district where all factions operate with tacit acknowledgment that this is where the city's real negotiations happen. The hotel lobbies smell like expensive cleaning products and the faint ozone of surveillance countermeasures that everyone runs and everyone knows everyone runs. The information brokers here sell assessed intelligence rather than raw data — curated, analyzed, priced for the specific party buying it.

CONTROLLER The Compact administers formally. Nisantasi governs itself through the social contracts of expensive real estate and mutual surveillance — a self-regulating system where everyone watches everyone and the watching is the governance.

DRAW • The NAF Commercial Attache's offices — the most genuinely neutral diplomatic presence in Istanbul. • High-end hotels hosting every faction's sensitive meetings because everyone can claim another reason for being there. • Information brokers who sell assessed intelligence rather than raw data. • Access to Compact leadership through Nisantasi's cafe and social channels. • The district's specific social architecture — a place where being seen matters as much as being heard.

RISK

• Every faction has surveillance in Nisantasi, and they know every other faction has surveillance. • The NAF Attache's office has been the site of three separate intelligence operations in the last year — none run by the NAF. • Three information brokers are playing three sides simultaneously; at least one gets caught this week. • The assessment team is meeting sources here — if the Compact confirms this, the district's neutrality premise collapses.

SCARCITY

• Privacy — Nisantasi's social contracts make privacy a luxury nobody can actually purchase. • Genuine neutrality — the district's neutral premise is a shared fiction maintained because the fiction is useful. • Information that hasn't already been assessed, priced, and sold to someone else.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Nisantasi's neutrality depends on its value as meeting ground exceeding any faction's interest in compromising it. The EO assessment operation is meeting sources here — in the hotels, in the restaurants, in the spaces where the neutrality premise makes contact possible. If the Compact confirms this, the assessment gets disrupted. If the confirmation becomes visible to PCU, the district's neutrality premise collapses — and with it, the social architecture that makes Nisantasi useful to everyone.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A faction intelligence operation in Nisantasi surfaces publicly — through a botched meeting, a broker's exposure, or an operator's mistake. The district's neutrality premise breaks. Hotels stop hosting faction meetings. Information brokers go dark. Nisantasi becomes what it always was underneath — a wealthy neighborhood with excellent surveillance — and loses the function that made it strategically valuable.

DAY

AUTHORITY

NAF Attache administration + Compact monitoring (discreet). The authority is social, not military.

ECONOMY

Diplomatic activity, high-end commercial, the assessed intelligence economy. Information here is a luxury product.

RISK

Three information brokers running competing operations without knowing they share the same clients. The overlap will surface this week.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Hotel security + informal district social contracts. The concierges know more than the security staff.

ECONOMY

The meetings that can't happen in daylight, in hotel rooms that everyone knows the Compact can access.

RISK

The assessment team is meeting a Compact source here tonight. The source does not know she is meeting the assessment team.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The NAF Commercial Attache's office window, third floor, overlooking a square where an EO intelligence officer and a PCU diplomatic courier are at adjacent cafe tables, neither acknowledging the other, both watching the same person enter the hotel across the street. The hotel concierge, who is watching all three of them, has not yet decided whom to call first.

FACTIONS PRESENT

NAF COMMERCIAL ATTACHE

the most genuinely neutral diplomatic presence in Istanbul — which makes the office useful to every faction for purposes the NAF does not officially sanction.

ALL FACTIONS

present with minimum friction. The friction is managed, not absent. Nisantasi's social contracts keep it below the surface.

CIVILIAN NEED

The neutrality premise maintained — Nisantasi's property values and commercial economy depend on the district remaining the place where factions come to negotiate rather than fight.

OPERATOR ACCESS

NAF diplomatic contacts, assessed intelligence from district brokers, hotel meeting facilitation, Compact leadership access through social channels, faction contact in a setting where everyone is theoretically equal.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

1. An information broker makes contact with operators. He has the assessment team's operational schedule. He will not say how he got it. His price is not money.

2. A NAF commercial attache staffer pulls operators aside. One of her colleagues has been meeting with EO personnel she hasn't reported. The staffer wants a second opinion before she decides what to do.

3. A Compact Snow Leopard unit is present in civilian clothes in a hotel lobby. They are not watching any of the obvious targets. They are watching the hotel concierge.

4. An EO and PCU representative are at the same restaurant table. Not a coincidence. Not on any official schedule. They stop talking when operators enter. The silence is deliberate.

5. A Void Walker contact surfaces — brief, specific, in a district cafe. The Void Walker leaves before the contact can be identified as the same individual from the Circuit. The cafe owner doesn't remember them.

6. A gene-forged Compact Snow Leopard in Stage 2 Drift is managing a diplomatic function in the hotel's main conference room. The thermal regulation is failing — the metallic sweetness is present in the air conditioning.

Nobody in the room recognizes what is happening to her. She is performing flawlessly.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

1. The assessment team's source meeting — operators can observe it without being observed. The source is a Compact administrative official who does not know she is meeting the assessment team. She thinks this is a NAF commercial inquiry.

2. Three information brokers independently make contact with operators in the same evening. Each offers different information about the same event. The discrepancies are informative.

3. The NAF Commercial Attache herself is in the hotel bar at 2300. Off duty. She orders one drink and sits with a view of the lobby for forty minutes without speaking to anyone. She is reading the room in a way that suggests she knows exactly what is happening in her district.

4. A document transfer in the hotel's service corridor — something moving from a Compact diplomatic staff member to a party that does not appear on any faction manifest.

5. A PCU intelligence officer makes an approach to an EO commercial contact. The contact accepts the meeting. The meeting is not what either of them thinks it is — a third party arranged both sides.

6. The hotel concierge the Snow Leopard unit was watching this morning has not appeared for the evening shift. His locker has been cleaned out. He left a note for the manager that consists of one sentence.

CONTACTS

NAF COMMERCIAL ATTACHE DIRECTOR LEYLA OSMAN

NAF diplomatic presence, Istanbul neutral broker

CAN GET NAF diplomatic back-channel access, neutral meeting facilitation, assessed intelligence on all faction positions in Istanbul, the back-channel communication between the Compact and EO command that neither Elif Demir nor the assessment team knows about.

WANTS	Istanbul's neutrality maintained — not for ideological reasons but because the NAF's Istanbul position depends on the city remaining the place where the NAF is useful as a neutral party.
FEARS	That the back-channel she has been facilitating between the Compact and EO command for three months is being used by one side to manage the other — and she cannot determine which side.
CURRENT PRESSURE	A message through the back-channel last night contained language she has not seen before — language that suggests the channel's purpose has shifted from diplomatic coordination to something closer to ultimatum.

DISTRICT 4 FATIH — BROTHERHOOD OF SHADOWS ARCHIVE QUARTER

SECURITY	light
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (old stone)
CIVILIANS	normal
SURVEILLANCE	minimal (Compact cameras only)
FACTION PRESSURE	Brotherhood dominant / Compact monitoring / all factions want what's inside
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	light
MOBILITY	open

FUNCTION Istanbul's oldest district and the location of the Brotherhood of Shadows archive — the most comprehensive collection of pre-Upheaval intelligence records in the hemisphere. The streets smell like old stone and the particular dry warmth of buildings that have been holding documents for longer than most factions have existed. The archive building has had seventeen official des-

ignations since 2028. None of them accurately describe what is inside.

CONTROLLER Arslan administers the archive. The Brotherhood maintains operational control through him. The Compact has monitored the building's external activity and chosen not to enter for eighteen years — because the calculation that protects the archive is the same calculation that protects the Compact: forcing it destroys its value.

DRAW • Pre-Upheaval intelligence records from three nations that no longer exist — including personnel files for individuals now running faction intelligence services. • The archive's document authentication services, the most reliable in Istanbul. • Arslan's accumulated knowledge of who is who in Istanbul's intelligence economy. • The one building in Istanbul where Snow Leopard units are not actively present.

RISK • The archive's value makes it a permanent target — it has survived by being the one place no faction wants to force. • A researcher with technically valid but functionally wrong credentials has been requesting pre-Upheaval records access for four days. • The missing Brotherhood courier's document package has Fatih's archive as its return address. • Arslan is old. His apprentice does not know everything Arslan knows.

SCARCITY • Access to the pre-Upheaval records section without Arslan's personal oversight. • Any document that has passed through the archive in the last thirty days. • Arslan's trust — the rarest commodity in Istanbul, and the only one that cannot be purchased.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The archive's security relies on the tacit understanding that forcing it destroys its value — the records are useful because they are trusted, and they are trusted because the Brotherhood has never been coerced. A faction that forces the archive gets records. A faction that maintains the relationship gets authentication, provenance, and fifty years of accumulated analytical context. Every faction has made the calculation. So far, every faction has chosen the relationship. The researcher with the wrong credentials is testing whether the calculation holds.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The researcher with the wrong credentials gets what she came for. The archive's security model collapses not through force but through a gap nobody thought to close — automated credentials that passed every digital check but failed the specific human attention of a custodian who has not yet directed his attention at her. Arslan discovers the breach three days later, when the document surfaces in an EO intelligence report. The archive's mechanical locks hold. Its trust architecture does not.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Arslan, personal. The archive keeps scholar's hours. The authority is one man's judgment, which has been sufficient for fifty years.

ECONOMY

Document authentication, record access, the careful traffic of Istanbul's intelligence researchers. The archive runs on trust and tea.

RISK

The researcher. Four days. Her credentials hold every automated check. They do not hold Arslan's specific kind of attention, which he has not yet directed at her.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The archive's own security — old, mechanical, and extremely good. Locks that predate digital systems and do not respond to digital compromise.

ECONOMY

Nothing officially. The Brotherhood courier network makes contact here after hours. The stones cool. The district quiets.

RISK

The missing courier's package. Whoever sent it knows the address. Whoever is looking for it knows the address. Both will arrive.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Arslan in the pre-Upheaval records room at 2200, reviewing a document that arrived with today's researcher, holding it under a lamp he has been using for forty years, his expression the specific stillness of a man who has just found what he was afraid he would find. The lamp is the only light. The walls hold records from three nations that no longer exist. The document in his hand is from one of them.

FACTIONS PRESENT

BROTHERHOOD OF SHADOWS

archive operations under Arslan's custodianship. The Brotherhood's Istanbul presence is the archive — without it, they have no reason to be here.

BOSPHORUS COMPACT

external monitoring only. Compact cameras on the surrounding streets. No Snow Leopard presence at the building itself — by eighteen years of deliberate choice.

CIVILIAN NEED

The archive's continued existence as neutral ground — Fatih's residents have lived alongside the archive for decades and their neighborhood's safety depends on the calculation that protects it remaining intact.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Pre-Upheaval records (with Arslan's permission), document authentication services, Brotherhood courier network contact, the one surveillance-light zone in Istanbul's surface districts.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

1. The researcher requests a second file — one that Arslan has never been asked for before. It is the same file the missing courier was supposed to deliver to a PCU contact.

2. A Brotherhood courier makes contact at the archive's side entrance. She is not the missing courier. She was sent to find out what happened to the missing courier. Her discipline is professional. Her concern is personal.

3. Arslan asks operators, apparently casually, whether they have contacts in the Shatter Belt. He does not explain why. He pours tea. The question hangs in the air like the steam from the glass.

4. A faction intelligence researcher requests document authentication for a file that operators can identify as recent — not pre-Upheaval. The file has a pre-Upheaval provenance marker that has been added artificially. The forgery is good. It is not good enough for this building.

5. The researcher is in the reading room. She has a document open. She is not reading it — she is photographing something behind it. The document

she is using as cover is itself significant, which she does not appear to know.

6. Three separate parties arrive at the archive within an hour of each other, all requesting access to the same pre-Upheaval records section. Arslan sends two of them away. He is not sure about the third.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

1. The Brotherhood courier from the daytime encounter is still in Fatih. She has been waiting at a specific corner for four hours. The missing courier's last known route passed this corner. The stones are cold. She does not leave.

2. The archive's side entrance lock has been tampered with. Not forced — picked, by someone who knew the mechanism. Arslan's mechanical security system is older and harder. They got through the first lock, not the second.

3. A document package arrives by Brotherhood courier. It is addressed to Arslan. It is not from the missing courier. Arslan's expression when he reads the cover sheet suggests it is worse than the missing courier's package.

4. Someone is in the street outside the archive at 0200. They have been there for an hour. They are watching the building, not approaching it. Their patience is not human patience.

5. The researcher's hotel room — operators can access it with the right introduction. What she has with her is either significantly more or significantly less than expected.

6. Arslan's apprentice makes contact with operators. She has been watching the researcher for two days without Arslan's knowledge. She has something to show them. She wants to know if she should tell Arslan first.

CONTACTS

ARSLAN
Brotherhood of Shadows, Istanbul archive custodian

CAN GET	Pre-Upheaval intelligence records, current faction asset identifications based on document provenance matching, the missing courier's package contents, the researcher's real affiliation, fifty years of analytical context on Istanbul's intelligence economy.
WANTS	The document package returned to the archive before faction intelligence services tracking it realize what building it came from. And something he will not ask for directly — the contents of a specific document moved out of the archive in a way that does not break his oath.
FEARS	That the archive has been compromised and he has not identified the method — the specific fear of a custodian whose security model is himself, discovering that himself is not sufficient.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The researcher asked for a file this morning that Arslan has never been asked for before. It is the same file the missing courier was carrying. The coincidence is not a coincidence, and Arslan knows it.

DISTRICT 5 BAZAAR CIRCUIT

THE ROTATING MARKET

SECURITY	none
INFRASTRUCTURE	pre-Upheaval routes (intact)
CIVILIANS	packed (market days)
SURVEILLANCE	dark zone
FACTION PRESSURE	none official / all factions present
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	open (Circuit routes)

FUNCTION	A weekly rotating market on pre-Upheaval trade routes that predate Istanbul's road network — routes that have been outrunning surveillance for a hundred and fifty years. The Compact's most reliable information exchange and the city's actual intelligence economy. The Circuit smells like spices, body heat, grilled meat, and the specific metallic tang of data storage media being traded in the open air. GREY TABLE's physical boards here carry more simultaneous contract options than any other single location in the OT world.
CONTROLLER	No faction. The Circuit controllers are the families who have run route logistics for four generations and survived every government by being indispensable to commerce. The families' authority is absolute and traditionally respected. It predates every faction currently operating in Istanbul.
DRAW	• The full range of Istanbul's black-market economy, rotating location preventing sustained surveillance. • Intelligence brokerage at the informal level — the real market, below the Nisantasi layer. • The gene-forged services network that operates outside all faction programs — calibration, medical support, template maintenance. • RELAY HOUSE wooden relay tokens — denser here than anywhere else, accumulating as call signs do. • The kind of introduction that only happens when both parties are already present and Circuit social protocols create the context.
RISK	• Every faction has Circuit informants — the informants know about each other and have a working arrangement not to expose each other because the alternative is worse for everyone. • A Void Walker has been in the Circuit for four months; five intelligence services are tracking them. • The EO assessment team is using the Circuit to source technical intelligence about the cable nodes — better at it than the Circuit families realize. • The Circuit's most reliable information broker has been a Snow Leopard informant for two years without knowing it.
SCARCITY	• The Circuit's next location — known only to route families and regular participants. • Introduction to the gene-forged services network requires Circuit social capital that cannot be purchased. • The Void Walker's actual position — five services tracking, none confident.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Circuit functions because every faction values its neutrality more than control of it — a market-scale version of the Compact's own survival architecture. The Void Walker's presence threatens this balance. The document they carry — which appears to be the Compact's own intelligence audit — makes the Void Walker too valuable to ignore and too dangerous to force. If any faction forces the Circuit trying to reach the Void Walker, the Circuit closes. Istanbul loses its most important non-faction intelligence mechanism.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

One of the five tracking services decides the Void Walker's document is worth more than the Circuit's continued existence. The families detect the operation and execute the closure protocol — a coordinated dispersal so practiced and so fast that the market simply ceases to exist between one hour and the next. The routes remain. The trust does not.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Circuit route managers — the families. Absolute and traditionally respected. Their word is law in a market that does not acknowledge any other law.

ECONOMY

All of it. The Circuit operates in daylight by design — intelligence brokerage, black-market trade, gene-forged services, GREY TABLE contracts, RELAY HOUSE tokens.

RISK

The assessment team sourcing cable node intelligence here. Better at it than the families realize. They are buying hardware with one application.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The Circuit closes at dusk. What happens on the routes after dark is not the Circuit's responsibility.

ECONOMY

The routes remain passable. Some parties use them. The night economy is personal, not commercial.

RISK

The Void Walker moves at night. On the Circuit routes. Alone. Five services know this. None have intercepted them.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Circuit's weekly shift — the market relocates in a coordinated movement that looks, to anyone who doesn't understand it, like a neighborhood spontaneously rearranging itself. To anyone who does, it looks exactly like what it is: a system that has been outrunning surveillance for a hundred and fifty years, carried by families who have been doing this since before the Upheaval and will be doing it after the factions are gone.

FACTIONS PRESENT

ALL FACTIONS (INFORMALLY)

every faction has Circuit informants. The informants know about each other. The mutual awareness is a working arrangement.

VOID WALKER 'TRANSIT'

four months in the Circuit. Five services tracking. The document they carry changes the cable intelligence program's meaning.

CIVILIAN NEED

The Circuit's continued existence — for the families who run it, the Circuit is not commerce, it is identity. It is four generations of survival practice. Closing it does not end a market. It ends a way of being in the city.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Black-market trade, intelligence brokerage, gene-forged services network, GREY TABLE contracts, RELAY HOUSE tokens, Circuit family introduction, Void Walker contact (if operators know what they are looking for).

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

1. Five parties are tracking the same individual through the Circuit. The individual knows. Four of the five do not know about the other three. The fifth — the Void Walker — is allowing the pursuit because the pursuit is informative.

2. A gene-forged operator in an unknown template — not EO, not PCU, not Sons — is shopping for calibration equipment. The template is not one any present faction runs. Her build pride is evident: the low-light eyes uncovered, the thermal gear worn open, the modifications displayed rather than concealed.

3. The assessment team's technical analyst is at a specific vendor. She is buying hardware that has one application: cable node access equipment. The vendor knows what the hardware is for. He is selling it anyway because that is what the Circuit does.

4. A Circuit route manager makes contact. The Void Walker's presence is becoming a problem for Circuit neutrality. She wants it resolved before a

faction forces the issue. She is not asking — she is informing operators of a deadline.

5. A Brotherhood courier — not the missing one — is running a Circuit dead drop. She makes operators immediately and changes routes. She does not run. Running would be unprofessional.

6. Three information brokers simultaneously offer operators the same intelligence package. Each claims to have sourced it independently. It is not possible for all three of them to have sourced it independently. The package is about the cable program.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

1. The Void Walker is on the Circuit's night routes. They make contact. They offer operators a document. It is not the document five services are tracking them for. It is something else — something that changes what the tracked document means.

2. The EO assessment team is conducting a night Circuit run — technically outside the Circuit's operating hours, technically not a Circuit operation. They find something they weren't looking for. Their reaction suggests it is significant.

3. Two of the five services tracking the Void Walker are running a joint operation tonight without either service knowing the other is present. They converge on the same position. The position is empty.

4. A Circuit route manager is following someone through the post-close routes. Not the Void Walker. Someone the Void Walker was watching. The someone has not noticed either of them.

5. A dead drop location from three weeks ago is still active — something was left there and never picked up. The package is weatherproof. It has been waiting.

6. The Void Walker makes contact with operators a second time. This time they want to know one specific thing: which of the five services has the closest relationship with the Compact. They will trade the document in their possession for the answer.

CONTACTS

CIRCUIT MANAGER SELIN YILDIZ

Third-generation route logistics, Circuit authority

CAN GET Circuit route schedule (advance, one location), introduction to the gene-forged services network, current location of anyone in the Circuit in the last three weeks.

WANTS The Void Walker out of the Circuit before one of the five services tracking them forces it — not because she dislikes the Void Walker, but because the Circuit's survival is her family's survival.

FEARS That the Circuit will be collateral damage in someone else's intelligence operation — the same fear her grandmother had, and her great-grandmother before that.

CURRENT PRESSURE One of the five services tracking the Void Walker has increased their Circuit presence in the last 48 hours. She knows which one. She does not know why. The increase is measured — not a raid, but preparation.

THE VOID WALKER 'TRANSIT'

Shatter Belt designation, Istanbul primary

CAN GET The Compact's intelligence audit, four months of Istanbul intelligence accumulation, and a document that post-dates cable collection and changes the PCU dam fracture communication's meaning.

WANTS To deliver the document to a specific party. Five services are trying to determine who. The Void Walker has been allowing the chase to continue because the surveillance is itself informative.

FEARS Unknown. Their threat assessment model does not match any known faction doctrine.

CURRENT PRESSURE The EO assessment team and the Void Walker's delivery objective are converging on the same location in the next 36 hours. The Void Walker anticipated this convergence. The assessment team did not.

DISTRICT 6 BOSPHORUS WATERFRONT

THE CROSSING ZONE

SECURITY	active (Snow Leopard, military-grade)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (crossing) / deep (seabed cables)
CIVILIANS	sparse
SURVEILLANCE	comprehensive (most surveilled zone in the city)
FACTION PRESSURE	Compact-controlled
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	none visible
MOBILITY	monitored

FUNCTION

The Bosphorus crossing — the strategic chokepoint that gives the Compact its leverage over every major faction, and the location of the seabed cables carrying eleven years of intercepted communications. The waterfront smells like salt and engine oil and the specific cold that comes off deep water. The crossing ceremony broadcast originates from the monitoring station here — the daily sovereignty declaration disguised as weather and transit scheduling. Snow Leopard units move through the waterfront infrastructure with military precision, their thermal regulation arrays visible in the cold air as faint heat shimmer.

CONTROLLER

Bosphorus Compact, fully. No other faction has operational presence in this zone. The monitoring station crew and Snow Leopard units answer to Yasemin Celik. The crossing is the Compact's primary revenue source and the foundation of its sovereignty claim.

DRAW

• The crossing — mandatory for all registered vessels, fee-based, the Compact's primary revenue source. • The monitoring station observing all transit. • The seabed cable access points — theoretically only Compact-accessible. • Crossing Ceremony broadcasts — the daily political theater reminding everyone who controls the water between things.

RISK

• Any unauthorized approach to the cable nodes triggers immediate Snow Leopard response. • EO has been running seabed drones toward the cable approaches — the Compact knows, has not responded overtly because overt response confirms the cables' significance. • The crossing maintenance window is six weeks away, creating observable access points the assessment team is timing their operation around. • The 7% discrepancy between recorded transits and fee collections that appeared this week.

SCARCITY

• Access to the waterfront without Snow Leopard awareness. • Seabed cable node locations — classified at the highest Compact level. • The maintenance window schedule — known to the assessment team, which is the problem.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The seabed cables require maintenance that cannot be conducted without briefly creating observable access points. The last maintenance window was fourteen months ago. The next is in six weeks. Every intelligence service in Istanbul knows when maintenance windows occur. The assessment team's operational timeline ends in seven weeks. The convergence is not a coincidence. The Compact's dilemma: delaying maintenance increases the risk of cable failure; conducting maintenance on schedule creates the access window the assessment team needs.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The maintenance window opens. EO's seabed drones conduct a coordinated mapping pass. The assessment team attempts cable node access through the underground maintenance corridors that pass within twenty meters of the infrastructure. The Compact responds — but the response confirms the cables' significance to every intelligence service observing. The weapon that can only be fired once is now visible, even if it hasn't been fired.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Snow Leopard units + Compact monitoring station crew. Military-grade security, fully professional.

ECONOMY

Vessel transit fees, crossing ceremony broadcast, diplomatic vessel scheduling. The crossing's economy is the Compact's economy.

RISK

EO SIGINT collection from the monitoring vessel three kilometers north. Vessel traffic creating cover for reconnaissance passes.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Reduced Snow Leopard patrol + automated monitoring. The crossing does not sleep but it quiets.

ECONOMY

Nothing official. The waterfront at night is the Compact's operational infrastructure, not its commercial face.

RISK

Seabed drone approaches from EO's monitoring vessel. Six mapping passes this week — fourth consecutive week of escalation.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Bosphorus at 0400 — an EO logistics vessel transiting north, a PCU trade ship transiting south, a Compact monitoring vessel between them running lights, and on the seabed beneath all three, cables that have been carrying their communications for eleven years. The water is black. The lights are steady. The cables do not care who passes above them.

FACTIONS PRESENT

BOSPHORUS COMPACT

full control. Snow Leopard units, monitoring station crew, automated surveillance systems. The waterfront is the Compact's territory in a way that no other district is.

CIVILIAN NEED

The crossing's continued operation — vessel crews, dock workers, and crossing ceremony staff depend on the Compact's sovereignty remaining unchallenged.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Crossing ceremony observation, monitoring station exterior reconnaissance, waterfront approach intelligence, transit fee records (through Compact contacts), cable infrastructure awareness (if operators have the right connections).

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

1. A Crossing Ceremony broadcast is interrupted by a technical fault. The fault lasts 90 seconds. The Compact's official explanation is equipment failure. The Snow Leopard response in those 90 seconds is inconsistent with equipment failure — it is consistent with a security breach.

2. A vessel requests emergency crossing clearance. Its manifest is medical. Its transit approach angle is not consistent with the listed origin port.

3. A Compact monitoring station technician approaches operators on the waterfront. She has a question about Shatter Belt transit infrastructure that she could not have formed without access to classified Compact intelligence. She is testing operators.

4. EO's monitoring vessel runs a new transit pattern — one that brings it 400 meters closer to a cable node approach zone than previous patterns. The Compact logs the approach but does not respond. The non-response is the response.

5. A Snow Leopard unit is detaining a diver at the waterfront. The diver has no dive permit. Her equipment includes seabed mapping hardware. She is not EO. She is not PCU. Her affiliation is unclear.

6. The Compact's daily crossing fee report shows a 7% discrepancy between recorded transits and fee collections. This has never happened

before. Someone transited without paying — and the monitoring system did not flag it.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

1. Six seabed drones from EO's monitoring vessel run a mapping pass of the cable node cluster. This is the fourth time this week. The passes are getting closer. The Compact's non-response is becoming harder to maintain.

2. A Compact Snow Leopard unit intercepts a submersible at the southern cable node approach. The submersible is not EO. Its origin is unknown. The occupant is alive and refusing to communicate.

3. The waterfront is empty. Every surveillance system is running normally. Someone is on the seabed, near the cable access points, and nothing is reading them. The absence of detection is itself the alarm.

4. A signal from the assessment team — a burst transmission, encrypted, aimed at a frequency the Compact's monitoring systems cannot crack but can log. They are logging it. The signal's destination is not the EO consulate.

5. A Compact monitoring vessel turns on its search lights at 0130 and sweeps an empty stretch of water for four minutes, then turns them off. The watch officer's log records nothing. The search lights were not for finding something — they were for showing something that they know it's there.

6. A Sons of the Serpent maintenance corridor in Istanbul Underground passes within twenty meters of the seabed cable infrastructure. Tonight, for the first time, someone in the corridor has noticed. They are not Sons. They are not Compact. They are standing very still.

CONTACTS

COMPACT MONITORING STATION CHIEF OFFICER DENIZ KARA

Bosphorus Compact, crossing operations and surveillance

CAN GET	Crossing schedules, vessel transit logs, monitoring station surveillance data, cable maintenance window timing, the 7% fee discrepancy analysis.
WANTS	The EO seabed drone approaches to stop — they are creating operational pressure on her monitoring crew that is unsustainable without escalation she is not authorized to initiate.
FEARS	That the 7% fee discrepancy is not an accounting error — that someone has found a way to transit the Bosphorus without the monitoring station's detection, which would mean the Compact's sovereignty is already breached.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Celik has ordered her not to respond to the seabed drone approaches. The order is clear. The operational logic is not — and her crew is beginning to ask questions she cannot answer honestly.

DISTRICT 7

ISTANBUL UNDERGROUND

PRE-UPHEAVAL INFRASTRUCTURE / SONS TRANSIT

SECURITY	none (faction) / present (Sons of the Serpent)
INFRASTRUCTURE	pre-Upheaval (selectively maintained)
CIVILIANS	none
SURVEILLANCE	dark zone (no faction sensor coverage)
FACTION PRESSURE	Sons controlled
CONTAMINATION	unknown (pre-Upheaval industrial residue possible)
BLACK MARKET	extreme
MOBILITY	open (for those who know the routes)

FUNCTION	Istanbul's pre-Upheaval underground — transit tunnels, maintenance corridors, and utility systems repurposed by the Sons of the Serpent as the most secure transit network in the hemisphere. The air is eighteen degrees constant, smells like stone and cable insulation and something geological that has no name, and carries sound in ways that make the corridors feel inhabited even when they are empty. The gene-forged services network operates here completely outside faction programs — calibration, medical support, template maintenance for operators who have left or never entered the faction supply chain.
CONTROLLER	The Sons of the Serpent operationally. The Compact does not officially acknowledge the underground's existence as a transit network — eighteen years of strategic denial that serves both parties.
DRAW	• Movement through Istanbul without appearing in any surveillance record. • The Sons' transit network — personnel, materials, information moving between the Shatter Belt and Istanbul. • The safest location in Istanbul for meetings that cannot be surveilled. • Gene-forged services operating completely outside faction programs — the underground network that maintains operators whose builds belong to them now. • Three maintenance corridors that pass within twenty meters of the seabed cable infrastructure.
RISK	• The underground is not mapped — getting in without a guide means the possibility of not getting out. • The Sons operate here with the assumption that anyone present without introduction is hostile. • The PCU Trade Mission investigation is approaching questions that might lead to the surface access points. • Three maintenance corridors pass within twenty meters of the seabed cable infrastructure — someone in the underground has recently noticed. • A sealed section the cell leader closed four years ago has been opened from the other side.
SCARCITY	• Introduction to the underground from a Sons contact. • Any mapped route that has not been changed in the last sixty days. • The Sons cell leader's attention — he is managing three crises simultaneously and operators are not his priority.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Sons transit infrastructure was built around Compact-adjacent port authority employees who don't know they're facilitating it. If the PCU investigation reaches those employees, the Istanbul end of the entire Shatter Belt transit network is compromised. The cell leader has been managing this risk alone because reporting it surfaces his cover — a seven-year operational identity that cannot be rebuilt. He is spending three hours a day on counter-investigation work. He missed his compliance appointment. The minor things accumulate.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The PCU investigation reaches the port authority employees. The Sons activate contingency rerouting. The rerouting requires operational decisions only someone embedded in the infrastructure could make — which burns the cell leader's cover. The underground does not collapse. It becomes known. The Compact's eighteen years of strategic denial about the underground's existence ends, and what replaces it is a conversation nobody in the city wants to have.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Sons of the Serpent, full time — the underground has no day/night distinction. Authority is venom-adapted patience and operational discipline.

ECONOMY

Transit operations, gene-forged services, logistics coordination for Shatter Belt operations. The economy runs on trust and introduction.

RISK

The investigation. The cell leader is spending three hours a day on active counter-investigation work that is pulling him from operations. His absence is noticed.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Sons, same as day but with additional transit volume. Night is when the bulk of personnel movements happen.

ECONOMY

Personnel transit, coordinated with surface access points. The underground at night moves with purpose.

RISK

The maintenance corridor proximity to the seabed cables. Something is in the corridor that isn't Sons. A sealed section has been opened from the other side.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A pre-Upheaval maintenance corridor, sixty meters below Karakoy, lit by cable-diverted power that officially does not exist, through which a Sons cell is moving personnel who arrived in Istanbul as Anatolian pilgrims and will depart as something else entirely. The walls are stone. The air is eighteen degrees. The venom-adapted gene-forged leading the transit moves with the patience of something that learned its operational tempo from desert terrain and brought it underground.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SONS OF THE SERPENT

operational control of the transit network. The cell leader's seven-year cover is the infrastructure's security architecture.

GENE-FORGED SERVICES NETWORK

operating outside all faction programs — calibration, medical support, template maintenance for freelance operators whose builds belong to them.

CIVILIAN NEED

None — the underground has no civilian population. The people who move through it are operational, not residential. Their need is transit. Their vulnerability is discovery.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Underground transit routes (with Sons introduction), gene-forged services network, surveillance-free meeting space, Shatter Belt contact chain, cable infrastructure proximity awareness.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

1. The cell leader surfaces to meet operators. He is direct: the PCU investigation has a name. He needs operators to make that name unavailable without making it obvious that someone made the name unavailable. His directness is not trust — it is desperation managed professionally.

2. A Sons transit movement is delayed. The personnel have been in the underground for eighteen hours. Something is wrong with the surface exit point. They are patient. Venom-adapted patience is not the same as calm.

3. A gene-forged operator in an unknown template is in the underground. She is not with a Sons cell. She has been here for six days. The Sons know she is here. They have not removed her. Her template is not one the faction programs produce — she is build-proud, the modifications displayed rather than concealed, the kit accommodating the body rather than hiding it.

4. An access point to the Bosphorus maintenance infrastructure opens off a corridor operators are moving through. It was not on the route map. The air from the opening is colder and carries the smell of deep water.

5. A Sons logistics coordinator is running a route that ends at a location operators recognize from the Karakoy waterfront — but the underground

route and the surface location do not connect geographically. The map is wrong, or the coordinator knows a connection that isn't mapped.

6. The cell leader's cover identity has a routine compliance appointment today. He has missed it. He does not know he has missed it. A minor thing. The minor things are how seven-year covers burn.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

1. A transit movement includes personnel that the escorting Sons operative identifies as non-Sons gene-forged — unknown template, unknown faction. She does not stop the movement. She does not log it. Her silence is a decision.

2. Something is in the seabed maintenance corridor. It is not Sons. It is not making noise. It has been there since approximately 2200 based on when the Sons patrol last cleared the route. The eighteen-degree air carries no sound from its position.

3. A Compact Snow Leopard unit has found an underground access point from the surface. They are not entering. They are documenting. The documentation is itself a message — the Compact acknowledging what it has officially denied for eighteen years.

4. The cell leader is in the corridor alone at 0300. He is sitting against the wall. He is not doing anything. This is the third consecutive night he has been here at this hour. The weight of three simultaneous crises is visible in a man who has carried seven years of cover without it showing.

5. A signal fragment from the Shatter Belt comes through the underground's communications infrastructure — the one that the Sons use for Compact-adjacent contact. The signal is not from the Sons' own network. Its origin is unclear. Its content is a question.

6. The underground connects to a section that the cell leader has sealed for four years. Tonight the seal is broken from the other side. What is on the other side of the seal has been waiting four years to come through.

CONTACTS

SONS CELL LEADER 'KAYA'
Istanbul operational commander, seven-year cover

CAN GET	Underground transit access, surface exit point schedules, Shatter Belt network contact chain, the PCU investigation's current state, the three maintenance corridor locations near the seabed cables.
WANTS	The PCU investigator who has the port authority employee's name removed from the investigation without surfacing as an operation. Clean work that leaves no operational signature.
FEARS	That the investigation reaches his cover before he can manage it — and that if his cover burns, seven years of operational relationships in Istanbul burn with it. The relationships are not replaceable. The man who built them is not replaceable.
CURRENT PRESSURE	He missed his compliance appointment today. It is minor. It is the kind of minor thing that gets noticed by people who are already looking. He is managing three crises simultaneously and the compliance appointment was the one he forgot — which tells you which crisis he considers least important and which ones are consuming him.

05/ KALEMIE

EO-ADJACENT / INDEPENDENT | EARTH 2066

The lake is the reason. Every faction in Kalemie knows this. Most of them are lying about what they plan to do with the water.

HUB OVERVIEW

The ACU built Kalemie's regional authority on one promise: the Great Lakes stay clean. Lake Tanganyika, Lake Victoria, Lake Malawi — nearly twenty percent of the world's unfrozen surface freshwater — kept intact for the forty million lakeside residents whose legitimacy sustains every Warden patrol, every checkpoint, every governance structure the ACU has built across the Corridor. The city of four hundred thousand is the strongest argument for ACU governance in sub-Saharan Africa. It is also sitting directly above a Lumicite deposit three times larger than anything previously catalogued.

The deposit was classified in 2044. The classification held for nineteen months. The ACU's water governance contract with forty million lakeside residents requires clean lakes. Lumicite extraction at scale requires destabilizing the lakebed. These two facts cannot coexist. The moment any faction begins extraction — including the ACU itself — the contract breaks, and forty million people who no longer have any reason to accept ACU governance will rearrange the Corridor accordingly.

At night, Lake Tanganyika glows. A faint amber pulse from deep water, visible from the shore on clear nights. Locals call it lakefire. The ACU says it is bioluminescent algae. The Brotherhood of Shadows researcher who spent six months embedded with a Mombasa aid organization before disappearing said something else. Her field notes, if they still exist, are the most valuable document in the Corridor. The pulse has a seventeen-second interval — the historical baseline. The current interval is fourteen seconds. The rate is changing. Nobody at ACU Marine Sciences has filed a report explaining why, because the explanation requires acknowledging what is pulsing.

Green, loud, and perpetually wet. Copper mining infrastructure running twenty years past specification. Lake water that smells clean in ways the instruments confirm and something else contradicts. The Obsidian Wardens move through fishing villages in matte-black kit, past canoes and fish traps that have not changed design in a thousand years. The Dawn Water Quality Broadcasts play in market areas on a continuous loop — clean numbers, accurate numbers, measuring the wrong things. In the Copperbelt, acid mine drainage has reached the groundwater and the news cycle is being managed rather than the contamination. On the Mombasa Road, Meridian East security contractors wave through vehicles at ACU checkpoints while the checkpoint commanders watch and do

not intervene. The smell of the lake changes at dusk — mineral and organic, something between rain on laterite soil and the faint copper-tinged sweetness of old industrial water. The temperature drops four degrees in the twenty meters between the lakeside market and the shore. Children notice the glow before adults do. They always have.

CURRENT STRESS CONDITION

The Lumicite deposit cannot be kept secret indefinitely. The ACU's own auditors are six weeks from discovering that Meridian East's financial penetration of the Copperbelt has been funding EO regional operations for four years — simultaneously with the governance crisis. Two failures on separate timelines, converging. The lakefire pulse interval has shortened from seventeen seconds to fourteen in the last six weeks. A new respiratory pattern has appeared in children across three villages — Copper Quarter and Lakefire Shore — consistent with long-term low-level Lumicite resonance exposure. Nobody at ACU Medical has made this connection yet. The Brotherhood researcher's message from inside the exclusion zone, signed with her name and containing a geological assessment only she could have written, arrived tonight. Three parties are attempting independent confirmation of the deposit. The next lakebed intake maintenance window is in eleven days.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

SECURITY	active (Obsidian Wardens) / strained at extraction corridors
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable near lake zones / failing in extraction corridors
CIVILIANS	packed (400,000) / managed anxiety — lake communities fiercely protective of water access
SURVEILLANCE	ACU drone net + cameras (lake zones) / informant net (Copperbelt) / dark zone (Mombasa Road night)
FACTION PRESSURE	ACU dominant / EO (Meridian East) embedded / NAF intelligence present / Void Walker unlocated
CONTAMINATION	none visible (surface) / Lumicite resonance deep and unannounced / Copperbelt acid mine drainage spreading
BLACK MARKET	heavy (Lumicite survey data, corridor passage, Meridian East cargo manifests)
MOBILITY	open (lake) / checkpointed (land) / barricaded (exclusion zone)
GENE-FORGED	Leopards (ACU infiltration), Wild Dogs (ACU pack units), Gorillas (ACU terrain ops), EO Bears/Boars (Meridian East security)

DISTRICT MAP

DISTRICT 1	**THE LAKESIDE COMPACT (Port / Administrative Hub)**: ACU governance headquarters and best freshwater port between Kinshasa and Mombasa. The suppression operation's nerve center.
DISTRICT 2	**COPPER QUARTER (Trading District)**: Where Meridian East's commercial penetration of the Copperbelt meets Kalemie's economic surface. The audit is six weeks out.
DISTRICT 3	**LAKEFIRE SHORE (Residential / Community Zone)**: Where the lakeside communities live and the amber glow is closest. The human cost of the secret lives here.
DISTRICT 4	**WARDEN BASE 7 (ACU Security Forward)**: The enforcement arm. The people who know things they cannot say.
DISTRICT 5	**MOMBASA ROAD (Corridor Transit Zone)**: The logistics artery connecting Kalemie to the Indian Ocean coast. Eight hundred kilometers of contested road.
DISTRICT 6	**DEEP SURVEY ZONE (The Lumicite Exclusion Area)**: The lakebed above the deposit. Officially ecological preservation. Actually the secret the ACU cannot keep forever.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Who a city is for reveals itself through what it forbids and what it forgives. Kalemie enforces three categories of control, and the gap between them tells you everything about the suppression.

Aggressively Enforced

Water Access Registration: Every resident over age six must maintain active water distribution registration. Failure triggers automatic supply suspension within 48 hours. The system was designed for public health. It functions as a census tool that tells the ACU exactly how many people depend on the promise.

Ecological Exclusion Compliance: The lakebed exclusion zone carries a zero-tolerance enforcement standard. Any watercraft entering the perimeter without ACU authorization is intercepted, impounded, and the operator detained for "environmental investigation." The investigation has no stated timeline. Wardens who patrol the perimeter have standing orders that override standard rules of engagement.

Geological Survey Prohibition: Unauthorized geological survey equipment within one hundred kilometers of Kalemie is grounds for immediate detention and equipment seizure. The prohibition is framed as environmental protection. The enforcement is military-grade. No civilian has ever successfully challenged the seizure process.

Selectively Weaponized

Commercial Manifest Verification: All cargo moving through Kalemie port requires ACU manifest certification. Applied rigorously to independent traders. Applied loosely to Meridian East logistics. The difference is documented nowhere and visible everywhere.

Corridor Transit Authorization: Movement between Kalemie and the Mombasa corridor requires current transit documentation. Enforcement is zero for Meridian East contractor vehicles, one hundred percent for Prometheus League-affiliated civilians, and variable for everyone else depending on what the checkpoint commander had for breakfast and whether Base 7 has issued a security advisory this week.

Community Assembly Notification: Gatherings of more than twenty people in public spaces require advance notification to the Warden community liaison. The rule is applied to political organizing. It is not applied to the Lakefire Festival, the fishing cooperative meetings, or any of the seventeen other regular community functions that would make enforcement politically impossible.

Feared Punishments

Corridor Exile: Serious infractions trigger expulsion from the Corridor — loss of water registration, transit documentation, and the specific protections that ACU governance provides in a region where the alternative is Meridian East contractor jurisdiction or the Mombasa Road at night. Exile is not formal. It is the withdrawal of everything that makes staying possible.

Suppression Protocol Trigger: Anyone who generates confirmed Lumicite survey data within the exclusion perimeter is subject to detention under security protocols that bypass standard ACU legal process. The protocols have never been formally invoked. The three people who have come closest to triggering them have all experienced career changes that are technically voluntary.

The Quiet Transfer: Warden personnel who question classification orders too persistently receive new assignments. The assignments are real. The locations are remote. The pattern is visible to anyone tracking Warden rotation schedules, which is why the communications technician who found the deliberate channel gap has not yet decided what to do with the information.

Civic Rituals

Dawn Water Quality Broadcast: Every morning at 0530, ACU Marine Sciences transmits the daily water quality assessment across all public channels in the Lakeside Compact and Lakefire Shore. The numbers are accurate. They measure the wrong things. The broadcast is simultaneously the ACU's most visible governance act and the community's most reliable reminder that the ACU is choosing what to tell them. Market vendors set their opening schedules by it. The scene underneath it runs on entirely different information about the lake.

Lakefire Festival: Annual, ACU-sponsored. The amber glow celebrated without explanation. The community ran the festival for thirty years before the ACU took over sponsorship in 2058 — the same year the geological survey data was classified. The festival has become the single largest cultural event in the Corridor, drawing visitors from Mombasa to Kinshasa. The irony is structural and invisible to everyone who does not know what causes the glow. The people who do know attend anyway. Their presence at the festival is its own kind of political statement.

Warden Presence Verification: Every fourteen days, Obsidian Warden community liaison officers conduct "presence checks" in each district — brief, visible walks through market areas and residential zones, demonstrating governance continuity. The checks are genuinely valued in Lakefire Shore, where the Wardens have forty years of community relationship. They are tolerated in Copper Quarter, where Meridian East's parallel presence makes the check a performance both parties understand. They do not occur in the Deep Survey Zone because the exclusion zone has no community to check on, which is the point.

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime in the Lakefire Shore community markets, the Lakeside Compact port district after hours, or the Copper Quarter trading houses where Meridian East surveillance creates gaps operators can use for social cover. Every result produces a new contact, a new debt, or a new exposure.

1 (Contact Made): An off-duty Warden Leopard-template operator at the lakeside market describes the exclusion zone patrol rotation in enough operational detail that operators understand the specific sensor gap it creates. She does this while explaining her fishing technique. She does not appear to notice the operational content of what she is saying. She remembers everything the next morning.

2 (Feud Started): Operator says something about the glow — or is heard saying something — that reaches a Meridian East informant through the market's geometry. Nothing happens immediately. Next morning, operator's corridor transit documentation enters "verification review." Review has no stated timeline. Meridian East's checkpoint on the Mombasa Road now has the operator's face.

3 (Equipment Lost): Operator's secondary comms device is lifted at some point during the evening. It holds 72 hours of location cache including two approaches to the exclusion zone perimeter. Whoever has it knows the operator's movement pattern, including a stop at a location the operator should not have visited.

4 (Secret Learned): A Prometheus League medic corners operator near evening's end. She has identified the connection between the new respiratory pattern in children and the lakefire pulse rate change. She wants something in trade for the data. Won't share the connection until the trade is confirmed. The trade involves medical supplies she cannot source through any faction channel.

5 (Debt Incurred): A community elder sits down with a proposition: she will share the Brotherhood researcher's complete field notes in exchange for one favor, undefined and redeemable within thirty days. She presents this as reasonable. She is correct. That is what makes it worth worrying about. The favor, when called, will involve the water council and a decision the ACU will not forgive.

6 (Locally Recognizable): Operator does something — helps a fishing family with their catch, covers a medical expense at the community clinic, handles a confrontation with a Meridian East contractor who was pushing a market vendor — that travels through the community by morning. The operator is now the person Lakefire Shore residents mention when deciding whether to trust someone new. One community network routes requests through the operator. The Warden community liaison's report now includes the operator's description.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Void Walker's Objective

Void Walker designation "Amber" has been in Kalemie for three months, specifically observing the exclusion zone perimeter. She left a sealed data chip at a perimeter marker addressed to Elder Zawadi Mwamba. Supplement does not define what the Void Walker wants or why she is watching the lakebed. Is she connected to the Brotherhood researcher? Running an independent Lumicite assessment for a faction that has not been identified? Watching the other watchers? Her objective shapes every contact and determines whether delivering the chip is an act of trust or a trigger for something larger.

The ACU Command Member

The auditor's second-source verification has revealed that one ACU Command member has known about the Meridian East financial gap for at least eighteen months and has been protecting it. Supplement does not name this person or define their motive. Are they EO-compromised? Running a double operation? Protecting the gap because the alternative — Meridian East exposure — collapses the economic model that funds Warden operations? The Command member's identity determines the political cost of every disclosure path.

The Brotherhood Researcher's Status

Solange sent a message from inside the exclusion zone tonight — the first contact in eight months. The geological assessment in the message is accurate. Only she could have written it. Supplement does not confirm whether she is alive and operating independently, alive and compromised, or whether

someone has her authentication credentials. Her status determines whether the exclusion zone contains an ally, a prisoner, or a trap.

The Respiratory Pattern's Source

A new respiratory pattern has appeared in children across three villages simultaneously. Dr. Carrasco's data suggests consistency with long-term Lumicite resonance exposure. Supplement does not confirm this connection. Is it Lumicite? Copperbelt contamination migrating through groundwater? Something else entirely? The source determines whether the health crisis is evidence of the deposit or a separate catastrophe requiring its own response.

The Stationary Cargo

A cargo shipment arrived at Kalemie port six weeks ago and has not moved from the transit staging area. The manifest says medical equipment. The loading sounds are wrong for medical equipment. The shipment is connected to Lumicite operations. Supplement does not specify the actual contents, the faction that sent it, or the authorization it is waiting for. What is in the container and who it belongs to determines whether it is leverage, evidence, or a weapon.

The Prometheus League's Medical Source

The League's Mombasa Road supply cache contains medications not available through any ACU or commercial supply chain in the Corridor. Supplement does not identify where these supplies originate. A faction relationship the League has not disclosed to its own Corridor cells? A black-market connection with implications for the League's stated principles? The source shapes how much operators can trust the League's independence.

FACTIONS

ACU OBSIDIAN WARDENS (LUMICITE SUPPRESSION OPERATION)

ACU Regional Governance & Security

OBJECTIVE Maintain the Lumicite suppression long enough to find a resolution that doesn't break the water governance contract with forty million lakeside residents. The suppression is not a plan. It is a prayer with a security budget.

ASSETS Corridor-wide authority, Obsidian Warden gene-forged units (leopard, wild dog, gorilla stock), ACU's water distribution control, the governance legitimacy that forty years of community presence has built, a classified geological survey, the exclusion zone perimeter, and the Dawn Water Quality Broadcast infrastructure that shapes what four hundred thousand people believe about their lake every morning.

DEPENDENCY Community trust. The Wardens have spent forty years building the relationship that makes their authority legitimate. Coercion alone does not sustain governance across eight hundred kilometers of Corridor. The Warden community liaison in Lakefire Shore is not performing a role. She is the governance structure in human form. If the community stops believing her, the patrols become an occupation.

VULNERABILITY The suppression itself. Every day it continues is a day closer to the community discovering the ACU lied to them about the water. The trust is the one thing the ACU cannot replace. The lakefire pulse rate change and the respiratory pattern in children are two timers the suppression did not account for.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Enhanced exclusion zone enforcement, communications blackout expansion, acceleration of external party diplomatic pressure.
- 2 — Selective disclosure to one faction at a time — offering supervised access in exchange for suppression support. Creates a party with leverage the ACU cannot control.
- 3 — Managed disclosure to community leadership before external confirmation — ACU controls the narrative by telling the truth first. Ends the suppression but preserves the governance relationship.
- 4 — Full lockdown — militarize the Corridor, suspend governance operations, treat disclosure as a security threat. Ends the water governance legitimacy permanently.

OFFER Corridor access, water distribution control, the most extensive intelligence picture of the Corridor's resource geography available, Warden gene-forged medical and operational support — the best in the Corridor.

DEMAND Non-disclosure of the deposit's existence, non-interference with exclusion zone operations, no independent geological survey within one hundred kilometers of Kalemie.

IF DAMAGED ACU losing the Corridor's trust doesn't reduce the freshwater reserve's strategic value — it means whoever has the governance infrastructure to protect it and the community relationships to sustain that protection can step into the vacuum. EO has the commercial infrastructure. NAF has the technical investment. Neither has the forty years of community presence. The Prometheus League has been building that relationship for eight months. They are not ready. They may not need to be.

MERIDIAN EAST (EO RESOURCE ACQUISITION)

EO Shell Contractor & Financial Penetration

OBJECTIVE Maintain the financial penetration of Copperbelt extraction operations and position for first-mover advantage on Lumicite acquisition before ACU can establish a suppression-plus-extraction framework.

ASSETS Commercial cover across the Corridor, Copperbelt financial penetration (18% off-manifest), EO Bears/Boars security contractors, intelligence assets embedded in ACU commercial oversight, the Copperbelt sealed tunnel geological survey team approaching the deposit formation from below, Mombasa Road contractor units operating outside ACU logistics oversight for fourteen months.

DEPENDENCY The financial gap. Meridian East's Corridor operations are funded by the 18% Copperbelt diversion. When the ACU auditors find the gap — six weeks, maybe less — the funding mechanism ends. The Bears and Boars stop getting paid. The Mombasa Road presence, which has been Meridian East's primary physical leverage, collapses within days of the first missed payroll.

VULNERABILITY The audit. Kesho Mbeki is six weeks from being identified as the access point. She is already talking. Meridian East's internal auditor arrived yesterday looking for who has been talking, not for the financial gap itself — which means Meridian East knows the leak exists before the ACU finds the gap.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Accelerate geological survey completion — get confirmation of the full deposit scope before the audit completes.
- 2 — Use Meridian East security contractor presence on Mombasa Road to create leverage against ACU checkpoint authority.
- 3 — Surface the audit discovery to EO command before ACU finds it — manage the revelation on EO's terms.
- 4 — Activate the Copperbelt sealed tunnel survey team to confirm the deposit independently — a unilateral move that ends the ACU suppression regardless of the audit timeline.

OFFER Copperbelt commercial access, Meridian East logistics network, off-manifest cargo movement, EO security contractor support, geological survey data from the tunnel approach.

DEMAND Non-interference with the tunnel survey, protection of the financial gap for as long as possible, and — if operators have it — the Brotherhood researcher's complete Lumicite assessment.

IF DAMAGED Meridian East losing the financial gap loses EO's primary Corridor funding mechanism. EO's regional intelligence operations — which depend on the Meridian East commercial cover — collapse within sixty days. Three thousand Copperbelt contract workers who have been absorbing health impacts from mining contamination without compensation lose the contractor health and safety oversight — however inadequate — that Meridian East had been providing. The Prometheus League's medical network becomes the only functioning health infrastructure in the extraction corridors.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE (INTERIOR OPERATIONS)

Community Defense & Anti-Extraction Resistance

OBJECTIVE Disrupt Meridian East's Copperbelt financial penetration and prevent any single faction from establishing extraction access to the Lumicite deposit before the lakeside communities can assert their own governance over it.

ASSETS Mombasa Road dark zone knowledge, Copperbelt community relationships, the mobile medical network (Dr. Carrasco's operation covers more of the Corridor than ACU's official health infrastructure), the only complete map of the Corridor's unofficial logistics infrastructure, eight months of sabotage targeting Meridian East logistics with zero ACU infrastructure damage.

DEPENDENCY Community tolerance. The Prometheus League's Corridor operations run through communities that have chosen not to report their presence. That tolerance is not unconditional. It is earned daily through the medical network and the specific discipline of sabotage that has never hit a community target. One mistake ends it.

VULNERABILITY Dr. Carrasco's new respiratory pattern. If it spreads beyond the communities he is currently managing, the League's medical resources become inadequate and the communities start looking to ACU for help the League has been telling them they don't need. The League's medical supply source — undisclosed to its own Corridor cells — is a second vulnerability the League has not acknowledged internally.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Continued sabotage of Meridian East logistics, medical network expansion, community relationship maintenance.
- 2 — Active disruption of ACU suppression infrastructure — surfacing contamination data the ACU has been managing.
- 3 — Direct intervention in the disclosure timeline — providing the lakeside communities with Lumicite survey data independently of ACU or NAF channels.
- 4 — Mobilization of community governance structures to assert territorial authority over the deposit — a political move that bypasses all faction claims simultaneously.

OFFER Mombasa Road dark zone navigation, Copperbelt community introductions, contamination data ACU has been suppressing, medical network access, the Corridor logistics map no other faction possesses.

DEMAND	Medical supplies — specific list, specific quantities, sourced outside faction supply chains. And a commitment: whatever operators learn about the deposit, the lakeside communities hear it before any faction command.
IF DAMAGED	The Prometheus League losing Corridor operations doesn't protect the lakeside communities from the deposit. It removes the one actor operating in the communities' interests without a resource acquisition agenda. The vacuum is filled by whoever has the next-best community relationships, which is the ACU — the same ACU that has been lying to them about the lake.

HUB-LEVEL CONTACTS | WILDCARDS

THE BROTHERHOOD RESEARCHER 'SOLANGE'

Status unknown, data location unknown

CAN GET	The complete Lumicite survey data, the lakebed fracture system connecting the deposit to the water intake, the rate change data that shifts the timeline from "eventual" to "imminent."
WANTS	Unknown. Her last transmission placed her inside the exclusion zone. The message sent tonight is the first contact in eight months.
FEARS	Unknown. Her disappearance was not consistent with ACU detention and not consistent with voluntary withdrawal.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The message she sent tonight is either evidence that she is alive and in the exclusion zone, or evidence that someone has her authentication credentials and wants operators to think she is alive. The geological assessment in the message is accurate. Only Solange could have written it.

VOID WALKER — KALEMIE DESIGNATION 'AMBER'

Lakefire observation, two confirmed sightings

CAN GET	Three months of exclusion zone observation data, the sealed data chip left at the perimeter marker, the connection between the Lumicite deposit and something she has been tracking in a different Corridor location.

WANTS	Unknown. Her operational presence in Kalemie is not consistent with any known faction's Lumicite acquisition strategy. Her equipment is cross-faction custom — bio-lock bypasses, modified field medicine from three different pharmacopoeias, old prototypes that function better than current issue.
FEARS	Unknown.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The data chip she left at the exclusion perimeter is addressed to Elder Zawadi Mwamba. The elder has not received it yet. The Void Walker has been waiting to see whether operators deliver it or keep it. Her decision about whether to trust them depends on the answer.

DOWNTIME

EMBED WITH THE COMMUNITY

WHAT: Operators spend five days in the Lakefire Shore community, doing the work — fishing cooperative labor, water infrastructure maintenance, community logistics. No cover. No agenda that the community cannot see.

COST: Five days, introduction through a community contact or community-visible action, willingness to work without cover.

GAIN: One of: community introduction network (permanent trust access) / Elder Zawadi's knowledge of the lake / the Brotherhood researcher's field notes (if operators have established sufficient trust). The community's own intelligence about the lake — generational knowledge no ACU sensor net has replicated — becomes available through conversation rather than extraction.

FALLOUT: ACU community liaison logs operator presence. Base 7 reviews the log. Three days later, operators receive a friendly visit from a Warden intelligence officer with questions about their purpose in the community. The questions are polite. The intelligence collection is professional. The Warden Leopard-template officer conducting the visit was born in Lakefire Shore. She is not sure whose interests she is serving.

RUN THE MOMBASA ROAD

WHAT: Operators spend four days embedded with a legitimate logistics run from Kalemie to Mombasa and back. Eight hundred kilometers of the most resource-dense transit corridor in the hemisphere.

COST: Four days, commercial logistics cover, willingness to be present at Meridian East checkpoint encounters where the ACU's authority is visibly eroding.

GAIN: One of: Mombasa Road dark zone map (Prometheus League-sourced, one use) / Meridian East contractor deployment locations (the map is much larger than operators expected) / the cargo manifest of the stationary Kalemie port shipment.

FALLOUT: Meridian East has operators' faces in their security contractor briefing. They cannot act on this officially. They will act on it at the next Mombasa Road checkpoint operators pass through. The EO Bears running the night checkpoint do not need official authorization to make a transit stop uncomfortable.

SURVEY THE EXCLUSION ZONE

WHAT: Operators conduct a geological survey approach to the exclusion zone using the lakebed intake maintenance window.

COST: Eleven days (waiting for the window), dive equipment, geological survey hardware, willingness to operate inside ACU exclusion enforcement range.

GAIN: One confirmed data point on the Lumicite deposit — location, depth, and surface resonance pattern. This is the data gap that completes the NAF verification team's report. On a successful approach, operators also observe the lakebed fracture system directly — and the fracture system is worse than the survey data suggests.

FALLOUT: ACU sensor anomaly records log the approach. Base 7's intelligence officer has been correlating anomalies for three months. Operators become the fifth confirmed approach on the correlation map. She files the full report to ACU Command with operators' operational profile attached. The Void Walker, who has been watching the perimeter, observes the approach and makes a decision about operators that she does not communicate.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

LAKESIDE WHISPERS (1D6)

- The amber glow has been intensifying for six months. The ACU's Marine Sciences bioluminescent algae explanation requires algae that does not exist in Lake Tanganyika. [TRUE]
- The water council's elder has a complete set of field notes from the Brotherhood researcher who disappeared. She has had them for four months. [TRUE]
- The seventeen-second pulse interval of the amber glow is consistent with Lumicite resonance seeping through a fractured substrate. The pulse interval has been changing — seventeen seconds is the historical baseline; the current interval is fourteen seconds. [TRUE — and the rate change is what the researcher's final message documented]
- Two ACU Marine Sciences staff were transferred out of Kalemie six months ago, one week after the Brotherhood researcher disappeared. Both transfers were initiated by Base 7, not Marine Sciences command. [TRUE]
- The ACU's Lakefire Festival was not always ACU-sponsored. The community ran it for thirty years before the ACU took over the sponsorship in 2058 — the same year the geological survey data was classified. [TRUE]
- A Void Walker has been in Kalemie for three months, specifically observing the exclusion zone perimeter. She has left one item near the perimeter that nobody has retrieved yet. [TRUE]

CONTRACTOR CHATTER (1D6)

- Meridian East receives approximately 18% of Copperbelt extraction output off-manifest. ACU's revenue projections assume 100% capture. The gap has been funding EO regional operations for four years. [TRUE]
- The ACU audit team currently in the Copper Quarter is six weeks from finding the Meridian East financial gap. Meridian East's informants inside ACU commercial oversight know the audit is happening. [TRUE]
- Meridian East's Copperbelt geological survey team broke through a lakebed formation this week. They are inside the exclusion zone perimeter. They do not know this yet. [TRUE]
- The stationary cargo shipment at Kalemie port is carrying Lumicite extraction equipment. It has been waiting for authorization from a party that has not yet provided it. [PARTIALLY TRUE — the shipment is connected to Lumicite operations; the authorization delay reason is disputed]

- The Prometheus League has a senior ACU mine management contact feeding them sabotage coordinates. [TRAP — the "contact" is an EO plant running a double operation against both parties]
- Meridian East's Mombasa Road contractor units have been deployed outside their commercial authority for fourteen months. Base 7 Command knows. The written order authorizing it does not exist. [TRUE]

MEDICAL NETWORK (1D6)

- A new respiratory pattern has appeared in children across three villages — Copper Quarter and Lakefire Shore. It is not consistent with Copperbelt contamination patterns. It is consistent with long-term low-level Lumicite resonance exposure. [TRUE — and nobody at ACU Medical has made this connection yet]
- The Brotherhood researcher who disappeared was treating two Lakefire Shore residents for a specific neurological symptom in the weeks before she vanished. The symptom is associated with prolonged proximity to Lumicite formations. [TRUE]
- Dr. Carrasco's mobile medical network covers more of the Corridor than ACU's official health infrastructure. His patient records, if the ACU ever obtained them, would show health impacts the ACU's official reports do not document. [TRUE]
- ACU Medical's contamination reports have been systematically revised before filing for eighteen months. The revisions reduce severity assessments. The original reports are stored in a system that the revising official did not know was backed up. [TRUE]
- The Prometheus League's medical supply cache on Mombasa Road contains medications not available through any ACU or commercial supply chain in the Corridor. They are getting them from somewhere the League has not disclosed to its own Corridor cells. [UNCLEAR]
- The new respiratory pattern and the amber glow pulse rate change have the same timeline: both changed six weeks ago. Nobody has made this connection yet. [TRUE]

ESCALATION TRACKS

Track 1 | The Lumicite Disclosure

Stage 1 — Suppression Holding

The exclusion zone is maintained. The amber glow explanation is holding with most of the community. Four parties are attempting independent confirmation. The maintenance window is eleven days away. The pulse interval is fourteen seconds and nobody official has explained why it was seventeen six weeks ago.

Stage 2 — External Confirmation

One party confirms the deposit independently. The ACU's suppression is now damage control, not prevention. The question shifts from "will it be disclosed" to "who controls the disclosure." The NAF verification team files their report within 72 hours. NAF's Corridor strategy shifts from water infrastructure investment to resource acquisition. The ACU's leverage with NAF — technical partnership, financial investment, diplomatic support — evaporates overnight.

Stage 3 — Community Discovers

Elder Zawadi presents the community water council with the Brotherhood researcher's field notes. The water council calls an emergency meeting without ACU. The Warden community liaison is not invited. The amber glow pulses on the wall behind them while they read. The council's governance response — formed around the premise that the lake's resources belong to the communities that have managed it for eight centuries — creates a governance claim that predates every faction's Corridor presence.

Stage 4 — Governance Collapse

The lakeside communities withdraw consent from ACU governance. Forty million people reassessing their relationship to the only governance structure that has protected their water access. The EO, NAF, and Prometheus League move simultaneously into the political vacuum. The Lumicite deposit — still in the lake, still unextracted — becomes the most contested piece of lakebed in the hemisphere. The Wardens, who spent forty years building the community relationship, are the ones most personally affected by its loss. Some of them were born here. Some of them match the lakefire amber on their non-duty kit.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Facilitate a managed disclosure before Stage 3 reaches the community through uncontrolled channels. Find and deliver the Void Walker's data chip. Locate the ACU Command member who has been protecting the Meridian East gap and determine whether they can be leveraged into authorizing managed disclosure. Any solution that works produces a new problem — the ACU Command member's exposure, NAF's repositioning, or the community's political activation.

Track 2 | The Financial Audit

Stage 1 — Audit Active

ACU auditors in the Copper Quarter. Meridian East informants tracking the audit. Six weeks from the gap. The auditors have been specifically pleasant to everyone they have interviewed. Meridian East is more worried about pleasant auditors than hostile ones.

Stage 2 — Gap Discovered

ACU freezes Meridian East commercial operations pending investigation. EO loses primary Corridor funding. Meridian East contractors stop being paid. The Meridian East internal auditor's parallel investigation — looking for who has been talking, not for the gap itself — accelerates as the window for containing the leak narrows. Kesho Mbeki has approximately 72 hours before she is identified.

Stage 3 — Contractor Breakdown

Unpaid Meridian East security contractors on Mombasa Road stop performing ACU-adjacent functions. Three thousand Copperbelt contract workers lose the health and safety oversight that Meridian East contractors, however badly, had been providing. The EO Bears and Boars who have been running Mombasa Road night operations for fourteen months do not leave — they freelance, which is worse than leaving because freelance EO gene-forged with no payroll and local knowledge are the most dangerous thing on the road.

Stage 4 — Copperbelt in Crisis

Contamination accelerates without oversight. The Prometheus League's medical network is overwhelmed. The communities that have been absorbing health impacts without compensation for a decade organize — not a protest, but a blockade. The Copperbelt shuts down. ACU's economic base loses its second structural support simultaneously with the water governance crisis. The forty-year governance model collapses on both legs at the same time.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Intercept the auditor before she files. Determine whether there is a version of the disclosure that doesn't collapse the Corridor's economic model simultaneously with the water governance crisis. The auditor has found the ACU Command member's involvement — managing that second piece is as important as managing the first.

OPERATIONS MAP

Mobility Corridors

- Lakeside Compact → Copper Quarter: Commercial transit (checkpointed, ACU manifest verification).
- Lakeside Compact → Lakefire Shore: Shore road (open, monitored by Warden community liaison).
- Lakeside Compact → Deep Survey Zone: Lakebed approach (barricaded, ACU exclusion enforcement, 23-day maintenance window).
- Copper Quarter → Mombasa Road: Southern transit route (checkpointed by ACU and Meridian East — dual authority, conflicting).
- Copper Quarter → Copperbelt extraction corridors: Mining access road (strained infrastructure, contamination present).
- Mombasa Road → Indian Ocean coast: Eight hundred kilometers, checkpointed, Prometheus League dark zones at kilometer markers the ACU has not mapped.
- Lakefire Shore → Deep Survey Zone: Lake surface approach (Warden patrol, 500-meter no-approach perimeter enforced).

Chokepoints

- Lakebed intake maintenance cycle — creates a 23-day window when geological survey equipment could be positioned near the deposit without triggering ACU sensor alerts. Documented in ACU maintenance records accessible to port engineers. Three separate parties are aware of the window. The next window is in eleven days.
- ACU manifest verification at Lakeside Compact port — the hard boundary between what enters Kalemie officially and what enters through Meridian East logistics.
- Mombasa Road Meridian East checkpoint — unauthorized, operational for fourteen months, effectively autonomous. The last ACU commander who challenged it spent four hours in a standoff that resolved in Meridian East's favor.
- Copperbelt sealed northern tunnels — the EO geological survey team's approach vector. They have broken through the lakebed formation. They are inside the exclusion zone perimeter from below. They do not know this.

Surveillance Architecture by Zone

- Lakeside Compact: ACU drone net + cameras, full coverage. NAF intelligence assets operating under commercial cover. One Void Walker, location unknown.
- Copper Quarter: ACU cameras + Meridian East informant net. Dual surveillance architecture where both networks watch each other as much as the district.

- Lakefire Shore: Warden community liaison presence. No enforcement-primary surveillance. Community self-governance after dark in ways Warden presence does not change.
- Warden Base 7: Comprehensive ACU military-grade surveillance. The deliberate communications channel gap is not a vulnerability — it is a feature someone outside ACU Command knows about.
- Mombasa Road: ACU cameras at checkpoints. Dark zones between them. Meridian East contractor deployment covers stretches the ACU does not.
- Deep Survey Zone: Comprehensive ACU sensor perimeter on the water surface. The lakebed itself is not controlled by anyone. The EO tunnel approach is below the sensor threshold.

Faction Territory Lines

- ACU Obsidian Wardens: All districts. Dominant in Lakeside Compact, Lakefire Shore, Base 7, Deep Survey Zone.
- Meridian East: Copper Quarter (commercial control), Mombasa Road (contractor presence), Copperbelt (extraction operations).
- Prometheus League: Copper Quarter (one cell, eight months), Mombasa Road (dark zone operations), Copperbelt communities (medical network).
- NAF: Lakeside Compact (three intelligence assets under commercial cover).
- Void Walker "Amber": Deep Survey Zone perimeter. Unlocated. Three months of observation.
- Brotherhood (Solange): Deep Survey Zone interior. Status unknown. Message received tonight.

Key Locations

- The lakebed intake access tunnel — Lakeside Compact, port district. The 23-day maintenance window. The geological survey instrument Port Engineer Amina Saleh found here is not ACU equipment.
- The exclusion zone perimeter — 500-meter no-approach zone on the water surface. The Void Walker's data chip is at a marker on the approach route.
- Meridian East commercial offices — Copper Quarter. The respectable face of EO resource acquisition. The ACU auditors have been here for two weeks.
- The community dock — Lakefire Shore. Where the amber glow is closest to the surface. Where the children track the glow's position with a hand-drawn chart.
- Base 7 communications center — the deliberate channel gap. The communications technician who found it has not decided what to do.
- The Copperbelt sealed northern tunnels — the EO geological survey team's approach from below. They broke through this week.

- Mombasa Road transit staging area — the stationary cargo shipment. Six weeks. Wrong weight for medical equipment.

MISSION SEEDS

1. DELIVER THE CHIP

OBJECTIVE: Retrieve the data chip the Void Walker left at the exclusion zone perimeter and deliver it to Elder Zawadi Mwamba before the ACU sensor correlation report identifies the approach pattern and closes the perimeter.

CLOCK: The Base 7 intelligence officer files her correlation report to ACU Command today. Once it's filed, the perimeter adds a sensor layer that closes the current approach window permanently.

COMPLICATION: The chip's contents are a complete geological assessment of the deposit signed by the Brotherhood researcher who disappeared eight months ago. Delivering it starts a process that cannot be stopped — the elder will act on it, and the Void Walker has been waiting to see whether operators deliver it or keep it before deciding whether to trust them with something more important.

2. FIND SOLANGE

OBJECTIVE: Determine whether the message from the exclusion zone signed by Brotherhood researcher Solange is genuine or fabricated, and locate her or her authentication credentials before the message's geological assessment is used to justify a unilateral extraction approach.

CLOCK: Meridian East received a copy of the message through their ACU intelligence assets within four hours of transmission. Their geological survey team's tunnel approach will reach the deposit formation in 48 hours. If Solange's assessment confirms the formation, Meridian East activates a unilateral extraction protocol without waiting for ACU authorization.

COMPLICATION: Solange is in the exclusion zone. She has been there for three months. She knows where the Void Walker is and what the Void Walker has been doing — and she has deliberately not told either party about the other, for a reason that changes the meaning of everything both parties have been doing.

3. STOP THE AUDIT

OBJECTIVE: Intercept the ACU auditor who has found the Meridian East gap before she files the report, and determine whether it is possible to contain the discovery without

suppressing it — specifically, whether there is a version of the disclosure that doesn't collapse the Corridor's economic model simultaneously with the water governance crisis.

CLOCK: The auditor files her report in 36 hours, after a second-source verification she is conducting tonight. After filing, ACU Command has the information and the timeline is out of any individual's control.

COMPLICATION: The auditor has found something in the second-source verification that is not in the first report — evidence that the Meridian East financial gap has been known to one ACU Command member for at least eighteen months and that person has been protecting it. The report, if filed, ends Meridian East and destroys an ACU Command member simultaneously. The auditor has not decided what to do with that second piece.

4. MANAGE THE DISCLOSURE

OBJECTIVE: Facilitate a managed disclosure of the Lumicite deposit to the Lakefire Shore water council before external confirmation forces an unmanaged one — giving the community the information on their terms, with enough time to organize a governance response before the extraction pressure arrives.

CLOCK: The NAF verification team files their report in 72 hours with or without the Brotherhood researcher's data. Once NAF's report is in their system, NAF's Corridor strategy shifts and the community loses the option of a managed disclosure.

COMPLICATION: The managed disclosure requires ACU cooperation, which requires an ACU Command member to authorize an action that ends the suppression they have been maintaining for eighteen months. The only Command member with the authority and the motive to authorize it is the same one the auditor's second-source verification has implicated in protecting the Meridian East gap. Helping the disclosure requires helping someone who has been covering for EO. Refusing the disclosure means the community finds out the wrong way.

5. THE CONTAMINATION

OBJECTIVE: Confirm the connection between the new respiratory pattern in children and the Lumicite pulse rate change before ACU Medical's revised contamination reports bury the data, and deliver the confirmed connection to a party that can act on it — Dr. Carrasco, Elder Zawadi, or the ACU auditor.

CLOCK: ACU Medical's next contamination report revision is in four days. The original unrevised data — stored in a backup system the revising official does not know about — will be overwritten in the next system maintenance cycle. The backup cycle runs in 96 hours.

COMPLICATION: The connection, if confirmed, does not just prove the deposit exists. It proves the deposit is already affecting the population — which means the suppression has moved from concealment to active harm. The political cost of that distinction is the difference between "the ACU kept a secret" and "the ACU let children get sick to protect the secret." Whoever delivers the confirmed connection controls the narrative of the entire disclosure.

6. THE TUNNEL

OBJECTIVE: Reach the Copperbelt sealed northern tunnel before Meridian East's geological survey team confirms the deposit formation from below, and determine whether to sabotage the survey, extract the data, or let the confirmation proceed on a timeline operators can manage.

CLOCK: The survey team broke through the lakebed formation this week. They are inside the exclusion zone perimeter from below. They do not know this. They will reach the formation and confirm the deposit within 48 hours. After confirmation, Meridian East's unilateral extraction protocol activates regardless of the audit timeline.

COMPLICATION: The tunnel approach passes through Copperbelt mining infrastructure where three thousand contract workers have been absorbing health impacts without compensation. The workers know who the operators are. They know the tunnel exists. They want to know what is at the end of it. If operators pass through without answering, the community tolerance the Prometheus League has been building for eight months ends with the operators' silence.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

Every solution in Kalemie creates a new problem. These are the specific new problems.

If the ACU Suppression Breaks

Forty million lakeside residents learn that the water governance contract was maintained through active concealment. The ACU's legitimacy breaks not because anyone was harmed by the deposit — yet — but because the promise was broken before the harm arrived. EO, NAF, and the Prometheus League move simultaneously into the political vacuum. The Corridor's governance infrastructure — forty years of Warden presence, water distribution networks, medical infrastructure — continues to operate for approximately six months without political legitimacy before it begins to fragment. The Wardens who were born in

these communities face a choice between the institution that built them and the people who raised them. Some of them have already made that choice. They match the lakefire amber on their non-duty kit.

If Extraction Begins

The lakebed destabilizes. The water changes before the announcement. The communities notice before the ACU manages the information. The water governance contract ends not through revelation but through the water becoming visibly wrong. Forty million people do not need a researcher's field notes or a geological assessment to tell them the lake is different. They grew up on it. The children who have been tracking the glow's position with a hand-drawn chart see the change first. They are the ones who tell the elders. The elders already knew.

If Meridian East Is Destroyed

ACU loses 18% of Copperbelt revenue simultaneously with the political cost of the disclosure that destroyed Meridian East. The Warden operations budget loses its structural support. The Copperbelt communities lose the contractor health and safety oversight — however inadequate — that Meridian East had been providing. The Prometheus League's medical network, already strained by the new respiratory pattern, becomes the only functioning health infrastructure in the extraction corridors. The League gains a legitimacy in the Corridor that the ACU cannot reclaim without resources it no longer has. Dr. Carrasco's patient list grows beyond his capacity. The medications from the undisclosed supply source become the most important logistics chain in the Corridor.

If the Community Organizes

The Lakefire Shore water council's governance response — formed around the premise that the lake's resources belong to the communities that have managed it for eight centuries — creates a governance claim that predates every faction's Corridor presence. The ACU's legal infrastructure, built on the premise that the water governance contract is bilateral, faces a three-way contest. The lakeside communities' governance claim is not military. It does not need to be. The forty million people the ACU's water promise was built to protect have become the most important political actors in the Corridor, and every faction that wants the deposit has to decide how to deal with that. The community does not need weapons. They need the water to be clean. That need is older than every faction at the table.

FIELD NOTE

The lake was here before the factions. The communities were here before the ACU. The glow was here before anyone decided to name it. What you call the lakefire depends on what you are willing to know about the water your children drink.

– Terra Conflictus 2066 Setting Guide, Earth 2066

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 THE LAKESIDE COMPACT

PORT / ADMINISTRATIVE HUB

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	ACU drone net + cameras
FACTION PRESSURE	ACU dominant / NAF intelligence embedded / one Void Walker unlocated
CONTAMINATION	none surface / Lumicite resonance deep
BLACK MARKET	light (suppressed — therefore sophisticated)
MOBILITY	open (lake) / checkpointed (land)

FUNCTION ACU regional administration, freshwater distribution hub, East African logistics anchor, and the physical location of the secret the ACU is most desperate to protect. The port handles sixty percent of the Corridor's legitimate commercial traffic and one hundred percent of the water distribution convoys that sustain the governance promise.

CONTROLLER ACU publicly. ACU Command's Lumicite suppression operation privately. Three NAF intelligence assets in the commercial district running an independent Lumicite verification operation. One Void Walker, location unknown, who has been moving at night near the port's lakebed intake access point for three months.

DRAW

• Clean water — the best in central Africa and functionally the ACU's primary governance tool. • Functioning medical care at a standard unavailable in most of the Corridor. • Economic stability and port access for legitimate East African trade. • The ACU administrative apparatus — the governance infrastructure that forty million people depend on. • The lakebed intake access tunnel — the geological survey instrument found here is not ACU equipment.

RISK

• The Lumicite deposit sits two hundred meters below the lakebed at the edge of the port's water intake. The ACU port maintenance schedule creates a surveillance gap every 23 days when the intake system is cycled. • Three NAF intelligence assets in the commercial district are running an independent Lumicite verification operation. They are one confirmed data point from filing a report that changes NAF's Corridor strategy entirely. • The Void Walker sighted near the lakebed survey coordinates has not been relocated. She has been in the city for at least three months. • The Brotherhood researcher who disappeared had her last confirmed contact in Kalemie's port district.

SCARCITY

• Lumicite survey data that hasn't been through ACU suppression filtering. • Access to ACU Command without going through channels that generate suppression-operation logs. • The Brotherhood researcher's field notes. • Un-surveilled port infrastructure — every meter of the Compact is within the ACU drone net, and the black market here is sophisticated precisely because it has to be.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The lakebed intake maintenance cycle creates a 23-day window when geological survey equipment could be positioned near the Lumicite deposit without triggering ACU sensor alerts. This window is documented in ACU maintenance records accessible to port engineers. Three separate parties are aware of the window. None of them have used it yet. The next window is in eleven days.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The NAF intelligence team files their Lumicite verification report. NAF's Corridor strategy shifts from water infrastructure investment to resource acquisition within 72 hours. The ACU's leverage with NAF — technical partnership, financial investment, diplomatic support — evaporates. The EO's Meridian East operation loses its financial rationale simultaneously if the deposit's size becomes known. The forty million lakeside residents whose governance the ACU's water promise sustains are the last to know what has been sitting under their lake.

DAY

AUTHORITY

ACU administrative apparatus + Warden Lakeside Compact patrol. Leopard-template units running the dock in matte-black kit.

ECONOMY

Port logistics, administrative commerce, freshwater distribution, the visible economic activity that makes Kalemie the Corridor's hub.

RISK

NAF intelligence assets running verification operations through commercial cover. They are close.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Warden night patrol + ACU sensor net (full coverage). The dock is quieter but never empty.

ECONOMY

Sophisticated black market: Lumicite survey data fragments, corridor passage documentation, Meridian East cargo intercepts.

RISK

The Void Walker. She has been moving at night near the port's lakebed intake access point. She has not triggered any sensor. The ACU's sensor engineers have filed four anomaly reports in three months. The anomalies stop when they look directly.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Kalemie port at dawn — a freshwater distribution convoy loading for the interior while a Warden Leopard-template unit runs the dock in matte-black kit, and in the lake behind them, forty meters below the surface, the lakefire glows amber in the pre-dawn dark, visible to anyone looking but explained by no one.

FACTIONS PRESENT

ACU OBSIDIAN WARDENS

Governance operations, suppression coordination, exclusion zone management. The port is the suppression's nerve center.

NAF INTELLIGENCE

Three assets under commercial cover running an independent Lumicite verification operation. One confirmed data point from filing.

CIVILIAN NEED

Continuation of clean water distribution — one disruption to the port's freshwater convoys and four hundred thousand people notice within 48 hours.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Lakebed intake maintenance schedule, port logistics documentation, ACU administrative contacts, NAF commercial cover identities (if operators know where to look), Void Walker approach intelligence.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A port engineer pulls operators aside. She has found a geological survey instrument in the lakebed intake access tunnel. It is not ACU equipment. It is not new.
- A NAF commercial delegation is in the administrative district. Their equipment loadout is not consistent with commercial oversight.

- An ACU administrative official offers operators a tour of the water distribution infrastructure. The tour route passes through a section of the port that has been off-limits to non-ACU personnel for eighteen months.
- A local fisherman has brought something up from the lake that he wants to show someone who knows what it is. He has been trying to get an appointment with ACU Marine Sciences for four days.
- The Brotherhood researcher's disappearance is the topic of a quiet conversation between two ACU intelligence officers in the administrative canteen. One of them is lying about something specific.
- A Warden Wild Dog unit stops a vehicle at a Lakeside Compact checkpoint. The vehicle's manifest checks out. The driver's biometrics produce a three-second processing delay that shouldn't exist.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The ACU sensor net logs an anomaly in the lakebed intake zone — the fourth in three months. The on-duty engineer does not report it through normal channels. She logs it in a personal record.
- The Void Walker is near the port's secondary access point. She is not trying to access the lakebed survey zone. She is watching who else is trying.
- A Meridian East cargo container is being moved from secure port storage to an unmarked vehicle. The cargo is logged as mining equipment components. The weight is wrong.
- Three separate parties are watching the lakebed intake access point tonight. None of them know about the other two.
- A NAF intelligence asset surfaces to make contact with operators. She has a data fragment from the Lumicite survey. She wants to know if operators have the rest.
- The fisherman from the daytime encounter is at the lake shore at 0200, alone. He has put the object back in the water. He is watching to see if it glows.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The lakebed intake tunnel has equipment in it that predates the current ACU administration. Someone was surveying the deposit before the ACU classified it. [TRUE]
- The NAF commercial delegation has visited Kalemie four times in eighteen months. Each visit has been longer than the last. The equipment cases get heavier each time. [TRUE]

- A port engineer found something in the intake tunnel and has been sitting on it for three weeks because she doesn't know who to tell. [TRUE — and the instrument has a data log she has not accessed]
- The Void Walker designated "Amber" is not watching the exclusion zone. She is watching the port's intake access point specifically — the same point the maintenance window opens. [TRUE]
- ACU Marine Sciences had a second researcher embedded in the port district before the Brotherhood researcher disappeared. That second researcher is still here and still filing reports through a channel that goes to Base 7, not Marine Sciences. [UNCLEAR]
- The freshwater distribution convoys have been running at 94% capacity for six months. The missing 6% is being diverted. Nobody in the administrative district will say where. [PARTIALLY TRUE]

CONTACTS

PORT ENGINEER AMINA SALEH

ACU port maintenance, lakebed intake specialist

CAN GET Lakebed intake maintenance schedule (including the 23-day survey window), the geological survey instrument she found, four months of anomaly reports that didn't go through official channels.

WANTS Someone to tell her what she has found, in terms she can act on, without her having to report it through channels that will make her the person who surfaced the deposit.

FEARS That she already knows what it is and that knowing it makes her dangerous.

CURRENT PRESSURE The survey instrument she found has a data log. She has not accessed the log. She is waiting. She does not know what she is waiting for. The instrument smells faintly of the lake in a way that maintenance equipment should not.

NAF INTELLIGENCE ASSET 'WREN'

Commercial cover, verification operation

CAN GET NAF's current Corridor strategy, the three confirmed data points the NAF team has assembled, and the specific data gap that is keeping the verification report from being filed.

WANTS	The Lumicite survey data from the Brotherhood researcher's field notes — that single source fills the gap and completes the report.
FEARS	That the ACU will discover the verification operation before it completes and that the diplomatic fallout will end NAF's Corridor presence.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Her team's senior analyst has given her a 72-hour window to source the gap data before he files the incomplete report anyway. Filing incomplete changes NAF's response from "investigate further" to "acquire now."

DISTRICT 2 COPPER QUARTER

TRADING DISTRICT

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	strained
CIVILIANS	normal
SURVEILLANCE	cameras (ACU) + informant net (EO/Meridian East)
FACTION PRESSURE	contested (ACU permits, EO financial control via Meridian East)
CONTAMINATION	present (Copperbelt acid mine drainage reaching groundwater)
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	checkpointed

FUNCTION The commercial district connecting Kalemie's administrative hub to the Copperbelt extraction economy — and the surface layer of Meridian East's financial penetration of ACU resource operations. The smell here is different from the rest of Kalemie: mineral and industrial, the Copperbelt's runoff seeping into the district's groundwater and making itself known in the taste of the tap water and the faint metallic edge the air carries in the trading houses after rain.

CONTROLLER	ACU holds the permits. Meridian East holds the actual extraction contracts through sub-licensing ACU Legal cannot fully map. In practice, Meridian East runs the commercial district's night economy. The Prometheus League cell that has been operating here for eight months targets Meridian East logistics exclusively — the discipline of that targeting is the League's calling card.
DRAW	• Commercial contracts for Copperbelt extraction output — significant legitimate trade. • Meridian East's commercial offices — the respectable face of EO resource acquisition. • Black-market Copperbelt output, which moves through Copper Quarter trading houses that officially handle legitimate mining byproducts. • The off-manifest cargo pipeline that connects the Copperbelt's 18% EO diversion to the broader East African black market. • Signal pirate frequencies broadcasting Copperbelt extraction data fragments.
RISK	• ACU auditors are six weeks from finding the Meridian East financial gap. The audit team has been operating in the Copper Quarter for two weeks. • Meridian East's informant network includes three ACU administrative staff. The informants' handlers are aware the audit is happening. • Copperbelt contamination — acid mine drainage has reached the Copper Quarter's groundwater. ACU knows. The news cycle is being managed, not the contamination. • A Prometheus League cell has been operating in the Copper Quarter for at least eight months. Their sabotage targets have been Meridian East logistics, not ACU infrastructure.
SCARCITY	• Meridian East's real cargo manifests. • Any Copper Quarter commercial information that isn't already part of Meridian East's surveillance picture. • Clean groundwater — the contamination is localized but spreading. The families who can afford it buy water from the port. The families who cannot drink from the tap and hope. • Medical supplies for long-term contamination exposure — the Prometheus League medic's supply list includes specifics the ACU doesn't stock.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Meridian East's financial penetration means EO receives 18% of Copperbelt output off-manifest. ACU's revenue projections assume 100% capture. The gap has funded EO regional operations for four years. When ACU's auditors find it — six weeks, maybe less — the economic model that sustains Warden operations loses a structural support simultaneously with the water governance crisis. The two auditors — ACU's and Meridian East's internal — are in the same district looking for different things. They are going to cross paths.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The audit finds the Meridian East gap. ACU freezes Meridian East commercial operations pending investigation. EO loses its primary Corridor funding mechanism. Meridian East's security contractors, whose payroll depends on EO funding, stop being paid. Three thousand Copperbelt contract workers who have been absorbing health impacts from mining contamination without compensation have Warden protection replaced by Meridian East contractors who are no longer on payroll.

DAY

AUTHORITY

ACU commercial oversight + Meridian East management (in practice, Meridian East's commercial staff manage most daytime operations).

ECONOMY

Copper and cobalt trade, extraction contracts, commercial logistics, the legitimate surface economy.

RISK

The audit team. They have been in the district for two weeks and have been specifically pleasant to everyone they've interviewed. Meridian East is more worried about pleasant auditors than hostile ones.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Meridian East security contractors — effectively autonomous after dark. EO Boar-stock running the warehouse perimeter.

ECONOMY

Off-manifest ore diversion, black-market medical supplies, unauthorized geological survey equipment, the Prometheus League's supply chain.

RISK

Meridian East contractor enforcement of payment disputes. This has escalated twice in the last month. The third escalation is being planned by three contractors who were not paid this week.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A line of ore trucks queuing at the ACU Copper Quarter checkpoint in grey pre-dawn, each bearing two manifest stickers — one ACU, one with a small blue Meridian East logo that officially means nothing. The checkpoint commander checks the ACU sticker. She does not look at the other one. She has not looked at the other one in fourteen months.

FACTIONS PRESENT

MERIDIAN EAST

Commercial penetration, financial operations, security contractor presence. The respectable face and the invisible pipeline running behind it.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

One cell, eight months, targeting Meridian East logistics exclusively. Their medic is treating symptoms of something the League cannot stop.

CIVILIAN NEED

Clean groundwater. The contamination is localized but spreading. Mining families who file complaints are redirected between ACU and Meridian East offices until they stop filing.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Meridian East commercial contacts, off-manifest cargo intelligence, ACU audit team access, Prometheus League cell contact (if operators demonstrate anti-extraction commitment), signal pirate extraction data broadcasts, contamination records ACU Medical has revised.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- An ACU audit team member pulls a commercial record that has been amended three times. The amendments are small. The pattern across six months is not small.
- A Meridian East logistics supervisor offers operators above-market rates for a specific delivery service — no manifest, immediate. She is doing this because her normal courier has not appeared for two days.
- A Copperbelt mining family is at the ACU commercial office trying to file a contamination claim. They have been redirected to a Meridian East office. They are at the Meridian East office. They are being redirected again.
- A Prometheus League pamphlet is circulating in the Copper Quarter trading houses. Someone got it through three checkpoints. The distribution method is not obvious.
- A Meridian East internal auditor is in the district. She is not the ACU auditor. She is not doing the same audit. The two auditors are going to run into each other today.
- Two trading house supervisors are arguing quietly over a tablet they keep angling away from the Meridian East cameras. They stop arguing when a Meridian East security contractor walks past.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- An ore truck running dark — no transponder, no lights — heading south on a route not in any manifest. The weight distribution is inconsistent with copper ore.
- A Meridian East security contractor is moving equipment out of a sealed storage section officially inactive for three years. He is doing it quickly and without logging.
- A signal pirate broadcasts Copperbelt extraction data fragments on a tight-band frequency. Operators with the right hardware can pull the full data set.
- A Prometheus League operative is in the district picking up a supply cache. She is not the cell's saboteur — she is the cell's medic. Her supply list includes specific medications for long-term contamination exposure.
- An ACU auditor is working late. She has found the Meridian East gap. She has not yet decided whether to file the report tonight or wait until she has verified it through a second source.
- Three Meridian East contractors who were not paid this week are in the district having a conversation that started as a complaint and has become a planning session.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The ACU auditors found the Meridian East gap three days ahead of schedule. They are sitting on it because the second-source verification revealed an ACU Command member's involvement. [PARTIALLY TRUE — timing is close but not exact]
- Meridian East's internal auditor is not looking for the financial gap. She is looking for who has been talking to the ACU auditors. She has a list of three names. Kesho Mbeki is on it. [TRUE]
- The contamination in the groundwater is not just Copperbelt runoff. Something in the water table is interacting with the acid mine drainage and producing a compound ACU Medical has not identified. [UNCLEAR]
- The Prometheus League cell has been in the Copper Quarter for eight months without a single ACU detection. That level of operational discipline requires inside support. [TRUE — but the "inside support" is community tolerance, not an ACU contact]
- Three Meridian East contractors have been planning something since the last payroll was short. Their plan involves the stationary cargo shipment at the port. [TRUE]

- The signal pirate broadcasting extraction data is not Prometheus League. The frequency and encryption are consistent with NAF intelligence methodology. [UNCLEAR]

CONTACTS

KESHO MBEKI

Meridian East senior logistics clerk

CAN GET Off-manifest cargo records, Meridian East facility layouts, EO contractor identities operating as civilians, the second set of extraction records stored at an off-site facility.

WANTS Confirmation that her brother — a miner who reported the sealed shaft anomaly — is safe. He went missing four days ago.

FEARS That Meridian East already knows she has been talking. The internal auditor arrived yesterday and is going through her records personally.

CURRENT PRESSURE The internal auditor is not looking for what the ACU auditors are looking for. She is looking for who has been talking. Kesho has approximately 72 hours before the records trail reaches her name.

DR. TOMAS CARRASCO

Prometheus League-affiliated mobile medic

CAN GET Contamination data, civilian health records, routes through the Corridor avoiding both ACU and Meridian East checkpoints, the Prometheus League cell's operational picture in the Copper Quarter.

WANTS Medical supplies — insulin, respiratory medication, anti-fungals — specific list, specific quantities. His patient list is growing faster than his supply chain can sustain.

FEARS He is treating symptoms of something much larger than a clinic can stop. The new respiratory pattern appearing in children across three villages simultaneously is not consistent with the contamination pattern he has been tracking for eight months.

CURRENT PRESSURE	The same respiratory pattern has appeared in Lakefire Shore families. The geography does not match Copperbelt contamination. It matches something else — something that pulses at fourteen-second intervals two hundred meters below the lake. He has not made this connection yet. He is about to.

DISTRICT 3 LAKEFIRE SHORE

RESIDENTIAL / COMMUNITY ZONE

SECURITY	light (Warden presence, not enforcement-primary)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + Warden community liaison
FACTION PRESSURE	ACU dominant (community trust, not force)
CONTAMINATION	none surface / Lumicite resonance below / respiratory pattern emerging
BLACK MARKET	minimal (community exchange, informal economy)
MOBILITY	open (shore) / monitored (lake access)

FUNCTION The residential core of Kalemie and the actual base of ACU governance legitimacy — the forty thousand lakeside residents whose trust the Compact's water promise was built to earn and keep. The shore smells of wood smoke, drying fish, and the mineral-clean scent of the lake itself. The temperature drops four degrees in the twenty meters between the market and the waterline. The sound is water against hulls, the Dawn Quality Broadcast from the market speakers, and children.

CONTROLLER ACU formally. The community's own structures informally — fishing cooperatives, water access councils, and the specific political

authority of the people who have been managing this lake for eight centuries and would manage it without ACU if they had to.

DRAW

• Clean water — this is what people came for and what they stay for. • The fishing cooperatives and the specific economy they sustain. • The Lakefire Festival — ACU-sponsored annually, the amber glow celebrated without explanation, the largest cultural event in the Corridor. • The community's own intelligence about the lake — generational knowledge that no ACU sensor net has replicated. • The scene — FLOOD CHANNEL's Corridor variant playing at the lake's edge, OPEN SURFACE COLLECTIVE pieces on old port infrastructure, the cultural velocity of East Africa worn visibly in how people dress when they go to market.

RISK

• The Lumicite deposit is directly below the community's water intake. If extraction begins, the water changes before the announcement. • The amber glow has been intensifying. Community elders have noticed. Three have asked ACU Marine Sciences for an explanation. The responses have been technically accurate and functionally evasive. • A community elder has a complete set of the Brotherhood researcher's field notes. She does not know what they mean. She knows they are important. • The new respiratory pattern Dr. Carrasco identified in Copper Quarter children has also appeared in two Lakefire Shore families. The geography is wrong for Copperbelt contamination.

SCARCITY

• Honest information about the glow — the community's generational knowledge tells them the ACU's explanation is wrong, but they do not have the specific data to prove it. • Medical attention for the new respiratory pattern — ACU Medical's contamination reports have been systematically revised for eighteen months. • Political leverage — the water council's authority is real but informal. Converting it to governance authority over the deposit requires data the ACU is suppressing. • Trust in the ACU — still intact, still functional, and eroding at the rate of fourteen-second intervals.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Community trust is the one thing ACU cannot replace and cannot buy. It was built on water quality and the specific kind of visible commitment that forty years of Warden community presence represents. The moment the Lumicite secret surfaces — through the glow intensifying, through the contamination spreading, through a researcher's notes, through any of the seventeen ways it can surface — the trust breaks. The governance structure survives losing NAF investment. It does not survive the lakeside communities deciding the ACU lied to them about the water.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A community elder presents the Brotherhood researcher's field notes to the Lakefire Shore water council. The notes identify the amber glow as Lumicite resonance seeping through a lakebed fracture system that extends to the water intake. The council calls an emergency meeting. The ACU's Warden community liaison is not invited. The glow pulses on the wall behind them while they read.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Community cooperative structures + Warden community liaison (present, genuinely embedded, not enforcement-primary).

ECONOMY

Fishing, water distribution, community commerce, the informal exchange economy that predates ACU. The Dawn Quality Broadcast plays in the market. The scene underneath runs on different numbers.

RISK

The elder with the field notes is deciding whether to share them. She makes this decision every day. Today she might decide differently.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Community itself — the shore is community-governed after dark in ways Warden presence does not change.

ECONOMY

Fishing (night catches), community social functions, the informal exchange of information that no surveillance system has ever successfully penetrated.

RISK

The glow intensifying. Clear nights bring the amber pulse close enough to the surface that children can see it from shore. They are asking questions. The pulse interval is fourteen seconds. Six weeks ago it was seventeen.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Lake Tanganyika at dusk, the amber pulse visible two meters below the surface at the community dock, a group of children watching it from the pier while a Warden community liaison stands at the shore end of the dock explaining bioluminescent algae to a community elder who has lived on this lake for sixty years and knows that bioluminescent algae does not pulse at a seventeen-second interval.

THE SCENE — KALEMIE

The Lakefire Corridor's scene runs on the cultural velocity of East Africa in 2026 — Nairobi's design and tech scene, the Afrobeats-adjacent production networks that were building global infrastructure before the Upheaval consolidated markets, the lakeside community aesthetic of the Great Lakes region with eight centuries of practice behind it — mutated by forty million people who moved to elevation and kept building. The amber pulse from the lakebed at night, visible from the shore as a slow unhurried rhythm from two hundred meters below, has become part of the visual vocabulary in ways the ACU never intended. Wearing lakefire amber in your kit color is a statement about what you know about the lake. The Obsidian Wardens do not comment on it officially. Some of them match it on their non-duty kit. FLOOD CHANNEL's Amazonian Metroplex production has a Corridor distribution network producing a local variant: denser, more layered, built for high-ceiling open-air venues at the lake's edge rather than the Metroplex's canopy-filtered interior. GRIDSEED propagation infrastructure is the scene's communications backbone — it grows in bad soil, and the Lakefire Corridor has an abundance of contested ground for it to root in. OPEN SURFACE COLLECTIVE's Corridor contributors work on old port infrastructure at the Lakeside Compact and the Copperbelt's twenty-years-past-spec mining sites, producing pieces on surfaces that have absorbed more industrial history than any other operational environment in the OT world. The Meridian East extraction corridor is the scene's most active tag zone. OPEN SURFACE COLLECTIVE has documented fifteen pieces in eighteen months. Meridian East has removed twelve. The other three are in locations their security has not identified. The scene knows exactly where they are. DEAD STACK COLLECTIVE runs lakefire-amber badge sets — void-stamped ACU water registration cards, expired Corridor transit permits, old Lakefire Festival lanyards from before the ACU took over sponsorship. The pre-2058 festival credentials are the most valued items in the stack because they represent the community's ownership of something the ACU appropriated. GHOST KIT JOURNAL's Corridor issues document Warden operators who have gone freelance — leopard-stock running the lakeside corridors in stripped kit with lakefire amber replacing faction insignia, wild dogs

on the Copperbelt extraction routes, gorilla-stock in terrain operations that Meridian East security does not enjoy encountering. MARK HAND STUDIO commissions from Corridor operators are the most sought-after in the studio's catalogue: garments designed around gorilla-stock proportions, leopard-adaptation thermal profiles, the wild dog's pack-sense social architecture expressed in how the silhouette reads in a group rather than individually. ACOUSTIC WEIRD's Corridor recordings capture the specific sound of Lake Tanganyika at dusk — the seventeen-second pulse that is now fourteen, the water against hulls, the Dawn Quality Broadcast numbers from the market speakers underneath it all. NULLMARK signal hygiene hardware circulates through the Corridor scene for a specific reason: in a surveillance city where the ACU's drone net logs everything and Meridian East's informant network watches the rest, the tech that makes you invisible is worth displaying.

FACTIONS PRESENT

ACU OBSIDIAN WARDENS

Community liaison presence, genuinely embedded. Forty years of relationship. The liaison is not performing a role — she grew up here.

CIVILIAN NEED

The truth about the glow, delivered by someone the community trusts, with enough time to organize a governance response before the extraction pressure arrives.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Community introduction network (requires earning trust), Elder Zawadi's knowledge, Brotherhood researcher field notes (highest trust threshold), fishing cooperative logistics, the community's generational intelligence about the lake.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A community elder approaches operators directly. She does not explain how she knew to find them. She wants to show them something. It is the field notes.
- A Warden community liaison is having a conversation with three community elders that has been going on for forty minutes and is not going well. The elders are not hostile. They are patient. The liaison is the one who is struggling.
- A community fisherman has found something in his net — not dangerous, not large, but clearly manufactured and clearly old. He is not bringing it to ACU. He is asking the community what to do.
- A group of children has been tracking the amber glow's position for three weeks using a hand-drawn chart. They have noticed the glow is moving. They want to show someone.
- Two families from Lakefire Shore are at the ACU medical facility. Their children have the respiratory pattern Dr. Carrasco identified in the Copper Quarter. The ACU physician's explanation does not account for the geography.
- A community water council meeting is underway. It is officially about quarterly water distribution. The actual agenda is the glow. Operators can observe but not easily attend without invitation.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The amber glow is close enough to the surface that it is visible without looking for it. A small crowd has gathered at the community dock. Nobody is speaking.
- The elder with the field notes has made her decision. She goes to a specific location at a specific time. Operators who have been watching her know where she is going.
- A Warden night patrol passes the community dock, sees the glow, and the patrol leader makes a radio call that she routes around the standard Warden frequency.
- Three community elders are in a meeting that they believe is private. It is not entirely private. They are discussing whether the ACU's Lumicite suppression constitutes a breach of the water governance contract.
- A child from the glow-watching group is at the community dock alone at 0100. She is lowering a weighted line into the water. She wants to see how close the glow is.

- The glow pulses three times in rapid succession — something it has never done before. The child with the weighted line pulls it up. The weight is warm.

RUMORS (1D6)

- Elder Zawadi has had the Brotherhood researcher's complete field notes for four months. She reads them every night. She has not shared them because she is waiting for someone to arrive. [TRUE — the "someone" is undefined]
- The glow is not just getting brighter. It is moving toward the water intake. The children's hand-drawn chart shows the migration pattern over three weeks. [TRUE]
- Two families whose children have the new respiratory pattern have stopped drinking the tap water. They are getting water from a community well that predates the ACU system. The well water tastes different. Their children's symptoms have not improved. [TRUE]
- The Warden community liaison has been routing her night patrol radio calls around the standard frequency for six weeks. She has not told Base 7. She has not told the community. She is making her own assessment. [TRUE]
- The Lakefire Festival was the community's before it was the ACU's. The community's version included a night vigil at the shore that the ACU version replaced with a fireworks display. Some elders still hold the vigil privately. [TRUE]
- The Brotherhood researcher treated two Lakefire Shore residents for a specific neurological symptom before she disappeared. The symptom is associated with prolonged Lumicite proximity. Both residents are still alive. They have not been contacted by ACU Medical. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

ELDER ZAWADI MWAMBA

Lakefire Shore water council, 60 years on the lake

CAN GET The Brotherhood researcher's complete field notes, sixty years of observational data about Lake Tanganyika that no ACU sensor has replicated, the water council's current political position on the glow, community intelligence about every external party that has approached the shore in the last two years.

WANTS The truth about the glow, delivered to her before the ACU decides how to manage the information. She wants to be the person who decides what the community knows, not the ACU.

FEARS	That the truth is worse than she suspects, and that she has already waited too long to find it.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Her granddaughter is one of the children tracking the glow's position. The chart shows the glow is moving toward the water intake. The elder has done the calculation. The Void Walker's data chip — addressed to her, not yet delivered — would confirm what she already suspects.

DISTRICT 4 WARDEN BASE 7

ACU SECURITY FORWARD

SECURITY	lockdown
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	none (restricted access)
SURVEILLANCE	comprehensive (ACU military grade)
FACTION PRESSURE	ACU absolute
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	none official
MOBILITY	barricaded (external) / open (internal with clearance)

FUNCTION

The Obsidian Wardens' Kalemie regional command — the enforcement arm of ACU governance and the location where the Corridor's classified operational picture is managed. The suppression operation for the Lumicite deposit is coordinated from Base 7. The base smells of equipment oil, recycled air, and the specific institutional cleanliness of a facility that has been maintained to specification for forty years by people who believe in the institution.

CONTROLLER	ACU military command, absolute. The three Warden personnel who have personally observed geological survey anomalies they were ordered to classify represent the only internal threat to that absolute control.
DRAW	• The ACU's classified Lumicite suppression operation files — the only complete picture of what the ACU knows and what they are doing about it. • Warden gene-forged medical and operational support — the best in the Corridor. • Intelligence on every faction operating in the Corridor, including the Brotherhood researcher's last confirmed contact records. • The ACU's own assessment of how long the suppression can hold. • The deliberate communications channel gap — sensitive traffic routed around standard ACU channels.
RISK	• Three Warden personnel on the base have personally observed geological survey anomalies they were ordered to classify and not investigate. One of them is close to deciding that the order was illegal. • The base's communications security has a gap — not a vulnerability, a deliberate channel that Compact Command uses to route sensitive suppression-operation traffic. Someone outside ACU Command knows about the channel. • The Brotherhood researcher's last confirmed contact was with a Warden intelligence officer who has not been on active duty since that contact. She returned today. After six months.
SCARCITY	• Access — Base 7 is the most secured facility in the Corridor. • Honest answers from personnel operating under classification orders they have not been given complete reasons for. • The suppression operation's complete timeline — even Base 7 personnel with clearance have not been shown the ACU's own assessment of the suppression's remaining viability. • Trust between Warden personnel who followed the classification order and the one who is considering refusing it.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The base's operational integrity depends on Warden personnel following classification orders they have not been given complete reasons for. The three personnel who have observed the anomalies have been given cover explanations that are technically accurate. Two of them have accepted the explanations. One has not. The one who has not is a Gorilla-template terrain operations specialist whose observational skills were built into her at the genetic level. She cannot stop noticing things she was ordered not to investigate.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The Warden who refuses the classification order files a formal dissent through the deliberate communications channel — the channel she is not supposed to know about, carrying her report to ACU Command through a path that bypasses every suppression filter Base 7 has built. The report arrives at Command simultaneously with the auditor's Meridian East findings. Two structural failures in the same inbox on the same morning.

DAY

AUTHORITY

ACU military command. Leopard, Wild Dog, and Gorilla-template units on rotation. Professional, capable, and operating under orders they do not all agree with.

ECONOMY

Military logistics, Warden supply chain, classified intelligence operations.

RISK

The Warden intelligence officer who had the last confirmed contact with the Brotherhood researcher has returned to active duty. Today. After six months. Nobody has explained where she was.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Skeleton duty rotation. The base is quieter but never unwatched. Leopard-template night operators have enhanced low-light vision that makes the base effectively brighter at night than during the day.

ECONOMY

None official. The deliberate communications channel carries its heaviest traffic between 0200 and 0400.

RISK

Three Warden Wild Dog-template operators have been having a conversation in the base common area that stops when officers pass and resumes when they leave. This has been happening for four days.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A Warden Leopard-template intelligence officer reviewing communications logs at 0400, pulling a specific six-month window, and finding that a communications channel she was told was inactive has been generating traffic she was told didn't exist. The base is quiet around her. The traffic is not.

FACTIONS PRESENT

ACU OBSIDIAN WARDENS

Absolute control. Suppression operation coordination. The enforcement arm of a promise that is structurally impossible to keep.

CIVILIAN NEED

Not applicable — no civilian access. But the Warden personnel who grew up in Lakefire Shore carry the community's needs with them onto the base every day. Some of them cannot reconcile the two.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Warden patrol schedules, checkpoint bypass protocols, contamination reports, the three Warden personnel who observed the geological anomalies, the deliberate communications channel (if operators learn about it through other sources).

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A Warden intelligence officer approaches operators outside the base perimeter. She wants to pass something — not physically, just information. She looks at the base camera positions before she speaks.
- The ACU auditors have been given access to Base 7's resource allocation files. They are not auditing resource allocation. They are auditing communications routing. Someone gave them the wrong access level and the wrong person is going to discover this.
- A Warden Gorilla-template unit returning from Copperbelt patrol has something in its equipment manifest that is not on its departure manifest. The unit leader is handling the discrepancy quietly.
- The Warden intelligence officer who had the last confirmed contact with the Brotherhood researcher has returned to active duty. Today. After six months. She is asking questions about the exclusion zone that her clearance level should not generate.
- Three Warden Wild Dog-template operators are having a conversation in the base common area that stops when officers pass and resumes when they leave. This has been happening for four days.
- A Base 7 communications technician pulls operators aside outside the base perimeter at the end of his shift. He has found the deliberate communications channel gap. He wants to know if what he found is what he thinks it is before he decides what to do with it.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The deliberate communications channel carries a burst transmission at 0300 that the duty officer intercepts and cannot decrypt. The encryption is ACU Command-grade. The origin point is inside the exclusion zone.
- A Warden Leopard-template operator leaves the base at 0200 in non-duty kit with lakefire amber accents. She is heading to Lakefire Shore. She has not logged the exit.
- The communications technician who found the channel gap is at his station running a trace on the traffic pattern. He has been doing this for three consecutive nights. Tonight the trace returns a result.
- The Gorilla-template Warden who is considering refusing the classification order is in the base gym at 0100, not exercising. She is reading a document on a personal device that she brought from outside the base.
- A supply convoy arrives at Base 7 at 0400 carrying equipment logged as "geological survey maintenance." The equipment is going to the exclusion zone. The convoy commander is the intelligence officer who returned from six months of unexplained absence.
- The three Wild Dog-template operators from the daytime conversation are at the base perimeter fence at 0300. They are not leaving. They are watching something on the lake. The lakefire is pulsing at a rhythm none of them have seen before.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The Warden intelligence officer who disappeared for six months was not on leave. She was in the exclusion zone. She was the ACU's contact with Solange. [UNCLEAR — the timeline fits but confirmation is not available]
- Base 7's communications channel is not a gap. It is a feature built by ACU Command for the suppression operation. Someone outside Command has been using it for at least three months. [TRUE]
- The three Warden personnel who observed the geological anomalies have been talking to each other. Two of them have accepted the cover explanation. The third has been showing the other two her observational data. One of them is no longer accepting the explanation. [TRUE]
- A contamination report filed through Base 7 six months ago was revised three times before reaching ACU Medical. Each revision reduced the severity assessment. The original report is stored in a backup system. [TRUE]
- The Gorilla-template Warden considering refusal was born in a Copperbelt mining village. Her family is still there. The contamination data she has access to includes her village. [TRUE]

- Base 7's supply manifest includes "ecological monitoring equipment" that has been delivered to the exclusion zone monthly for eighteen months. The equipment has never been returned. The monitoring data it generates has never appeared in any report. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

WARDEN SERGEANT ADAEZE NWOSU

ACU checkpoint commander, Base 7 liaison

CAN GET Warden patrol schedules, checkpoint bypass protocols, ACU Medical's contamination reports she has seen and should not have seen, the three Warden personnel who observed the geological anomalies.

WANTS Someone to act on the contamination data before her people start showing symptoms.

FEARS Career termination. She escalated through official channels once. The escalation was acknowledged, documented, and filed somewhere she cannot access.

CURRENT PRESSURE A mining family came to her this morning with photographs of their water supply. The contamination pattern in the photographs is not consistent with the Copperbelt runoff timeline ACU Medical provided to field personnel. The pattern is consistent with something else. She is the kind of person who will not stop until she identifies what.

DISTRICT 5 MOMBASA ROAD

CORRIDOR TRANSIT ZONE

SECURITY	active (checkpointed)
INFRASTRUCTURE	strained
CIVILIANS	sparse (transit workers, logistics crews)
SURVEILLANCE	ACU cameras at checkpoints / dark zones between
FACTION PRESSURE	contested (ACU checkpoints, Meridian East logistics, Prometheus League road operations)

CONTAMINATION	none (surface road) / present (Copperbelt access routes)
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	checkpointed (dual authority — ACU and Meridian East, conflicting)

FUNCTION The logistics artery connecting Kalemie to the Indian Ocean coast — eight hundred kilometers of the most resource-dense transit corridor in the hemisphere, and the pipeline through which everything moving in or out of the Corridor must pass. The road sounds like diesel engines, checkpoint barriers, and the specific silence of dark zones between camera coverage where deals happen and disputes resolve outside any legal framework. The dust is red laterite. It gets into everything.

CONTROLLER ACU officially controls checkpoint operations. Meridian East controls the logistics contracts. The Prometheus League controls the knowledge of which stretches of road are not what they appear to be. The actual authority at any given kilometer marker depends on who arrived first and what they are carrying.

DRAW • Access to the Indian Ocean port network through Mombasa. • Corridor logistics contracts — significant commercial traffic. • The black-market cargo pipeline that runs parallel to legitimate ACU-logged shipments. • The specific knowledge of the Corridor's dark zones, which only the Prometheus League has mapped completely. • GRIDSEED propagation nodes growing in the contested ground along the route — the scene's communications backbone rooted in bad soil.

RISK

• Three Prometheus League sabotage incidents on the northern access road in the last year. Pattern analysis suggests the next target is the ACU's primary Copperbelt logistics relay. • Meridian East has positioned security contractor units along Mombasa Road that operate outside ACU logistics oversight. They have stopped three ACU patrol vehicles in the last two months. • A cargo shipment that arrived at Kalemie port six weeks ago has not moved from the transit staging area. The manifest is legitimate. Nobody will explain the delay. • EO Bear-stock contractors who have been running the night shift for fourteen months without ACU authorization carry the weight and patience of something designed for sustained operations. They do not respond to ACU checkpoint commands. They respond to payroll.

SCARCITY

• Safe transit after dark — the road between ACU checkpoints belongs to Meridian East contractors, Prometheus League logistics, and whatever lives in the dark zones. • Reliable information about what is actually moving on the road — every faction's manifest tells a different story. • ACU checkpoint authority — the authority is nominal and everyone on the road knows it. • The Prometheus League's dark zone map — the only complete picture of the Corridor's unofficial logistics infrastructure.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Mombasa Road logistics chain assumes ACU checkpoint authority. Meridian East's security contractor presence has been eroding that authority for fourteen months — not through confrontation, but through the specific competence of people who know the road better than the checkpoint commanders and who have made themselves indispensable to logistics operations the ACU cannot stop without disrupting its own supply chains. The written order authorizing the Meridian East deployment does not exist. Base 7 Command knows. They have not acted because acting means acknowledging the authority gap publicly.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Meridian East contractor units stop responding to ACU checkpoint authority entirely. This escalated from delay to non-compliance two weeks ago. The next escalation is physical. The ACU checkpoint commander who tried to intervene last time spent four hours in a standoff that resolved in Meridian East's favor. She has not intervened since. The road belongs to whoever is standing on it when the sun goes down.

DAY

AUTHORITY

ACU checkpoint commanders + Meridian East logistics coordinators (parallel, sometimes conflicting). The dual authority is visible in the two manifest stickers on every cargo vehicle.

ECONOMY

Legitimate cargo transit, commercial logistics, the visible supply chain.

RISK

The stationary cargo shipment. Whatever it is, it is becoming conspicuous. Six weeks without movement generates questions the manifest cannot answer.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Meridian East security contractors — EO Bear and Boar-stock operating under an ACU logistics authority they have not been officially granted. Their thermal regulation modifications make them comfortable in the night temperature drop. The road is their environment after dark.

ECONOMY

Off-manifest cargo movement, black-market supply chain, Prometheus League logistics to and from interior operations.

RISK

Meridian East contractor units that are not responding to ACU checkpoint authority. Freelance EO geneforged with no payroll and local knowledge are the most dangerous thing on the road after the audit cuts funding.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A Meridian East security contractor waving through a vehicle at an ACU checkpoint while the ACU checkpoint commander watches from her vehicle and does not intervene, because the last time she intervened the situation escalated to a standoff that lasted four hours and resolved in Meridian East's favor. The red laterite dust covers both vehicles equally. It does not distinguish between authorities.

FACTIONS PRESENT

MERIDIAN EAST

Security contractor units operating outside ACU logistics oversight for fourteen months. EO Bear and Boar-stock. The unauthorized deployment the ACU has chosen not to confront.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

Dark zone operations, sabotage targeting Meridian East logistics, supply chain running through the Corridor's unofficial infrastructure.

CIVILIAN NEED

Safe transit. Logistics crews who depend on the road for their livelihood are caught between three authorities and answerable to whichever one stops them next.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Corridor transit documentation, Meridian East checkpoint intelligence, Prometheus League dark zone contacts (if operators demonstrate non-faction commitment), the stationary cargo shipment manifest, ACU checkpoint commander's documentation of Meridian East non-compliance.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- The stationary cargo shipment's manifest is accessible. The listed contents are medical equipment. A logistics clerk who has been watching it for six weeks says the loading sounds are wrong for medical equipment.
- An ACU checkpoint commander pulls operators aside. She has documentation of Meridian East contractor non-compliance. She wants to know if there is a channel to report it that does not go through Base 7.
- A Prometheus League operative is traveling the road as a legitimate commercial passenger. She is doing surveillance — not of ACU positions, but of Meridian East contractor deployment patterns.
- A Meridian East logistics coordinator makes a request of operators that is technically within commercial contractor authority and is clearly not a commercial operation.
- Three ACU logistics vehicles are being held at a Meridian East checkpoint position that has no ACU authorization. The checkpoint has been there for six hours. Base 7 has been notified. Base 7 has not responded.
- A signal is moving on the road — not a vehicle, a person. Running. She reaches operators before the Meridian East security unit behind her does.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The stationary cargo is being moved. At 0300. Without ACU logistics documentation. Four Meridian East contractors are on the perimeter. The destination is not Kalemie port.
- A Prometheus League supply cache is being retrieved from a concealed roadside position. The cache includes items that are not standard Prometheus League equipment — medications from a supply source the League has not disclosed.
- An ACU night patrol finds a Meridian East position that was not on any map they were given. The position has been there for at least a month.
- A runner arrives at an ACU checkpoint with a message that bypasses all standard ACU communication protocols. The checkpoint commander does not know the message authentication code but the runner does.
- Three people are waiting at a specific kilometer marker. They have been there since dark. They are not Meridian East. They are not ACU. They are waiting for a vehicle that is late.
- The Prometheus League operative from the daytime encounter makes contact with operators at a rest stop. She has the Meridian East contractor deployment map. It is much larger than operators expected.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The Meridian East contractor deployment on Mombasa Road is not a security operation. It is a logistics operation positioned to move Lumicite extraction equipment from Mombasa port to Kalemie when the order comes. [PARTIALLY TRUE]
- The Prometheus League's next sabotage target is not Meridian East logistics. It is the stationary cargo shipment. They know what is in it. [UNCLEAR]
- The runner who arrived at the ACU checkpoint carried a message from someone inside the exclusion zone. The message authentication code is Brotherhood of Shadows protocol. [TRUE]
- Three Meridian East contractors who were not paid have been talking to a Prometheus League contact. They are not defecting. They are selling the deployment map. [TRUE]
- The ACU checkpoint commander who lost the standoff has been documenting every Meridian East non-compliance incident for four months. Her documentation, if it reaches the right person, is more damaging than the financial audit. [TRUE]
- The dark zones on Mombasa Road are not empty. The Prometheus League uses them for logistics. Something else uses them too. GRIDSEED nodes have been appearing in the dark zones without anyone planting them. [PARTIALLY TRUE — GRIDSEED grows where it grows. The question is who established the first nodes.]

CONTACTS

CHECKPOINT COMMANDER LIEUTENANT ASHA OKONKWO

ACU Mombasa Road, northern sector

CAN GET Four months of documented Meridian East non-compliance, checkpoint timing data, the specific gaps in ACU coverage that Meridian East has been exploiting, the location of every unauthorized Meridian East position she has identified.

WANTS A channel to report the non-compliance that does not go through Base 7. She has lost faith in Base 7's willingness to act. She has not lost faith in the ACU.

FEARS That the non-response from Base 7 is not neglect but policy — that Command has authorized the Meridian East deployment for reasons she has not been told.

CURRENT PRESSURE	A Meridian East Bear-stock contractor stopped her vehicle yesterday and told her the next time she filed a report, the report would be the last thing she filed. The contractor was not threatening her. He was warning her. The distinction worried her more than a threat would have.

DISTRICT 6 DEEP SURVEY ZONE — THE LUMICITE EXCLUSION AREA

SECURITY	lockdown (ACU enforcement / no-approach zone)
INFRASTRUCTURE	none
CIVILIANS	none (exclusion enforced)
SURVEILLANCE	comprehensive (ACU sensor perimeter on surface) / blind (below lakebed)
FACTION PRESSURE	ACU absolute control / three parties attempting access
CONTAMINATION	Lumicite resonance (below surface, intensifying)
BLACK MARKET	none (exclusion zone)
MOBILITY	barricaded

FUNCTION The lakebed zone above the Lumicite deposit — officially designated as ecological preservation area, actually the physical location of the thing the ACU is most desperate to keep suppressed. The water here is warmer than it should be. The instruments do not explain the temperature differential. The fish avoid this section of the lake. The fishermen noticed before the instruments did.

CONTROLLER ACU, absolute on the surface. Warden patrol maintains a 500-meter no-approach perimeter on the water. The lakebed itself is not controlled by anyone. The Lumicite deposit two hundred meters below has its own agenda, expressed in a pulse that is getting faster.

DRAW

• The Lumicite deposit — the most significant undisclosed resource find of the post-Upheaval era. • The survey data the deposit has generated — fragments held by four separate parties, none of which have the complete picture. • The lakebed intake maintenance window — eleven days until the next 23-day survey opportunity. • The Void Walker's data chip at the perimeter marker. • Solange — if she is alive, she is here.

RISK

• Three parties are attempting access: the NAF verification team (through the maintenance window), the EO geological survey (approaching from the Copperbelt's sealed tunnels below), and the Void Walker (through a method no one has identified). • The deposit's Lumicite resonance has been seeping upward through the lakebed for at least two years. The rate has been stable. The recent amber pulse variations suggest the rate is no longer stable. • ACU sensor anomalies near the exclusion zone perimeter have been filed and not investigated for three months. Someone is in the zone. They have not been identified. • The EO tunnel approach has broken through a lakebed formation below the sensor threshold. They are inside the perimeter from below.

SCARCITY

• Access — the exclusion zone is the most restricted location in the Corridor. • Complete survey data — four parties hold fragments, none have the full picture. • Time — the maintenance window, the audit timeline, the pulse rate change, and the tunnel approach are all converging. • Understanding of the deposit's behavior — the pulse rate change suggests the deposit is not static. Nobody has explained what that means.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The exclusion zone exists to prevent independent confirmation of what ACU already knows. Every confirmed data point from an external party ends the suppression. The suppression has already been partially compromised — the Brotherhood researcher had data, the Void Walker has been in proximity for three months, the NAF team has three confirmed data points, the EO tunnel is inside the perimeter from below. The suppression is not protecting the deposit. It is managing the timeline of disclosure. The timeline is accelerating without permission.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Two or more external parties confirm the deposit independently within the same 72-hour window. The ACU cannot manage simultaneous disclosure to multiple factions. The governance question and the resource question arrive at the same time, in the same city, in front of forty million lakeside residents whose water supply sits directly above the thing everyone is now fighting over. The amber pulse is visible from the shore when it happens. The children see it first.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Warden Leopard-template water patrol. 500-meter no-approach perimeter. Standing orders that override standard rules of engagement.

ECONOMY

None. The exclusion zone is economically inert on the surface. Below the surface, it is the most valuable piece of lakebed in the hemisphere.

RISK

Multiple approach attempts from different vectors. The Warden patrol has protocols for one unauthorized approach. Not three simultaneously.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Warden night patrol + ACU sensor perimeter. Leopard-template operators with enhanced night vision make the perimeter effectively tighter after dark.

ECONOMY

None visible. The amber glow is the only activity. It is not an economy. It is something else.

RISK

The glow pulses irregularly. Warden sensors log anomalies the duty officer does not recognize. The deposit is doing something. Nobody knows what.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The exclusion zone perimeter at dusk — a Warden Leopard-template unit on water patrol, the amber glow visible below her craft, and on the far side of the perimeter, three separate parties who are not acknowledging each other's presence, each attempting a different kind of access to the same piece of lakebed. The water is warmer here than it should be. The Warden can feel it through the hull.

NOTE: The Deep Survey Zone runs as a scenario node, not an improvisation space. Approach encounters are driven by which party reaches the deposit first. See Mission Seeds — specifically FIND SOLANGE and THE TUNNEL.

FACTIONS PRESENT

ACU OBSIDIAN WARDENS

Exclusion zone enforcement. The perimeter patrol. The sensor net. The standing orders that nobody has tested because nobody has been caught inside the perimeter yet.

NAF INTELLIGENCE

Verification team approaching through the maintenance window. One data point from filing.

MERIDIAN EAST / EO

Geological survey team approaching from below through the Copperbelt sealed tunnels. Inside the perimeter. They do not know this.

VOID WALKER "AMBER"

Three months of observation. Method of access unidentified. Data chip at the perimeter marker. Watching.

CIVILIAN NEED

Not applicable — the exclusion zone has no residents. But the forty thousand people in Lakefire Shore whose water intake sits at the edge of the deposit are the civilians this zone was built to protect. The protection is the lie. The deposit is the truth. The distance between them is two hundred meters of lakebed and fourteen seconds of pulse.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A Warden perimeter patrol intercepts a NAF-affiliated research submersible approaching the exclusion zone. The submersible has a commercial survey permit that predates the exclusion zone designation. The permit is technically valid.
- A fisherman's boat drifts into the exclusion perimeter during a Warden patrol gap. The fisherman is not fishing. He is photographing the glow pattern.
- An ACU geological survey officer approaches operators. She has the complete survey data from 2044. She was the survey team lead. She wants to talk about the rate change.
- The EO geological survey team's tunnel approach has broken through a lakebed formation. The breakthrough is below the exclusion zone perimeter. The Wardens' surface sensors have not detected it.
- The Void Walker surfaces near the exclusion perimeter. Not to access it — to leave something at a specific marker on the approach route. She is gone before a Warden patrol can respond.
- The ACU sensor anomalies from the last three months have been correlated by a Warden intelligence officer into a movement pattern. The pattern does not match any known approach methodology. She is presenting this to Base 7 command today.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- Three surface-approach attempts at the exclusion zone simultaneously — one NAF, one unidentified, one that the Warden patrol cannot classify. The patrol has protocols for one. Not three.
- The amber glow pulses irregularly for twenty-two minutes between 0100 and 0123. Warden sensors log an anomaly. The duty officer does not recognize the anomaly type.

- The ACU geological survey officer from the daytime encounter is at the exclusion perimeter alone. She has dive equipment. She has been here for four consecutive nights.
- The item the Void Walker left near the perimeter earlier is visible to operators. It is a sealed data chip. It is addressed to someone whose name operators may recognize.
- The EO geological survey tunnel surfaces inside the exclusion perimeter. The survey team is not sure they are inside the perimeter. They are sure they have found the formation.
- A message arrives from inside the exclusion zone, through ACU's own communications infrastructure. It is a geological assessment — complete, verified, timestamped two hours ago. It is signed by the Brotherhood researcher who disappeared eight months ago.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The deposit is not just a resource. The Lumicite is interacting with the lakebed fracture system in ways the 2044 survey did not predict. The fracture system is extending toward the water intake. [TRUE — and the children's chart in Lakefire Shore tracks the extension without knowing what it means]
- The Void Walker's data chip contains a geological assessment written by Solange. If delivered, it gives Elder Zawadi everything she needs to understand what is under the lake. [TRUE]
- The ACU geological survey officer who wants to talk about the rate change was the 2044 team lead. She was transferred out of Kalemie when the data was classified. She came back on her own. [TRUE]
- Solange is alive and inside the exclusion zone. She has been there for three months. She has dive equipment, geological survey hardware, and a communications setup that uses the ACU's own infrastructure. [TRUE — her status beyond "alive" is undefined]
- The EO tunnel approach was not authorized by EO Command. It was authorized by Meridian East's local operations director, acting on intelligence the director obtained from a source inside Base 7. [PARTIALLY TRUE]
- The deposit's pulse rate change is not a natural process. Something triggered it six weeks ago. The trigger's timing coincides with the EO tunnel's breach of the first lakebed formation. [UNCLEAR — the timeline correlation is real. Causation is unconfirmed.]

06/

AMAZONIAN METROPLEX

SCA TERRITORY | EARTH 2066

The architecture and the ecosystem are indistinguishable. In places, they are fighting each other.

OVERVIEW

Four hundred miles of bio-engineered city threaded through a jungle the SCA redesigned from the genome up. The architecture and the ecosystem are indistinguishable in places. Buildings grow. Defensive plants eat equipment if you're not cleared. Root systems digest basements on a timetable nobody fully controls. The Amazonian Metroplex is the SCA's power base, their proof of concept, and the only city on Earth that is literally alive.

The Metroplex runs on a single nutrient cycle. Every building, every defensive organism, every vertical farm, every root system, every engineered predator -- all of it draws from the same mineral flow regulated by the Nutrient Interchange at Sector 14. That interchange is the chokepoint. Disrupt it and the food supply cascades in eleven days. Contaminate it and the city eats itself.

Fourteen months ago, Dr. Lucia Ferreira of the SCA Bioengineering Division authorized a classified modification to the Interchange's mineral profile under a protocol designated CANOPY SHIFT. The modification increases nitrogen-phosphorus ratios by 3.2% across the central nutrient cycle. The stated purpose: accelerated vertical farm growth to meet population demand. The actual purpose: the modified mineral profile alters the bloom-drift chemistry. The next bloom cycle will carry a neural-disruptive compound that affects non-SCA-adapted respiratory systems. SCA residents, whose anti-spore patches are calibrated to SCA-standard atmospheric chemistry, will be unaffected. Everyone else in the Metroplex -- every operator, every visitor, every intelligence asset -- will experience progressive cognitive degradation over 72 hours of exposure. The SCA is turning the city itself into a weapon that only targets outsiders.

Ferreira did not model the side effect. The modified mineral profile is accelerating unauthorized root-mass growth by 400%. Three black sites from the pre-CANOPY SHIFT bioweapons program were swallowed by root systems years ago. Those root systems are now growing toward the containment barriers at a rate that puts the first breach at eleven days. If the containment fails, pre-CANOPY SHIFT bioweapons research material enters the nutrient cycle. What happens when a neural-disruptive delivery mechanism carries legacy bioweapons material into the bloom-drift is something nobody has modeled and nobody wants to.

One person has calculated the breach timeline: Inspector Marisol Vega, Sector 14 fungal customs. She has been tracking the bloom-drift chemistry shift for eight months. CANOPY SHIFT is classified above her clearance. She cannot report what she knows through official channels. She has eleven days.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

Territory: SCA core Infrastructure: stable surface / accelerating sub-surface Surveillance: pheromone cycling + fungal customs checkpoints Civilian mood: adapted / bloom-aware Faction pressure: dominant SCA / covert multi-faction Black market: heavy (anti-spore, agricultural cultures) Biological hazard: bloom-drift (scheduled), root-mass (uncontrolled) Chokepoint: Nutrient Interchange, Sector 14

HUB SIGNATURE

The canopy dampens sound. A firefight in the outer zones does not carry the way it would in open terrain. Inside the inner city, sound is filtered by growth -- buildings absorb acoustic signature rather than reflecting it. Bloom-drift is visible as slow movement at the canopy line, orange-yellow in color, the only reliable visual warning. Smell is layered: wet organic from the root systems, pheromone cycling through the ventilation infrastructure, sharp medical chemical from anti-spore stations at every checkpoint. The temperature shift at the agricultural boundary -- wet heat to controlled dry in twenty meters -- is physically disorienting the first time. SCA residents don't notice it anymore. Outsiders do, which is how SCA border personnel spot them.

LAWS AND CIVIC STRUCTURE

Aggressively enforced: Unauthorized biological material transport across Sector 14 customs; unregistered root-mass cultivation; bloom-drift schedule violation (movement during active drift without anti-spore patches)

Selectively weaponized: Anti-spore patch allocation audits -- residents in good standing are resupplied automatically; residents under scrutiny find their allocation 'under review'; root-mass code violations in residential zones, applied against residents the SCA wants relocated

Feared punishments: Canopy exile -- removal to the outer expansion zones where the city's systems are unregulated and the jungle's systems are not; anti-spore patch revocation, which makes the Metroplex's atmosphere a slow weapon; Root Level detention in facilities the root systems are actively growing through

Civic rituals: Bloom-drift forecasts -- daily public broadcasts of the drift schedule, treated with the same weight as weather; the Harvest Procession -- quarterly public event where vertical farm yields are displayed and distributed, doubling as SCA loyalty demonstration; Sector 14 customs clearance, which every person and vehicle entering the inner city passes through and which functions as public theater of biological control

THE SCENE — AMAZONIAN METROPLEX

The Metroplex scene is louder, denser, and more botanical than anywhere else in the OT world. The cultural DNA runs from Brazilian favela aesthetics — the improvised density that built permanence from available material, the baile funk bass physics that belongs to communities who claimed the sonic environment the way they claimed everything else — through Afrobeats' layered rhythmic complexity into something that only exists where the city grows its own walls. Anti-spore patches have become fashion objects: NULLSKIN's medical-grade patches layered and painted in the favela-dense elevated districts, bloom-drift orange-yellow pulled directly into the color vocabulary. The aesthetic principle is not decoration. It is acknowledgment. The city is trying to eat you and you decided to match it.

FLOOD CHANNEL's rhythmically dense production is the sonic infrastructure — the label's contracts allow artists to retain genomic data rights, which every operator zine has written up and every major label has ignored. OPEN SURFACE COLLECTIVE does its most aggressive work on root-mass walls in the elevated districts: genomic registration notation distorted into botanical shapes, SCA and EO faction insignia collaged against each other until the result belongs to neither. IRONWELD COLLECTIVE salvage has a second life in the scene — pre-Upheaval components with the specific patina of things sealed in organic matter, worn as found-object jewelry with provenance no other city can replicate. CLADE DRIP's Capuchin-adapted gear is a status object specifically because wearing it in the wrong context reads clearly to anyone who knows SCA programs. CARCASS COFFEE here runs on a local nutrient-cycle reformulation that

tastes slightly different from the London original. Interchange veterans treat this as definitive proof of authenticity.

SCA-forged who go freelance in the elevated market districts — jaguar, caiman, Capuchin stock — operate with the ease of people in their native environment doing something it never intended. The jaguar's ambush stillness worn as social texture at a market stall. The Capuchin's climbing range used to access strata that SCA sensor arrays cannot surveil. Bloom-drift schedules become scene calendars: market days, performance events, everything organized around the city's own biological rhythm rather than any faction's schedule. Inspector Vega's Sector 14 customs post is where the scene's intelligence circulates — the customs inspectors know more about what moves through the Metroplex than SCA agricultural security command does, and three of them run stalls at the scene's informal market during off-rotation hours. The modified mineral profile that is accelerating unauthorized root-mass growth has created sensor gaps in the canopy that the scene has been mapping for eight months. Nobody has told Ferreira about the maps.

FACTIONS

SCA BIOENGINEERING DIVISION

OBJECTIVE Complete the CANOPY SHIFT bloom-drift transition on schedule -- turning the Metroplex's atmosphere into a selective weapon that targets non-SCA-adapted respiratory systems while protecting SCA citizens.

ASSETS Control of the Nutrient Interchange; CANOPY SHIFT's complete technical infrastructure across 7 nutrient input nodes; the classified monitoring network; the neural-disruptive compound formula; the anti-spore patch recalibration authority

DEPENDENCY The nutrient cycle functioning as designed. If the root-mass acceleration contaminates the cycle with legacy bioweapons material, CANOPY SHIFT's delivery mechanism becomes a mass-casualty amplifier rather than a targeted deterrent.

VULNERABILITY Ferreira did not model root-mass growth. Carvalho found the variable and tried to fix it alone for 3 weeks. Inspector Vega calculated the breach timeline from outside the Division. Three agricultural workers filed variance reports. The side effect has been visible for months to anyone looking.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Monitor and suppress -- close variance reports, maintain 'within parameters' responses, keep the nutrient modification classified
- 2: Accelerate the transition timeline -- deploy the bloom-drift compound before the root-mass breach rather than after, converting a 9-day threat into a 72-hour race
- 3: Emergency containment -- deploy Phantom Vipers to physically reinforce the FLORA-7 perimeter while running CANOPY SHIFT's transition simultaneously, accepting the risk that the containment holds long enough
- 4: Scorched nutrient cycle -- shut down the Nutrient Interchange entirely, stopping CANOPY SHIFT, the root-mass acceleration, and the Metroplex's food supply simultaneously. The city starves in 11 days. The bloom-drift stops in 72 hours. The root systems do not stop.

OFFER Current-calibration anti-spore patches; CANOPY SHIFT's neural-disruptive compound formula, which has applications beyond the bloom-drift; the Bioengineering Division's research archive on engineered biological warfare, the most complete in the world

DEMAND Silence. The Division's existence depends on CANOPY SHIFT remaining classified. Any faction that acquires the formula and reveals its deployment will trigger an international response that makes the SCA a target for every bloc simultaneously.

IF DAMAGED Bioengineering Division collapse means CANOPY SHIFT's infrastructure remains in the nutrient cycle with nobody monitoring or controlling it. The neural-disruptive compound enters the bloom-drift on the next active cycle whether the Division authorizes it or not. The system runs without a hand on the controls.

PHANTOM VIPERS

OBJECTIVE Maintain SCA security inside the Metroplex -- which this week means deploying to Root Level to manage a growth acceleration they haven't been briefed on, preparing for a 'post-transition monitoring period' they don't have context for, and running the Inner Citadel's perimeter while their command tries to get information the Bioengineering Division won't share.

ASSETS The most effective jungle warfare special forces in the world; gene-forged jaguar operators with close-combat capability that exceeds any other faction's infantry; Root Level passage maps that are the most current available; standing kill-on-sight authorization in restricted zones; the institutional knowledge of operators who have been patrolling a living city for years

DEPENDENCY Operational intelligence. The Vipers can fight anything in the Metroplex. They cannot fight what they don't know is happening. Their effectiveness depends on command giving them accurate mission parameters, and command does not have accurate parameters because the Bioengineering Division is withholding them.

VULNERABILITY The information gap. Da Silva's reports are being suppressed. Souza is reading them anyway. The Vipers' loyalty to SCA command holds exactly as long as command's honesty holds. Phantom Vipers who learn they were deployed blind into a bioweapons crisis will not forget it.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Standard patrol posture -- Root Level monitoring, Inner Citadel security, Sector 14 boundary support
- 2: Increased Root Level deployment -- additional teams to FLORA-7 and TOXIN-3 perimeters based on da Silva's growth data
- 3: Physical containment operation -- Vipers attempt to reinforce black site containment using field engineering, accepting personnel exposure to the biological environment at the breach points
- 4: Independent action -- Souza takes da Silva's data directly to SCA Operational Command, bypassing the Bioengineering Division's classification, and requests a full Metroplex security alert

OFFER Root Level escort; gene-forged jaguar capability against any threat in the Metroplex; Phantom Viper intelligence on the Metroplex's biological security environment; da Silva's growth rate data and the TOXIN-3 breach report

DEMAND The truth about what is happening in the nutrient cycle and what the 'post-transition monitoring period' is actually monitoring

IF DAMAGED Phantom Viper neutralization means the Metroplex's interior security collapses. Root Level becomes unpatrolled. The Inner Citadel perimeter depends on gene-forged jaguars alone. Every smuggling network, intelligence operation, and unauthorized presence in the Metroplex operates without the implicit threat of Viper response.

THE MYCORRHIZAL NETWORK

OBJECTIVE Preserve the Metroplex as a living system that serves its residents rather than the Bioengineering Division's weapons program. Named for the fungal communication system between tree roots, the Mycorrhizal Network moves information the way mycorrhiza moves nutrients -- underground, distributed, and without a central node the SCA can cut.

ASSETS A distributed civilian intelligence network built from people who understand the Metroplex's biological systems better than SCA command: agricultural workers, customs inspectors, root-mass harvesters, bloom-drift forecast technicians, settlement leaders. They see the system from the ground and they have been watching it change.

DEPENDENCY The Metroplex's biological integrity. If the nutrient cycle is contaminated or the bloom-drift becomes lethal, the Network's value proposition -- that the Metroplex is worth protecting -- collapses. Their intelligence value is in a city worth living in.

VULNERABILITY No central coordination. The Network operates through connections, not command. A single compromised node can expose adjacent nodes. Vega, Batista, Liana Ferreira-Santos -- any one of them brought into custody provides a map to the next.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Information collection -- soil samples, variance reports, bloom-drift composition data flowing through personal networks to people who can read them
- 2: Active interference -- agricultural workers sabotaging CANOPY SHIFT nutrient input installations, customs inspectors logging Division bypasses publicly, root-mass harvesters mapping breach points
- 3: Public exposure -- the Network's collected data released to every faction presence in the Metroplex simultaneously, forcing the SCA to respond to international pressure
- 4: Direct action on the Nutrient Interchange -- physically disrupting the CANOPY SHIFT-modified mineral flow, which stops the weapon and starts the 11-day food cascade

OFFER Ground-truth data on the Metroplex's biological status; Vega's breach timeline; Batista's 14-month residue collection; sub-surface access through root-mass harvester routes; the informal health data from every settlement showing the progressive degradation pattern

DEMAND The Metroplex's survival. Not the SCA's. Not the Bioengineering Division's. The city and the people in it.

IF DAMAGED The Mycorrhizal Network neutralized means the ground-level monitoring of the Metroplex's biological systems stops. Vega stops taking soil samples. Batista stops collecting residue. Liana stops tracking settlement health. The SCA's command structure does not replace this monitoring because it does not know the monitoring exists. The city loses its immune system.

NAF THORNFIELD CELL

OBJECTIVE Acquire SCA bioweapons intelligence and extract. Three years of deep cover inside the Metroplex collecting data on the pre-CANOPY SHIFT bioweapons program. Thornfield does not know CANOPY SHIFT exists. They are collecting data on a program that has been superseded by something worse.

ASSETS Three years of embedded intelligence infrastructure; contacts inside the Bioengineering Division and the Greenhouse Spine; extraction routes through the River Quarter and the Overgrowth; the Bioengineering Division's compromised network access points, 14 of which have just been identified

DEPENDENCY Cover. Thornfield's anti-spore patches are old-calibration. Their cover identities were built for the pre-CANOPY SHIFT atmospheric chemistry. When the bloom-drift transitions, their patches will not protect them and their cognitive degradation will expose them.

VULNERABILITY Time. Gardener has been requesting extraction for 4 months. The bloom-drift transition timeline -- which Thornfield does not know about -- means extraction after transition is extraction under cognitive impairment. They do not know they are on a clock.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Continued intelligence collection -- which is producing increasingly valuable data because CANOPY SHIFT's effects are becoming visible throughout the Metroplex
- 2: Emergency contact with the compromised Division researcher -- risk exposure to acquire whatever the researcher was carrying on the flagged device
- 3: Accelerated extraction -- abandon remaining intelligence objectives, activate River Quarter extraction route, get out before the bloom-drift transitions
- 4: Blown cover -- Thornfield is identified, the cell scatters, Gardener activates the emergency extraction protocol that destroys 3 years of infrastructure in exchange for personnel survival

OFFER Three years of SCA bioweapons intelligence including the pre-CANOPY SHIFT program's capabilities, Phantom Viper operational doctrine, and the Metroplex's internal security architecture

DEMAND Extraction. Gardener will trade anything for safe passage out of the Metroplex for her cell before the clock she doesn't know about runs out.

IF DAMAGED Thornfield burned means the NAF loses its primary intelligence source inside the SCA. The compromised network access points are sealed. The contacts are exposed. Three years of infrastructure gone. Gardener and her cell -- operating under progressive cognitive degradation they don't understand -- become the most dangerous loose intelligence assets in the Metroplex.

HUB WILDCARDS

DR. LUCIA FERREIRA

SCA BIOENGINEERING DIVISION, CANOPY SHIFT LEAD

Ferreira is not a villain. She is a scientist who built a weapon she believes will protect her city. CANOPY SHIFT is elegant -- it turns the Metroplex's natural atmospheric cycle into a selective deterrent that makes invasion biologically impossible without harming SCA citizens. She is proud of it. She has never considered the possibility that the ecosystem she weaponized would develop a side effect she didn't model.

Tonight she ran the root-mass variable for the first time. The FLORA-7 breach timeline is 9 days. She is in the emergency communications suite deciding whether to shut down the project that defined her career or to try to outrun the breach by accelerating the transition timeline. If she accelerates, the bloom-drift weapon goes active before the containment fails. If she shuts down, the 72-hour reversal window overlaps with the breach timeline. Neither option is clean.

Current Status: Emergency communications suite, Inner Citadel, 0400. Deciding.

The Deliberate Blank: What Ferreira decides -- and whether she calls Operational Command or Carvalho first -- left for the table to determine

INSPECTOR MARISOL VEGA

SECTOR 14 FUNGAL CUSTOMS, AGRICULTURAL BOUNDARY

Vega has 47 dated soil samples, an 8-month dataset, a calculated breach timeline, and no official channel to report through because the thing she needs to report is classified above her clearance. She does not know about CANOPY SHIFT. She knows the nutrient profile changed, the root growth accelerated, and the breach is coming.

Her model says 11 days. Her most recent sample suggests the model is optimistic. She has not updated the model because the new number fright-

ens her. She is a customs inspector. She is holding evidence of a biological crisis that the people who created it have not yet fully understood.

Current Status: Sector 14, taking soil samples, running calculations she is afraid to finish

The Deliberate Blank: Who Vega decides to give her evidence to -- the Mycorrhizal Network, an operator, the SCA, or someone else entirely -- left for the table

_____

_____

DOWNTIME PROCEDURES

ACQUIRE CURRENT-CALIBRATION ANTI-SPORE PATCHES

What: Source anti-spore patches calibrated to the CANOPY SHIFT-modified atmospheric chemistry -- the only protection against the neural-disruptive compound.

Cost: Information the Clearance Network or the Bioengineering Division values, or a favor owed to the source. Current-calibration patches are not on the black market because nobody outside the Division knows the calibration changed.

Gain: Protection for one operator against CANOPY SHIFT's effects for 30 days.

Fallout: Acquiring current-calibration patches reveals that the operator knows the calibration changed -- which is information the Bioengineering Division has classified. The source of the patches will be investigated within 72 hours.

MAP A ROOT LEVEL ROUTE

What: Navigate Root Level with Phantom Viper or root-mass harvester guidance to reach a specific target -- FLORA-7 perimeter, TOXIN-3 breach, or the nutrient distribution capillaries.

Cost: Time and risk. Root Level passages change daily. The route mapped today may not exist tomorrow. Requires a guide, Viper escort, or the Unauthorized Analyst's sub-surface data.

Gain: A confirmed route to one Root Level target, valid for approximately 48 hours, with growth rate data that predicts passage status.

Fallout: Root Level exposure contaminates equipment and clothing with biological markers that the Sector 14 sensor arrays will detect. Returning to the inner city after a Root Level operation requires either decontamination or a sensor bypass.

TAP THE MYCORRHIZAL NETWORK

What: Make contact with the civilian intelligence network to acquire ground-truth data on the Metroplex's biological status -- nutrient cycle readings, bloom-drift composition, root growth observations, health pattern data.

Cost: Trust. The Network does not sell information. They share it with people they believe will use it to protect the Metroplex. Operators who demonstrate that intent gain access. Operators who demonstrate faction allegiance do not.

Gain: One complete intelligence package: Vega's breach timeline, Batista's residue data, settlement health patterns, and the Network's collective assessment of what is happening to the city.

Fallout: The Network is distributed but not invisible. Contacting one node exposes the operator to the node's neighbors, who will observe, evaluate, and potentially report if the operator's actions conflict with the Network's purpose. The SCA does not know the Network exists. The Phantom Vipers suspect it.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

MARKET WHISPERS -- THE CANOPY (1D6)

BLOOM-DRIFT FORECAST CHATTER (1D6)

RIVER QUARTER DOCK TALK (1D6)

SETTLEMENT SURVIVAL REPORTS -- OVERGROWTH (1D6)

ESCALATION TRACKS

TRACK 1: ROOT-MASS BREACH COUNTDOWN

The clock is the accelerated root growth approaching the three swallowed black sites. The breach timeline shortens if the nutrient cycle modification continues. It extends only if CANOPY SHIFT is reversed or the Nutrient Interchange is shut down.

Stage 1 (current): 9-11 days: Root growth at FLORA-7 is 1.8 meters from containment. TOXIN-3 has been breached but nothing has entered the cycle. Black Site 3 status unknown. Vega's model says 11 days. Carvalho's model says 9. The Unauthorized Analyst's model says 8.

Stage 2: 5-7 days: FLORA-7 containment seal begins chemical degradation -- root systems metabolizing the seal. Viper perimeter patrols report chemical changes at the containment surface. The nutrient capillaries near FLORA-7 show trace contamination below lethal threshold.

Stage 3: 2-3 days: FLORA-7 containment fails. Crude bloom-drift weaponization agents enter the nutrient cycle at the capillary level. First measurable contamination in the Greenhouse Spine's nutrient input nodes. The food supply is contaminated 4 days before the atmosphere.

Stage 4: Breach: Legacy bioweapons material reaches the bloom-drift through the nutrient cycle. CANOPY SHIFT's delivery mechanism amplifies rather than filters. The bloom-drift becomes lethal to all respiratory systems regardless of adaptation. The Metroplex's atmosphere kills everyone.

TRACK 2: CANOPY SHIFT BLOOM-DRIFT TRANSITION

The bloom-drift transition is the deployment of the neural-disruptive compound through the Metroplex's natural atmospheric cycle. It is Ferreira's intended outcome. The transition is not the crisis. The crisis is the transition happening while the root-mass breach is approaching.

Stage 1 (current): Pre-transition: The final component is installed at the Greenhouse Spine nutrient input nodes. The next major bloom cycle -- 6 days -- is the deployment window. Ferreira has not authorized transition. She is in the emergency communications suite deciding.

Stage 2: Transition authorized: Ferreira authorizes the bloom-drift transition. Phantom Vipers deploy to monitor non-SCA individuals for 'atypical behavior.' Non-SCA residents in the Canopy begin experiencing symptoms within 6 hours. Overgrowth residents -- upwind, unprotected -- experience symptoms immediately. Thornfield's cell is affected within 72 hours.

Stage 3: Transition + breach overlap: The bloom-drift weapon is active AND the root-mass breach contaminates the nutrient cycle. CANOPY SHIFT's delivery mechanism begins carrying crude agents. The timeline between 'selective deterrent' and 'mass-casualty atmospheric event' is approximately 96 hours.

Stage 4: Full atmospheric contamination: The Metroplex's atmosphere is hostile to all respiratory systems. Anti-spore patches at any calibration cannot protect against the combined compound. Four hundred miles of bio-engineered city is uninhabitable. The SCA built a city that is alive. It is dying.

OPERATIONS MAP

SPATIAL NOTES

Chokepoints: Sector 14 customs checkpoint (only legal entry); Nutrient Interchange perimeter (caiman patrols, Bioengineering Division authorization required); Root Level access points (Phantom Viper kill-on-sight); Inner Citadel biosecurity entry (gene-forged jaguar perimeter)

Dark Zones: The Overgrowth (no surveillance, no infrastructure, no SCA presence); Root Level below the FLORA-7 perimeter (passages changing daily, no reliable mapping); the River Quarter's tolerance corridor during active night operations; the Canopy during bloom-drift curfew (empty streets, pheromone monitoring only)

Faction Territory Lines: SCA Bioengineering Division: Nutrient Interchange, Greenhouse Spine nutrient input nodes, Inner Citadel compound; Phantom Vipers: Root Level, Inner Citadel perimeter, Sector 14 boundary support; Mycorrhizal Network: distributed through Sector 14, Canopy, Greenhouse Spine, Overgrowth; NAF Thornfield: embedded in Canopy and Exchange Quarter with extraction routes through River Quarter

Mobility Corridors: Sector 14 customs (legal, monitored, slow); River Quarter waterways (fast, unmonitored on tolerance routes, Mega-Crocodylus risk); Root Level passages (unstable, access via Sector 14 sub-surface or Greenhouse Spine foundations); Canopy pedestrian corridors (open during non-curfew, social visibility risk); Overgrowth (open but biologically hazardous, no infrastructure)

Key Distances: Sector 14 to Greenhouse Spine: 4 km through inner city, transit system; Root Level FLORA-7 to Nutrient Interchange capillaries: 800 meters through passages that change daily; Inner Citadel to any extraction point: requires passing through at least 2 SCA security zones; Overgrowth to River Quarter extraction: 6 km through uncontrolled biological terrain

MISSION SEEDS

SEED 1: THE ELEVEN-DAY SAMPLE

Objective: Acquire Inspector Vega's soil sample collection and breach timeline data before the Bioengineering Division identifies her personal monitoring program and confiscates the evidence.

Clock: Vega's most recent sample showed accelerated rates. Her updated model will produce a shorter timeline. The Division's monitoring network will flag her customs bypass log within 72 hours of an internal audit triggered by the 14 identified network access points.

Complication: Vega will not give the samples to someone who will use them as intelligence. She wants them used to stop the breach. The operators must decide what to do with evidence that could save the city or burn the SCA -- and both options produce consequences the other side cannot survive.

SEED 2: REINFORCE FLORA-7

Objective: Physically reinforce the FLORA-7 containment perimeter before the root systems breach the seal -- buying time for CANOPY SHIFT to be reversed or for an alternative solution.

Clock: 9 days. Root Level passages to FLORA-7 are closing. Da Silva's maps show 2 viable routes today. Tomorrow there may be 1.

Complication: Reinforcing FLORA-7 requires materials and personnel in Root Level for 48+ hours. Phantom Viper kill-on-sight authorization applies. Da Silva will cooperate. His command has not authorized cooperation. The root systems at the containment perimeter are metabolizing the seal -- the reinforcement must be something the root systems cannot digest, and the operators must determine what that is in a biological environment that digests everything.

SEED 3: EXTRACT THORNFIELD

Objective: Get NAF Thornfield cell out of the Metroplex before the bloom-drift transition renders them cognitively compromised and exposes their cover.

Clock: 6 days to the projected bloom cycle. Thornfield's old-calibration patches will not protect them. Gardener doesn't know about CANOPY SHIFT. Telling her is the only way to motivate extraction. Telling her gives NAF command CANOPY SHIFT intelligence, which changes the geopolitical landscape.

Complication: Gardener's best asset -- the compromised Division researcher -- was flagged at the Inner Citadel exit today. Extracting Thornfield means abandoning the asset or extracting the asset too, which requires entering the Inner Citadel's security perimeter.

SEED 4: SHUT DOWN THE INTERCHANGE

Objective: Physically disrupt the Nutrient Interchange to stop both CANOPY SHIFT's bloom-drift transition and the accelerated root-mass growth by cutting the modified mineral flow at source.

Clock: The next bloom cycle in 6 days. If the Interchange runs the transition cycle, the neural-disruptive compound enters the atmosphere. If the Interchange is shut down, the Metroplex's food supply cascades in 11 days.

Complication: Shutting down the Interchange stops CANOPY SHIFT and the root acceleration. It does not stop the root systems -- they continue growing at the pre-acceleration rate, which still produces a breach in approximately 6 months. And the Metroplex starves. The operators save the city from a 9-day biological disaster by creating an 11-day famine. The Bacigalupi principle in its purest form.

SEED 5: THE BUYER

Objective: Identify the single entity purchasing bloom-drift composition data from Oliveira, sub-surface nutrient assay data from the Unauthorized Analyst, and root-mass cal-

culations from the Visitor at Mendes's shelter. Three separate intelligence streams converging on one buyer.

Clock: The buyer has been assembling the data for months. The three streams together provide a complete picture of CANOPY SHIFT and the root-mass breach -- enough to act on. The buyer's next move determines whether the data saves the city or destroys it.

Complication: The buyer might be the Mycorrhizal Network. The buyer might be a rival faction. The buyer might be an independent actor who intends to sell the combined data-set to the highest bidder. Identifying the buyer reveals what the data is for. What the data is for determines whether the operators help or stop them.

SEED 6: FERREIRA'S DECISION

Objective: Reach Dr. Ferreira in the Inner Citadel's emergency communications suite before she makes her call -- and give her the information she doesn't have: the FLORA-7 breach timeline, the TOXIN-3 breach, and the fact that accelerating the transition will not outrun the contamination.

Clock: She is in the suite now. She is deciding between shutting down CANOPY SHIFT and accelerating it. Neither option works without the data she doesn't have. Reaching her requires entering the Inner Citadel -- the most defended position in the Metroplex.

Complication: Ferreira with complete data might make a better decision. Or she might make a faster one. If she accelerates the transition before operators reach her, the bloom-drift weapon goes active in 6 days and the operators are in the Inner Citadel without current-calibration patches. If she shuts down CANOPY SHIFT, the 72-hour reversal window overlaps with the root-mass breach. The operators are the variable in a decision that was never supposed to include them.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

IF CANOPY SHIFT SUCCEEDS

The Metroplex's atmosphere becomes a selective weapon. Non-SCA-adapted individuals experience progressive cognitive degradation within 72 hours of exposure. Every faction's intelligence operation inside the Metroplex collapses. Every visitor, every diplomatic asset, every operator who does not have current-calibration patches is compromised. The SCA achieves biological sovereignty over its territory. The root-mass acceleration continues. FLORA-7's breach timeline does not stop because the bloom-drift transitioned. Ferreira has 9 days to solve the side effect she didn't model while running the weapon she built. The city is a weapon and a time bomb simultaneously.

IF THE NUTRIENT INTERCHANGE IS DESTROYED

CANOPY SHIFT stops. The root-mass acceleration stops. The bloom-drift returns to natural chemistry within 72 hours. The Metroplex's food supply cascades in 11 days. Four hundred miles of bio-engineered city begins to starve. The SCA's self-sufficiency -- the entire premise of the Metroplex -- collapses. The Metroplex becomes dependent on external food aid from factions it was preparing to wage biological war against. The root systems continue growing at pre-acceleration rates. FLORA-7's breach timeline extends to 6 months. The problem is deferred, not solved.

IF FLORA-7 BREACHES

Legacy bioweapons material enters the nutrient cycle. CANOPY SHIFT's delivery mechanism amplifies the crude agents. The bloom-drift becomes lethal to all respiratory systems. The Metroplex's atmosphere kills SCA citizens and outsiders equally. Four hundred miles of bio-engineered city becomes the largest biological disaster in human history. The SCA loses its capital, its power base, and its proof of concept simultaneously. The jungle the SCA redesigned from the genome up continues growing. The root systems continue expanding. The buildings continue growing. The city does not die. It stops being habitable for humans.

IF CANOPY SHIFT IS REVERSED BEFORE BREACH

The nutrient profile returns to pre-modification chemistry in 72 hours. The root-mass acceleration slows. FLORA-7's breach timeline extends to approximately 18 months at the original growth rate. The bloom-drift returns to standard spore composition. The Metroplex is safe. The SCA loses CANOPY SHIFT -- its most significant defensive technology. Ferreira's career is over. The Bioengineering Division's classified research is exposed during the reversal process, because the reversal requires modifying the nutrient cycle in a way the agricultural workers and customs inspectors will observe and document. The Mycorrhizal Network has the evidence. The SCA's bioweapons program becomes public knowledge. Every faction reassesses the SCA. The patient knife is no longer hidden.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

These are not gaps. They are features.

- The identity of the buyer receiving data from Oliveira, the Unauthorized Analyst, and the Visitor -- one entity, three streams, determine who at the table
- What Ferreira decides at 0400 in the emergency communications suite -- accelerate, shut down, or a third option the operators provide
- The contents of Black Site 3, which has not been referenced in any current intelligence and whose designation is not in the system Inspector Vega has access to
- The sealed data chip in the Overgrowth foundation layer that predates the Metroplex -- what is on it, who put it there, and what it means for the nutrient cycle it was buried in
- The large displacement event in the River Quarter waterway -- not a Mega-Crocodylus, too large, wrong movement pattern, determine what at the table
- The feral gene-forged capuchin troop's organized behavior -- six years of uncontrolled breeding in a biologically accelerated environment produced something. What it produced is a blank the table fills.
- Dr. Gabriel Mendes's 18 months of unprotected bloom-drift exposure and what it has done to his cognition that his self-documentation cannot fully track

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime at the Sector 14 customs bar, the Canopy market social spaces, the Greenhouse Spine worker hangouts, the River Quarter boatyard, the Inner Citadel's servant quarters, or the Overgrowth's informal gathering points. Every result produces a new edge, a new debt, or a new exposure.

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 SECTOR 14 (AGRICULTURAL BOUNDARY)

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: packed Surveillance: fungal customs + sensor arrays Faction pressure: dominant SCA Contamination: bloom-drift (scheduled, currently modified) Black market: light Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION The Metroplex's outer agricultural boundary and primary customs checkpoint. Every person, vehicle, and container entering the inner city is scanned for unauthorized biological material. The Nutrient Interchange -- the node regulating mineral flow to the entire bio-architecture -- sits at the center of this district. The line moves slowly. Bribes are common. The checkpoint records show a 94% pass rate. The actual rate is lower.

CONTROLLER On paper: SCA Agricultural Security. In reality: the customs inspectors run the boundary, and the inspectors answer to the SCA Bioengineering Division -- which means they answer to Ferreira's protocols, including CANOPY SHIFT's modified mineral parameters, whether they know it or not.

DRAW The only legal entry point to the inner Metroplex / the Nutrient Interchange monitoring station / bloom-drift forecast data at source quality / the customs inspectors' fungal analysis tools, which can identify any biological material in the cycle

RISK Sensor arrays calibrated to detect non-SCA biological material -- operators carrying anything not grown in the Metroplex get flagged / bloom-drift exposure at the boundary, where anti-spore patches are checked before entry / customs inspectors who know what SCA biology looks like and notice what doesn't belong / the Nutrient Interchange is a classified facility whose perimeter is Sector 14's primary function

SCARCITY Current-calibration anti-spore patches -- the modification to the mineral profile means patches more than 6 months old are calibrated to the wrong chemistry / unmonitored entry to the inner city / any access to the Nutrient Interchange that doesn't go through Bioengineering Division authorization

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Nutrient Interchange has been running CANOPY SHIFT's modified mineral profile for 14 months. Inspector Vega's monitoring station is 200 meters from the Interchange's primary feed line. She has been watching the bloom-drift chemistry change for 8 months. Her customs data shows a progressive shift in the spore composition that doesn't match any natural cycle she has catalogued in her 11 years at the boundary. She ran the numbers six weeks ago and identified the nitrogen-phosphorus ratio increase. She does not know about CANOPY SHIFT. She knows something changed the mineral profile and that the change is accelerating root-mass growth rates across the entire sub-surface network.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If Vega is right about the breach timeline, the Sector 14 customs checkpoint -- designed to prevent unauthorized biological material from entering the city -- will be the first place where legacy bioweapons material appears in the nutrient cycle. The irony is structural: the system designed to detect contamination will be contaminated first.

DAY

AUTHORITY

SCA Agricultural Security -- customs inspectors with bloom-drift charts and sensor arrays, backed by Bioengineering Division protocols

ECONOMY

Customs processing, agricultural supply chain transit, bloom-drift forecast distribution, anti-spore patch verification

RISK

Sensor arrays that detect anything non-SCA biological; inspectors who know what normal looks like

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Reduced customs staff; automated sensor arrays on continuous cycle; the Nutrient Interchange's internal security, which is separate from the customs checkpoint and answers to Ferreira's division directly

ECONOMY

The customs inspectors who process late arrivals for unofficial fees; black-market anti-spore patches sold at the boundary to visitors whose allocation has expired; agricultural culture smuggling through the night shift's thinner coverage

RISK

The Nutrient Interchange's internal security, which patrols a 200-meter perimeter with gene-forged caiman handlers and does not use non-lethal protocols

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The customs line at 0800, two hundred people waiting in wet heat, holding their anti-spore patches out for inspection. An inspector walks the line with a handheld sensor, running it over every container, every bag, every pocket. Orange-yellow bloom-drift is visible at the canopy line above. The drift looks the same as it always has. It is not the same.

ENCOUNTERS -- DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS -- NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS -- SECTOR 14

INSPECTOR MARISOL VEGA

SCA Agricultural Security, Sector 14 Fungal Customs

CAN GET 47 dated soil samples documenting the progressive bloom-drift chemistry shift over 8 months, her calculation of the root-mass breach timeline, and the customs bypass log she has been keeping in her boot -- every Bioengineering Division case that skipped the sensor array, dated and authorization-coded.

WANTS For someone with clearance above hers to look at her samples and tell her she is wrong. She does not want to be right. She has run the numbers four times.

FEARS That eleven days is optimistic and the breach is closer than her model shows, because her model is based on the growth rate she measured six weeks ago, not the rate today.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her most recent soil sample, taken this morning, shows a nitrogen-phosphorus ratio 0.6% higher than her model predicted. The growth is accelerating faster than her calculation assumed. She has not updated the model yet because she is afraid of the new number.

SENIOR INSPECTOR TOMAS REYES

SCA Agricultural Security, Sector 14 Night Shift Lead

CAN GET The night shift's processing records including every unofficial fee, every bypass, and every anti-spore patch anomaly he has logged over the past 14 months -- the period exactly matching CANOPY SHIFT's timeline, which he does not know about but whose effects he has been documenting through the patch calibration failures.

WANTS An explanation for why the anti-spore patch specifications changed without a notification to customs staff. He filed a formal query 9 months ago. The response was 'routine update.'

FEARS That the patch specification change is connected to whatever Ferreira's division is doing at the Interchange, and that asking more questions will put him in the same position as the last customs inspector who questioned a Bioengineering Division protocol -- reassigned to the outer expansion zone.

CURRENT PRESSURE A visitor he processed three nights ago had a current-calibration anti-spore patch and claimed first entry. He let her through. She was NAF Thornfield. He doesn't know that. He knows her patch was wrong and he let her through for a fee he now wishes he hadn't accepted.

RENATA OLIVEIRA

Bloom-Drift Forecast Team, Junior Technician

CAN GET The unfiltered bloom-drift composition data she has been copying to a personal device for 3 months, which shows the progressive chemistry shift in raw form before the Bioengineering Division's filters normalize the readings for the public forecast.

WANTS Money. Enough to leave the Metroplex. She took the forecast job because it was the best posting she could get. She started copying data because someone offered to pay for it and she needed the money.

FEARS The Bioengineering Division finding the transmissions. Her buyer has been patient. Her buyer's patience is a professional quality she has not thought about carefully enough.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her buyer asked for a specific reading last week -- the nitrogen-phosphorus ratio at the Nutrient Interchange's primary feed line. She had never been asked for a specific metric before. The request tells her the buyer knows more than she does about what is happening.

CIVILIAN NEED

Customs workers want to keep their positions and their clearance despite the modified mineral profile raising sensor sensitivity. The inspectors want someone above their authority to acknowledge what their soil samples show and relieve them of the responsibility for what happens next. Residents with business at the Interchange want their processing expedited -- the longer they wait with bloom-drift exposure on the wind, the closer they get to exceeding safe dosage on their current-calibration patches.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Customs processing window schedules and sensor array calibration windows (via Vega). The unfiltered soil sample data documenting CANOPY SHIFT's progression over 14 months (via Vega, at significant personal cost to her career). Access to the night-shift processing records including every unofficial bypass and fee arrangement (via Reyes). Introduction to the Bloom-Drift Forecast Team and the unfiltered composition data (via Oliveira, if paid). The single least-monitored entry window during the daily dawn customs changeover -- four minutes of reduced sensor coverage at 0600.

DISTRICT 2 THE CANOPY

Security: light Infrastructure: stable Civilians: packed Surveillance: pheromone cycling Faction pressure: dominant SCA (cultural) Contamination: bloom-drift (scheduled) Black market: light Mobility: open

FUNCTION The Metroplex's upper-level residential and commercial zone -- where the bio-engineered architecture meets the canopy, where the density is highest, and where the SCA's civilian population lives in a relationship with the city's biological systems that outsiders find difficult to parse. Residents carry anti-spore patches and know the bloom-drift schedule the way other people know bus routes.

CONTROLLER SCA civil administration. The Canopy is the SCA's showcase -- the public face of a civilization that grew a city from the jungle. Security is lighter here because the bloom-drift is the security: unpatched outsiders start showing symptoms within 6 hours of continuous exposure.

DRAW The densest civilian population in the Metroplex / the commercial exchange economy / bloom-drift forecast terminals on every block / the anti-spore distribution stations / the social visibility of a community that has been adapting to biological living for two decades

RISK	Bloom-drift exposure for anyone without current-calibration anti-spore patches / the pheromone cycling ventilation, which carries biological data as well as air and which the SCA's systems can read like a status report / social visibility -- the Canopy's residents know each other and notice outsiders the same way the agricultural boundary does, by watching how they react to the temperature shift
SCARCITY	Current-calibration patches for non-residents / privacy in a community built on shared biological rhythm / any information about the sub-surface root systems that the Canopy sits on top of

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Canopy's residents are the first non-military population that will be affected if the bloom-drift chemistry completes CANOPY SHIFT's intended transition. Their anti-spore patches are current-calibration -- they will be protected. The outsiders living among them on short-term visas and work permits will not. There are approximately 800 non-SCA residents in the Canopy at any given time. In 72 hours of post-transition exposure, all of them will experience the cognitive effects. The SCA civil administration does not know about CANOPY SHIFT. They will observe the effects and not understand the cause.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

800 non-SCA residents experiencing simultaneous cognitive degradation in the most visible district of the Metroplex. The SCA's medical system treats spore exposure. It has no protocol for neural-disruptive atmospheric compounds because it has never seen one deployed through the bloom-drift. The first response will be quarantine. The quarantine will be wrong.

DAY

AUTHORITY

SCA civil administration -- visible, community-oriented, operating a district that largely runs itself through biological rhythm and social cohesion

ECONOMY

Commercial exchange, food distribution from the vertical farms, anti-spore patch resupply, the social economy of a community that is genuinely adapted to biological living

RISK

Social visibility; the pheromone cycling that reports on air composition to SCA monitoring systems

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Bloom-drift curfew -- residents shelter during active drift hours, the district empties, the pheromone cycling ventilation runs at maximum

ECONOMY

Bloom-drift curfew breaks -- residents who know the drift schedule well enough to move between active cycles; the black-market anti-spore trade that operates in the gaps

RISK

Bloom-drift exposure for anyone without shelter during active cycles; the curfew itself, which makes any movement visible to anyone watching

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A Canopy market at midday, open-air, the canopy filtering sunlight into green-gold columns. A vendor is selling bloom-drift forecast chips -- updated hourly, worn on the wrist, they vibrate when active drift is within 400 meters. Every person in the market has one. Three people do not. They are shopping with the deliberate casualness of people pretending they have been here before.

ENCOUNTERS -- DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS -- NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS -- THE CANOPY

DR. AMARA COSTA
SCA Civil Medical, Canopy District

CAN GET The medical station's intake logs for the past 14 months, including 23 cases of 'atypical presentation' in non-SCA residents that don't match any spore category -- the clinical footprint of CANOPY SHIFT's neural-disruptive compound, which she has documented without knowing what she is documenting.

WANTS A diagnostic category that matches the symptoms. She has been treating spore exposure for 8 years and she knows what spore exposure looks like. This is not spore exposure.

FEARS That the 23 cases are connected to something systemic rather than individual, which would mean the medical system's protocols are wrong and her treatments are not helping.

CURRENT PRESSURE Case 24 presented this morning with symptoms she has not seen before -- the cognitive component. The previous 23 were headache and confusion. This one includes disorientation and a 4-second delay in verbal response. The patient has been in the Metroplex for 5 months.

JULIO MARQUEZ

Canopy Market Vendor, Root-Mass Trader (unofficial)

CAN GET Sub-surface access routes through the Canopy's foundation network, the locations of root-mass concentrations that have shifted in the past 6 months, and the specific root-mass sample he is selling -- which he harvested from a depth that put him within 30 meters of one of the swallowed black sites.

WANTS His root-mass trade to continue without SCA Agricultural Security attention. He has been harvesting for 4 years. The growth rate has accelerated and his supply has become easier to source, which he knows is wrong but which is also profitable.

FEARS Going deeper and finding something that is not root-mass. He knows the black sites exist as rumor. He does not want to find one.

CURRENT PRESSURE His last harvest was from a depth he had never reached before -- the root system had opened a passage that wasn't there 3 months ago. At the end of the passage he found a sealed surface he could not identify. He did not open it. He has been thinking about it for a week.

KATARINA SOARES

SCA Civil Administration, Canopy District Coordinator

CAN GET The Canopy's non-SCA resident registry including work permits, visa durations, and the 800 current non-SCA residents and their locations within the district.

WANTS For the root-mass code violations in her district to be taken seriously by someone above her. She has filed 14 violations in the past 3 months -- triple the previous year's rate. All 14 were closed as 'within natural parameters.'

FEARS That the accelerated root growth and the strange medical cases are connected and that the connection runs through something the Bioengineering Division is doing that she is not cleared to know about.

CURRENT PRESSURE The foundation crack in the main corridor appeared last night. She has a structural engineer coming tomorrow. She is worried the engineer will tell her it's natural settling. She is more worried the engineer will tell her it isn't.

CIVILIAN NEED

Non-SCA residents are tracking the symptom patterns themselves -- the 23 cases at the medical station are known in the community. Residents are calculating whether current-calibration patches are holding and trying to decide whether to purchase black-market replacements or leave the district. They want accurate information about bloom-drift composition and a reliable source for current-calibration patches. The district coordinator wants the root-mass code violations documented and escalated before the foundation damage becomes structural.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The medical station's full intake logs for the past 14 months including the 23 atypical cases and Case 24's cognitive component (via Dr. Costa). The Canopy's non-SCA resident registry including work permits, visa status, and the 800-person population breakdown (via Soares). Sub-surface access routes through the foundation network to the root-mass concentrations (via Marquez). Current bloom-drift composition data updated daily (via the forecast terminals, open access). The identity and approach routes for the three residents in the market at midday without bloom-drift chips -- the deliberate three among the population that knows what normal looks like.

DISTRICT 3 ROOT LEVEL

Security: lockdown Infrastructure: failing Civilians: none Surveillance: drone sweep (limited by growth) Faction pressure: dominant Phantom Vipers Contamination: present (biological, unclassified) Black market: none Mobility: barricaded (by growth)

FUNCTION The sub-surface zone where the Metroplex's biological infrastructure grows -- the root systems that support the architecture above, the nutrient distribution capillaries that feed the cycle, and the three swallowed black sites from the pre-CANOPY SHIFT bioweapons program. Phantom Vipers maintain a standing kill-on-sight authorization here. Nobody goes to Root Level on purpose unless they have a very specific reason.

CONTROLLER Phantom Vipers, by standing authorization from SCA military command. The Vipers patrol the accessible sections. The inaccessible sections -- the areas where root growth has closed passages and swallowed structures -- are controlled by the root system itself.

DRAW The three swallowed black sites and whatever is inside them / the nutrient distribution capillaries that carry the CANOPY SHIFT-modified mineral flow / the root-mass network itself,

which is the largest biological system in the Metroplex and the one nobody fully maps

RISK Phantom Viper patrols with kill-on-sight authorization / root growth that closes passages on a timetable measured in days, not months / biological contamination from the decomposing material the root systems have consumed / the swallowed black sites, which contain pre-CANOPY SHIFT bioweapons research in containment that the root systems are approaching

SCARCITY Maps -- Root Level changes faster than any map can track / breathable air without respiratory protection / any route that is guaranteed to exist tomorrow

UNDER-SYSTEM

Black Site 1 (designation: FLORA-7) was a Phantom Viper field lab for bloom-drift weaponization research. It was abandoned in 2051 when root growth compromised the entrance. Its containment was rated for 20 years. It is year 9. The accelerated root growth has moved the breach timeline to 11 days. FLORA-7's containment holds six sealed cultures of bloom-drift weaponization agents developed before Ferreira's team refined the delivery mechanism. They are cruder, less targeted, and more lethal than CANOPY SHIFT's neural-disruptive compound. If they enter the nutrient cycle, the bloom-drift becomes something the anti-spore patches cannot protect against. For anyone.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

FLORA-7 breach. The crude agents enter the nutrient cycle. The next bloom-drift cycle carries material that kills SCA residents and outsiders equally. The Metroplex's atmosphere becomes uninhabitable. Four hundred miles of bio-engineered city becomes the largest biological disaster in human history.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Phantom Viper patrol teams -- two operators per team, gene-forged jaguar stock, moving through accessible passages on routes they know will exist today

ECONOMY

None. Root Level has no economy. It has biology.

RISK

Vipers; root growth; biological contamination; the passages themselves, which are organic, wet, and narrowing

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The same patrols on extended rotation. Root Level has no day/night cycle -- the canopy above blocks all natural light. The Vipers run on 8-hour shifts regardless of surface time.

ECONOMY

None.

RISK

Identical to day risk. Root Level does not change between shifts. It changes between days.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A Phantom Viper patrol at the FLORA-7 perimeter marker -- a painted line on a root surface that was 6 meters from the containment wall when it was marked. The root surface has grown 2 meters since the mark was painted. The Viper operator touches the mark, looks at the wall, and notes the distance in a log. He has been doing this every patrol for 4 months. The distance is shrinking.

ENCOUNTERS -- DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS -- NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS -- ROOT LEVEL

SERGEANT MARCOS DA SILVA

Phantom Vipers, Root Level Patrol Lead

CAN GET The current Root Level passage map -- the most up-to-date version that exists, updated every patrol cycle, showing closures, growth rates, and the FLORA-7 perimeter measurements. Also: the TOXIN-3 breach, which he discovered on yesterday's extended patrol and which he has not reported yet because he doesn't know what to report.

WANTS For someone in Viper command to take the growth acceleration seriously. He has submitted four reports. The first three were filed as 'natural variance.' The fourth hasn't been acknowledged.

FEARS That the growth rate means the timeline for all three black sites is shorter than anyone outside Root Level understands, and that by the time command takes it seriously, the routes to the sites will be closed and unreachable.

CURRENT PRESSURE The TOXIN-3 breach. He saw the root system inside the containment. Nothing was leaking. The root system was growing around the storage containers. He does not know if that is better or worse than a direct breach.

PRIVATE YARA SANTOS

Phantom Vipers, FLORA-7 Perimeter Monitor

CAN GET The distance log for the FLORA-7 perimeter -- every measurement from the past 11 months, showing the shrinkage curve that has doubled in the past 6 weeks. Also: the wet sound from last night's patrol. She recorded it on a personal device.

WANTS Reassignment. She does not want to be the person standing at the FLORA-7 perimeter when the containment wall fails.

FEARS That requesting reassignment will be treated as cowardice and that the Vipers' culture will not forgive it regardless of the reason.

CURRENT PRESSURE The root surface at the containment wall changed color on her last measurement. She touched the discolored surface. Her glove dissolved in 40 seconds. She has not filed this because she does not have a reporting category for it.

THE UNAUTHORIZED ANALYST

Unknown Affiliation, Root Level

CAN GET	A complete real-time biological assay of the CANOPY SHIFT-modified nutrient capillary including the neural-disruptive compound's molecular structure, the accelerated root-mass growth data, and her model of the breach timeline -- which is more accurate than Vega's because she has sub-surface data Vega doesn't.
WANTS	Her model verified. She has been inside Root Level twice and both times she knew the Viper schedule. She works for someone who told her what to test for. She does not know what CANOPY SHIFT is. She knows what it does.
FEARS	Being wrong. Her model shows 8 days, not 11. If she is wrong, she wasted the risk. If she is right, someone needs to act in 8 days.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Her buyer -- who is not Renata Oliveira's buyer but who is receiving the same type of data -- has gone silent for 72 hours. She does not know if that means the mission is complete or if she has been cut loose.

CIVILIAN NEED

The Phantom Vipers know the breach timelines better than their command structure acknowledges. They want someone outside military hierarchy to know what they know. Sergeant da Silva wants the growth acceleration formally recognized. Private Santos wants reassignment or permission to refuse the assignment without career consequences. They want proof that staying at the FLORA-7 perimeter is not suicide.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The real-time Root Level passage map with growth acceleration data spanning 11 months (via da Silva). The FLORA-7 perimeter distance log showing the wall shrinkage rate (via Santos). The TOXIN-3 breach confirmation -- the root system is actively breaching TOXIN-3 containment and has been for at least 30 days (via da Silva). The biological assay of the modified nutrient capillary including neural-disruptive compound concentrations and breach timeline models (via the Unauthorized Analyst). The specific passage route through Root Level that avoids the primary Viper patrol zones -- dangerous but passable, used by the Unauthorized Analyst's team.

DISTRICT 4 THE GREENHOUSE SPINE

Security: active Infrastructure: stable (surface) Civilians: sparse (workers only) Surveillance: cameras + pheromone cycling Faction pressure: dominant SCA Bioengineering Contamination: modified nutrient cycle (classified) Black market: none (heavy external demand) Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION The Metroplex's vertical farm corridor -- the food production backbone that feeds four hundred miles of city and is the stated justification for CANOPY SHIFT's modified mineral profile. Geothermal-powered growing towers producing everything the SCA eats. The agricultural output that makes the Metroplex self-sustaining and the engineering that makes it a weapon come from the same system.

CONTROLLER SCA Bioengineering Division -- Ferreira's territory. Agricultural production workers operate the farms. Bioengineering Division controls what the farms are fed. The two groups work in the same facility and are operating at different classification levels.

DRAW The Metroplex's food supply / access to the modified nutrient cycle at the point where it enters the growing systems / agricultural culture samples worth more per gram than weapons-grade material / the Bioengineering Division's production research,

which is the public face of the same program that produced CANOPY SHIFT

RISK Bioengineering Division security protocols that treat the growing system as classified infrastructure / the pheromone cycling system, which is more sensitive in the Greenhouse Spine than anywhere else because the growing environment requires precise atmospheric monitoring / agricultural workers who know the system intimately and notice variance immediately / the modified nutrient cycle itself, which is visible at the input nodes as an orange residue that wasn't there 14 months ago

SCARCITY Unmonitored access to the nutrient input nodes / any sample of the modified mineral profile in isolatable form / agricultural workers willing to talk about what changed

UNDER-SYSTEM

The vertical farms are growing 3.2% faster than historical baseline. The Bioengineering Division's public explanation is improved cultivar genetics. The agricultural workers know better -- they know what improved cultivars look like and this isn't it. The growth rate is coming from the nutrient cycle itself. Three senior agricultural workers have filed variance reports. All three were closed with the same response: 'within engineered parameters.'

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If the FLORA-7 breach contaminates the nutrient cycle, the Greenhouse Spine is where it shows first. The growing systems will absorb the crude agents before the bloom-drift carries them to the atmosphere. The food supply will be contaminated before the air is. Eleven days to atmospheric exposure. Four days to food contamination.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Bioengineering Division production managers overseeing agricultural workers on standard shifts

ECONOMY

Food production, cultivar research, the agricultural output that feeds the Metroplex and that every faction wants to license

RISK

Bioengineering Division oversight; agricultural workers who know the system; pheromone monitoring

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Automated growing systems on continuous cycle; a skeleton crew of agricultural workers running maintenance; Bioengineering Division's classified monitoring runs unattended

ECONOMY

Agricultural culture theft -- the engineered strains are worth fortunes outside the Metroplex and the night crew knows which ones and how to extract them

RISK

Automated atmospheric monitoring that flags any variance without human delay; the classified monitoring equipment that runs the CANOPY SHIFT metrics

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A vertical farm tower at full production -- 40 meters of engineered growth from floor to canopy, the air thick with humidity and chlorophyll, the nutrient input node at the base showing the orange residue that three workers filed reports about and three reports were closed. One worker is standing at the node right now, looking at the residue. She is not filing a fourth report. She is taking a sample.

ENCOUNTERS -- DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS -- NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS -- THE GREENHOUSE SPINE

ROSA BATISTA

Senior Agricultural Worker, Greenhouse Spine Tower 4

CAN GET The nutrient residue scrapings she has been keeping for 14 months -- dated, labeled, stored in sealed containers in her apartment. A complete chemical timeline of the CANOPY SHIFT modification in physical form. Also: the photograph of the Bioengineering Division's nighttime installation, which she took two days ago.

WANTS An explanation that makes sense. She filed three variance reports and all three were closed. She has stopped filing reports. She has started collecting evidence.

FEARS The Bioengineering Division finding her sample collection. Fourteen months of dated, sealed evidence of a classified nutrient modification would end her career. It might end more than that.

CURRENT PRESSURE The photograph she took shows a component she does not recognize. She showed it to a retired Bioengineering Division researcher who lives in the Canopy. The researcher looked at it for a long time and said she needed to think. That was two days ago. The researcher has not called back.

ESTEBAN RUIZ

Night Crew Lead, Greenhouse Spine

CAN GET The night shift's complete log of Bioengineering Division after-hours installations, which have occurred 7 times in the past 14 months -- each one at a different nutrient input node. Also: the agricultural culture theft network he knows about and tolerates because the night crew's loyalty is more valuable than the Division's inventory control.

WANTS For the after-hours installations to stop or to be explained. He runs the night crew and he cannot run it if the Division is modifying the system without telling him what the modifications do.

FEARS That the installations are connected to something the Division is doing to the food supply and that he has been running a crew that is growing food in a system that has been modified for a purpose he was never told about.

CURRENT PRESSURE The root-mass tendril at Tower 3 appeared on his shift last night. He sealed the area and filed a report. The report was closed in 40 minutes -- the fastest response he has ever received. Faster than investigation allows. Someone closed it without looking.

DR. THIAGO CARVALHO

Bioengineering Division, Nutrient Systems (classified clearance)

CAN GET CANOPY SHIFT's full technical specification including the neural-disruptive compound's molecular structure, the modified mineral profile parameters, and the intended timeline for bloom-drift transition. He wrote the nutrient delivery architecture.

WANTS To finish the project. He believes CANOPY SHIFT is the most important defensive technology the SCA has ever developed -- a weapon that makes the Metroplex itself hostile to invaders without harming SCA citizens. He is proud of it.

FEARS Dr. Ferreira. Specifically: what Ferreira will do when she learns about the side effect, which Carvalho discovered three weeks ago and has been trying to model a solution for without telling anyone. His solution does not work.

CURRENT PRESSURE He ran the root-mass acceleration numbers. His model shows the FLORA-7 breach at 9 days. He knows what is in FLORA-7 because he reviewed its archived contents before designing CANOPY SHIFT's delivery system. He designed CANOPY SHIFT to be compatible with the new nutrient profile and incompatible with the crude agents. If the crude agents enter the cycle, CANOPY SHIFT's delivery mechanism will amplify them rather than filter them.

CIVILIAN NEED

Agricultural workers know the farms are growing too fast and the Bioengineering Division is installing equipment at night without documentation. Rosa Batista has been collecting evidence for 14 months and wants someone with clearance to validate her observations before the Division discovers her sample collection. Esteban Ruiz wants the after-hours installations documented and explained. They want proof their concerns are real and justified, not paranoia.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The 14-month nutrient residue sample collection documenting progressive mineral profile shift (via Batista, if secured from her). The night-shift log of all Bioengineering Division after-hours installations spanning six months (via Ruiz). The photograph of the unidentified component from the mysterious installation at Tower 4 (via Batista). CANOPY SHIFT's full technical specification including the neural-disruptive compound's molecular structure and delivery mechanism (via Dr. Carvalho, if leverage is applied). The maintenance window schedule for the vertical farms covering the next 90 days -- the only period when the growing systems are accessible without Division oversight.

DISTRICT 5 RIVER QUARTER

Security: light Infrastructure: stable Civilians: normal Surveillance: informant net Faction pressure: contested (SCA + smuggling networks) Contamination: none (river system isolated) Black market: heavy Mobility: open (waterways)

FUNCTION

The Metroplex's waterway system -- the river corridors that serve as the primary transport network for bulk goods, the smuggling arteries that every faction uses, and the patrol zone for the SCA's Mega-Crocodylus aquatic security. Trade happens here. Information moves here. Things that cannot pass through Sector 14 customs enter the Metroplex through the River Quarter.

CONTROLLER	SCA Naval Command in theory. In practice, the River Quarter is split between SCA patrol zones where the Mega-Crocodylus units run and the waterway sections where the smuggling networks have negotiated a working tolerance -- the SCA knows they're there, takes a cut, and maintains the arrangement because the alternative is worse.
DRAW	The primary smuggling route into and out of the Metroplex / black-market anti-spore patches, agricultural cultures, counterfeit meds / information from outside the SCA's controlled media environment / waterway access that bypasses Sector 14 customs entirely
RISK	Mega-Crocodylus patrols -- saltwater crocodiles scaled to armored-vehicle weight, not interested in negotiations / SCA Naval Command interdiction runs that happen without warning when the tolerance arrangement breaks / the river itself, which carries the Metroplex's biological waste and which has its own engineered ecosystem that does not welcome unregistered vessels / Aqua-Felis -- semi-aquatic gene-forged big cats the SCA bred and no longer fully controls, hunting the river margins
SCARCITY	Safe navigation charts -- the waterway changes as the Metroplex grows / Mega-Crocodylus patrol schedules, which are irregular by design / any guarantee that the tolerance arrangement will hold through this operation

UNDER-SYSTEM

The river system draws from the same water table as the Metroplex's nutrient cycle. The CANOPY SHIFT modification has not yet reached the waterway -- the nutrient cycle and the water table are separated by a biological membrane the SCA installed in 2047. The membrane is maintained by a root system. The root system is part of the accelerated growth network. When the membrane fails, the modified nutrient profile enters the waterway. The Mega-Crocodylus and Aqua-Felis are adapted to SCA-standard water chemistry. The modified profile is not standard.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Modified nutrient profile in the waterway means the SCA's aquatic security assets begin behaving unpredictably. The Mega-Crocodylus are not pets. They are animals with weapons-grade biology operating in a chemical environment their adaptation was not built for. Unpredictable Mega-Crocodylus in a waterway used by smuggling networks and civilian transport is not a security problem. It is an extinction event for the River Quarter.

DAY

AUTHORITY

SCA Naval Command -- patrol boats, Mega-Crocodylus units in marked zones, visible enforcement of the official waterway code

ECONOMY

Official trade, bulk goods transport, SCA supply chain logistics

RISK

Mega-Crocodylus patrols; Naval Command interdiction; Aqua-Felis at the river margins

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The tolerance arrangement -- smuggling networks move after dark under terms negotiated with SCA Naval Command's night-shift officers, who are paid to see less

ECONOMY

Smuggling: anti-spore patches, agricultural cultures, counterfeit meds, intelligence, and people who need to enter or leave the Metroplex without passing through Sector 14

RISK

The tolerance arrangement's limits -- Naval Command has standing authorization to cancel the arrangement and run a full interdiction at any time, and the night-shift officers are nervous about something they aren't explaining

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A smuggler's boat at twilight, running without lights on a waterway corridor the Mega-Crocodylus units haven't patrolled in 6 hours. The water is dark. Something large displaces the surface 30 meters to port. The smuggler kills the engine, waits. The displacement moves away. The smuggler counts to sixty and restarts the engine. This is how business runs in the River Quarter. Everyone counts to sixty.

ENCOUNTERS -- DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS -- NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS -- RIVER QUARTER

CAPTAIN ELIANA TORRES

SCA Naval Command, River Quarter Night Operations

CAN GET The Mega-Crocodylus behavioral data for the past 3 months including the zone-crossing anomalies and the decommissioned unit that appeared in the waterway, and the specific waterway section near the biological membrane that Naval Command has been ordered to reroute patrol away from -- an order she received 6 weeks ago from SCA military command with no explanation.

WANTS An explanation for the patrol reroute order. She has been rerouting her units around a section of waterway she is responsible for and she does not know why.

FEARS That the reroute is connected to whatever is happening to the Mega-Crocodylus units' behavior, and that she has been operating blind in a section of the river system that contains something she should have been told about.

CURRENT PRESSURE The dead unit in the waterway. She was not told about a decommissioned unit being returned to the water. Someone put it there. Its biological systems were active when it died. She is waiting for the necropsy report. She is not confident she will receive it.

FELIPE 'RIVER DOG' NASCIMENTO

Smuggling Network, River Quarter Senior Pilot

CAN GET The smuggling network's complete waterway chart including the routes the SCA doesn't know about, the biological membrane's location and the monitoring buoy's current status, and his personal log of every unusual water event in the past 6 months -- including displacement patterns that don't match any known SCA aquatic asset.

WANTS For the tolerance arrangement to hold. His entire operation depends on it. The night-shift route changes are threatening a system that took years to build.

FEARS The fourth boat running the non-arrangement route. He does not know who it belongs to. He does not know what it is carrying. He knows it is using waterway intelligence that only his network and Naval Command should have.

CURRENT PRESSURE The displacement event last night. He has seen Mega-Crocodylus his entire career. The displacement event was not a Mega-Crocodylus. He has been a river pilot for 22 years. He does not know what it was.

MARINA AQUINO

Biological Membrane Monitoring Technician

CAN GET The membrane's current integrity data -- specifically the stress indicators showing the accelerated root growth is putting pressure on the membrane structure in three locations, and the chemical composition data from the membrane's river-side sensors showing early trace levels of modified nutrient profile leakage.

WANTS For someone to come fix the membrane stress points. She filed a maintenance request 4 weeks ago. The request was assigned to the Bioengineering Division. Nobody has come.

FEARS That the maintenance request was assigned to Ferreira's division and that Ferreira's division is the reason the membrane is under stress, which would mean the maintenance request is circular and nobody is coming.

CURRENT PRESSURE The trace leakage readings started 8 days ago. They are increasing. She has been running water samples and storing them in her monitoring station. She has 8 days of samples. She is a membrane technician, not a chemist. She needs someone who can read the samples.

CIVILIAN NEED

Boat operators want the Mega-Crocodylus patrols to maintain their current pattern and not escalate. Smugglers want stable routes and predictable SCA Naval Command behavior. Residents want access to off-channel water sources that are not monitored. The boatyard workers want to maintain the informal repair economy without SCA interference. Everyone is tracking the waterway for changes in the megafauna behavior and the water chemistry.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The stable navigation charts for the waterway system and the current Mega-Crocodylus patrol patterns (via the boatyard network). The black-market anti-spore patch distribution routes and the current supply chain (via smuggling contacts). The water chemistry monitoring data showing the nutrient profile changes in real-time (via boatyard workers with access to discharge points). The unauthorized boat repair services and their specific capabilities including weapons-grade modifications (via the informal boatyard economy). The single stable smuggling route into and out of the Metroplex that does not require SCA Naval Command cooperation -- slow but reliable, independent of patrol patterns.

DISTRICT 6 INNER CITADEL

Security: lockdown Infrastructure: stable Civilians: none Surveillance: cameras + gene-forged patrols Faction pressure: dominant SCA military

Contamination: none (controlled environment) Black market: none Mobility: barricaded

FUNCTION SCA military command, Phantom Viper headquarters, and the Bioengineering Division compound where CANOPY SHIFT was designed. The Inner Citadel is the Metroplex's hardened core -- the most defended position in SCA territory and the place where every decision that runs the city originates.

CONTROLLER SCA military command and the Bioengineering Division's classified research facility. Access requires military credentials or Division authorization. Phantom Vipers provide security. Gene-forged jaguars patrol the perimeter -- fast, silent, and not interested in credentials.

DRAW CANOPY SHIFT's origin data / the Bioengineering Division's complete research archive / SCA military command's operational planning / Phantom Viper deployment schedules for the entire Metroplex / Dr. Ferreira's office, which is the administrative center of the operation that is turning the city into a weapon

RISK Phantom Viper security at peak readiness / gene-forged jaguar perimeter patrols that track by scent and move faster than operators can react to / the most sophisticated biosecurity in the SCA -- air-locked entries that test for non-SCA biological markers / this is the one place in the Metroplex where a direct assault has never succeeded and infiltration has never returned an asset

SCARCITY Any way in that doesn't require SCA military or Division credentials / any route that bypasses the gene-forged jaguar perimeter / any information from inside that doesn't come through a contact already in the facility

UNDER-SYSTEM

Dr. Lucia Ferreira's office contains the CANOPY SHIFT master file -- the complete project documentation including the neural-disruptive compound formula, the modified nutrient profile specifications, the intended bloom-drift transition timeline, and the risk assessment. The risk assessment does not include the root-mass acceleration side effect because Ferreira did not model root-mass growth rates as a variable. She modeled atmospheric chemistry, bloom-drift dispersion, and anti-spore patch efficacy. The root systems were someone else's department. That department filed variance reports. The reports were closed.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If Ferreira learns about the root-mass acceleration and the FLORA-7 breach timeline before she can act, she will attempt to shut down CANOPY SHIFT by reversing the nutrient profile modification. The reversal takes 72 hours to propagate through the cycle. During the 72-hour reversal window, the neural-disruptive compound is still active in the bloom-drift and the root systems are still accelerating. She cannot stop both simultaneously.

DAY

AUTHORITY

SCA military command and Phantom Viper security -- full operational staffing, gene-forged patrols on 90-minute cycles

ECONOMY

Military operations planning, Bioengineering Division research, Phantom Viper deployment coordination

RISK

The most defended position in the Metroplex -- every security system at peak, every patrol alert, every biosecurity measure active

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Phantom Viper night security -- reduced staffing but gene-forged patrols maintain the same 90-minute cycle; the jaguars don't need lights

ECONOMY

Ferreira's team works late. The CANOPY SHIFT transition deadline is approaching and the final component was installed at the Greenhouse Spine two nights ago. The next bloom-drift cycle is the deployment window.

RISK

Gene-forged jaguars hunting by scent in darkness they are better adapted to than any operator

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A gene-forged jaguar on the Inner Citadel perimeter at dusk -- bipedal, armored, moving through the engineered growth at the compound's boundary with a silence that is not the absence of sound but the active suppression of it. Its eyes reflect light that has not yet faded from the canopy. It has been aware of the operators for 200 meters. It has not alerted its handler. It is making a decision.

ENCOUNTERS -- DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS -- NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS -- INNER CITADEL

DR. LUCIA FERREIRA

SCA Bioengineering Division, CANOPY SHIFT Project Lead

CAN GET The CANOPY SHIFT master file including every technical specification, the bloom-drift transition timeline, and the risk assessment she built -- which is incomplete. Also: the SCA Operational Command decision to proceed, which carries authorization codes that trace the project to the highest levels of SCA military leadership.

WANTS CANOPY SHIFT to succeed. She has spent 3 years building a weapon that makes the Metroplex itself hostile to invaders while protecting its citizens. She believes it is the most important defensive technology the SCA has produced. She does not want to learn it is also the most dangerous.

FEARS Carvalho's message. Specifically: that Carvalho found the root-mass variable before she did and that he found it 3 weeks before he told her, which means he tried to fix it alone and failed. She is about to learn that her project has a failure mode she did not design for.

CURRENT PRESSURE She ran the numbers at 0200 tonight. Her model -- now including the root-mass variable -- shows the FLORA-7 breach at 9 days. She is deciding whether to call SCA Operational Command and recommend shutting down CANOPY SHIFT, which will end her career and possibly her freedom, or whether to find a way to stop the root growth without stopping the project.

COMMANDER RAFAEL SOUZA

Phantom Vipers, Metroplex Security Command

CAN GET The complete Phantom Viper deployment plan for the post-transition period, the Root Level patrol data including da Silva's growth rate reports that he has been forwarding to Viper command, and his assessment of whether the FLORA-7 perimeter can be physically reinforced before the breach.

WANTS Information. He has been deploying Vipers to Root Level for 2 years and the mission parameters keep changing without explanation. He knows something is accelerating. He does not know what.

FEARS That the acceleration is connected to a Bioengineering Division project and that his Vipers are being deployed to manage the consequences of something they were never told about.

CURRENT PRESSURE Da Silva's fourth report -- the one that hasn't been acknowledged -- is on his desk right now. Da Silva included the TOXIN-3 breach data. Souza is reading it for the third time. He is about to call Ferreira. He does not know that Ferreira is already in the emergency communications suite calling someone above both of them.

CAN GET Thornfield's 3 years of intelligence collection on SCA bioweapons capability including the network of contacts, access routes, and data they have built inside the Metroplex. They do not have CANOPY SHIFT. They do not know it exists. They have been collecting data on the pre-CANOPY SHIFT bioweapons program -- the program whose remnants are in FLORA-7, TOXIN-3, and Black Site 3.

WANTS Extraction. Thornfield's mission is approaching its intelligence yield ceiling and Gardener has been requesting extraction for 4 months. NAF command has denied extraction because the intelligence stream is still producing. Gardener is operating past the point where professional judgment says to leave.

FEARS CANOPY SHIFT's bloom-drift transition. She does not know about it. Her anti-spore patches are old-calibration. She and her entire cell will be affected within 72 hours of transition. NAF command does not know this because nobody knows this.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her best asset inside the Bioengineering Division has gone silent for 48 hours. The asset is the researcher whose device was flagged at exit today. She is deciding whether to attempt contact or begin the extraction she has been requesting for 4 months.

CIVILIAN NEED

The vetted domestic staff here are trying to maintain their invisibility despite the foundation cracks and the unlogged emergency meetings. Outer-ring delivery workers want expedited clearance processing. Inner-circle staff with knowledge of the emergency communications suite want someone outside the Inner Citadel to know what decisions are being made in the 0400 hours. They want their families out of the Metroplex before the decision Ferreira makes becomes public.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The outer-ring Complex layout and staff rotation schedules including the secure perimeter blind spots (via Nassar, if trust is earned). The outer-gate delivery scheduling and all approved access records for the past 14 months (via Khalil). Full technical expertise on B-7 membrane failure modes and available repair protocols (via Al-Miraj). The timing and participant list for the three unlogged Inner Council meetings -- the actual content is unavailable, but the timing and who attended provides enough to triangulate the decision context. The secure communications suite's access protocol and the 12-minute window when the emergency line is unmonitored during shift change at 0530.

DISTRICT 7 THE OVERGROWTH (OUTER EXPANSION ZONE)

Security: none Infrastructure: collapsed Civilians: displaced Surveillance: dark zone Faction pressure: none (feral) Contamination: present (uncontrolled biological) Black market: none (barter only) Mobility: open (if you survive)

FUNCTION The Metroplex's outer expansion zone -- where terraforming drones push the city's boundary into raw jungle and where the SCA's control structure frays to nothing. Architecture here is partial, growing, and not always designed. Root systems run unchecked. Defensive plants operate without SCA clearance parameters. The people who live here are the ones the inner city doesn't have room for, doesn't want, or can't find.

CONTROLLER Nobody. The Overgrowth is the Metroplex's frontier and its margin. Terraforming drones expand the boundary. The jungle resists, adapts, and reclaims. The people who live here navigate both without the SCA's infrastructure support.

DRAW	Unmonitored space / extraction and insertion routes that bypass every SCA checkpoint / access to the raw jungle's unengineered biological resources / the displaced population, which includes people who left the inner city on purpose and people who were sent here as punishment
RISK	Uncontrolled biological hazards -- defensive plants, feral gene-forged animals, root systems that grow over sleeping figures in 6 hours / no anti-spore coverage -- the bloom-drift reaches here but the distribution stations do not / terraforming drones that do not distinguish between jungle to be cleared and humans in the way / Aqua-Felis hunting territory along the expansion zone's river margins
SCARCITY	Anti-spore patches / medical care / communication with the inner city / any guarantee that the structure you slept in last night will exist tomorrow

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Overgrowth is the canary. CANOPY SHIFT's bloom-drift transition will reach here first -- the outer expansion zone is upwind from the Metroplex's bloom-drift dispersion pattern. The residents here have no anti-spore patches. They have no protection. The neural-disruptive compound will affect them before it reaches the Canopy's outsiders. If there is a visible warning of what CANOPY SHIFT does to unprotected humans, it will appear in the Overgrowth first. No one is watching.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The Overgrowth's displaced population -- approximately 3,000 people -- experiences mass cognitive disruption with no medical infrastructure, no communication with the inner city, and no one who knows what is happening to them. The bodies are the warning. If anyone finds them in time.

DAY

AUTHORITY

None. Terraforming drones operate on SCA expansion schedules. Residents avoid the drones.

ECONOMY

Barter: clean water, improvised anti-spore mixtures, information about which routes are still open, which structures are still standing

RISK

Terraforming drones; uncontrolled biology; the expansion boundary itself, which shifts daily

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Survival. The biological environment is more active at night -- defensive plants extend, Aqua-Felis hunt, root systems grow fastest between midnight and dawn.

ECONOMY

Nothing moves at night in the Overgrowth if it can avoid it.

RISK

Everything that hunts at night in a jungle the SCA redesigned to be dangerous

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A structure at the expansion boundary -- half building, half organism, walls growing while the roof sags. A family of four lives inside it. They have hung fabric over the growing sections to mark where the walls were yesterday. The father checks the marks every morning. The walls have moved 3 centimeters overnight. Tomorrow they will move 5.

ENCOUNTERS -- DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS -- NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS -- THE OVERGROWTH

DR. GABRIEL MENDES

Displaced Bioengineering Division Researcher, Overgrowth Exile

CAN GET The CANOPY SHIFT risk assessment methodology report that got him exiled -- which includes the root-mass growth variable that Ferreira's model excluded and which his math predicted 14 months before anyone else noticed. Also: 18 months of unprotected bloom-drift exposure data from his own body, which he has been documenting.

WANTS Vindication. He wants someone who matters to read his report and understand what it means. He does not want to return to the inner city. He wants the inner city to know he was right.

FEARS That 18 months of unprotected exposure has done something to him that his self-documentation cannot fully track because the cognitive effects are progressive and he is the subject.

CURRENT PRESSURE Someone is at his shelter tonight. They asked about his report. They know his name. They know what he filed. He does not know who sent them. He is showing them his math. His hands are shaking and he is not sure if it is adrenaline or a symptom.

LIANA FERREIRA-SANTOS

Overgrowth Settlement Leader, Former SCA Agricultural Worker

CAN GET The Overgrowth's informal settlement map including routes, populations, and resources -- the most accurate picture of the outer expansion zone that exists. Also: the residents' health patterns, which she has tracked informally and which show a progressive degradation that she attributes to spore exposure but which matches CANOPY SHIFT's clinical footprint.

WANTS Anti-spore patches for her settlement. She has been requesting supply from the inner city for 2 years. The requests are ignored. She has 200 people and no protection.

FEARS That the patches she is requesting would not help. The modified bloom-drift chemistry means the standard patches are calibrated wrong. Current-calibration patches would help. She does not know the distinction exists.

CURRENT PRESSURE Three residents presented with identical symptoms tonight. She has seen gradual degradation for months. She has never seen identical acute onset in three people simultaneously. Something changed in the drift. She is right.

THE VISITOR

Unknown Affiliation, Arrived at Mendes's Shelter Tonight

CAN GET Whatever she was sent to acquire from Mendes -- which is his CANOPY SHIFT methodology report and specifically the root-mass growth calculations. She has a portable data device and she is copying everything.

WANTS The data. She was given a name, a location, and a description of what to acquire. She was told to be in and out in 2 hours. She has been here for 90 minutes.

FEARS Mendes. He is talking and he is not stopping. He has been alone with this data for 18 months and he is showing her everything. She was told to copy the report. He is giving her context the report doesn't contain. She is 30 minutes past her operational window.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her buyer is the same entity as the Unauthorized Analyst's buyer and Renata Oliveira's buyer. She does not know this. The three data streams -- bloom-drift composition, subsurface nutrient assay, and Mendes's root-mass calculations -- are converging at a single point. Determine who the buyer is at the table.

CIVILIAN NEED

Pending-review residents want to stay off the census sweep long enough to reach the next compliance tier advancement. They need water at survival-minimum allocation without losing access. Block leaders are coordinating mutual aid routes and want someone external to verify the block leader network is not being surveilled. Dr. Mensah wants someone to care about the anomalous clinical presentations the district administration has filed and forgotten.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The mutual aid network's internal routing including basement corridors and rooftop crossings not on official maps (via Fatou Diarra, if trust is earned over sessions). Three weeks of anomalous clinical data that district administration has already filed and discarded (via Dr. Mensah). Direct introduction to Dr. Amara Diallo at Sand Gate and the operational status of her ACU coordination channels (via Kouyate). The pending-review resident status list and the specific residents closest to compliance tier advancement (via block leaders). The operational freedom window after dark -- minimal informant density, no PCU patrol presence, and a population with strategic reasons to want outside assistance arriving unannounced.

07/

NEW BATAVIA

VW-ADJACENT / MARITIME HUB | EARTH 2066

The port doesn't care who owns it. Whoever controls the transit fee schedule controls the port.

HUB OVERVIEW

The sea didn't rise slowly. The models said it would. The models were wrong about the rate. By 2045, the maps were redrawn. Old coastlines were two to eight meters underwater. Forty-two million people had moved to elevation. The chart plotters called the new configuration the Java Scatter, and the name stuck because it was accurate: the old archipelago logic was gone, replaced by a maritime puzzle that no existing faction had built their logistics around.

Into this puzzle, the Pacific Free Zone built New Batavia — elevated on the Bogor highlands, purpose-engineered for 2.8 million residents, and now holding 3.2 million and counting. It is one of the most successfully realized post-Upheaval urban constructions on the planet. It is also built on grief that its administrative culture has professionalized itself out of discussing. Eight meters below the harbor, Old Jakarta's street signs are still readable. One traffic light still cycles green-yellow-red-green every 47 seconds. Nobody has explained the power source.

New Batavia is maritime Splice Punk: everything built around the fact that the ground moves, the map is wrong by definition, and the water between things matters more than the things themselves. The cultural DNA runs from Indonesian, Filipino, and Vietnamese street culture in the elevated former coastal communities — the aesthetic energy of people told their cities were gone who built different ones at higher altitude instead and kept the same market logic, the same kinetic density, the same capacity for improvisation that Southeast Asian urban culture always ran on — through PFZ port city trading culture where every faction moves cargo through the same facility and calls it neutrality. The Scatter-born generation treats old maps as historical curiosities. The scene they built treats elevation itself as the aesthetic condition: everything designed for a world where the floor might not be where it was yesterday.

This supplement covers New Batavia and its operational hinterland: the Makassar Crossing where PFZ sovereignty meets PRC data dependency, the High Thirty elevated community, the Shelf market built over drowned Jakarta, the Arafura Deep where the Shinkai Collective has been working for three years without fully explaining why, and Darwin Forward — the NAF installation 2,000 kilometers south that is the only reason the PRC hasn't forced the issue. The balance holds as long as no single party decides the cost of disruption is worth the gain. Project Amaterasu changes that calculation. The window is 22 days.

CURRENT STRESS CONDITION

The PFZ Maritime Council is sitting on two undisclosed assets — a cable access agreement with the PRC negotiated eighteen months ago by a single Council member acting alone, and the Arafura Sea Lumicite survey data — and managing both by pretending neither exists. The cable maintenance window is 22 days out. The PRC's Makassar platform dropped its commercial cover internally six months ago. Three of six cable node clusters are degrading at 73% capacity and the maintenance team that should have fixed them was reassigned. New Batavia's infrastructure was engineered for 2.8 million people and is currently holding 3.2 million on revenue the Council cannot sustain without monetizing secrets it cannot disclose. The Shinkai Collective has been on the Arafura shelf for three years and is finding things the survey models said shouldn't exist. The missing research vessel has been dark for fourteen months. A Void Walker designated CURRENT has been in-theater for six months — longer than any confirmed presence in a single territory — and is looking for a name.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

TERRITORY	PFZ-governed (maritime) / contested (PRC data pressure, NAF strategic interest, Shinkai deep-water operations)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable at PFZ nodes / collapsed in drowned zones / purpose-built on artificial islands
SURVEILLANCE	PFZ maritime sensors / PRC SIGINT at Makassar / dark zones in deep seabed approaches
CIVILIAN MOOD	adapted — Scatter-born generation treats old maps as curiosities; elevation migrants in outer districts are organized and running out of patience
GENE-FORGED	Saltwater Crocs (PFZ boarding), Sea Eagles (PFZ aerial), Clouded Leopards (PFZ infiltration) / Tigers & Pangolins (PRC intel) / Wolves & Eagles (NAF Darwin)
ENFORCEMENT	Corsair boarding authority — 50km navigable-water range, constitutionally mandated
BLACK MARKET	heavy — cable access tech, elevation permits, gene-forged Drift management, Old City salvage
MOBILITY	open maritime (PFZ transit registration) / restricted node approach zones / deep-water requires Collective cooperation

NODE MAP

NODE 1	**NEW BATAVIA HARBOR**: PFZ administrative capital. 3.2 million residents. The Maritime Council governs, the Corsairs stage, and the Old City is visible at low tide eight meters down.
NODE 2	**MAKASSAR CROSSING**: Java Sea chokepoint. Cable node cluster. PFZ monitoring station and PRC platform staring at each other across five kilometers of water for six years running.
NODE 3	**HIGH THIRTY**: Elevation +30m. Scatter-born community. No permanent faction surveillance. The gene-forged informal network's relay point and the only place in the Scatter where certain conversations can happen.
NODE 4	**THE SHELF**: Built over drowned Jakarta. Low-tide rooftop market. The Scatter's informal economy, anchored to former rooftops with ladders descending into the Old City at low tide.
NODE 5	**ARAFURA DEEP**: Shinkai Collective research zone. Lumicite shelf. Three-year survey. No faction sensor coverage at depth. The strategic endpoint every operation in the Scatter is oriented toward.
NODE 6	**DARWIN FORWARD**: Northern Australia. NAF strategic base. The Scatter's counterweight. Without it, PFZ military capacity cannot match PRC autonomous platforms and the deterrence balance ends.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Who a city is for reveals itself through what it forbids and what it forgives. New Batavia enforces three categories of maritime control.

Aggressively Enforced

Maritime Transit Registration: Every vessel entering PFZ-controlled waters must maintain active transponder and file course with the Maritime Council's harbor authority. Running dark within 50 kilometers of a cable node triggers Corsair interception. No exceptions. No appeals process that operates faster than the boarding team.

Elevation Zone Residency Documentation: All residents above the 20-meter elevation line must maintain current residency permits tied to infrastructure allocation. Expired permits trigger automatic reallocation of water and power credits within 14 days. Enforcement is algorithmic — the infrastructure management system decides rationing before any Council official reviews the case.

Cable Node Approach Restriction: Unauthorized approach within 500 meters of any cable node cluster triggers Corsair response. The 500-meter boundary is not negotiable, not appealable, and not survivable if the boarding team determines hostile intent. Three vessels have tested this in six years. None of them tested it twice.

Selectively Weaponized

Old City Dive Permits: Technical language requires PFZ authorization for any submersion below the harbor waterline. Applied selectively — licensed commercial dive operators file permits and pay fees; the unlicensed salvage economy that actually runs the Old City access operates on a schedule the harbor authority has decided not to see. Enforcement is zero until someone finds something the Council wants kept quiet.

Commercial Transaction Logging: All market transactions above 200 PFZ credits require registered vendor documentation. Creates a record of every significant purchase in New Batavia. The Shelf operates entirely outside this system. The Council knows. The Shelf knows the Council knows. The arrangement holds because both sides benefit from the gap.

Gene-Forged Registration and Drift Reporting: All gene-forged residents must register template lineage and submit to quarterly Drift assessment at PFZ-licensed clinics. Rule applies universally. Enforcement targets PRC-program operators and ignores Corsair veterans whose Drift stages the Council would rather not document.

Feared Punishments

Maritime Exclusion Order: Repeated infractions trigger placement on the Maritime Exclusion Registry — no vessel will carry you, no harbor will dock you, no port facility will process your cargo. Civic death by geography in a world where the water between things is everything.

Infrastructure Reallocation: Serious violations trigger immediate reallocation of water and power credits to other residents. In a city engineered for 2.8 million

holding 3.2 million, reallocation means someone else gets what you had and the queue for restoration has no published timeline.

Corsair Holding Facility: Final punishment is detention at the Corsair maritime holding facility on the harbor's southern margin. Officially a processing center. The processing has no stated duration. The facility sits on pilings above water that goes eight meters down to streets nobody officially visits.

Civic Rituals

Tidal Census: Every 28 days at the lowest tide window, PFZ harbor authority conducts a visual census of all vessels, platforms, and structures within the harbor zone. Operators and residents are expected to be present and visible. Absence flags the vessel or structure as "unaccounted." Two flags and it faces boarding inspection.

Cable Health Broadcast: Every 14 days, the Maritime Council broadcasts cable node status data on open channels — an act of transparency designed to demonstrate PFZ stewardship of the infrastructure the entire Scatter depends on. The broadcast omits the three degrading clusters. It has omitted them for six months. The Corsair field units who monitor the cables have noticed the omission and filed reports that have not received responses.

Elevation Memorial: Annual observance marking the 2045 displacement. The Maritime Council leads a harbor ceremony. The outer district elevation migrants hold their own ceremony at the same time, facing in a different direction — toward the drowned city below, not the administrative capital above. Both ceremonies are broadcast on PFZ channels. Only one is officially acknowledged.

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime in New Batavia's harbor market district, the High Thirty community, or the Shelf's after-hours gatekeeper economy. Every result produces a new contact, a new debt, or a new exposure.

1 (Contact Made): A retired Corsair Clouded Leopard running a charter dive operation buys operators a round of fermented coconut water and describes the outer district rationing schedule in enough operational detail that operators understand which blocks lose power when and what the community does during those windows. She doesn't remember being that specific the next morning. She does remember their faces.

2 (Feud Started): Operator says something — or is heard saying something — about the cable access agreement that reaches a PRC Pangolin collector through the market's geometry. Nothing happens immediately. Next morning, the operator's transit registration enters "compliance review." Review has no stated timeline. A Corsair informal network contact mentions the review happened fast — faster than normal.

3 (Equipment Lost): Operator's secondary nav device is lifted at some point during the evening. It holds 72 hours of maritime positioning cache. Whoever has it knows every route the operator has taken through the Scatter, including the unregistered channel they used to reach High Thirty.

4 (Secret Learned): A Shinkai Collective researcher, two drinks past professional discretion, describes the Arafura shelf's secondary property in terms that are technically vague and operationally unmistakable. She wants something in trade for the full picture. Won't say what until operators demonstrate they can reach the shelf.

5 (Debt Incurred): A Shelf gatekeeper sits down with a proposition: he will provide unrestricted access to the lower Old City through his network in exchange for one favor, undefined and redeemable within 30 days. He presents this as reasonable. He is correct. The anchor bolts beneath his platform are conducting something, and the favor will involve finding out what.

6 (Locally Recognizable): Operator does something — intervenes in a rationing dispute, covers a harbor tax, handles a confrontation with a PRC commercial attaché — that travels through the market by morning. The elevation migrant

network routes requests through the operator. A Pangolin operative has a photograph. A Corsair patrol leader mentions the operator's name to someone who mentions it to someone who files it.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Cable Access Agreement's Negotiator

One Council member acted alone to negotiate the undisclosed cable access agreement with the PRC. Supplement identifies the agreement's existence and implications but does not specify which Council member negotiated it or what they received in return that wasn't in the agreement text. Whether the negotiator acted from pragmatism, corruption, or a strategic calculation the rest of the Council would reject determines how disclosure unfolds and what the Council does when it learns.

The Traffic Light's Power Source

One traffic light on the drowned Jakarta grid still cycles green-yellow-red-green every 47 seconds. Supplement confirms it is active and that nobody has explained the power source. Whether it is Lumicite-powered from a pre-Upheaval research installation, running on infrastructure that predates anything the current factions understand, or something else entirely determines what the Old City actually contains and what the dive guides have been circling without knowing it.

The Shinkai Collective's Secondary Property

Dr. Watanabe has survey data she has not disclosed to anyone. The Collective's three-year operational presence on the Arafura shelf has found something the initial survey didn't capture. Supplement does not define the secondary property's nature. Whether it makes the Lumicite deposit more valuable, more dangerous, or something no current faction framework has a category for determines what disclosure actually means and why Dr. Watanabe has been protecting it.

The Missing Vessel's Crew

Four people have been aboard the missing research vessel for fourteen months. They cannot leave and cannot communicate. Supplement does not explain why. Whether the vessel is damaged, sealed, quarantined by something in the survey data, or being held by an entity that hasn't been identified determines what extraction looks like and whether the crew wants to be extracted.

The Void Walker's Principal

CURRENT has been in the Scatter for six months collecting from the cable node seabed operation, the maintenance diver's recovered artifact, and the research vessel's location. They want one exchange: the name of whoever authorized the cable node corrosion operation. Supplement does not identify who the Void Walkers answer to or what they do with names once they have them. The answer reshapes what CURRENT's presence in the Scatter means and what their departure leaves behind.

The Anchor Bolt Connection

The Shelf's central market platform is built on the rooftop of a pre-Upheaval building that satellite records show as a research facility. The platform's anchor bolts run into something below the concrete that isn't load-bearing structure. The gatekeeper has not investigated. Supplement does not specify what the bolts connect to, whether the sealed sublevel below is still dry, or what the pre-Upheaval facility was researching. The answer determines what the Shelf is actually built on and what happens when someone opens it.

FACTIONS

PFZ / CRIMSON CORSAIRS

Maritime Confederation & Naval Special Operations

OBJECTIVE Maintain cable node control and transit fee revenue while managing the Project Amaterasu timeline, the Lumicite disclosure problem, and New Batavia's infrastructure crisis — without triggering the confrontation with PRC that the Scatter's balance is structured to prevent.

ASSETS Crimson Corsairs gene-forged units (Saltwater Crocs, Sea Eagles, Clouded Leopards), maritime sensor network across the Scatter, New Batavia administrative infrastructure, cable node physical control, Arafura survey data (classified copy).

DEPENDENCY The deterrence balance. PFZ military capacity cannot win a direct confrontation with PRC autonomous platforms. Everything the PFZ does assumes NAF's Darwin commitment holds.

VULNERABILITY The undisclosed cable access agreement. If the Scatter population discovers that the PFZ has been privately negotiating away the sovereignty it publicly claims to defend, the Maritime Council loses its governing legitimacy overnight.

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive pressure: Increased Corsair patrol density, transit fee disputes, permit delays for PRC-adjacent commercial operations.
- 2 — Active friction: Cable node access suspension, maritime boundary enforcement actions, PFZ Council diplomatic pressure on PRC commercial interests.
- 3 — Overt force: Corsair interdiction of PRC vessels in approach zones, asset seizure, maritime exclusion orders.
- 4 — Last resort: Full maritime closure of Scatter transit lanes — damages PFZ as much as PRC but denies PRC the cable access it needs for Amaterasu deployment.

OFFER Safe maritime passage, cable infrastructure access for non-PRC parties, New Batavia administrative cover, Corsair tactical support, Arafura survey data (partial).

DEMAND Cable security intelligence, disruption of PRC SIGINT operations, Arafura survey data kept out of open circulation.

IF DAMAGED PFZ losing cable control changes the information architecture of the entire Pacific. Every faction's communications route through infrastructure the PRC now monitors. New Batavia's governance legitimacy collapses faster than the infrastructure.

PRC / SCATTER INTELLIGENCE STATION

Pacific Rim Coalition — Makassar Platform Operations

OBJECTIVE Achieve supervised access to the Makassar cable nodes sufficient to ensure Project Amaterasu telemetry runs cleanly through the infrastructure before operational deployment — without triggering NAF military response from Darwin or Corsair interdiction that creates a public confrontation.

ASSETS Makassar platform (military installation under commercial cover), Tiger and Pangolin gene-forged intelligence operators, SIGINT capability covering all PFZ maritime communications, commercial presence in New Batavia, the undisclosed cable access agreement, Project Amaterasu as the strategic endpoint.

DEPENDENCY The cable access window in the agreement. If that window is disclosed or closed, PRC has to find another way to route Amaterasu telemetry — which requires direct action that ends the deterrence balance.

VULNERABILITY The platform's cover. If the Makassar platform's military function is confirmed and published, PRC loses the diplomatic argument. NAF response becomes politically easier. The six-year investment in commercial cover burns in a single news cycle.

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive pressure: SIGINT collection escalation, commercial pressure on PFZ Council members, Pangolin intelligence operations in New Batavia.
- 2 — Active friction: Cable node degradation through the introduced corrosion agent — pressure without attribution.
- 3 — Overt force: Platform activation as a military asset, direct seabed operations against cable nodes.
- 4 — Last resort: Project Amaterasu early deployment using whatever cable access exists — accepting the confrontation, betting the system works well enough to win it.

OFFER

Commercial investment in New Batavia infrastructure, cable maintenance capacity PFZ cannot replicate, managed Amaterasu deployment timeline as strategic leverage.

DEMAND Supervised cable node access during maintenance windows, Arafura survey data, Corsair patrol schedule data.

IF DAMAGED PRC losing the Scatter cable nodes delays Project Amaterasu by an estimated 18 months. That 18 months is the operational window every other faction is trying to create.

SHINKAI COLLECTIVE

Deep-Water Research Authority

OBJECTIVE Bring the Arafura Lumicite disclosure to a resolution that prevents any single faction from controlling the deposit — and do so with sufficient leverage that the Collective becomes a necessary party to whatever framework emerges. Dr. Watanabe has been building toward this position for three years.

ASSETS The Arafura survey data (most complete copy), deep-water operational capability no faction can replicate short-term, independent communications network outside cable infrastructure, Darwin Forward liaison relationship, three years of operational presence on the shelf, submersibles with biological camouflage profiles.

DEPENDENCY The PFZ research permit — cover that allows the Collective to operate without triggering the faction confrontation that open Lumicite disclosure would cause. If the permit is revoked or the cover breaks, the Collective loses its operational position before it can execute the disclosure on its own terms.

VULNERABILITY The secondary survey property Dr. Watanabe has not disclosed. If another faction reaches the shelf and reads the full data without context, they get the strategic picture without the framing the Collective has been carefully building.

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive approach: Survey continuation, independent communications maintenance, Darwin Forward liaison briefings.
- 2 — Active friction: Selective data sharing to pressure factions toward multilateral framework, deep-water asset repositioning to complicate seabed approaches.
- 3 — Overt action: Public disclosure of partial survey data, forcing all factions to negotiate on Collective terms.
- 4 — Last resort: Full data release including secondary property — the uncontrolled disclosure Dr. Watanabe has been trying to prevent, triggered because the controlled version became impossible.

OFFER Survey data access (conditional), deep-water navigation and support, independent communications outside PRC monitoring, Drift management protocols the informal gene-forged network doesn't have.

DEMAND The disclosure handled on terms that make the Collective a party to the outcome, not a provider of information to be managed.

IF DAMAGED The Collective losing its shelf position means the survey data disperses to whoever gets there first. The secondary property becomes a surprise rather than a managed revelation. Nobody has modeled what that looks like.

NAF / DARWIN FORWARD

North Atlantic Federation — Strategic Power Projection

OBJECTIVE Maintain Darwin Forward as a functional power projection point without triggering the Australian parliamentary crisis that the classified annex's existence would cause if disclosed — while using Darwin Forward's strategic position to ensure the Scatter doesn't become a PRC operational zone.

ASSETS Aurora Ranger units (Wolf, Eagle templates), Darwin Forward installation, classified annex authority, NAF surveillance platforms covering northern Australia and Scatter approach corridors, the missing research vessel's location (known), the Arafura geological survey (classified copy).

DEPENDENCY The Australian government's willingness to maintain the basing arrangement. This willingness is contingent on the classified annex never becoming a public political issue.

VULNERABILITY The annex. One disclosure — from any source — triggers a parliamentary crisis that the Australian government cannot survive without action against the basing arrangement. NAF knows this. It is the most carefully protected secret at Darwin Forward.

ESCALATION

- 1 — Passive presence: Surveillance platform monitoring, Darwin Forward readiness posture, diplomatic pressure through Australian channels.
- 2 — Active friction: Expanded surveillance of Scatter approach corridors, classified annex activation for "cable infrastructure threats," contractor deployment.
- 3 — Overt force: Aurora Ranger deployment into the Scatter under annex authority, unilateral operations without Australian notification.
- 4 — Last resort: Full Darwin Forward activation — military projection into the Scatter that exposes the annex, burns the Australian relationship, and changes the balance permanently.

OFFER Scatter-wide surveillance data, military counterweight to PRC autonomous platform capability, cable infrastructure protection under the annex framework, access to the missing vessel's location through back channels.

DEMAND The Scatter balance maintained in terms favorable to NAF strategic interest, the classified annex kept out of public circulation, PFZ cooperation with Darwin Forward intelligence operations.

IF DAMAGED NAF losing Darwin Forward removes the counterweight. The PRC recalibrates. The PFZ's strategic position collapses. The Scatter transforms from a maritime confederation into a PRC strategic zone. The timeline is months, not years.

HUB-LEVEL CONTACTS | WILDCARDS

DR. KEIKO WATANABE — Shinkai Collective, lead researcher, Arafura survey

CAN GET: The Arafura survey data (the Collective's copy), deep-water access to the shelf, Shinkai Collective independent communications network, the missing research vessel's actual location.

WANTS: The survey findings handled by someone with enough reach to prevent any single faction from controlling the Lumicite disclosure. She has watched what happened in the Lakefire Corridor.

FEARS: That the missing vessel's copy of the data has already been accessed by Darwin Forward. That the secondary property she has not disclosed will make the disclosure more dangerous, not less.

CURRENT PRESSURE: The Collective's deep-water team has been on the Arafura shelf for three years. They are finding things that weren't in the survey data. The PRC drones are six hours from the shelf approach corridor.

VOID WALKER — SCATTER DESIGNATION 'CURRENT' — One confirmed presence, methodology unknown, six months in-theater

CAN GET: Whatever they have been collecting from the cable node seabed operation, the maintenance diver's recovered artifact, the research vessel's current location.

WANTS: One exchange. They are looking for whoever authorized the cable node corrosion operation. They will trade everything they have for a name.

FEARS: Unknown. Threat assessment unknown.

CURRENT PRESSURE: They have been in the Scatter for six months. Nobody has established what is keeping them here this long.

DOWNTIME

DIVE THE OLD CITY

WHAT: Operators run an unauthorized dive into the drowned district below New Batavia harbor — past the rooftop market, past the salvage zones, into the grid where the street signs are still readable and the traffic light still cycles.

COST: Dive equipment. No permit. Exposure to PFZ harbor security on ascent. One full session of downtime.

GAIN: One of the following — the pre-Upheaval data storage device from the Lumicite research facility; a contact in the elevation migrant community who knows the tunnel network; a map of Old City infrastructure connecting to current New Batavia foundations; the power source for the cycling traffic light.

FALLOUT: PFZ security logs the unauthorized dive location. If operators return to the same area, they find a marker — someone else knows what they found.

Two of the unlicensed dive guides are Shinkai Collective affiliates. At least one of them reported the dive.

WORK THE CORSAIR NETWORK

WHAT: Operators spend five days embedded with a Corsair patrol circuit — running the maritime lanes between New Batavia and the Makassar approach zone, learning the interdiction doctrine from the inside.

COST: Five days. PFZ cooperation — requires an existing Corsair contact or introduction through the informal gene-forged network.

GAIN: Gene-forged informal network contacts across PFZ and PRC programs, Corsair maritime routing knowledge, Stage-specific Drift management protocols the formal clinical system doesn't distribute, patrol schedule data current within 48 hours.

FALLOUT: PRC SIGINT at Makassar registers operator presence in Corsair patrol patterns. A Pangolin operative begins tracking operator maritime movement. The SIGINT record is permanent and the Pangolin is patient.

TRANSIT THE SCATTER DARK

WHAT: Operators move between nodes using the elevation migrant informal maritime routes — off PFZ registration, Corsair-knowledgeable, used by the gene-forged informal network for movement that cannot appear in any system.

COST: Introduction from Bagas Santoso, a High Thirty community contact, or a Corsair informal network member. Two days transit minimum. The routes are physically demanding — small vessels, open water, no rescue coverage.

GAIN: Movement between any two nodes without appearing in PFZ transit records. One informal network contact per transit. Understanding of the Scatter's actual geography as experienced by the people who live in it.

FALLOUT: The routes are Corsair-knowledgeable but not Corsair-invisible. A Corsair patrol sees something and makes a note they haven't decided what to do with. The note exists in the informal system, not the official one — which means someone in the Corsair command is deciding whether to act on it personally.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

MARKET WHISPERS | CIVILIAN SURVIVAL INTEL (1D6)

- The Arafura survey data shows a Lumicite deposit large enough to solve New Batavia's infrastructure funding problem permanently. The Council knows. They are not announcing it because announcing it ends PFZ sovereignty over the Scatter. [TRUE]
- The Old City light that still cycles is Lumicite-powered. Something on the drowned grid was connected to a pre-Upheaval research installation. It is still running. [TRUE]
- The Shinkai Collective's New Batavia research center is not a research center. It is a node in an independent deep-water communications network that does not route through the cable infrastructure the PRC monitors. [PARTIALLY TRUE]
- The elevation migrant community leader is a former Corsair in Stage 3 Drift. The PFZ knows. They have been hoping the situation resolves without intervention. [TRUE]
- The undisclosed cable access agreement gives the PRC a maintenance window during which PFZ monitoring is suspended. The window is quarterly. The next is in three weeks. [TRAP — agreement exists; the monitoring suspension provision is EO fabrication designed to provoke premature PFZ action]
- The piece of equipment from the Old City is a data storage device from a pre-Upheaval Lumicite research facility that operated under the former coastal Jakarta district. The data is intact. [TRUE]

CORSAIR CHATTER | OPERATIONAL SECURITY INTEL (1D6)

- Project Amaterasu's first operational test is scheduled for the next cable maintenance window — 22 days out. If it runs clean through Scatter infrastructure, the PRC considers it combat-ready. [TRUE]
- The missing research vessel has a crew of four still aboard. They have been there for fourteen months. They cannot leave and they cannot communicate. [PARTIALLY TRUE — vessel location confirmed; crew status unknown]
- The Arafura shelf Lumicite deposit is stable under extraction. The Shinkai Collective's three-year survey confirms this. Disclosure would end the Scatter's strategic balance overnight. [TRUE]
- The Void Walker presence in the Scatter is connected to the Lakefire Corridor Void Walker sightings. They are not separate operations. [UNCLEAR — nobody in the Scatter has the Corridor context to evaluate it]

- The PFZ cable access agreement was not negotiated by the Maritime Council. It was negotiated by one Council member acting alone. The rest of the Council doesn't know. [TRUE]
- The cable node degradation is not ecosystem growth. It is a slow-acting corrosion agent introduced during a maintenance window two years ago. The PRC knows who did it. [PARTIALLY TRUE — corrosion is real; attribution is disputed]

ESCALATION TRACKS

TRACK 1 | PROJECT AMATERASU DEPLOYMENT WINDOW

Stage 1 — Window Approaching

Covert operations from all parties increase as the 22-day maintenance window closes. PRC SIGINT at maximum collection. Corsair patrol density elevated. NAF Darwin Forward at heightened readiness. Every contact in the Scatter is under more pressure than usual and making decisions faster than they'd like. The cable node degradation — three clusters at 73% — is becoming operationally significant. If the test runs through degraded infrastructure, the results may not be clean enough for the PRC to act on.

Stage 2 — Window Opens

The cable maintenance window begins. PFZ monitoring is suspended per the undisclosed agreement. PRC cable node access proceeds. If operators have acted to disclose the agreement, Stage 2 triggers a Corsair interdiction rather than the window opening — the confrontation happens here. The Maritime Council splits. Councilor Wibowo's infrastructure portfolio becomes the swing vote. The outer districts' water rationing intensifies as Council attention shifts to the crisis at Makassar.

Stage 3 — Amaterasu Test

Project Amaterasu routes telemetry through Scatter cable infrastructure during the window. Success means PRC considers it combat-ready. Failure — due to cable degradation, Corsair interdiction, or operator action — delays deployment 18 months and sends the PRC to their Stage 4 escalation option. Darwin Forward's surveillance platforms record the test traffic. Sgt. Chen's intelligence report enters a classification system she cannot access for follow-up.

Stage 4 — Open Confrontation

PRC activates the Makassar platform as a military asset. Corsairs respond with maritime interdiction. NAF Darwin Forward activates the classified annex. Australian government position becomes untenable. The Scatter stops being a deterrence balance and becomes a theater. New Batavia's 3.2 million residents are in the operational zone of a confrontation their government told them couldn't happen.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Close the window (disclose the agreement before Stage 2). Degrade the test (sabotage cable infrastructure or disrupt the test run). Expose the platform (confirm the Makassar installation's military function publicly). Any solution that works produces a new problem — the PRC's response to having its 22-day window closed is not to wait for the next one.

TRACK 2 | LUMICITE DISCLOSURE

Stage 1 — Survey Competition

Multiple parties working to acquire the complete survey data before another faction does. The PRC drones on the shelf approach corridor, the NAF contractors at Darwin civilian port, and Dr. Watanabe deciding whether to trust operators all happen in this stage. The missing research vessel's location becomes contested intelligence. The Shelf vendor who has partial survey data doesn't know what she's selling.

Stage 2 — Partial Disclosure

Incomplete survey data surfaces — through the missing vessel, the Shelf vendor, or a Council leak. Factions begin repositioning based on partial information. The strategic picture is contested. Dr. Watanabe's undisclosed secondary property is either the key context or an unknown variable, depending on what she decides. The PFZ Maritime Council realizes the Arafura question is connected to the cable access question in ways the single-member negotiation didn't account for.

Stage 3 — Full Disclosure

The complete survey data — including the secondary property — becomes available to multiple parties simultaneously or through operator action. The PFZ's sovereignty claim becomes the most contested territorial question in the Pacific. The Shinkai Collective either becomes a necessary party to the resolution or loses that position depending on how the disclosure happens. High

Thirty's community council begins evaluating options that don't include the PFZ.

Stage 4 — Resource Confrontation

Every faction in the hemisphere has recalibrated toward the Scatter. The deterrence balance that kept the Scatter functional is subsumed by the Lumicite question. The Scatter transforms from a maritime confederation into a contested resource extraction zone. What that looks like with Project Amaterasu potentially combat-ready has not been modeled. The civilians of New Batavia — 3.2 million people in an infrastructure designed for 2.8 million — are now living in the most valuable contested zone in the Pacific.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Control the disclosure (ensure the secondary property has context when it surfaces). Broker a multilateral framework (before Track 1 forces unilateral action). Protect the Collective's position (ensure Dr. Watanabe's framing survives the political process). The Lumicite disclosure cannot be prevented — only managed. Management requires operators who understand that every faction in the Scatter has a legitimate interest and none of them have the complete picture.

OPERATIONS MAP

MARITIME CORRIDORS

- New Batavia Harbor → Makassar Crossing: Registered PFZ transit lane (8 hours). Corsair patrol coverage continuous. PRC SIGINT monitors all communications in approach zone.
- New Batavia Harbor → The Shelf: Harbor boat access (30 minutes). No checkpoint — the Shelf is technically within harbor jurisdiction. Surge weather creates access windows and closures.
- New Batavia Harbor → High Thirty: Overland elevation route (2 hours) or informal maritime route via elevation migrant network (4 hours, unregistered).
- Makassar Crossing → Arafura Deep: Open water transit (18 hours minimum). No Corsair coverage past the Makassar approach zone. Requires Shinkai Collective cooperation or independent deep-water capability.
- New Batavia Harbor → Darwin Forward: Open ocean (2,000 km). Registered transit through PFZ and Australian maritime zones (3 days). Informal routes through the Scatter dark network (4-5 days, no records).
- Darwin Forward → Arafura Deep: NAF surveillance platform coverage. Transit requires classified annex authorization or contractor cover.

CHOKEPOINTS

- Makassar Strait Cable Node Cluster — the junction routing PRC communications through PFZ-controlled waters. Disrupting it changes everything simultaneously. Three of six clusters at 73% capacity.
- New Batavia Harbor Authority — the registration and checkpoint system controlling all vessel movement in and out of the capital. One system, 3.2 million people, no redundancy.
- The Shelf Access Ladders — improvised, unmaintained, the only route between the surface market and the drowned Old City. Lethal in surge conditions. The bottleneck that determines who gets to the lower city and who doesn't.
- Arafura Shelf Approach Corridors — navigable but not publicly charted. The Collective controls access through equipment and route knowledge. PRC seabed drones are six hours out.
- Darwin Forward Perimeter — NAF/Australian jurisdictional seam. Not a gap — a seam. Both sides manage it awkwardly. The classified annex makes it load-bearing.

SURVEILLANCE ARCHITECTURE BY NODE

- New Batavia Harbor: PFZ sensor net plus cameras. Full coverage in the harbor zone. Gaps in outer elevation districts where the sensor net was never extended to match population growth.
- Makassar Crossing: Comprehensive — both sides, full overlap. PFZ monitoring station and PRC SIGINT provide complete coverage of the strait. No unmonitored communication within the approach zone.
- High Thirty: Minimal. No PFZ sensor net. Community-enforced observation only. The only major Scatter node with no permanent faction surveillance presence.
- The Shelf: Gaps. PFZ sensor coverage is inconsistent over the drowned grid. Below the waterline, surveillance is effectively zero. The Shelf's gatekeeper network provides its own information layer.
- Arafura Deep: Dark zone. No faction sensor coverage at operational depth. The Collective's submersible camouflage makes sonar tracking unreliable. Surface surveillance from NAF platforms covers vessel movement but not what happens below.
- Darwin Forward: Comprehensive NAF systems on base. Australian perimeter monitoring at the boundary. The jurisdictional seam creates gaps that both sides formally deny and informally exploit.

FACTION TERRITORY LINES

- PFZ / Corsairs: New Batavia (dominant), Makassar Crossing (surface water), The Shelf (nominal), maritime lanes between nodes.
- PRC / Scatter Intelligence: Makassar platform (military), New Batavia commercial district (intelligence), cable node approach zones (contested).
- Shinkai Collective: Arafura Deep (de facto control at depth), New Batavia research center (surface presence), independent deep-water communications network.
- NAF / Darwin Forward: Darwin base (dominant), Arafura surface (surveillance), Scatter-wide (surveillance platforms).
- Informal Gene-Forged Network: High Thirty (relay point), New Batavia outer districts (Drift support), Corsair patrol routes (embedded).

MISSION SEEDS

1. CLOSE THE WINDOW

OBJECTIVE: Expose the undisclosed cable access agreement before the 22-day maintenance window opens, triggering PFZ Council action that closes the window and prevents the Amaterasu test run.

CLOCK: 22 days. After the test runs successfully, the window closes but the strategic fact of Amaterasu readiness doesn't change — the PRC's position in the Scatter shifts permanently.

COMPLICATION: The Council member who negotiated the agreement is the only person with full documentation. Getting to her means getting through PFZ security she has activated to protect herself from exactly this kind of approach. And the security following her may not be PFZ. Councilor Wibowo has a partial copy — but using it requires trusting operators with the Council's internal fracture.

2. FIND THE VESSEL

OBJECTIVE: Locate the missing research vessel, recover the Arafura survey data, and determine what Darwin Forward knows about its current position.

CLOCK: The contractors loading unmarked equipment at Darwin civilian port are preparing an operation. If they reach the vessel first, the survey data goes into NAF classification and the Shinkai Collective's copy becomes the only independent record.

COMPLICATION: The vessel's crew. Whatever is keeping four people on a vessel for fourteen months without the ability to leave or communicate is still in effect. Extracting the vessel without addressing the crew's situation is not straightforward. Dr. Watanabe knows the crew is alive. She knows where they are. She has not acted on it, and the reason involves the secondary property.

3. STAGE FOUR PREVENTION

OBJECTIVE: Disable the Makassar platform's military activation capability before Stage 3 of the Amaterasu track triggers Stage 4 — specifically, the seabed operations capability that allows the platform to directly access the cable nodes.

CLOCK: The cable maintenance window. Once it opens and the test runs, the platform's military function has served its purpose and PRC may shift to overt positioning regardless.

COMPLICATION: The platform's cover has been maintained for six years. A visible strike on a commercial logistics hub is a diplomatic incident the PFZ cannot absorb without NAF support, and NAF support requires the classified annex to activate. The maintenance diver's recovered artifact from the seabed may connect to the platform's operation in ways that change what operators need to do.

4. THE SECONDARY PROPERTY

OBJECTIVE: Reach the Arafura shelf and receive the full survey data from Dr. Watanabe — including the undisclosed secondary property — before PRC seabed drones arrive and the Collective loses its controlled position.

CLOCK: The PRC drones are six hours from the shelf approach corridor. After that, the shelf is contested rather than Collective-controlled, and Dr. Watanabe's conditions become irrelevant.

COMPLICATION: Her conditions are not negotiable and she will not state them fully until operators have demonstrated they can reach the shelf. Getting there requires Shinkai cooperation or independent deep-water capability. The PRC drones arrive before operators without both. The secondary property, once known, creates a new decision operators didn't expect to face.

5. THE OUTER DISTRICT

OBJECTIVE: Secure stable water access for the 4,000 elevation migrants in New Batavia's outer district before the community's organized response crosses from petition to something the PFZ Council will characterize as a security crisis.

CLOCK: Bagas Santoso is managing the community's response. He is Stage 3 Drift. His management window is narrowing on two fronts — the community's patience and his own coherence. The PFZ security team that visited yesterday wasn't there about water.

COMPLICATION: The infrastructure crisis is connected to the cable access revenue the Council has been using to quietly fund New Batavia's expansion. Solving the water problem permanently requires the Council to acknowledge the infrastructure gap. Acknowledging the gap leads to the cable agreement. The cable agreement leads to the Amaterasu window. Every thread in New Batavia connects to every other thread.

6. THE NAME

OBJECTIVE: Identify the person who authorized the cable node corrosion operation and trade that information to the Void Walker designated CURRENT in exchange for everything CURRENT has collected during six months of Scatter operations.

CLOCK: CURRENT has been in-theater longer than any confirmed Void Walker presence in a single territory. Whatever is keeping them here has a limit. When they leave, their collection goes with them, and the authorization chain for the corrosion operation becomes unknown to anyone in the Scatter.

COMPLICATION: The corrosion operation's authorization chain leads somewhere none of the factions want operators to look. The PRC claims it was PFZ negligence. The PFZ claims it was PRC sabotage. CURRENT's interest suggests a third possibility. The main-

tenance diver's artifact, the anomaly readings at the cable nodes, and the Shelf gatekeeper's sensor data may all be connected to the same source — and that source may predate every faction currently operating in the Scatter.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

Every solution in the Scatter creates a new problem. These are the specific new problems.

If PFZ Loses Cable Control

The PRC's communications architecture for the Pacific gains a layer of infrastructure it owns rather than accesses. Project Amaterasu deploys on PRC terms. The Scatter transforms from a maritime confederation into a PRC strategic zone within two years. New Batavia's governance legitimacy was built on PFZ cable sovereignty. Without it, the Maritime Council's claim to represent the region's interests collapses faster than the infrastructure. The 3.2 million residents of a purpose-built city discover the purpose has changed.

If NAF Loses Darwin Forward

The counterweight disappears. PFZ military capacity cannot match PRC autonomous platforms without it. The deterrence balance ends. The Scatter's independent status ends with it — not immediately, not loudly, but structurally and irreversibly. The timeline from Darwin Forward's political compromise to PRC operational dominance in the Scatter is measured in months, not years. High Thirty's community council begins planning for a world without PFZ protection. They have been planning quietly for two years.

If the Arafura Deposit Is Disclosed

Every faction in the hemisphere recalibrates toward the Scatter. The PFZ's maritime sovereignty claim becomes the most contested territorial question in the Pacific. The Shinkai Collective's three-year operational presence makes them a party to any resolution — a status they have been building toward deliberately. Whether the secondary property makes this better or worse depends on what it is, and Dr. Watanabe is the only person who knows. The deposit sits directly under the maritime boundary between PFZ and Australian territorial waters. That was not an accident, but whose decision it was is unclear.

If Project Amaterasu Deploys Successfully

The PRC has a combat-ready AI weapons system. The 18-month window every other faction has been trying to create closes. Whatever plans were contingent on that window expire. What comes next has not been modeled. The Scatter was functional as a deterrence balance because every party could calculate the cost of the alternative. Amaterasu changes the calculus in a direction the balance was not designed to survive. The cable nodes that carried the test telemetry become the most strategically significant infrastructure on the planet.

If the Void Walker 'CURRENT' Gets the Name

They leave. Whatever they were collecting from six months of Scatter operations goes with them. The cable node corrosion operation's authorization chain becomes known to whoever the Void Walkers answer to — which is not a faction anyone in the Scatter has a working model of. What they do with the name is not something any current faction intelligence operation has projected. The absence of the Void Walker presence is, in its own way, as destabilizing as their arrival was. The Scatter's equilibrium was recalibrated around an observer who is no longer observing.

FIELD NOTE

The sea took the old cities. The people who survived built new ones higher up and kept the same market logic, the same density, the same refusal to stop trading. The PFZ calls it sovereignty. The Corsairs call it range. The Scatter-born call it home. Eight meters down, the traffic light still cycles for an intersection that doesn't exist anymore, powered by something nobody has explained, marking time for a city that is still, somehow, keeping its appointments.

— Terra Conflictus 2066 Setting Guide, Earth 2066

MARITIME NODES

NODE 1 NEW BATAVIA HARBOR

PFZ ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL — POP. 3.2M

SECURITY	active — PFZ sensor net, harbor patrols, Corsair rapid reaction
INFRASTRUCTURE	purpose-built, well-maintained (core) / strained (outer districts)
CIVILIANS	packed — 3.2M in infrastructure designed for 2.8M
SURVEILLANCE	PFZ sensor net + cameras (core) / gaps in outer elevation districts
FACTION PRESSURE	PFZ dominant / PRC commercial + intel / NAF diplomatic / Shinkai research
CONTAMINATION	none (surface) / unknown (drowned grid below harbor)
BLACK MARKET	moderate — elevation documents, Drift management, Old City salvage
MOBILITY	open city / checkpointed highland access / harbor authority registration

FUNCTION

PFZ administrative capital, regional trade hub, and the largest population center in the Scatter. Where the Maritime Council governs, the Corsairs stage, and the elevation migrants wait for water that gets rationed before it reaches them. The only place in the Scatter where all factions have a formal presence — PRC commercial staff, NAF diplomats, Shinkai researchers, and PFZ Council officials all maintain offices within six blocks of each other. The harbor itself sits above the drowned Old City, visible at low tide through water so clear you can read the street signs eight meters down.

CONTROLLER	PFZ Maritime Council — competent, technocratic, sitting on the undisclosed cable access agreement and the Arafura survey data for eighteen months. Councilor Wibowo holds the infrastructure portfolio and the partial documentation that could force the agreement into open Council debate. The Council governs by consensus. The consensus is built on information one member withheld.
DRAW	• The only hub in the Scatter where all factions have formal presence — PRC commercial staff, NAF diplomats, Shinkai researchers, Corsair command. • Old City dive access — the drowned grid, intact and accessible, with pre-Upheaval infrastructure that may still contain active Lumicite research data. • PFZ administrative cover for operations requiring legitimate documentation. • The harbor market — the Scatter's largest above-board commercial zone. • Corsair informal network introductions through the harbor district off-duty population.
RISK	• PRC Pangolin intelligence operators run collection against Council staff in the commercial district — three contacts simultaneously, civilian clothes, not successfully subtle. • Corsair rapid reaction is in the harbor but response time to outer districts is 18-22 minutes. • PFZ security is following at least one Council member — the detail is discreet but visible to operators who know what they're looking at. • The outer district elevation migrants are organized and their leader is Stage 3 Drift. • The gene-forged informal network routes GRIDSEED traffic around the Pangolins' collection pattern as standard precaution.
SCARCITY	• Clean water in outer districts — rationed, and the rationing schedule tracks with residency permit priority, not need. • Elevation zone residency permits — controlled, waitlisted, and the waitlist has a secondary market the Council pretends not to see. • Old City dive permits — technically required, enforcement inconsistent, and the unlicensed dive operators know the grid better than anyone with a permit.

UNDER-SYSTEM

New Batavia's infrastructure was engineered for 2.8 million. It is holding 3.2 million. The city works. It will not continue to work at this growth rate without capital the PFZ does not have without monetizing the cable access agreement or the Arafura survey data — both of which it cannot disclose without triggering the crises those disclosures would create. The infrastructure funding models on Councilor Wibowo's desk make the Lumicite disclosure inevitable. She knows this. She is waiting for the cable agreement question to resolve first.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Power rationing in outer districts. The city administration calls it load balancing. The outer districts — disproportionately elevation migrants without legacy residency rights — understand what that means when it is always their district that gets balanced. When New Batavia visibly doesn't work for a specific population, the PFZ Council's claim to represent the region's interests gets contested in ways it cannot easily manage. Bagas Santoso is the voice of that contestation. He is also Stage 3 Drift and managing on two fronts.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PFZ city administration + Maritime Council offices. Corsair command in the harbor district. Council security details visible at government buildings.

ECONOMY

Regional trade, Council diplomacy, Shinkai research operations, PRC and NAF commercial presence, harbor market, licensed dive operations.

RISK

PRC intelligence collection against Council officials. NAF diplomatic pressure over Darwin Forward coordination. Pangolin operatives in civilian clothes working the commercial district.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

PFZ security force + Corsair rapid reaction in harbor. Outer districts: community self-governance, no PFZ presence after 2200.

ECONOMY

Old City salvage dives (unlicensed), black-market elevation documents, gene-forged Drift support networks, harbor after-hours.

RISK

Elevation migrant unrest in outer districts when rationing hits. Shinkai Collective operatives moving through the city on tasks unconnected to their research center cover. The security detail following the Council member operates after dark.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Old City at 0600 through harbor water so clear you can see the street signs — still readable after twenty years, the traffic indicators pointing in directions that no longer exist, one light that still cycles green-yellow-red-green every 47 seconds, powered by something on the drowned grid that has outlasted everything else. Above the water, a FLOATPACK-laden market vendor sets up her stall without looking down. The Scatter-born don't look down. That's how you know.

FACTIONS PRESENT

PFZ / CRIMSON CORSAIRS

Administrative governance through the Maritime Council. Corsair rapid reaction staged in the harbor. Security details on Council members. The informal

gene-forged network runs through off-duty Corsair personnel in the harbor district.

PRC / SCATTER INTELLIGENCE

Commercial presence as cover for Pangolin intelligence collection. Three contacts run simultaneously in the commercial district. The commercial attaché at the trade reception is real. The two assistants are not.

SHINKAI COLLECTIVE

Research center in the harbor district. Surface node in the independent deep-water communications network. A researcher meeting a Council member off the official schedule.

NAF / DARWIN FORWARD

Diplomatic presence. Two staff at the trade reception. Quiet coordination with PFZ on cable infrastructure security that neither side discusses publicly.

CIVILIAN NEED

Water. The outer districts need clean, stable, unrationed water for 4,000 people who have been asking through every legitimate channel for eight months. The community leader organizing the ask is a retired Corsair veteran in Stage 3 Drift who understands exactly how much time he has.

OPERATOR ACCESS

PFZ administrative documentation, all-faction contact access, harbor market commercial cover, Corsair informal network introductions, Old City dive access (licensed or otherwise), elevation migrant community introduction through Bagas Santoso.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A PFZ Council official requests a private meeting. She has documentation of the undisclosed cable access agreement. She wants it in the right hands before she is transferred in four days.
- A PRC commercial attaché invites operators to a trade reception. Other guests include two NAF diplomatic staff and a Shinkai Collective researcher who is not there for the food.
- An elevation migrant community in the outer district has organized around a leader with military experience. PFZ security is calling it a public order situation. The community is calling it asking for water.
- A Corsair gene-forged operator is in the city's Drift support clinic — off duty, unregistered, Stage 2, declining to discuss it with the PRC medical team that holds official clinical authority over PRC gene-forged operators in the Scatter.
- An Old City dive guide offers operators an unofficial tour. The site she wants to show them is not on any permit registry and is not in the former residential grid.
- The Shinkai Collective researcher from the Makassar Crossing incident is in New Batavia. She is meeting a PFZ Council member. The meeting is not on the official schedule.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- Outer district rationing triggers a gathering that is not quite a protest yet but is moving in that direction. The community leader is present. He is managing it. Barely.
- A dive team surfaces in the harbor with a piece of pre-Upheaval equipment from the Old City. One component is labeled with a Lumicite research facility designation.
- A Shinkai Collective submersible surfaces at an unauthorized point on the harbor's southern margin. The crew does not disembark. They are waiting for someone.
- PFZ security is following someone through the city — discreetly, but operators good at this work can see it. The target appears to be the Council official with the agreement documentation.
- A gene-forged Pangolin in civilian clothes moves through the market district, collecting from three separate drop points. The GRIDSEED traffic in the market reroutes around him as he moves.
- A message arrives from an address operators don't recognize. It contains current Arafura shelf coordinates and the words: "Before they do."

RUMORS (1D6)

- The Council member who negotiated the cable access agreement did it alone. The rest of the Council doesn't know. What she received in return isn't in the agreement text. [TRUE]
- The Old City dive guides who run the unofficial tours are Shinkai Collective affiliates. Two of them. The Collective's interest in the drowned grid predates their Arafura survey. [TRUE]
- The outer district rationing schedule is algorithmically generated. The algorithm's weighting factors include residency permit priority class, which means elevation migrants always lose power first. Nobody programmed it that way deliberately. Nobody has changed it. [TRUE]
- PFZ security is following Councilor Wibowo because she accessed the classified Arafura survey data three times in the last week. The security detail reports to someone on the Council. Not the chair. [PARTIALLY TRUE]
- The cycling traffic light on the drowned grid is connected to a power source that predates PFZ infrastructure. The dive guides know its location. None of them will take you there without introduction. [TRUE]
- The PRC commercial attaché's trade receptions are intelligence collection events. The guest list is the product. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

COUNCILOR LARAS WIBOWO

PFZ Maritime Council, Infrastructure Portfolio

CAN GET The cable access agreement document (partial), Arafura survey data access (partial), New Batavia infrastructure funding models that make the Lumicite disclosure inevitable.

WANTS The agreement made public before the next cable maintenance window. She has been unable to do this through Council channels because the channels are controlled by the member who negotiated it.

FEARS That she has been followed for six days and the person following her is good enough she can't confirm it. And that the infrastructure models she has been building prove the city's funding crisis is past the point of resolution without the Lumicite disclosure.

CURRENT PRESSURE A Council vote on "infrastructure development partnerships" — language that formalizes the cable agreement without disclosing it — is scheduled four days from now. She has that long to decide whether to break consensus publicly.

CORSAIR (RETIRED) BAGAS SANTOSO

Elevation migrant community leader, Stage 3 Drift

CAN GET Corsair tactical knowledge, Scatter navigation that doesn't touch PFZ registered channels, gene-forged informal network contacts across PRC and PFZ programs, introduction to the dark maritime routes.

WANTS Water access for 4,000 people in the outer district. Clean and stable. Not rationed. Not conditional on permits they cannot get.

FEARS What he is becoming. What he might do if the water keeps getting cut. The episodes are coming closer together and the lucid windows between them are shrinking.

CURRENT PRESSURE A PFZ security team visited the district yesterday. They weren't there about water. They were mapping the community's organizational structure. He recognized the methodology because he used to run it.

DIVE GUIDE SARI HARTONO

Unlicensed Old City dive operator, Shinkai Collective affiliate

CAN GET Old City grid access through routes not on any PFZ survey, the cycling traffic light's location, pre-Upheaval infrastructure mapping below the harbor, introduction to the other dive guides.

WANTS Someone to explain what the dive guides have been finding in the lower grid — formations that aren't structural, readings that aren't geological, a sealed sublevel that the Shelf is built directly above.

FEARS The Shinkai researcher who debriefs her. The questions have been getting more specific. The researcher knows what Sari has been finding before Sari describes it.

CURRENT PRESSURE

A PFZ harbor security team pulled her dive log last week. The log she gave them is not the log she keeps. The real log has the sublevel coordinates.

NODE 2 MAKASSAR CROSSING

JAVA SEA CHOKEPOINT — CABLE NODE CLUSTER

SECURITY	active — PFZ Corsair patrol + PRC platform security, dual coverage
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (PFZ monitoring station) / purpose-built (PRC platform) / degrading (cable nodes at 73%)
CIVILIANS	sparse — logistics workers, platform crews, monitoring station staff
SURVEILLANCE	comprehensive, both sides, full overlap — no unmonitored communication in the approach zone
FACTION PRESSURE	PFZ surface / PRC platform / six-year deterrence standoff
CONTAMINATION	seabed corrosion agent (introduced, slow-acting, disputed attribution)
BLACK MARKET	light — electronics, cable access hardware
MOBILITY	open water / restricted 500m node approach zones / PRC platform exclusion perimeter

FUNCTION The physical chokepoint where PFZ maritime sovereignty over the cable infrastructure meets PRC's need to access it. Every negotiation about the Scatter ultimately returns to this strait. The cable node cluster sits on the seabed at the narrowest navigable point. The PFZ built a monitoring station on the nearest elevated island. The PRC built a commercial logistics hub on a platform five kilometers away. They have been watching each other across that water for six years. The distance is close enough for optics and too far for conversation.

CONTROLLER	PFZ officially controls the water and the node. PRC controls its platform and the SIGINT capability trained on the node. In practice, neither controls the strait — they share it under a deterrence arrangement that is one incident from collapse. Lt. Soekarno commands the PFZ monitoring station. She has been filing anomaly reports without receiving responses for four months. She has started keeping a second set of logs.
DRAW	• The only legitimate access point to cable node telemetry — the data that shows what is actually flowing through the Scatter's information infrastructure. • Lt. Soekarno's anomaly logs — filed without response, accumulating evidence of something happening at the cable nodes that the official system has decided not to address. • The maintenance diver's artifact — something from the seabed that isn't cable infrastructure and that she won't explain until someone she trusts asks. • The strait itself — every faction's maritime traffic passes through here, and most of it leaves a record.
RISK	• PRC SIGINT covers all communications in the approach zone. Unmonitored conversation is essentially unavailable in the strait. • The PRC platform's commercial cover was dropped internally six months ago — security posture is now military. • Unauthorized approach within 500 meters of the node cluster triggers Corsair response. • Three of six cable node clusters are operating at 73% capacity due to seabed corrosion that the PFZ maintenance team was pulled from addressing. The PRC has detected the degradation. They have not told the PFZ. • Seabed drones from the PRC platform run mapping passes of the cable node cluster at night — four times this week.
SCARCITY	• Legitimate node access — tightly controlled, PFZ council authorization required for any direct cable work. • Deep-water seabed clearance — requires permits nobody is granting while the security situation escalates. • Unmonitored communication — the strait is the most surveilled piece of water in the Scatter.

UNDER-SYSTEM

Three of the six cable node clusters are operating at 73% capacity due to seabed corrosion. The PFZ maintenance team that should have addressed this six months ago was pulled for security concerns. The PRC SIGINT operation has detected the degradation and has not told the PFZ. The corrosion is not ecosystem growth — it is a slow-acting agent introduced during a maintenance window two years ago. Attribution is disputed. The cable node's seabed readings show resonance patterns consistent with Lumicite. Nobody has connected the resonance to the corrosion yet.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A cable node failure drops PRC financial data routing by 31% globally. The PRC's response is not diplomatic. The PFZ, which caused the failure through maintenance neglect, faces the choice of admitting neglect or allowing the PRC to characterize it as sabotage. Both options are bad. The PRC platform's military function activates. Lt. Soekarno's replacement arrives in eleven days with a reputation for accommodation. The window for action at this node is her watch.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PFZ Monitoring Station + Corsair patrol circuit. Station crew of twelve. Lt. Soekarno commands the watch.

ECONOMY

Vessel transit logging, cable maintenance operations, PRC platform commercial cover activity (cargo transfers that are real but not the point).

RISK

PRC SIGINT collection on all communications. Vessel traffic creating cover for insertion teams. The PRC commercial vessel with the 800kg manifest discrepancy.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Automated systems + reduced crew on both sides. The strait runs on sensors after dark.

ECONOMY

Unauthorized vessel transits during reduced patrol coverage. Deep-water Shinkai Collective activity that surfaces on no one's log.

RISK

PRC platform launch of seabed survey drones toward cable nodes — the fourth time this week. A Corsair night patrol reporting a contact in the water near the node approach — gene-forged movement profile, not Corsair, not PRC stock.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A PFZ Sea Eagle operative perched on the monitoring station's upper deck at dawn, watching the PRC platform through optics that weren't designed for anything that has to blink, while the platform's sensors track her tracking them — two pieces of expensive surveillance equipment staring at each other across five kilometers of glittering water, each one logging the other's position at intervals calibrated to demonstrate that neither has stopped paying attention.

FACTIONS PRESENT

PFZ / CRIMSON CORSAIRS

Monitoring station operations, Corsair patrol circuit, cable node maintenance authority. Lt. Soekarno running the watch with anomaly logs that nobody upstream is reading.

PRC / SCATTER INTELLIGENCE

Makassar platform — military installation under commercial cover that was dropped internally six months ago. SIGINT trained on the cable nodes. Seabed drones deployed nightly.

CIVILIAN NEED

The monitoring station crew and the platform workers share a strait that both sides have militarized around them. The logistics workers who transit the strait daily have learned to read the security posture changes the way other people read weather.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Cable node telemetry data, Corsair patrol schedules, PFZ anomaly logs, strait transit records, maintenance diver's artifact (if trust is established), seabed approach maps, PRC platform activity patterns.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A PRC commercial vessel requests emergency maintenance stop at the PFZ monitoring station. The manifest lists spare parts. The cargo weight is 800 kilograms over manifest.
- A Corsair aerial team intercepts a vessel with no transponder running the cable node approach zone. The crew claims navigation failure. The vessel has military-grade seabed mapping hardware.
- A Shinkai Collective research vessel docks at the PFZ monitoring station requesting data access that requires Council authorization they don't have.
- A PFZ maintenance diver surfaces early and won't say what she found. She asks to speak to someone outside the chain of command.
- The PRC platform broadcasts a technical emergency request for strait transit — a vessel launch that would pass directly over the cable node cluster.
- An operator's communications intercept picks up a data fragment in a PRC encryption standard from a source that shouldn't be in the strait.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- Six seabed drones from the PRC platform running a mapping pass of the cable node cluster. This is the fourth time this week. Lt. Soekarno is documenting but not interdicting.
- A Shinkai Collective submersible surfaces at an unregistered point between the node and the PRC platform. The hull configuration matches nothing in the Corsair's recognition database.
- A vessel launches from the platform with no logged destination, running dark. Corsair patrol tracking loses it against the strait's thermal layer.
- The monitoring system triggers an anomaly alert — the seabed beneath three clusters shows resonance readings consistent with Lumicite.
- A Corsair night patrol reports a contact in the water near the node approach zone — gene-forged, based on movement profile. Not a Corsair. Not PRC stock. Something else.
- The maintenance diver who surfaced early is gone from the station. Her dive log shows she went back in. Alone. At 0230.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The cable node degradation is not ecosystem growth. It is a slow-acting corrosion agent introduced during a maintenance window two years ago. The PRC knows who did it. [PARTIALLY TRUE — corrosion is real; attribution is disputed]
- The Shinkai Collective's research permit for this zone covers a seabed area that includes the Lumicite anomaly. They knew before the survey. [TRUE]
- The PRC platform has been operational as a military installation for eighteen months. The commercial cover was dropped internally six months ago. No one told the PFZ. [TRUE]
- A Project Amaterasu test run used this strait's cable infrastructure as a communications relay. The PFZ monitoring station recorded the traffic without recognizing it. The log is still in the system. [TRAP — log exists; the Amaterasu interpretation is PRC intelligence planted to discredit PFZ monitoring capability]
- The maintenance diver found something on the seabed that wasn't cable infrastructure. She brought a piece of it up. She has it. [TRUE]
- The PFZ Council has a private agreement with the PRC for supervised cable node access, negotiated eighteen months ago and never disclosed to the Corsair field units. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

CORSAIR LT. RIMA SOEKARNO

PFZ Monitoring Station watch commander

CAN GET Real-time cable node status data, Corsair patrol schedules, the anomaly logs the station has been filing without receiving responses to, strait transit records for the last six months.

WANTS Someone to explain the anomaly readings. Not a cover story — an actual explanation from someone with the technical background to read seabed resonance data and tell her what it means.

FEARS That the PRC platform launch she authorized last week as a navigation emergency was exactly what she thought it was, and she approved it anyway because the alternative was an incident she couldn't manage alone.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her rotation ends in eleven days. Her replacement has a reputation for accommodation with PRC interests. She knows this. The anomaly logs will not survive the transition unless someone else has a copy.

TECH OPERATOR DIAN KARTIKA

PFZ maintenance diver, Makassar station

CAN GET What is on the seabed that isn't cable infrastructure. Seabed approach maps. The piece she brought up — a fragment of something that predates the cable installation and conducts in ways she cannot categorize.

WANTS To understand what she found before someone figures out she has it. A technical analysis from someone outside the PFZ chain of command.

FEARS The Shinkai Collective researcher who was at the station the day she surfaced early. The way that researcher looked at her — the recognition in it, as though the researcher already knew what Dian had found.

CURRENT PRESSURE	Her dive log has been accessed twice since she returned. Not by anyone on the station roster. She went back in at 0230 because the seabed readings she saw on the first dive changed between surfacing and logging. Something down there moved.

NODE 3 HIGH THIRTY — ELEVATION +30M — SCATTER-BORN COMMUNITY

SECURITY	community-enforced — no PFZ presence
INFRASTRUCTURE	self-built, maintained, expanding — off-grid
CIVILIANS	dense — Scatter-born, elevation-adapted, first generation of the new geography
SURVEILLANCE	minimal — no PFZ sensor net, no permanent faction presence
FACTION PRESSURE	PFZ nominal / EO commercial interest / gene-forged informal network active
CONTAMINATION	none — elevation advantage
BLACK MARKET	moderate — elevation permits, pre-Upheaval salvage, gene-forged informal support
MOBILITY	open — community-gate access

FUNCTION

The community built on the highest accessible elevation after the 2045 remapping — 30 meters, the number that survived. High Thirty residents are the first generation born into post-Upheaval geography. They do not mourn Old Jakarta. They have never seen it as anything other than a dive site. Their relationship to PFZ governance is pragmatic and conditional: the Council provides services, the community votes, and the arrangement holds as long as both sides consider it worth holding. The gene-forged informal network uses High Thirty as a relay point — Corsair, PRC, and NAF operators all know the address.

CONTROLLER	Community council — elected, practically minded, deeply connected to the Corsair informal network through the gene-forged veterans who retired here. Council Chair Sera Nakamura is Scatter-born, former maritime salvage, and increasingly concerned about the EO property acquisition pattern on the elevation margin. Not formally affiliated with any major faction. Consulted by all of them.
DRAW	• The only major Scatter hub with no permanent faction surveillance presence. Conversations that can't happen anywhere else happen here. • Gene-forged informal network relay point — cross-faction contacts, Drift support outside clinical channels. • The community's salvage knowledge of the drowned zones — the most comprehensive in the Scatter. • Off-grid communications that don't route through PFZ or PRC systems. • GRIDSEED propagation infrastructure for maritime-distance communication without faction relay nodes.
RISK	• EO commercial scouts have been buying property on the elevation margin — the acquisition pattern, when plotted, outlines the community's water infrastructure. • Three residents in Stage 3 Drift under community care with no clinical backing — two are Corsair veterans. • The community's off-grid status means no emergency response from PFZ security forces. • Pangolin intelligence collectors have been mapping the informal network through the community's commercial interactions. • The unrecognized communications frequency the community relay has been carrying for four months is a Void Walker signal.
SCARCITY	• Medical support for advanced Drift stages — the community's folk knowledge has kept three Stage 3 residents stable for two years, but stability is not treatment. • PFZ elevation zone permits for incoming migrants the community wants to accept. • Reliable communications that don't route through PFZ systems — the GRIDSEED infrastructure is aging.

UNDER-SYSTEM

High Thirty has three residents in Stage 3 Drift under community care. The community council has never formally reported this to PFZ health authorities. Two of the three are Corsair veterans. One of them — a former intelligence analyst — has moments of full cognitive clarity during which she provides information no civilian should have. The informal arrangement has held for two years on community goodwill and folk knowledge. It will not hold indefinitely. The Shinkai Collective researcher who visited yesterday offered a treatment protocol the community doesn't have.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A Drift event — a Stage 3 resident losing coherence in a public space. The community's response will be what it always is: contained, quiet, handled internally. The PFZ health authority investigation that follows will not be contained or quiet, and the informal network the community has been protecting will be exposed. The EO scouts who return after dark are not property scouts. They are mapping something the community hasn't identified yet.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Community council — visible, accessible, respected. Council Chair Nakamura handles disputes personally.

ECONOMY

Salvage trade, informal maritime consulting, gene-forged Drift support network, small-scale fishing, Scatter navigation services.

RISK

EO property scouts on the elevation margin. PFZ health authority spot inspections (infrequent but feared). Pangolin collectors mapping the informal network through commercial cover.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Informal — community watch rotation, gene-forged residents on natural night-vision schedules.

ECONOMY

Off-grid communications relay, Drift support sessions, salvage planning for unauthorized Old City approaches, GRIDSEED maintenance.

RISK

Stage 3 episodes in the care community. The EO scouts who come back after dark are not property scouts. The unrecognized frequency on the communications relay is active and has been carrying Void Walker traffic for four months.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A retired Sea Eagle gene-forged sitting on the highest point of the community's water tower at dusk, watching the harbor lights of New Batavia 12 kilometers south, while three Scatter-born children below her argue about whether the moving light on the water is a Corsair patrol or a Shinkai submersible — a debate they have honed over years of observation into something that is almost always right.

FACTIONS PRESENT

GENE-FORGED INFORMAL NETWORK

Cross-faction relay point. Corsair, PRC, and NAF gene-forged veterans all know the address. Drift support operates here outside any clinical system.

EO COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

Property acquisition scouts mapping the elevation margin. The acquisition pattern outlines the community's water infrastructure. Their night visits involve survey equipment.

CIVILIAN NEED

The Stage 3 residents need treatment the community doesn't have. The community needs the Stage 3 residents to stay under community care, not PFZ institutional processing. These needs are incompatible and the window is closing.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Off-grid communications, gene-forged informal network introduction, drowned-zone salvage maps, unmonitored meeting space, GRID-SEED infrastructure access, Corsair informal network contacts, Drift management folk protocols.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A community council member asks operators to look at an EO property acquisition map. The pattern — when plotted — outlines the community's water infrastructure.
- A Stage 2 Corsair veteran asks operators to carry a package to the Makassar monitoring station. He won't say what it is. The weight suggests electronics.
- An incoming elevation migrant has PRC intelligence markings in their biometric register — faint, a year old, but there. The community gate operator noticed. The migrant doesn't know she's been flagged.
- A Scatter-born teenager has been doing unauthorized dives in a section of the Old City the community considers off-limits. She found something and she hasn't told anyone.
- A Shinkai Collective researcher shows up without appointment, asking for introduction to the informal gene-forged network. She has a Drift management protocol the network doesn't have.

- The community's off-grid communications relay picks up a transmission fragment in a frequency the council doesn't recognize. They want someone to identify it.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- A Stage 3 resident is experiencing an episode. The community response team is handling it. They would like operators to not be here right now — or to be completely trustworthy. Those are the only options.
- Three people arrive by water with no transponder and no introduction. The community gate operator lets them through because one of them has a Corsair gene-forged marker she recognizes.
- An EO commercial scout is still on the elevation margin after dark. He is photographing the water infrastructure access points. His equipment is not commercial-grade.
- The communications relay picks up the same unrecognized frequency. This time it includes a coordinate set — the Arafura shelf.
- A Corsair veteran who should be at Darwin Forward is here, asking about the missing research vessel in terms that suggest he knows more about its current location than he's saying.
- Something surfaces in the water below the community — larger than a Shinkai submersible, holding position, not signaling. The children on the water tower see it first.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The EO property acquisition pattern is not about real estate. EO is mapping the drowned utility corridors beneath the elevation — infrastructure that connects Old City foundations to current New Batavia systems. [TRUE]
- One of the Stage 3 Drift residents has moments of full cognitive clarity that the community has never reported because what she says during those moments is information no civilian should have. She was a Corsair intelligence analyst. [TRUE]
- The teenager doing unauthorized Old City dives found an access point to a pre-Upheaval tunnel network that runs under the current harbor. The community council knows about the network. [UNCLEAR — network exists; access point disputed]
- High Thirty's community council has been in contact with the Prometheus League for eighteen months. The contact is about Drift treatment, not politics. [PARTIALLY TRUE]

- The unrecognized communications frequency is a Void Walker relay. High Thirty's position makes it a natural relay node. The community has been unknowingly carrying their traffic for four months. [TRUE]
- The gene-forged informal network at High Thirty has a copy of the Corsair patrol schedules — current, not historical. Someone inside Corsair command is feeding them. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

COUNCIL CHAIR SERA NAKAMURA

High Thirty community council, Scatter-born, former maritime salvage

CAN GET Off-grid communications access, gene-forged informal network introduction, drowned-zone salvage maps that don't appear in PFZ permit registries, community meeting space for conversations that cannot happen elsewhere.

WANTS EO gone from the elevation margin. She will trade a lot for that. The acquisition pattern she plotted three weeks ago keeps her awake because it means someone has mapped her community's infrastructure from the outside.

FEARS The Stage 3 residents. What happens to them if PFZ health authority comes in. What she's been doing to prevent that, and what it has cost the community's relationship with the Council.

CURRENT PRESSURE The EO property scout who was back last night was carrying survey equipment that measures subsurface utility corridors. She knows what the acquisition pattern means now. She has four days before the next EO filing deadline.

VETERAN OPERATOR 'TIDAL'

Corsair (retired), Stage 2 Drift, High Thirty informal care community, former tactical intelligence

CAN GET Corsair informal network access, maritime routing outside PFZ registered channels, tactical intelligence analysis during clarity windows, the gene-forged network's internal communication protocols.

WANTS His Stage 2 to hold. A treatment protocol the community doesn't have. Time.

FEARS	The next episode. Whether he will still be himself after it. The Shinkai researcher who visited yesterday offered a treatment protocol — he doesn't trust her motivations, but he also doesn't have better options.
CURRENT PRESSURE	During his last clarity window, the former intelligence analyst in Stage 3 told him something about the Makassar cable nodes that he cannot verify from High Thirty and cannot ignore. The information has a shelf life.

NODE 4 THE SHELF

BUILT OVER DROWNED JAKARTA — LOW-TIDE ROOFTOP MARKET

SECURITY	PFZ nominal / community enforcement by Shelf operators' coalition
INFRASTRUCTURE	improvised — layered over Old City rooftops, stable in dry conditions, lethal in surge
CIVILIANS	dense — traders, salvagers, elevation migrants, off-register arrivals
SURVEILLANCE	gaps — PFZ sensor coverage inconsistent over the drowned grid; below waterline, zero
FACTION PRESSURE	contested — PRC Pangolin drops, Corsair informal contacts, Shinkai equipment trades
CONTAMINATION	unknown below waterline — rhythmic pulse from below the platform is uncharacterized
BLACK MARKET	heavy — salvage goods, off-register permits, Drift tech, cable access hardware, information
MOBILITY	open by boat / restricted to those who know the access ladders / lethal in surge

FUNCTION	The commercial layer built directly on top of drowned Jakarta — platforms, walkways, and market stalls anchored to former rooftops, connected by ladders that descend at low tide to Old City streets still readable below the waterline. The Shelf is where the Scatter's informal economy operates: salvage goods, off-register elevation permits, gene-forged Drift management outside clinical channels, cable access hardware, and the kind of information that cannot be transacted at the registered markets. If it exists in the Scatter and someone wants to move it quietly, it moves through here.
CONTROLLER	No single controller. PFZ security patrols the surface market with light coverage. The Shelf operators — a coalition of salvage crews, market holders, and informal gatekeepers — maintain their own order on everything below the waterline. The gatekeeper known as Koli has been on the central market platform for twelve years and has recently discovered that the anchor bolts beneath his platform connect to something that isn't structural.
DRAW	• The only place in New Batavia where you can buy something without a logged transaction. • Working relationships with Corsair informal network contacts, Shinkai equipment traders, and PRC-adjacent tech vendors who need a surface for transactions that can't appear in commercial records. • Old City access through the gatekeeper network at low tide. • The central platform — built on a pre-Upheaval research facility rooftop — where the most sensitive transactions happen above something nobody has investigated.
RISK	• Surge events — storm surge covers the lower Shelf in minutes, and the access ladders become lethal in current. The improvised evacuation system was not built by anyone with engineering authority. • PFZ security sweeps are infrequent but thorough when they happen — 20 minutes' warning through the gatekeeper network. • The PRC Pangolin network uses the Shelf's surveillance gaps for drop exchanges. So does everyone else. • Reliable information about what is actually for sale versus what is bait — the Shelf's information economy has layers that reward established trust and punish new arrivals.

SCARCITY

• Trust — the Shelf's information layers mean what is offered to unknown operators differs from what is offered to known ones. • Surge-safe space — the platform positions rated for storm conditions are limited and expensive. • The gatekeeper's lower-access network — passage to the Old City through the platform is not available to everyone.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The former rooftop layer of the Old City that the Shelf is built on includes the roof of a pre-Upheaval building that satellite records show as a research facility. The Shelf operators built their central market platform on that rooftop. Twelve years in, gatekeeper Koli noticed that the platform's anchor bolts run into something below the concrete that isn't load-bearing structure. He has not investigated. He has not told anyone. He has started charging more for the platform space. His handheld sensor is reading something from below that makes him stand very still when he checks it at low tide.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A surge event hits while a significant number of operators and traders are on the lower Shelf access. The evacuation ladder system — improvised, unmaintained by any official body — is the only way up. The event reveals what the Shelf operators have in the lower spaces, who was there, and what the gatekeeper's platform anchor bolts actually connect to. A data fragment surfacing from the pre-Upheaval research facility references "sublevel access from rooftop installation." The platform above is the rooftop installation.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Shelf operators' coalition — visible market governance, fair-witness culture, disputes resolved quickly and publicly.

ECONOMY

Salvage goods, off-register elevation permits, Drift management tech, cable access hardware, maritime equipment, information brokerage.

RISK

PFZ security sweep (unpredictable frequency). Pangolin drop exchange activity in surveillance gaps. Surge weather watch — the lower Shelf access closes in conditions the market operators read by instinct.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Shelf gatekeepers — smaller number, more tightly controlled access, different price structure. Koli controls the central platform personally after dark.

ECONOMY

Information trades, off-book faction transactions, dive access to the lower Old City through the gatekeeper network, the transactions that can't happen in daylight.

RISK

Surge risk peaks after dark. PRC intelligence collection activity increases. The lower Shelf access, in the dark, with current, is genuinely dangerous. The rhythmic pulse from below the platform is strongest between 0200 and 0400.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Low tide at 0400 — the market surface empty, the ladders extending down into the lit murk of the Old City below, a salvage diver ascending with something that catches the light in a way metal doesn't, while gatekeeper Koli on the platform above writes nothing in his transaction log and the anchor bolts beneath him conduct something that has been conducting since before the water came.

FACTIONS PRESENT

PRC / PANGOLIN NETWORK

Using surveillance gaps for drop exchanges. Two operatives purchasing platform time at above-market rates for six weeks, scheduling during surge advisories. They are doing something during those windows.

CORSAIR INFORMAL NETWORK

Off-duty contacts transacting through the Shelf's information economy. The retired analyst at High Thirty sends verbal-only messages through this channel during clarity windows.

SHINKAI COLLECTIVE

An operative — not a researcher, operational profile — purchasing deep-water Drift management tech. The Collective doesn't run gene-forged operators in the Scatter. Officially.

CIVILIAN NEED

The elevation migrant families purchasing off-register permits on the Shelf need documents that will hold up at a PFZ checkpoint. Most of what's sold won't. The paper stock is wrong. Nobody at the Shelf points this out unless asked.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Off-book transactions for any faction with the right approach, drowned-zone access through gatekeeper network, cable access hardware, Drift management tech, information brokerage, central platform meeting space (surge-rated, high-value).

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A Shelf vendor is selling cable access hardware with a PFZ monitoring station serial number on the interior chassis. She claims she doesn't know where it came from. The claim is almost certainly false.

- A Corsair informal network contact approaches operators with a message — verbal only, no record. The sender is the retired analyst at High Thirty during a clarity window.
- A PRC Pangolin operative is completing a drop exchange in the Shelf's surveillance gap zone. The package is small. He notices operators noticing him.
- A salvager has recovered a data storage device from the lower Old City. She is trying to sell it without understanding what she has. Two other buyers are already at the table.
- A Shelf gatekeeper offers operators premium platform access for a meeting — private, no log, surge-rated structure. The price is high. The platform is the one with the anomalous anchor bolts.
- An elevation migrant family is trying to purchase an off-register permit. The document they're being offered is plausible but the paper stock is wrong. Nobody at the Shelf has pointed this out yet.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- PFZ security sweep — twelve officers, methodical, an hour away from the Shelf's central market. The gatekeeper network is moving things. Operators have twenty minutes to decide what side of the market they want to be on.
- A surge advisory comes in. The lower Shelf access teams have forty minutes to surface. One team hasn't come up yet. Their dive light is still visible 8 meters down.
- Koli is below the platform at low tide, in the Old City, with a handheld sensor. He is not a salvager. The reading he's getting is making him stand very still.
- A Shinkai Collective operative — not a researcher, operational profile — makes a quiet purchase from a Drift tech vendor. The tech she bought is for deep-water Drift management. The Collective doesn't run gene-forged operators. Officially.
- A data fragment from the pre-Upheaval research facility surfaces in a Shelf vendor's recovered tech haul. It is partial. It references "sublevel access from rooftop installation." The platform above is the rooftop installation.
- Something in the water below the Shelf is active — not surge, not biological — a rhythmic pulse that the Shelf's longest-resident operators recognize as something they have not heard in three years.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The gatekeeper's platform anchor bolts connect to a sealed pre-Upheaval sublevel beneath the research facility rooftop. The sublevel was above the

water table when the facility was operational. It is not above it now — but it is sealed well enough that it might still be dry inside. [TRUE]

- The cable access hardware with the monitoring station serial number was not stolen. It was sold. By a PFZ maintenance technician. To four separate buyers over six months. [TRUE]
- The Shelf's central gatekeeper coalition has been running an information brokerage for three years — collecting and reselling intelligence from every faction that transacts here. The PFZ knows and has allowed it to continue because the collected intelligence also flows to PFZ security. [PARTIALLY TRUE]
- The Shinkai Collective operative who bought Drift management tech is the third Collective operative in the Scatter with a gene-forged operational profile. The Collective's public position is that they do not run gene-forged field operators. [TRUE]
- The rhythmic pulse from below the Shelf is a Lumicite resonance signature. The pre-Upheaval research facility was studying Lumicite in the geological layer below coastal Jakarta. Some of it is still there. [UNCLEAR — resonance is real; source attribution is contested]
- The missing research vessel's original departure was from a Shelf-adjacent dock under a Shelf operator's registration. Koli processed the departure. He knows the vessel's last filed destination. He has not been asked. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

GATEKEEPER 'KOLI'

Shelf platform operator, twelve years on the central market, owner of the anomalous anchor bolt platform

CAN GET Off-book transactions for any faction with the right approach, drowned-zone access through gatekeeper network, the missing vessel's last-filed departure destination, Old City navigation through the lower grid.

WANTS An explanation for what his handheld sensor is reading from below the platform. He wants it from someone who won't immediately report it. Someone who understands that the answer might be worth more than the question.

FEARS That the answer is something he cannot unknow and cannot sell. That the PRC operatives who have been purchasing platform time during surge advisories already know what's down there.

CURRENT PRESSURE	Two PRC operatives have been purchasing platform time at above-market rates for six weeks. They schedule during surge advisories when the market clears and the lower access is underwater. He has started to understand what they're doing during those windows. The understanding has not made him feel safer.

SALVAGER AMARA PUTRI

Shelf vendor, recovered tech specialist, Old City diver

CAN GET	Pre-Upheaval equipment from the Old City — data storage devices, research facility components, infrastructure hardware that still functions. The data storage device from the Lumicite research facility designation.
WANTS	A buyer who understands what the data storage device contains and will pay accordingly. She knows it's valuable. She doesn't know why. Two other buyers are already at the table and one of them is PRC-adjacent.
FEARS	The dive she did last week. The lower grid — below the areas the regular salvagers work — had been disturbed. Something had been through there recently. Something large enough to displace sediment on the Old City streets.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The data fragment she recovered references the sealed sublevel below Koli's platform. She has not told Koli. She has not told the other buyers. She is deciding who to trust with the connection.

NODE 5 ARAFURA DEEP

SHINKAI COLLECTIVE RESEARCH ZONE — LUMICITE SHELF

SECURITY	Shinkai Collective controlled (deep-water) / PFZ Maritime Council nominal (surface)
INFRASTRUCTURE	Collective research platforms, bio-integrated submersibles, deep-water habitat modules

CIVILIANS	none — Collective researchers only, rotating teams, 24-hour survey coverage
SURVEILLANCE	dark zone — no faction sensor coverage at depth; NAF surface surveillance tracks vessel movement only
FACTION PRESSURE	all factions wanting access, none having it — PRC drones six hours out
CONTAMINATION	unknown — Lumicite behavior at depth exhibits properties the survey models didn't predict
BLACK MARKET	N/A at depth
MOBILITY	requires Collective cooperation or independent deep-water capability — approach corridors navigable but not publicly charted

FUNCTION

The partially surveyed Lumicite shelf in the Arafura Sea — the strategic endpoint that every operation in the Scatter is ultimately oriented toward. The Shinkai Collective has been here for three years under a PFZ research permit that was commercial cover for something the Collective hasn't fully disclosed. What they are finding, they are not sharing. The survey data exists in three copies: one with the Collective, one classified at PFZ Maritime Authority, one on a research vessel that went dark in the Timor Sea fourteen months ago. The deposit is the only confirmed stable Lumicite source in the Pacific. Stable under extraction — unlike the Lakefire Corridor.

CONTROLLER

Shinkai Collective — de facto control of the deep-water survey zone through equipment, presence, and a three-year operational investment no other faction can replicate on short notice. PFZ has the surface water above the shelf. No one has the shelf itself. Dr. Watanabe has the full picture and is deciding, for the fourth time this week, that she is not yet ready to tell anyone.

DRAW	• The only confirmed stable Lumicite deposit in the Pacific. Disclosure would end the Scatter's strategic balance overnight. • Dr. Watanabe's full survey data — including the secondary property no other faction knows about. • The Collective's independent deep-water communications network — five years operational, outside cable infrastructure, unmonitored. • Deep-water navigation capability and route knowledge that no faction can replicate short-term.
RISK	• Deep-water operations without Shinkai cooperation require equipment none of the major factions have pre-positioned in the Scatter. • The shelf's approach corridors are navigable but not charted publicly — the Collective controls access through knowledge as much as equipment. • Collective submersibles use biological camouflage profiles that make sonar tracking unreliable. • PRC seabed drones are six hours from the approach corridor. When they arrive, the shelf becomes contested. • The Lumicite behavior at depth — the secondary property — is doing something the survey models said it shouldn't be able to do.
SCARCITY	• The survey data itself — the only complete picture of the deposit's extent, stability, and secondary property. • Deep-water access without Collective cooperation — through the missing vessel or the PFZ classified archive, both actively contested. • Understanding of what the secondary property means — Dr. Watanabe is the only person with context.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Collective's three-year survey has found things that weren't in the original survey data — Lumicite behavior at depth that the initial survey didn't capture. Dr. Watanabe has the full picture. She is not certain what to do with it. It changes the deposit's strategic value in a direction she was not expecting, and not in a direction that makes disclosure simpler. The deposit sits directly under the maritime boundary between PFZ and Australian territorial waters. The survey permit boundary was drawn by someone who knew.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The Collective's deep-water team encounters a faction insertion at the shelf — PRC seabed drones from the Makassar platform, or a NAF deep-water team from Darwin Forward using the classified annex. The Collective's response capability at depth is not military. If insertion succeeds, whoever gets the full survey data gets the strategic picture Dr. Watanabe has been protecting — without the context she has been carefully building. The secondary property becomes a surprise rather than a managed revelation.

DAY

AUTHORITY

No meaningful distinction at operational depth. Surface: PFZ Maritime Council nominal, not enforced. Deep: Shinkai Collective practical control through equipment and route knowledge.

ECONOMY

Survey operations, deep-water research, Collective internal logistics. No commercial activity at depth.

RISK

PFZ permit challenges from the surface. NAF and PRC surveillance platforms tracking Collective surface vessel movement. The gap between what's visible from the surface and what's happening at 340 meters.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Collective survey schedule is continuous — rotating teams, 24-hour coverage. The depth makes day/night irrelevant. The pressure makes everything else irrelevant.

ECONOMY

Survey operations continue. The Collective's independent communications network is most active during surface nighttime hours when satellite coverage patterns create transmission windows.

RISK

The things the survey data found that Dr. Watanabe is not sharing. PRC seabed drones transiting toward the approach corridor. Darwin Forward's extended surveillance pass over the shelf surface. The full survey data — all three copies — may be converging on the same location.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A Shinkai submersible at operational depth on the shelf — 340 meters, the water pressure beyond what standard equipment handles comfortably, the submersible's hull configured in a profile that local biology has spent three years learning to treat as non-threatening — holding position over a Lumicite formation that is doing something the survey models said it shouldn't be able to do, while Dr. Watanabe in the observation bay writes nothing in her research log and decides, for the fourth time this week, that she is not yet ready to tell anyone.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SHINKAI COLLECTIVE

Three-year operational presence on the shelf. Full deep-water survey capability. Dr. Watanabe leads the research team and controls the most complete copy of the survey data, including the secondary property nobody else has seen.

PRC (APPROACHING)

Four seabed drones launched from the Makassar platform on a heading consistent with the shelf approach corridor. Six hours out. The Collective's deep-water assets are repositioning.

NAF (OVERHEAD)

Darwin Forward's surveillance platform running extended passes over the shelf surface. What it has mapped from altitude is now in NAF classification. The classified annex gives NAF authority to act on "threats to cable infrastructure." The Lumicite shelf may qualify.

CIVILIAN NEED

The Collective's research team has been at depth for three years. Whatever Dr. Watanabe decides about the disclosure shapes their future — and she has not consulted them about what she is protecting or why.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Full survey data (conditional on Dr. Watanabe's trust), deep-water shelf access, Collective independent communications network, Drift management protocols, the missing vessel's actual location, the secondary property that changes everything.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- Dr. Watanabe surfaces at New Batavia requesting a meeting with operators. She has decided to trust someone with the full survey data. She has conditions. The conditions are not negotiable.
- A PFZ Maritime Council delegate is at the Collective's New Batavia research center requesting survey data access under the classified archive provision. The Collective's legal team is stalling. They have 72 hours.
- NAF Darwin Forward has filed a formal request through Australian maritime authority for an independent survey of the Arafura shelf. The filing cites environmental monitoring. The survey zone matches the Collective's operational area precisely.
- A Collective researcher has separated from the main survey team — voluntarily, based on her dive log. She has surfaced at an unauthorized point and is asking for pickup at a location that is not a Collective-registered position.
- The PRC Makassar platform has launched four seabed drones on a heading consistent with the Arafura shelf approach corridor. Transit time: six hours.
- Someone has the partial survey data — the copy from the missing research vessel. They are offering to sell it. The seller's identity and current location are unknown. The offer came through a Shelf gatekeeper.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- A Shinkai submersible surfaces at an unauthorized point in the harbor. The operator asks for Dr. Watanabe. Dr. Watanabe is not in New Batavia. Nobody knows where Dr. Watanabe is.

- Deep-water acoustic monitoring picks up an unidentified object on the shelf approach corridor — larger than any Collective submersible, moving slowly toward the survey zone.
- A message from Dr. Watanabe arrives through the Collective's independent communications network. The coordinates it contains are not the current survey zone. They are 60 kilometers west.
- PRC seabed drones have reached the shelf approach corridor. Collective deep-water assets are repositioning. The survey team on the shelf has 40 minutes before the drones arrive.
- Darwin Forward's night surveillance platform has been running an extended pass over the Arafura shelf surface for six hours. What it's mapped from altitude is now in NAF classification.
- The full survey data — all three copies — may be in the same place. The missing research vessel's location matches a coordinate in Dr. Watanabe's most recent communication. The vessel is 340 kilometers northwest of Darwin.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The Arafura Lumicite deposit is stable under extraction — unlike every other known deposit. This single property makes it the most strategically significant resource find since the Upheaval. The Collective has known this for two years. [TRUE]
- What the survey found that Dr. Watanabe is not sharing: the deposit has a secondary property that the initial survey didn't capture. The Collective's term for it has not been shared outside the team. [TRUE — nature unknown]
- The Lumicite deposit is directly under the maritime boundary between PFZ and Australian territorial waters. The survey permit boundary was drawn by someone who knew. [UNCLEAR]
- The Collective's independent deep-water communications network has been active for five years. Every major Collective communication in the Scatter has gone through it unmonitored. [TRUE]
- Dr. Watanabe and the missing research vessel's chief researcher were in the same graduate program. They have been in contact since the vessel went dark. She knows the crew is alive. She knows where they are. [TRUE]
- The PRC's Project Amaterasu deployment plan includes a post-deployment phase involving the Arafura shelf. The AI combat system's targeting architecture requires Lumicite-stable processing nodes. [PARTIALLY TRUE — dependency confirmed; specific application disputed]

CONTACTS

DR. KEIKO WATANABE

Shinkai Collective, lead researcher, Arafura survey

CAN GET The Arafura survey data (the Collective's copy, most complete), deep-water access to the shelf, Shinkai Collective independent communications network, the missing research vessel's actual location, the secondary property that changes the deposit's strategic value.

WANTS The survey findings handled by someone with enough reach to prevent any single faction from controlling the Lumicite disclosure. She has watched what happened in the Lakefire Corridor. She will not let it happen here.

FEARS That the missing vessel's copy of the data has already been accessed by Darwin Forward. That the secondary property she has not disclosed will make the situation more dangerous, not less. That three years of careful positioning will be undone in six hours by seabed drones launched from a platform that dropped its commercial cover six months ago.

CURRENT PRESSURE The PRC drones are six hours from the shelf approach corridor. After they arrive, her position changes from controlling the disclosure to surviving it. She is offering operators access to the full picture — with conditions she will not state until they demonstrate they can reach the shelf. The conditions involve the secondary property. The secondary property involves something the survey models said shouldn't exist.

NODE 6 DARWIN FORWARD

NAF STRATEGIC BASE — NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

SECURITY	lockdown — NAF military + Australian Defense Force perimeter
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable, NAF-spec, well-resourced — the best-maintained facility in the Scatter theater

CIVILIANS	sparse — base personnel, contractors, Darwin adjacent civilian strip
SURVEILLANCE	comprehensive NAF systems on base / Australian perimeter monitoring / jurisdictional seam at boundary
FACTION PRESSURE	NAF dominant / Australian government friction on jurisdictional edge cases
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	light — outside the wire, not inside; Darwin civilian strip handles the overflow
MOBILITY	open (military airfield, naval access) / restricted (base access requires clearance) / seam at perimeter

FUNCTION NAF power projection into the Scatter and the western Pacific. The installation that changes the PRC's operational calculus. Without Darwin Forward, PFZ military capacity cannot match PRC autonomous platforms. The deterrence balance ends. The Scatter ends with it — not immediately, not loudly, but structurally and irreversibly. The base also holds the classified annex to the NAF-Australia agreement, the missing research vessel's contractor records, and Sgt. Chen's surveillance data showing Project Amaterasu telemetry running through the cable infrastructure.

CONTROLLER NAF Aurora Ranger command on base. Australian Defense Force at the perimeter — a jurisdictional seam that creates operational gaps both sides manage awkwardly. The classified annex gives NAF unilateral authority for operations in specific escalation scenarios, including "threat to cable infrastructure integrity." The Australian officials who know this are working very hard to ensure the Makassar situation never officially reaches that threshold.

DRAW

• The classified annex — if obtained, changes every faction's operational calculus in the Scatter. • The missing research vessel's last registered contractor address is in Darwin Forward's base system. • Aurora Ranger Sgt. Chen has seen Project Amaterasu telemetry running through the cable data — surveillance evidence that the test has already begun. • The contractor network outside the wire — information brokers who know the price of every piece of access Darwin holds.

RISK

• NAF counterintelligence is active and not naive. The Aurora Rangers are the unit that held Neo-Toronto in 2065 — they know what competent operators look like. • The Australian perimeter is a seam, not a gap — ADF Cpl. Nguyen is paying attention and keeping real logs that differ from the NAF-integrated system. • Any operation publicly attributable to unauthorized access of Darwin Forward triggers the Australian political situation NAF is most afraid of. • The classified annex has already been used once — an operation publicly attributed to PFZ Corsairs. The Australian officials are in an increasingly uncomfortable position.

SCARCITY

• Legitimate base access — clearance-controlled and the vetting process has no expedited track. • The classified annex text — the most protected secret at Darwin Forward. • The missing research vessel's contractor records — accessed twice in 48 hours by two different users, flagged by an Australian archivist. • Project Amaterasu telemetry data that Sgt. Chen has seen and cannot un-see.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The NAF-Australia agreement's classified annex has already been used once — an operation publicly attributed to PFZ Corsairs. The Australian officials who approved the annex without full knowledge of its contents are in an increasingly uncomfortable position. The Shinkai Collective has a liaison at Darwin Forward operating under academic cover. They brief NAF intelligence quarterly. The PFZ does not know this relationship exists. The Arafura geological survey Darwin Forward's team filed six months ago confirms the deposit sits under the PFZ-Australian maritime boundary. The implications have been classified.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A NAF unilateral operation from Darwin Forward — conducted without Australian notification — becomes public. The Australian government's position becomes untenable. NAF loses its Australian basing access within 90 days of the revelation becoming a political crisis. The Scatter loses its counterweight. The PRC recalibrates. The timeline from Darwin Forward's political compromise to PRC operational dominance is months.

DAY

AUTHORITY

NAF Aurora Ranger command. The Australian parliamentary liaison conducts inspections — a politely adversarial ritual of mutual non-disclosure.

ECONOMY

Military logistics, intelligence operations, contractor support, Scatter-wide surveillance platform management.

RISK

Australian jurisdictional disputes. PRC intelligence collection against NAF technical staff. The PRC commercial vessel with a navigation emergency that Australian Maritime Authority approved over NAF objection.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

NAF security + Australian perimeter. The jurisdictional seam is widest after dark when handoff protocols rely on automated systems both sides configured independently.

ECONOMY

Darwin civilian strip outside the wire — contractors, operators, logistics workers, information brokers. The strip runs on the base's overflow economy.

RISK

The sector 7 breach record closed as equipment fault. The contractors with unmarked equipment loading at Darwin civilian port. The gap between what NAF records and what actually comes through the wire. Cpl. Nguyen's real patrol logs.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

An Aurora Ranger in full kit at the base perimeter at dusk, looking north across the Timor Sea at weather she knows is not weather — atmospheric disturbance consistent with NAF monitoring platforms that officially don't operate this far south — while an ADF corporal twenty meters away watches her watch the horizon and writes nothing in his patrol log. Both of them know the other is watching. Neither says anything. The arrangement has worked for six years on the understanding that not saying anything is the arrangement.

FACTIONS PRESENT

NAF / AURORA RANGERS

Base command, intelligence operations, surveillance platform management, Scatter-wide power projection. Sgt. Chen has seen Amaterasu telemetry in the cable data and is deciding what to do with it before her Drift assessment in eight days.

AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE FORCE

Perimeter security, jurisdictional boundary management. Cpl. Nguyen keeps real patrol logs that differ from the NAF-integrated system. The sector 7 breach was not equipment fault.

SHINKAI COLLECTIVE (COVERT)

Academic liaison briefing NAF intelligence quarterly. The PFZ does not know this relationship exists. The liaison has access to the Arafura geological survey.

CIVILIAN NEED

The Darwin civilian strip exists because the base does. The contractors and logistics workers outside the wire need the base to keep operating — and they need the Australian political situation to hold, because if NAF loses the base, the strip loses its reason for existing.

OPERATOR ACCESS

NAF surveillance platform data, the missing vessel's contractor records, Sgt. Chen's Amaterasu telemetry, the classified annex (if operators can get to it), ADF perimeter logs (through Cpl. Nguyen), Darwin civilian strip information brokers, Shinkai liaison introduction (if operators identify the cover).

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A NAF intelligence officer asks operators for contractor support on a task that falls into the classified annex's ambiguous escalation threshold. Officially, she cannot ask them. She is asking them.
- An Australian parliamentary liaison is on base for an inspection — a politely adversarial process both sides have choreographed into a ritual of mutual non-disclosure.
- A PRC commercial vessel has declared a navigation emergency requesting Darwin port access. NAF command says no. Australian Maritime Authority says yes. The vessel is in the harbor.
- A NAF technical team is working on a system that the Darwin Forward manifest doesn't list. The Australian liaison's escort route has been quietly adjusted to avoid the building.
- Aurora Ranger Sgt. Chen requests a meeting with operators outside official channels. She has seen something on a surveillance platform output she was not cleared to see.
- The research vessel that went dark fourteen months ago was last registered to a Darwin Forward contractor. The contractor's records are in the base system. An Australian archivist has flagged the file as accessed twice in 48 hours by two different users.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- Someone in the civilian strip is asking questions about the missing research vessel. Not subtle. Not NAF, Australian, or PFZ. The bartender has noticed. So has the contractor at the next table.
- A Corsair operator — off duty, civilian clothes, outside their normal operational range — is in the Darwin strip making contact with someone. The meeting is not coincidental.
- A NAF platform returns from a Timor Sea run with a logged mission that doesn't match the time it was gone. Four hours unaccounted.

- The Australian perimeter logs a breach — motion sensor, sector 7, no visual confirmation. The NAF response treats it as equipment fault. ADF Cpl. Nguyen is not satisfied with that assessment.
- Three contractors are loading unmarked equipment onto a vessel at Darwin civilian port. The vessel is registered to the same contractor company as the missing research vessel.
- A data packet arrives from an origin point consistent with deep water. It contains partial Arafura shelf coordinates and the words: "The Collective found it. Darwin knows."

RUMORS (1D6)

- The missing research vessel is not missing. It is anchored at a location that doesn't appear on civilian charts, 340 kilometers northwest of Darwin. The survey data is intact and onboard. [TRUE]
- The classified annex to the NAF-Australia agreement has already been used once — an operation publicly attributed to PFZ Corsairs. [PARTIALLY TRUE]
- Aurora Ranger Sgt. Chen has seen Project Amaterasu telemetry in the surveillance data — running through cable infrastructure, testing. [TRUE]
- An Australian official has a copy of the classified annex and is planning to leak it. NAF counterintelligence is aware. [TRAP — the "official" is an NAF counterintelligence asset testing leak attribution channels]
- The Shinkai Collective has a liaison at Darwin Forward operating under academic cover. They brief NAF intelligence quarterly. The PFZ does not know. [TRUE]
- The Arafura Lumicite deposit is directly under the maritime boundary between PFZ and Australian territorial waters. Darwin Forward's geological survey team filed a classified report on this six months ago. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

AURORA RANGER SGT. MAYA CHEN

Wolf template, Stage 1 Drift, Darwin Forward intelligence support

CAN GET NAF surveillance platform output data, the missing research vessel's last known position, the classified annex language around the cable infrastructure escalation threshold, Project Amaterasu telemetry evidence.

WANTS To understand what Project Amaterasu telemetry is doing in the cable data before it matters that she saw it. Someone outside her chain of command who can tell her what the data means without filing a report about who asked.

FEARS That asking the question officially puts her in a category of people whose questions get managed rather than answered. That her Drift assessment in eight days will not come back Stage 1.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her annual evaluation includes a Drift assessment in eight days. She is managing Stage 1. She is not certain she is still Stage 1. The telemetry she found in the cable data is the kind of discovery that ends careers — either because it's wrong, or because it's right.

CPL. JAMES NGUYEN

Australian Defense Force, Darwin Forward perimeter

CAN GET ADF perimeter patrol logs — the real ones, which differ from the NAF-integrated system — and the sector 7 breach record that was closed as equipment fault.

WANTS Someone to tell him what actually came through sector 7. Not a cover story. Not an equipment fault explanation. An answer from someone who treats the question as legitimate.

FEARS That he will report it officially and the answer will be that he saw nothing and the follow-on is a transfer request from NAF command. That the answer is something the classified annex was written to authorize.

CURRENT PRESSURE The contractors with the unmarked equipment were back last night. He has their vessel registration. The vessel is registered to the same company as the missing research vessel. He has been a corporal long enough to know what that pattern means.

THE SCENE **SPLICE PUNK — NEW BATAVIA**

MARITIME KIT CULTURE & SCATTER-BORN IDENTITY

New Batavia is maritime Splice Punk at its most fully realized: everything built around the fact that the ground moves, the map is wrong by definition, and the water between things matters more than the things themselves. The cultural DNA runs from Indonesian, Filipino, and Vietnamese street culture in the elevated former coastal communities — the aesthetic energy of people told their cities were gone who built different ones at higher altitude instead and kept the same market logic, the same kinetic density, the same capacity for improvisation that Southeast Asian urban culture always ran on — through PFZ port city trading culture where every faction moves cargo through the same facility and calls it neutrality.

FLOATPACK's buoyant carry systems are the central aesthetic object in a way that is true of no other location: the high-visibility tide-orange civilian variant and the matte-grey field variant coexist in the market district in a way that makes their distinction visible and legible to everyone paying attention, which in New Batavia is everyone. VEKTORA's orange-and-grey relay pylons appear on the artificial island infrastructure; their technician badges and lanyards circulate through the scene as dead credentials specific to this geography. GRIDSEED propagation infrastructure lets the scene communicate across maritime distances without faction relay nodes.

The Crimson Corsairs' maritime interdiction aesthetic — saltwater crocodile, sea eagle, and clouded leopard gene-forged who patrol the maritime lanes with the silence of something that learned patience from deep water — feeds into the civilian scene as the visual vocabulary of constraint-native motion: weight distribution for maritime traversal, quick-release for cable submersion, the kit profile of people whose range is defined by water rather than wall. Corsair operators off rotation in the harbor district move through the New Batavia market with a deliberate civilian affect that the scene reads immediately and correctly. The subdermal plating visible through a deliberate wardrobe gap at the collarbone. The low-light optics in hand-lettered eye covers that announce rather than conceal. Salt-corroded gear worn as field authenticity, not damage — the patina of equip-

ment that has been in open water and survived, which is the Scatter's specific version of the dead stack.

PRC Pangolin intelligence operators in civilian clothes collecting from three contacts simultaneously in the commercial district are less successfully subtle. The scene watches both, discusses neither, and routes GRIDSEED traffic around the Pangolins' collection pattern as a matter of standard precaution. The Corsair operators notice this and say nothing. The precaution is correct.

Dive-kit fashion is the scene's native contribution to the wider Splice Punk vocabulary: rebreather harness straps worn as external rigging over market clothes, depth gauge bezels as bracelet hardware, the specific salt-and-neoprene material culture of people whose daily life involves descending into a drowned city that used to be their grandparents' home and surfacing with things the water preserved. The Old City at 0600 through harbor water so clear you can read the street signs is the scene's defining visual. Corsair mark culture runs through the Scatter scene as the aesthetic of people whose territory is measured in nautical miles and whose presence is announced by the specific silence that precedes a boarding action. The mark is maritime. The mark is patient. The mark is salt.

08/

NEW BUENOS AIRES

NRD TERRITORY | EARTH 2066

Three governments claim it. One of them is correct, and it isn't the loudest one.

HUB OVERVIEW

New Buenos Aires smells like the river and construction dust and the specific fried-dough street food that survived every political reconfiguration in South American history. Sopaipillas and churros cooked on repurposed industrial heating elements in the Estuary District, the oil smoke mixing with estuary brine and the ozone tang of the Compact's sensor net running at full draw. The city is confident in a way that post-Upheaval cities generally aren't — the Compact's independence has lasted long enough that people born after 2045 treat it as a permanent fact, not a fragile achievement. That confidence is the thing the SCA and NAF most want to erode, and the thing the Compact's leadership most assiduously cultivates.

The old Buenos Aires is visible at low tide — the pre-flood city grid forty-five degrees off-alignment from the rebuilt highland city above it, as if the new one was deliberately turned to face a different direction. The drowned streets shimmer under two meters of clear estuary water at dawn, the old avenues still legible if you know what a porteno block grid looks like, and climate migrants who arrived in 2049 can describe both cities from memory. The city rebuilt itself in phases up the highland escarpment as the Rio de la Plata estuary expanded. Twenty years of architectural history visible in vertical cross-section: the oldest elevated districts at the top, the newest construction at the current flood line. Acoustic signature shifts with altitude — the highland Assembly Quarter carries the controlled quiet of administrative power and diplomatic protocol, while the Estuary District runs on the layered noise of market commerce, tide warnings, and the constant low hum of flood-management pumps cycling on schedule.

Temperature gradient runs from the highland's wind-scoured chill to the Estuary District's humid flood-line heat, and operators learn to read the altitude by feel within a week. The Patagonian wind comes down from the ridgeline beyond the Interior Gate and arrives in the city as a sustained presence that shapes everything from construction engineering to the way people stand at intersections — angled, shoulders forward, a posture as culturally specific as the forty-five-degree street grid below the waterline. The sky here is the biggest thing in any operational environment, open in ways that feel wrong after any other theater. The Compact's managed wilderness is genuinely beautiful, which is the kind of detail that makes experienced operators nervous.

OPEN KIT's modular clothing system is the dominant aesthetic object in the Basin — everything swappable, connected by standardized hardware available at any Ironweld surplus or SOLDER kit, nothing sewn to anything that doesn't need to be. Basin access cards and water allocation documentation — the most valuable identity papers in the southern hemisphere, still technically valid — become dead credential decoration here with a weight no other city's expired credentials carry: worn not because they expired but as a statement about what their continued validity actually means when you know the forty-year number. GHOST KIT JOURNAL production in New Buenos Aires is the highest volume of any single city in the OT world. The isolation creates writers. The subtext creates urgency. The city has been adapting continuously and remains itself. That is what it is most proud of.

CURRENT STRESS CONDITION

The Compact's negotiating position with both the SCA and NAF is built on an 80-year aquifer viability figure. The Compact's own hydrologists revised that figure to 40 years at current extraction rates, three years ago. Three Assembly members know. The revision changes everything about the Compact's independence negotiation. The Compact government has been sitting on it — and sitting on it is no longer a strategy, it is a delayed detonation.

The SCA renegotiation technical annex — scheduled for review in three weeks — references hydrological data inconsistent with the official 80-year figure. Someone has given them a number closer to the real one. Assembly member Dr. Valentina Sosa has been meeting with an SCA contact for six months. The NAF Aurora Ranger operating in the city without a logged mission has four days before her retrieval window closes. The interior communities have been planning around the real number for two years through a source nobody in the Assembly has identified. All of these clocks are running simultaneously. None of them know about each other.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

SECURITY	active (Compact Puma / Harpy Eagle units)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (highland) / strained (Estuary flood zone)
CIVILIANS	packed (4.1 million)
SURVEILLANCE	Compact sensor net (dense highland / intermittent flood zone / dark beyond Interior Gate)
FACTION PRESSURE	Compact-governed / SCA commercial & intelligence / NAF diplomatic & technical / Prometheus League (interior)
CONTAMINATION	none
BLACK MARKET	moderate (classified hydrological data, Compact citizenship docs, interior passage permits)
GENE-FORGED	Pumas, Harpy Eagles, Maned Wolves (Compact) / Jaguars, Caimans (SCA advance) / Wolves, Eagles (NAF Santiago-based)
MOBILITY	open (highland) / tide-dependent (Estuary) / checkpointed (Interior Gate)

DISTRICT MAP

DISTRICT 1	**HIGHLAND ASSEMBLY QUARTER**: Government / Diplomatic. The oldest elevated district. Compact Assembly, diplomatic missions, the city's formal political layer.
DISTRICT 2	**ESTUARY DISTRICT**: Lower Market / Old Grid. The most recent construction at the current flood line, where the old BA grid is visible at low tide and the informal economy breathes.
DISTRICT 3	**BUILDING FRONT**: Mid-Level Construction Zone. Twenty years of architectural history in cross-section. NAF technical contractors embedded in city expansion infrastructure.
DISTRICT 4	**ITAIPU LIAISON OFFICES**: Infrastructure Management Hub. The administrative nerve center for joint dam management — the Basin's most important piece of governance infrastructure.
DISTRICT 5	**PORTENO MARKET**: Commercial Hub. Trade, gene-forged informal network, SCA commercial presence, NAF technical contractors. The city's economic engine.
DISTRICT 6	**INTERIOR GATE**: The Dark Zone Access. Where the city ends and the deep Patagonian interior begins. The Prometheus League's entry point.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Who a city is for reveals itself through what it forbids and what it forgives. New Buenos Aires enforces three categories of control shaped by twelve years of navigating independence between two major factions.

Aggressively Enforced

Basin Access Card Registration: Every resident over age 14 must maintain active Basin access credentials. Failure triggers immediate administrative review and suspension of water allocation rights within 48 hours. The card is the most valuable identity document in the southern hemisphere. Losing it is losing citizenship in practice if not in law.

Itaipu Data Classification Compliance: Any hydrological data generated by Compact-employed scientists or contractors is automatically classified at the point of creation. Unauthorized disclosure triggers prosecution under the Compact's Resource Security Act — the only law in the Basin that carries a mandatory custodial sentence. Three Assembly members have been violating this law for three years.

Interior Passage Documentation: All vehicles and persons transiting the Interior Gate checkpoint must carry current passage documentation, cargo manifests verified by Compact logistics authority, and return timeline commitments. Enforcement is thorough but not hostile. The checkpoint inspector knows everyone who passes regularly. That knowledge is the surveillance.

Selectively Weaponized

Foreign Commercial Activity Audit: SCA and NAF commercial operations require quarterly compliance review. Applied universally in theory. In practice, the Compact triggers audits when it needs diplomatic leverage — the audit itself is the message, not the findings. NAF technical contractors have been audited eleven times in seven years. SCA commercial staff have been audited three times. The disparity is not an accident.

Climate Migrant Provisional Status Review: Post-2045 arrivals hold provisional citizenship subject to periodic administrative review. Reviews are routine. They are also the mechanism by which the Compact controls the Estuary District's labor force without openly acknowledging that the labor force is what keeps flood management operational. Triggering a review is how you remind someone who maintains the infrastructure who grants the permission to stay.

Gene-Forged Support Restrictions: Compact gene-forged medical and calibration services are restricted to faction-program operators. Independent gene-forged must source support through informal networks. The restriction exists to maintain neutrality across faction programs. The restriction is killing people in the Porteno Market who cannot access calibration through any official channel.

Feared Punishments

Basin Access Revocation: Permanent removal from the Compact's water allocation system. In a territory whose entire political existence is organized around freshwater access, revocation is civic death. It has been applied four times in

twelve years. Each application was justified. Each was also a message to everyone who heard about it.

Interior Exclusion Order: Prohibition on transit beyond the Interior Gate. Applied to individuals the Compact designates as security risks to the interior communities. The order removes access to everything south of the city — the deep Patagonian wilderness, the communities, the Prometheus League's operational territory. It is the Compact's way of cutting someone off from the future without admitting that the future is in the interior.

Diplomatic Expulsion: Formal removal of faction representatives from New Buenos Aires. Never applied. The threat of application is the Compact's most powerful diplomatic tool. The SCA and NAF both maintain their presence in the city because the alternative — being expelled and losing direct access to Itaipu joint management — is worse than any concession the Compact has demanded.

Civic Rituals

The Tide Reading: Every morning at 0630, the Estuary District's flood management authority publishes the day's tide schedule on physical boards at twelve locations along the waterline. Residents gather. The reading is not just logistics — it is a collective acknowledgment of the relationship between the city and the water, performed daily, and the crowd that gathers is the Estuary District's most reliable census.

Assembly Open Session: The Compact Assembly holds a public session every fourteen days. Attendance is not required. Attendance is universal among the political class and anyone who needs to be seen attending. The open session's real function is the informal meetings in the corridors before and after — the session itself is theater. The theater is the point.

Interior Gate Manifest Review: Every seven days, the Interior Gate checkpoint inspector publishes a summary of outbound and inbound traffic for the previous week. The summary is public. The summary is also the Compact's intelligence operation on interior movement, conducted in plain sight, because everyone who reads the summary is also reading what the Compact chose to include and what it chose to omit.

Water Allocation Ceremony: On the first day of each quarter, the Compact's water management authority formally certifies the Basin's allocation schedule for the next ninety days. The ceremony involves the Assembly chair, represent-

atives from the six Compact city-states, and the Itaipu joint management committee. It is the most politically significant quarterly event in the southern hemisphere. The ceremony's public-facing confidence is built on a number that is wrong by forty years.

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime in the Estuary District market after hours, the Porteno Market's commercial social zones, or the Highland Assembly Quarter's diplomatic reception circuits. Every result produces a new contact, a new debt, or a new exposure.

1 (Contact Made): A Compact Maned Wolf intelligence officer, off duty and three drinks into something she is not discussing, describes the cross-reference pattern the Interior Gate checkpoint log analysis has been building for eight months. She does not realize she has given operators enough to reconstruct the pattern's target list. She will realize it tomorrow morning.

2 (Feud Started): Operator says something — or is heard saying something — about the Basin's long-term water viability that reaches an Assembly staff member through the room's geometry. Nothing happens immediately. Next morning, the operator's Basin access card enters administrative review. The review has no stated timeline.

3 (Equipment Lost): Operator's secondary comms device is lifted at some point during the evening. It holds 72 hours of location cache. Whoever has it knows everywhere the operator has been, including the Interior Gate checkpoint approach they scouted yesterday and the Prometheus League frequency they received a signal on.

4 (Secret Learned): An SCA commercial staff member, cornered by social obligation at a Porteno Market reception, mentions that the renegotiation technical annex references a hydrological figure the Compact hasn't published. She catches herself. She changes the subject. The number she almost said is closer to forty than eighty.

5 (Debt Incurred): A climate migrant cooperative coordinator sits down with a proposition: she will provide Estuary District movement patterns, camera maintenance gap schedules, and tide-synchronized evacuation route timing in

exchange for one favor — undefined, redeemable within 30 days. She presents this as reasonable. She is correct. That is what makes it worth worrying about.

6 (Locally Recognizable): Operator does something — intervenes in a flood-zone evacuation, covers a family's document renewal fee, handles a confrontation between an SCA commercial staff member and a climate migrant vendor — that travels. By next morning, operator is the person the Estuary District's neighborhood associations mention when deciding whether to trust someone new. One faction network routes requests through the operator. The Compact's Maned Wolf intelligence unit now has a photograph.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Unidentified Hydrological Data Buyer

Someone has been purchasing classified projection fragments in the Porteno Market black market for four months. The Compact's intelligence operation has a physical description and a purchase pattern but no identification. The buyer is not SCA, not NAF, not Prometheus League. Their affiliation is the most significant unknown in the city's current intelligence picture. Whether they represent a fifth party, an internal Compact faction, or something the existing power structure has not imagined determines what happens when the projection surfaces.

The Interior Communities' Source

The deep Patagonian interior communities have had the classified 40-year projection figure for two years. The source has not been disclosed. The supplement identifies that the source connects to the Assembly in ways that would change the Assembly's assessment of the Prometheus League's intentions — but the specific identity, the specific connection, and the specific motivation are undefined. Whether the source acted out of conscience, calculation, or a third motive the table invents determines how the Assembly responds when the connection surfaces.

The NAF Contingency Plan's Author

The NAF Basin acquisition contingency plan exists in draft form. Secretary-General Vale has a copy. The three Assembly members named in it were not

cultivated by the NAF contact who drafted it — they were added to the plan by someone who wanted them implicated. The supplement does not identify who added them or why. Whether the additions were an internal NAF power play, an SCA false-flag operation, or an Assembly member's preemptive self-defense determines whose interests the plan actually serves.

The Assembly Member Blocking Fernanda's Meeting

One of the three Assembly members who knows the projection has been intentionally deprioritizing interior community representative Fernanda Quispe's meeting request. Not because he opposes the communities — because the communities' source for the 40-year figure connects to him. The supplement identifies the connection but does not define the relationship between this Assembly member and the source, or whether his blocking action is protective, self-serving, or both.

The Prometheus League's Interior Infrastructure

The League has been operating in the deep Patagonian interior for eight years. SCA and NAF reconnaissance teams have not found the League's actual operational infrastructure because it looks like community infrastructure — because it is community infrastructure. The supplement does not define where the line falls between League operations and community self-governance, or whether the communities view the League as partner, guest, or something they tolerate for reasons they have not fully articulated.

The Pre-Upheaval Underground Discovery

A construction crew in the Building Front broke through a sealed section of pre-Upheaval Buenos Aires's underground infrastructure. The Compact classified the discovery and assigned it to an office that has not acted. The supplement does not define what was found. Whether the sealed section contains pre-Upheaval hydrological data, infrastructure that changes the Basin's engineering picture, or something that predates the resource questions entirely is for the table to determine.

FACTIONS

SOUTHERN COMPACT

Assembly Administration / Compact Intelligence

OBJECTIVE Manage the hydrological projection's eventual disclosure without losing the independence the 80-year figure has been sustaining — specifically, find a path to voluntary disclosure that preserves the Assembly's credibility and doesn't give the SCA or NAF a negotiating advantage in the window between disclosure and renegotiation.

ASSETS Itaipu Dam joint management authority, aquifer access rights, 4.1 million city residents whose political confidence is itself a strategic asset, Compact Puma/Harpy Eagle/Maned Wolf intelligence units, twelve years of Basin governance infrastructure, the most sophisticated political mediation apparatus in the Southern Hemisphere.

DEPENDENCY The dam. The Compact's independence rests on neither the SCA nor NAF being able to unilaterally control Itaipu. The joint management framework was built for an 80-year scenario. It may not hold under a 40-year renegotiation.

VULNERABILITY The three Assembly members who know the projection. One of them is trying to surface it. She has been meeting with an SCA contact. The Compact's intelligence operation on the SCA contact's activities has not yet flagged the meeting. A second is blocking the interior communities' representative from reaching the Assembly. The third — Secretary-General Vale — has a copy of the NAF contingency plan he has been holding for eleven months.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Continue suppression: manage the SCA renegotiation technical annex as an anomaly, not an indicator. Maintain the 80-year public position.
- 2 — Selective disclosure to one party: offer the SCA or NAF the real projection in exchange for renegotiation terms that preserve the Compact's dam management authority.
- 3 — Voluntary disclosure: Assembly member Sosa surfaces the projection through official channels before an external leak forces it. Credibility cost is real but manageable.
- 4 — Disclosure under crisis conditions: the projection leaks through unauthorized channel simultaneously with SCA renegotiation. Credibility cost is total. Dam management framework is in play.

OFFER Aquifer access, dam management stability, the most sophisticated political mediation infrastructure in the Southern Hemisphere, Basin access card issuance.

DEMAND Non-interference with Itaipu joint management, respect for aquifer access rights, no unilateral extraction operations in Compact-licensed zones.

IF DAMAGED Compact independence failing doesn't reduce the aquifer's strategic value. It means the Basin enters a contested governance period in which the SCA and NAF compete for the infrastructure the Compact spent twenty years building. The 4.1 million people who built their confidence on Compact permanence discover it was built on a suppressed projection.

SCA PHANTOM VIPERS

Commercial Cover / Pre-Positioned Cell

OBJECTIVE Obtain the classified hydrological projection before the Compact's voluntary disclosure option closes, and position the cell for activation if the Compact's political structure destabilizes during the renegotiation.

ASSETS Pre-positioned cell in New Buenos Aires (four years), commercial cover infrastructure across the Porteno Market, cultivated Assembly contacts (three, over seven years — same three NAF has cultivated), the SCA renegotiation technical annex as leverage, Jaguar and Caiman gene-forged advance units in the region.

DEPENDENCY The Assembly member who has been meeting with an SCA contact. The SCA does not know which of their contacts she reached out to. They are trying to determine this.

VULNERABILITY The technical annex. It references data closer to the real projection than the official figure — someone gave the SCA a number, and that someone has given the SCA leverage they haven't fully exploited because they don't know if the source is reliable. The cell's commercial cover includes one member who is simultaneously a Compact intelligence asset — a double agent whose loyalties are genuinely unclear.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Source the projection through the commercial intelligence operation. Maintain cell dormancy.
- 2 — Use the technical annex as leverage in the renegotiation to force Compact acknowledgment of the 40-year figure.
- 3 — Activate the pre-positioned cell to secure access to Itaipu joint management staff during the renegotiation window.
- 4 — Activate the cell for full Basin acquisition operations if the Compact's political structure fails under renegotiation pressure.

OFFER SCA commercial network access, Amazonian Metroplex supply chains, gene-forged calibration support through SCA program channels, extraction to SCA territory.

DEMAND The classified projection document, Itaipu operational data, Assembly intelligence on the Compact's disclosure timeline.

IF DAMAGED The SCA losing New Buenos Aires intelligence presence loses their projection sourcing operation and renegotiation leverage simultaneously. Basin negotiations resume on the 80-year figure. The SCA knows the figure is wrong. They cannot prove it.

NAF AURORA RANGERS

Santiago-Based / Technical Infrastructure

OBJECTIVE Prevent the Basin acquisition contingency plan from activating while maintaining NAF's technical investment leverage — specifically, ensure that the Compact's political structure survives the projection disclosure rather than collapsing into a governance vacuum NAF would have to fill.

ASSETS Technical contractor infrastructure in New Buenos Aires (seven years), cultivated Assembly contacts (three — same three SCA has cultivated), Santiago hub, Aurora Ranger operational capacity, construction-phase camera network management, infrastructure backbone access at the connection phase.

DEPENDENCY The technical investment. NAF's Compact presence is built on infrastructure value, not military presence. If the Compact requests the Basin acquisition contingency, NAF activates. If the contingency activates without a Compact request, NAF is the faction that moved on a neutral city.

VULNERABILITY The contingency plan itself. It exists in draft form. The three Assembly members NAF has cultivated over seven years are named in it. If the plan surfaces, NAF's Compact relationships end. The Aurora Ranger currently in the city without a logged mission is carrying a current revision — and she came to prevent the contingency, not execute it.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Maintain technical investment leverage. Monitor projection disclosure timeline through contractor intelligence.
- 2 — Use technical infrastructure access to position for post-disclosure governance support.
- 3 — Aurora Ranger makes contact with Secretary-General Vale directly. Shares contingency plan contents to force a managed disclosure.
- 4 — Contingency activates: NAF technical infrastructure becomes governance infrastructure. The faction that built the city's construction backbone claims operational authority over it.

OFFER Technical expertise, construction infrastructure access, Santiago hub resources, the contingency plan's contents as political intelligence.

DEMAND Assurance that the Compact's political structure will survive disclosure. NAF's investment calculus requires a stable governance partner, not a power vacuum.

IF DAMAGED NAF losing New Buenos Aires technical presence loses the infrastructure embedded in the city's construction backbone. The Santiago hub remains. The direct leverage on Itaipu joint management staffing — built through seven years of technical contractor placement — cannot be rebuilt quickly.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

Interior Operations / Dark Zone Presence

OBJECTIVE Ensure the interior communities' independent water management framework is recognized by the Compact Assembly before the projection disclosure forces a Basin governance reset — specifically, make the interior communities' governance claim visible before the SCA or NAF can characterize the post-disclosure period as a power vacuum.

ASSETS Deep interior operational presence (eight years), interior community relationships, the classified aquifer projection (held by interior communities for two years), the only complete map of the Basin's water management infrastructure including unofficial components, Harpy Eagle and Maned Wolf gene-forged operating by rules the Compact officially cannot see, communications node in the Estuary District.

DEPENDENCY The interior communities' trust. The League's Basin operations run through communities that have chosen not to report their presence. This tolerance is not unconditional, and the communities' relationship to the Compact is about to become politically significant.

VULNERABILITY The source of the interior communities' projection data. The communities have had the 40-year figure for two years. The source — which the League has not disclosed to its own cells — connects to the Assembly in ways that would change the Assembly's assessment of the League's intentions.

ESCALATION LADDER

- 1 — Facilitate Fernanda Quispe's Assembly meeting through back channels. Keep interior governance framework visible without forcing the issue.
- 2 — Activate interior community representatives across the six Compact city-states simultaneously. Present the 40-year water management record as a governance achievement.
- 3 — Release the communities' independent hydrological data publicly. Force the Assembly to engage with the real Basin picture before the SCA renegotiation sets terms.
- 4 — Full interior network activation. The League's operational infrastructure and the communities' governance framework become publicly visible simultaneously. The Compact must respond to both.

OFFER Interior community access, the real 40-year Basin water management picture, operational freedom in the dark zone, the communities' distributed infrastructure as a governance model.

DEMAND	Assembly recognition of the interior communities' governance framework before the post-disclosure politics treats them as subjects rather than architects.
IF DAMAGED	The Prometheus League losing Basin operations loses the interior communities' independent governance framework its political champion. The communities become dependent on whichever faction fills the post-disclosure vacuum rather than the architects of a governance alternative.

HUB-LEVEL CONTACTS | WILDCARDS

COMPACT ASSEMBLY SECRETARY-GENERAL RODRIGO VALE

One of three who know the projection — the one who has been protecting it the longest

CAN GET	The classified projection document, the identity of the source that gave the interior communities the 40-year figure two years ago, the NAF contingency plan's draft (he has a copy — the NAF contact who gave it to him did not know he would keep it).
WANTS	A managed disclosure that preserves the Compact's credibility, the dam's joint management framework, and the interior communities' governance claim simultaneously. He believes this is possible. He is running out of time to achieve it.
FEARS	That Assembly member Sosa's SCA contact has already passed enough data to trigger the renegotiation technical annex, and that the technical annex will surface before his managed disclosure is ready.
CURRENT PRESSURE	He has known about the SCA contact meeting for six days. He has not confronted Sosa. He has been calculating whether confronting her accelerates or slows the disclosure. The calculation is not going well.

INTERIOR COMMUNITY WATER ENGINEER 'ALBA'

Deep Patagonian interior, 46th parallel autonomous network

CAN GET	The interior communities' complete water management infrastructure (the real 40-year Basin picture), the source of the communities' projection data, the Prometheus League's interior operational footprint (she works alongside them without being part of them).

WANTS	Recognition from the Compact Assembly that the interior communities' water management represents a governance model, not a governance gap — before the Basin's post-disclosure politics treats them as subjects rather than architects.
FEARS	That the Assembly will respond to the communities' independent management as a threat to Compact authority rather than a resource. She has seen this response before, from smaller factions, and it never ends well for the communities.
CURRENT PRESSURE	Community representative Fernanda Quispe has been in New Buenos Aires for three days and cannot get her Assembly meeting. Alba sent her. Alba is waiting for a report. The report hasn't come. The silence is becoming its own message.

DOWNTIME

WORK THE PORTENO MARKET

WHAT: Operators spend five days embedded in the Porteno Market as commercial traders or contractors, building cover through the specific social protocols of Basin commerce — the shared meals, the unhurried negotiations, the careful demonstration of knowledge about water allocation that marks someone as Basin-literate.

COST: Five days, a plausible commercial cover, one piece of genuine commercial intelligence to establish credibility.

GAIN: One of: the Phantom Viper cell's commercial cover identities (partial — two confirmed) / the hydrological data black market's current inventory / Caridad's gene-forged network introductions / the unidentified buyer's purchase pattern.

FALLOUT: The Compact's market intelligence operation logs operators' commercial activity. The cross-reference with Interior Gate traffic identifies a pattern inconsistency. An intelligence officer flags it. Three days later operators receive a friendly visit from a Maned Wolf operator who asks careful questions and listens to the answers with the patient attention of something that learned surveillance from the pampas.

EMBED WITH THE INTERIOR

WHAT: Operators spend seven days in the deep Patagonian interior, working with interior community water management infrastructure under the biggest sky in any operational environment, where the Patagonian wind is constant and the silence between gusts carries further than any comms signal.

COST: Seven days, introduction through Fernanda Quispe or the Prometheus League, willingness to work with your hands on distributed low-extraction water infrastructure that is more sophisticated than anything the Compact has built.

GAIN: Interior community network access (permanent), the 40-year water management picture the communities have built, the source of the projection data the communities have held for two years.

FALLOUT: The Compact Interior Gate checkpoint log shows operators' outbound transit. The cross-reference intelligence operation flags the pattern. NAF's Aurora Ranger has the same flag. SCA has a different flag. All three respond within ten days. The interior communities notice operators are being watched and begin calculating whether the attention is because of the operators or because of what the operators learned.

ACCESS THE ASSEMBLY

WHAT: Operators spend four days cultivating access to the Assembly Quarter's informal political network — the staff, the advisors, the people who do the actual work of Compact governance in the corridors before and after the open sessions, over meals in the quarter's diplomatic restaurants where the wine is Chilean and the conversation is never casual.

COST: Four days, a political reason to be in the quarter, willingness to engage with the specific social protocols of Compact governance — which require demonstrating Basin literacy, water management fluency, and the patience to let the people who know the projection decide whether you are trustworthy.

GAIN: One of: the classified projection document's location (but not the document itself) / the identity of Assembly member Sosa's SCA contact / the NAF contingency plan's existence confirmed (but not its contents) / Secretary-General Vale's assessment of the disclosure timeline.

FALLOUT: SCA Phantom Viper surveillance picks up operators' Assembly Quarter activity. The cell reports it as a possible third-party projection acquisi-

tion operation. SCA command assigns additional resources to identify operators' affiliation. The Compact's Maned Wolf intelligence unit, which has been watching the Phantom Vipers watch the operators, now has two surveillance operations to manage instead of one.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

Assembly Quarter | Political Intelligence (1d6)

- The classified hydrological projection exists. Three Assembly members have seen it. The 40-year figure changes every active Basin negotiation. One of the three is trying to get it out. [TRUE]
- The SCA's Phantom Vipers have a pre-positioned cell in New Buenos Aires that has been in place for four years, waiting for authorization. [TRUE]
- The NAF has a contingency plan for Basin acquisition if the Compact's political structure fails. It involves Santiago, technical infrastructure already in place, and three specific Assembly members cultivated over seven years. [TRAP — the plan exists in draft form; the Assembly members identified in the draft were not cultivated by the NAF contact who drafted it — they were added by someone who wanted them implicated]
- The SCA renegotiation technical annex references a hydrological figure inconsistent with the official 80-year estimate. Someone gave the SCA a number closer to the real projection. The source is inside the Assembly. [TRUE — but the source is not one of the three who knows the projection; it is someone who ran their own analysis and arrived at a similar conclusion independently]
- The interior communities have had the classified 40-year projection figure for two years, through a source they have not disclosed. Their water management decisions have been based on it. [TRUE]
- Assembly Secretary-General Vale has a copy of the NAF contingency plan. He received it from a NAF contact who did not intend for him to keep it. He has been keeping it for eleven months. [TRUE]

Porteno Market | Commercial Intelligence (1d6)

- Hydrological data fragments circulating in the Porteno Market black market are consistent with the classified projection's data format. Someone has been selling pieces of it for at least six months. [PARTIALLY TRUE — fragments are real; whether they come from the projection document or from independent analyses is disputed]

- The SCA commercial presence in the Porteno Market is managing a pre-positioned Phantom Viper cell's commercial cover. The commercial staff know they are providing cover. They do not know for what. [TRUE]
- The gene-forged informal network in New Buenos Aires is stronger than in any other Compact city because Compact independence means no single faction controls gene-forged support. Caridad has identified more Phantom Viper cell members than the Compact's intelligence operation. [TRUE]
- A Puma operator in Stage 2 Drift has been in the market for three days. She will not go to Compact medical services. She is approaching Stage 3. [TRUE]
- NAF technical contractors in the Porteno Market have been purchasing components with non-commercial applications for 18 months. The Compact's commercial inspector who flagged the pattern has been reassigned. [TRUE]
- The unidentified hydrological data buyer has been purchasing fragments for four months. The Compact's intelligence operation has a physical description and a purchase pattern but no identification. The buyer is not SCA, not NAF, not Prometheus League. [TRUE — and the buyer's affiliation is the most significant unknown in the city's current intelligence picture]

Interior Gate | Dark Zone Intelligence (1d6)

- The interior communities have been planning their water management around a 40-year aquifer timeline for two years. The Compact governance team does not know this because they have not asked. [TRUE]
- The Prometheus League's interior operational infrastructure is not in the locations the SCA and NAF reconnaissance teams have been looking. It is in the locations that look like community infrastructure because it is community infrastructure. [TRUE]
- A NAF Aurora Ranger is in the city without a logged mission and is heading for the interior. She is trying to reach the same interior community representative the Prometheus League operative is trying to reach. [TRUE — and neither of them knows about the other]
- The checkpoint log cross-reference intelligence operation has identified a pattern: seven different parties have transited the Interior Gate in the last eight months on manifests that are individually legitimate and collectively form a Prometheus League logistics chain. [TRUE — the Compact intelligence officer running the cross-reference is three connections from presenting this to Base Command]
- The interior communities' source for the classified aquifer projection was not a Prometheus League operative and not an Assembly member. It was a Compact hydrologist who gave it to a community water engineer in 2064 because she calculated that the communities would use the information to protect the aquifer rather than exploit it. [TRUE]

- The deep Patagonian interior south of the 46th parallel contains at least three communities whose independent water management infrastructure is more sophisticated than anything the Compact has built. The Compact's governance team has classified this as a governance gap. The communities classify it as a governance achievement. [TRUE — and which framing prevails in the post-disclosure politics determines the Basin's long-term management structure]

ESCALATION TRACKS

Track 1 | The Projection Disclosure

Stage 1 — Suppression Holding

Three Assembly members know. The SCA renegotiation technical annex has an inconsistent number. The interior communities have been planning around 40 years for two years. The SCA contact meeting has not been flagged. The NAF Aurora Ranger is in the city without a logged mission. The Compact's Maned Wolf intelligence unit has not connected these facts. Everything is stable. Nothing is safe.

Stage 2 — Leak Detected

The SCA contact meeting is flagged. The SCA renegotiation team's technical annex source is identified. The Compact has 48 hours to get ahead of the disclosure or be overtaken by it. Secretary-General Vale calculates. Assembly member Sosa calculates. The third Assembly member — the one blocking Fernanda's meeting — calculates. All three are making different calculations.

Stage 3 — Renegotiation Under Crisis

The SCA begins formal renegotiation using the 40-year figure as leverage. Assembly members who didn't know face a political crisis. The NAF contingency plan's existence becomes relevant. The interior communities — who have been planning around the real number for two years — become the most important political actors in the Basin. The Estuary District's climate migrants, whose labor maintains the flood infrastructure, realize the water allocation system their provisional status depends on is built on a number that is wrong by forty years.

Stage 4 — Governance Reset

The dam's joint management framework is in play. The SCA and NAF are competing for a post-disclosure governance arrangement. The interior communities' independent water management is either recognized as the Basin's most viable long-term infrastructure or suppressed as a governance challenge. The Compact's confidence — the city's single most important strategic asset — depends entirely on which one happens first. The 4.1 million people who built their lives on Compact permanence are watching the Assembly decide whether to evolve or collapse.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Get ahead of the leak. Reach Sosa before the SCA contact reports. Help Vale construct the voluntary disclosure path. Get Fernanda her Assembly meeting before the renegotiation sets terms without the interior communities at the table. Any solution that works produces a new problem — the party that controls the disclosure controls the framing, and the framing determines who the Basin belongs to.

Track 2 | The Cell Activation

Stage 1 — Cell Dormant

Four years in place. Commercial cover maintained. Waiting for authorization that requires Compact political instability. The cell members go to work in the Porteno Market. They eat lunch at the same vendors. They have friends in the commercial district who do not know what they are. One of them is a Compact intelligence asset who does not know she is a cell member. The Compact does not know she is a cell member. She has been feeding both sides for three years.

Stage 2 — Political Instability Begins

The projection disclosure creates Assembly crisis. The SCA command assesses whether the instability crosses the authorization threshold. The cell members' commercial cover begins to shift — procurement patterns change, meeting schedules adjust, the small behavioral signatures that experienced operators read as pre-operational preparation. Caridad, in the gene-forged informal network, notices first.

Stage 3 — Cell Activated

SCA Phantom Vipers move from commercial cover to operational posture. NAF's Aurora Ranger has been in the interior for four days. The Prometheus League's interior network activates its own contingency. All three actors are moving simultaneously in a city whose political structure is in crisis. The Compact's Puma

and Harpy Eagle units deploy. The Estuary District's neighborhood associations close ranks.

Stage 4 — Contested Governance

New Buenos Aires is a functioning city with three factions in active operational competition for post-Compact governance relationships. The Compact's security apparatus is intact. The Assembly's political authority is not. The dam is still running under joint management. The water is still clean. But the 4.1 million people who built their confidence on Compact permanence are watching three factions move through their city, and the Patagonian wind carries the smell of construction dust and river water and fried dough the same way it always has, because the city does not stop being itself just because the politics above it are failing.

WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO: Identify the cell before activation. Use Caridad's partial identification and the market intelligence operation's purchase pattern data. Find the double agent before the cell goes operational. Any solution that works produces a new problem — exposing the cell exposes the Compact's intelligence operation on the SCA, which exposes the SCA's intelligence operation on the Compact, which accelerates everything.

OPERATIONS MAP

Mobility Corridors

- Highland Assembly Quarter → Estuary District: Escarpment road (open, monitored by Compact sensor net, altitude drop of 180 meters over 2.4 km).
- Highland Assembly Quarter → Building Front: Construction access road (restricted during active construction hours, NAF contractor traffic dominant).
- Estuary District → Porteno Market: Waterfront commercial corridor (open, tide-dependent — high tide closes lower access for 3-4 hours daily).
- Porteno Market → Itaipu Liaison Offices: Administrative transit route (checkpointed, joint management credentials required).
- Building Front → Porteno Market: Mid-level connector (open, construction vehicle traffic creates movement cover).
- Porteno Market → Interior Gate: Southern access road (open to checkpoint, passage documentation required beyond).
- Interior Gate → Deep Interior: Dark zone (no faction surveillance past the first ridge, Prometheus League logistics network, community supply routes).

Chokepoints

- Interior Gate Checkpoint — single vehicle inspection point. Every vehicle and person logged. Cross-reference intelligence operation running for eight months. The inspector knows everyone who passes regularly.
- Itaipu Liaison Offices Access — joint management credentials required. All three parties (Compact, SCA, NAF) monitor entry. The most surveilled chokepoint in the Basin.
- Estuary District Tide Gates — high tide closes lower commercial access. Evacuation routines create predictable security gaps that SCA Jaguar units have used at least twice.
- Assembly Quarter Approaches — Compact sensor net at maximum density. Puma and Maned Wolf intelligence units maintain overlapping coverage. Diplomatic cover is the only reliable passage for non-Compact personnel.
- Building Front Infrastructure Spine — NAF technical contractors control camera network maintenance. The construction phase's infrastructure connection points are access points to the city's backbone that the Compact has not fully mapped.

Surveillance Architecture

- Highland Assembly Quarter: Compact sensor net (dense), Puma/Maned Wolf intelligence patrols, diplomatic mission observation (mutual). Full coverage.
- Estuary District: Cameras (intermittent — flood zone maintenance issues create gaps the neighborhood associations maintain deliberately), Compact flood management officers (daytime). Coverage is incomplete and managed by people who benefit from the gaps.
- Building Front: Construction-contractor camera network (NAF-managed maintenance contract, not Compact-operated). Coverage serves NAF intelligence collection as much as security.
- Itaipu Liaison Offices: Comprehensive (all parties monitor). The most complete surveillance picture in the Basin. Everyone watches everyone. Nobody has complete coverage of anyone else.
- Porteno Market: Compact commercial inspectors and cameras. Market intelligence operation on the hydrological data black market is the Compact's primary intelligence collection tool. Coverage is active but focused on specific targets.
- Interior Gate: Compact cameras at checkpoint only. Beyond the checkpoint: dark zone. The deep Patagonian interior is unmonitored by any faction's technical surveillance. Harpy Eagle gene-forged provide the only coverage, and they report to the Prometheus League.

MISSION SEEDS

1. GET AHEAD OF THE LEAK

OBJECTIVE: Reach Assembly member Sosa before her SCA contact reports the meeting to SCA intelligence, determine what she has already shared, and help her construct the voluntary disclosure path that Secretary-General Vale has been trying to build for three years.

CLOCK: The SCA contact has 36 hours before his weekly intelligence report is due. The meeting will appear in it. After that, SCA intelligence has the lead and the disclosure is no longer voluntary.

COMPLICATION: Sosa has already shared more than she intended. The data she gave the SCA contact was general — not the projection document itself, but a hydrological estimate consistent with the real figure. She thought she was testing whether the SCA already knew. She was. And now they know she knows.

2. THE PHANTOM IDENTIFICATION

OBJECTIVE: Identify the full Phantom Viper cell composition using Caridad's partial identification and the market intelligence operation's purchase pattern data before the cell activates in response to projection disclosure.

CLOCK: The SCA renegotiation technical annex briefing is in 72 hours. If the Compact's response to the annex is interpreted by SCA command as political instability, the cell's authorization threshold is crossed.

COMPLICATION: The four cell members Caridad has identified include one person who is simultaneously a Compact intelligence asset — recruited three years ago, running against the SCA commercial presence. The cell member knows she is a Compact asset. The Compact does not know she is a cell member. She has been feeding the Compact information about SCA commercial operations while feeding the SCA information about Compact intelligence priorities. Her loyalties are not split — she is running her own operation, and both sides are her cover.

3. THE CONTINGENCY

OBJECTIVE: Deliver the NAF contingency plan's contents to Secretary-General Vale before the Aurora Ranger — who is carrying a current revision — enters the interior and the plan becomes operational intelligence rather than draft planning.

CLOCK: The Aurora Ranger has been in the city for eleven days. Her NAF retrieval window ends in four days. After that, she is either recalled or she is not coming back. If she is not

coming back, she is operating without NAF authorization and the contingency plan she carries is the only record of what NAF had planned.

COMPLICATION: The Aurora Ranger came to New Buenos Aires to prevent the contingency, not execute it. She has information that makes the plan impossible to activate — information about the three Assembly members named in it that changes their strategic value from assets to liabilities. She will share the information with Vale directly. She will not share it with anyone who cannot prove they are not working for the SCA.

4. FERNANDA'S MEETING

OBJECTIVE: Get interior community representative Fernanda Quispe her Assembly meeting with Secretary-General Vale before the projection disclosure resets Basin politics without the interior communities' governance framework visible.

CLOCK: The SCA renegotiation technical annex briefing in 72 hours will force the Assembly to engage with the 40-year figure publicly, at which point the interior communities' two years of planning around it becomes relevant to everyone simultaneously — and the faction that introduces them to the Assembly conversation controls how they are framed.

COMPLICATION: The administrative deprioritization of Fernanda's meeting request has been intentional. One of the three Assembly members who knows the projection has been blocking it — not because he opposes the interior communities, but because he knows that the communities' source for the 40-year figure connects to him, and their testimony in an Assembly meeting would surface both the projection and his role in disseminating it.

5. THE UNIDENTIFIED BUYER

OBJECTIVE: Identify the unknown party purchasing hydrological data fragments in the Porteno Market black market before the Compact's intelligence operation identifies them first — or before the fragments they have already purchased give them enough of the projection to act on it independently.

CLOCK: The buyer's purchase pattern has been accelerating. Four fragments in the first three months. Three in the last month. The Compact's intelligence operation is converging on identification. If the Compact gets there first, operators lose access to whoever this is and whatever they represent.

COMPLICATION: The buyer is not working for any of the four major factions. Their purchase pattern suggests they are reconstructing the projection independently from fragments — not to sell it, not to leverage it, but to verify it. Someone sent them to check whether the number is real. Who sent them, and what happens when they confirm, is the question underneath every other question in the city.

6. THE DAM SIMULATION

OBJECTIVE: Retrieve the personal 40-year dam operations simulation that Itaipu Technical Director Gabriel Moreira ran without authorization before the SCA renegotiation team's technical annex forces the joint management committee to confront the data gap — and before Moreira decides to destroy the simulation rather than explain why he ran it.

CLOCK: The SCA observer on the joint management committee asked Moreira a technical question this morning that he could only answer correctly by acknowledging the 40-year scenario is real. He gave a technically accurate answer that did not acknowledge the scenario. The observer wrote something down. Moreira has approximately 48 hours before the observer's next briefing includes a follow-up question he cannot dodge.

COMPLICATION: Moreira's simulation is on a personal device that is not on the Compact's secure system. He keeps it on him. The simulation results, if surfaced, either confirm the classified projection independently — which helps the Compact's voluntary disclosure narrative — or expose Moreira as someone who ran unauthorized analysis on classified parameters, which ends his career. Whether operators frame the retrieval as rescue or extraction determines which outcome Moreira cooperates with.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

Every solution in New Buenos Aires creates a new problem. These are the specific new problems.

If the Compact's Credibility Breaks

4.1 million people whose confidence was the city's strategic asset discover it was built on a suppressed projection. The SCA renegotiation proceeds on the 40-year figure. The dam's joint management framework is in play. NAF's technical investment recalculates. The Compact's security apparatus remains intact — the Pumas are still operating, the Harpy Eagles are still in the air, the infrastructure still functions — but the political authority that makes governance legitimate rather than occupying is gone. What fills the vacuum is a negotiation that the interior communities are better positioned for than anyone in the Assembly currently recognizes. The city smells the same. The construction dust and the river water and the fried dough. The confidence that carried the smell has changed.

If the Phantom Cell Activates

A four-year pre-positioned intelligence and action cell going operational in a functioning city of 4.1 million. The SCA has commercial cover, established relationships, and authorization from command. The Compact's security apparatus is intact and responding. The Porteno Market's commercial district becomes contested ground where the vendors who have been neighbors for years discover that two of the people they shared meals with are Phantom Vipers. The city does not become a warzone — it becomes a city where the political crisis above is matched by an operational crisis below, and the people who live in it are navigating both simultaneously. The double agent's position becomes the most important unknown in the city.

If the Dam's Joint Management Fails

The SCA's northern agricultural zones start failing within 90 days. The Compact's own communities downstream start failing in the same window, from the other direction. Neither party chose this outcome. Both parties have the capability to prevent it unilaterally only by causing it for the other. The Itaipu operational staff — who have been running joint management since 2049 — continue doing their jobs. They are the most important people in the Basin. Nobody is talking about them. The dam's real-time flow data continues on the main display. The 40-year projection sits three kilometers away. The staff read the data and do the work and the Basin lives or dies on whether anyone lets them.

If the Interior Communities Are Recognized

The forty-year aquifer management framework is not the Compact's governance problem to solve alone. The interior communities have been solving it for two years. The Basin's long-term water management is a distributed, community-built infrastructure that predates and outlasts every faction's involvement. This outcome requires the Compact to recognize that its governance extends to, not over, the communities it was built to serve. The SCA and NAF will characterize this as Compact weakness. The forty million people across the Southern Cone who depend on the water will characterize it as the first honest governance decision the Basin has seen. The Prometheus League's dark zone aesthetic — the wardrobe of people who have been watching the pampas long enough to learn how it thinks — enters the Assembly Quarter for the first time. The highland's controlled quiet absorbs it without comment.

FIELD NOTE

The calm is either the confidence of people who have managed impossible situations before, or the stillness of people who have already accepted what comes next. Operators who have worked here long enough stop being sure which one it is, which is how you know the Basin has gotten into you.

– Terra Conflictus 2066 Setting Guide, Earth 2066

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 HIGHLAND ASSEMBLY QUARTER

GOVERNMENT / DIPLOMATIC

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	normal (government workers, diplomatic staff)
SURVEILLANCE	Compact sensor net (dense)
FACTION PRESSURE	Compact dominant / SCA intelligence active / NAF diplomatic presence
BLACK MARKET	light (political, not commercial)
MOBILITY	open (upper city) / monitored (Assembly building approaches)

FUNCTION The Compact Assembly, diplomatic missions from SCA and NAF, and the political administration of an independence that requires constant maintenance. The city's highest point, in more than the geographic sense. The quarter smells like administrative buildings — recycled air, coffee from six different South American growing regions, the faint ozone of sensor arrays running at full density — and the Patagonian wind that arrives over the escarpment carries the highland's clean chill into every open corridor.

CONTROLLER Compact Assembly administration. SCA and NAF diplomatic missions observe. Everyone knows the observation is mutual. The quarter's acoustic signature is the controlled quiet of people who choose their words knowing the sensor net is recording and the diplomatic staff are reporting.

DRAW

• The Compact Assembly — the six-city-state governance body whose decisions determine Basin politics. • Diplomatic access to SCA and NAF representatives through formal and informal channels. • The classified hydrological projection — physically stored in an Assembly building sub-basement accessible to three Assembly members and their immediate staff. • The specific kind of political intelligence the quarter generates: what the Assembly is actually deciding versus what it is announcing. • GHOST KIT JOURNAL writers who orbit the diplomatic circuit — the highest-volume production node in the OT world, fueled by subtext.

RISK

• The SCA's Phantom Viper pre-positioned cell has been in the quarter for four years, waiting for authorization. They are in positions operators cannot identify from external observation. • Three Assembly members know about the 40-year projection. One is trying to get it out. She has been meeting with an SCA contact for six months. • A NAF Aurora Ranger in civilian cover is operating in the city without a mission logged at Darwin. She is not operating on NAF orders. • The Assembly member trying to surface the projection has made contact with an SCA commercial contact who has not reported the meeting to SCA intelligence. Not yet.

SCARCITY

• The hydrological projection document itself. • Any Assembly member not under SCA or NAF surveillance. • A channel to the Assembly's scientific staff that does not pass through the three members' offices. • Unsurveilled meeting space — the quarter's sensor net coverage means every conversation is recorded somewhere, and the question is always who has access to the recording.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The classified projection is three years old. The three Assembly members who know it have been sitting on it because surfacing it ends the negotiating position that sustains Compact independence. But sitting on it means every agreement made with the SCA and NAF during those three years has been made on false premises. If the Compact surfaces it voluntarily, the credibility cost is real but manageable. If it surfaces through a leak, the credibility cost is total.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The projection leaks to an SCA commercial contact. Within 48 hours, the SCA begins renegotiating every active water agreement using the 40-year figure as leverage. NAF's technical investment calculus changes. Assembly members who didn't know about the suppression face a political crisis in addition to a resource one. The interior communities, who have been running their own water management independently for a decade, suddenly become the most important people in the Basin.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Compact Assembly administration + Compact Puma and Maned Wolf intelligence units. Diplomatic staff circulate. The open sessions run on fourteen-day cycles.

ECONOMY

Diplomatic activity, administrative governance, the formal political economy of Basin management. The quarter's restaurants serve Chilean wine and Argentine beef and the conversation is never casual.

RISK

The Assembly member trying to surface the projection is meeting her SCA contact again today. The meeting location is a diplomatic restaurant where the sensor net has a known maintenance gap between 1300 and 1340.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Compact security force — smaller, more focused, less visible. The highland wind makes the quarter's empty corridors sound like something breathing.

ECONOMY

Political intelligence trade, black-market hydrological data fragments, the Assembly's informal decision-making channels that do more work than the formal sessions.

RISK

SCA Jaguar infiltration units operating in the diplomatic quarter. They run intelligence operations the Compact has never fully mapped. The NAF Aurora Ranger who is not on a logged mission is also here, moving with the careful patience of someone deciding something.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The old Buenos Aires street grid visible in the shallow estuary water at low tide, forty-five degrees off-alignment from the new highland grid above it — the drowned city and the rebuilt city at odds geometrically, as if the new one was turned to face a different direction on purpose. From the Assembly Quarter's highest terrace, both grids are visible simultaneously. The Assembly members who know the projection look at this view every day.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SOUTHERN COMPACT

Assembly administration, Puma/Maned Wolf intelligence units, the governance apparatus of Basin independence.

SCA PHANTOM VIPERS

pre-positioned cell members in diplomatic and administrative cover. Four years in place.

NAF AURORA RANGERS

diplomatic mission staff and one unlogged operative in civilian cover.

CIVILIAN NEED

Political stability — the Assembly Quarter's staff and residents have built careers on Compact independence. The projection's disclosure threatens the governance structure their livelihoods depend on.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Diplomatic cover identity, Assembly open session attendance, political intelligence network introductions, sensor net maintenance gap schedules, GHOST KIT JOURNAL writer contacts.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A Compact hydrologist approaches operators in the Assembly Quarter commercial district. She has a data chip. She says she cannot explain in a surveilled space why they should take it or where to deliver it.
- An SCA commercial delegation is in the quarter for 'water framework discussions.' Their security detail is twice the size a commercial delegation warrants. The detail includes two people Caridad has identified as Phantom Viper cell members.
- A NAF technical contractor's access badge was found in a section of the Assembly building she had no legitimate reason to be in. The badge has been recovered. The Compact's security review of what she accessed has not been completed.
- A Compact Assembly member asks operators to locate her chief of staff, who hasn't reported in for 18 hours and was meeting with an SCA contact last night at a diplomatic restaurant where the sensor net has the known maintenance gap.
- A street vendor in the lower quarter is selling something wrapped in old packaging. The packaging is from a pre-Upheaval hydrology research installation. The vendor does not know what it is. The packaging's institutional markings match the facility that generated the original aquifer viability study.
- The gene-forged informal network in the city has a problem — a Puma operator in Stage 2 Drift is being managed by a PRC-affiliated physician who is not equipped for non-PRC gene-forged templates. Someone is going to get hurt. The physician is in the Assembly Quarter because she accompanied a diplomatic delegation.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- A Jaguar unit in civilian clothes, moving with the specific unhurried efficiency that means they know exactly where they're going, is in the diplomatic quarter. Two of them. Going in different directions. Their kit carries the Amazonian Metroplex origin markers that experienced operators read at a glance.
- A signal from the interior arrives at operators' comms on a Prometheus League frequency. It contains one word and a coordinate. The coordinate is inside the Assembly building.
- Three Compact security officers are arguing in an alley about something that one of them clearly wants reported and the other two clearly do not. The argument carries in the highland wind.

- The hydrologist from the daytime encounter is being followed by someone she hasn't noticed yet. The follower's movement pattern is not Compact, not SCA, not NAF. It matches no known faction's operational signature.
- A Compact Assembly building staff member offers operators a meal, conversation, and — if they seem trustworthy — information about a document that three Assembly members have been keeping locked since 2063. She serves the conversation with Chilean wine and the careful syntax of someone who has been rehearsing this disclosure.
- An NAF Aurora Ranger in civilian cover is in the quarter without a mission logged at Darwin. She makes eye contact with operators. She does not avoid them. She is deciding something. The decision has a four-day deadline she has not mentioned.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The Assembly's scientific staff have been requesting access to the sub-basement archive with increasing frequency. Three requests in the last two weeks. All denied by the same office. [TRUE]
- A diplomatic reception next week will include representatives from all six Compact city-states. Secretary-General Vale has added an unscheduled agenda item. Nobody knows what it is. [TRUE — and whether the item is the projection disclosure depends on what happens in the next 72 hours]
- The sensor net maintenance gap at the diplomatic restaurant is not a malfunction. It was created by a Compact intelligence officer who needed a meeting space. The officer is one of the three who knows the projection. [PARTIALLY TRUE — the gap was created deliberately, but not by an Assembly member; by a Maned Wolf intelligence officer running a parallel assessment]
- The NAF diplomatic mission has been requesting additional building access for 'infrastructure assessment.' The requests have been approved. The assessments have included areas of the Assembly building that are not infrastructure. [TRUE]
- An Assembly member's chief of staff has been photocopying documents from the sub-basement archive after hours. The copies are incomplete — she is taking specific pages, not whole files. [TRUE — and the pages she is selecting form a coherent summary of the projection that could be transmitted without the original document]
- The Compact's water allocation ceremony next quarter will be the last one conducted under the 80-year figure. Someone in the Assembly has decided.

The decision has not been announced. [UNCERTAIN — depends on which Assembly member's timeline prevails]

CONTACTS

ASSEMBLY MEMBER DR. VALENTINA SOSA

Southern Compact — one of three who know the projection

CAN GET The classified hydrological projection (she has a copy), the identities of the other two informed Assembly members, the SCA contact she has been meeting with.

WANTS A way to surface the projection that doesn't end Compact independence — specifically, a path to voluntary disclosure that preserves the Assembly's credibility.

FEARS That the SCA contact she met with six months ago, who seemed trustworthy, has already begun using the partial information she provided. The technical annex suggests he has.

CURRENT PRESSURE A water rights renegotiation with the SCA is scheduled in three weeks. The SCA delegation's technical briefing documents, which her office received today, include a hydrological estimate that is inconsistent with the official 80-year figure. Someone has given them a number closer to the real one. She is not sure whether that someone is her.

NAF AURORA RANGER 'MERIDIAN'

Civilian cover, no logged mission — four days until retrieval window closes

CAN GET NAF's contingency plan for Basin acquisition if the Compact's political structure fails, the identities of the three Assembly members NAF has been cultivating for seven years, and the specific infrastructure already in place through Santiago.

WANTS Something she will not explain until operators demonstrate they are not operating for any of the parties she is not operating for. Her trust protocol requires proof of negative affiliation — harder to provide than proof of positive.

FEARS That the plan she came to prevent is already in motion. The technical contractors in the Building Front have been making infrastructure modifications that match the contingency plan's Phase 2 preparations.

CURRENT PRESSURE	She has been in the city for eleven days without logging her mission. NAF command's window for retrieving her without a formal incident ends in four days. After that, she is either recalled or she is operating without authorization in a neutral city during a political crisis. Both outcomes change what she can do.

DISTRICT 2 ESTUARY DISTRICT — LOWER MARKET / OLD GRID

SECURITY	light
INFRASTRUCTURE	strained (flood-zone adjacent)
CIVILIANS	packed (mixed — longtime residents, climate migrants, informal economy workers)
SURVEILLANCE	cameras (intermittent — flood zone maintenance issues)
FACTION PRESSURE	Compact nominal / informal economy self-governing
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	open (when not flooding) / restricted (high tide)

FUNCTION

The city's lowest and newest construction layer, built at the current flood line, where pre-Upheaval Buenos Aires is visible at low tide and the city's informal economy operates in the space between Compact oversight and the water. The district smells like estuary brine, frying oil, wet concrete, and the specific mineral tang of flood-zone infrastructure running at capacity. The acoustic signature is layered: tide warning horns, market commerce, pump cycles, and the constant low conversation of people who learned to read the water before they learned to read the city above it.

CONTROLLER	Compact nominally. The flood-zone's informal governance structures in practice — the neighborhood associations that have managed the tide schedule, the evacuation protocols, and the camera maintenance gaps for fifteen years. These associations predate the Compact's formal governance structure in the district. They are older than the authority that nominally controls them.
DRAW	• The pre-Upheaval city grid at low tide — a tourist attraction that is also the district's most useful navigation aid for anyone who has learned to read it. • The black market in hydrological data fragments, interior passage permits, and Compact citizenship documents. • Climate migrant networks — the people who arrived after 2045 and built the city's economic base without the political status to shape its governance. • The informal economy that operates in the camera maintenance gaps. • The Prometheus League's communications node — not an operator, just infrastructure. A building nobody would look at twice. • OPEN KIT modular clothing at Ironweld surplus prices — the Basin's reconfigurability-as-survival-philosophy made wearable.
RISK	• High tide flooding forces periodic evacuation of lower commercial areas. The evacuation routines create predictable security gaps that SCA Jaguar units have used at least twice. • Three climate migrant families who arrived after 2045 are being used as unwitting intelligence couriers by an SCA commercial contact who has cultivated them over four years. • The camera maintenance gaps are maintained deliberately by workers who benefit from them — disrupting the gaps disrupts the informal economy. • The Prometheus League's communications node is passive infrastructure, but its signal characteristics are identifiable to operators who know what to look for.
SCARCITY	• Dry ground during high tide — the district's commercial space contracts by 40% during peak flooding. • Compact citizenship documentation for climate migrants whose provisional status has been in review for years. • Camera coverage in areas the neighborhood associations want covered — the gaps serve the informal economy, but they also serve anyone else who knows the schedule. • Reliable flood management infrastructure — the pumps are maintained by climate migrant labor, and the labor force's legal status depends on Compact goodwill.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Estuary District functions because the Compact's flood management infrastructure holds. The flood management infrastructure holds because the climate migrant labor force maintains it — workers whose legal status depends entirely on Compact goodwill, doing work the city cannot function without, in a space the Compact's surveillance infrastructure doesn't fully cover. This is a governance arrangement that works until it doesn't.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The SCA contact's cultivated courier families are activated for a data transfer that uses the high-tide evacuation routine as cover. The data moves during the security gap. The Compact's flood management officers notice the movement pattern is wrong but cannot respond without disrupting the evacuation that protects 6,000 people. The neighborhood associations see everything. They do not intervene. They are calculating.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Compact flood management officers + neighborhood associations (parallel, usually cooperative). The Tide Reading at 0630 draws the crowd that is also the district's census.

ECONOMY

Lower-tier commercial trade, climate migrant informal economy, the visible black market in documents and passage permits. Sopaipillas cooked on repurposed heating elements. The best street food in the Basin.

RISK

Tide schedule. Everything in the Estuary District runs around it. SCA Jaguar units know the schedule. The evacuation routines are predictable. The security gaps are mapped.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Neighborhood associations, absolutely. The Compact's night patrol coverage is inconsistent in the flood zone. The associations run their own security and have been doing it longer than the Compact has been governing.

ECONOMY

The sophisticated black market — hydrological data, interior passage arrangements, the Prometheus League's communications infrastructure. Dead credential decoration: Basin access cards worn as jewelry, water allocation documentation as statement pieces.

RISK

High tide. The lower commercial zone floods. Whatever is down there when the water comes up stays down there until it goes down. The old Buenos Aires grid is visible in the estuary water, and the flood lights make it look like a city that is still waiting.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Low tide in the Estuary District — the old Buenos Aires street grid visible under two meters of clear estuary water, the pre-flood city at a forty-five degree angle to the highland grid above, and standing at the water's edge a climate migrant who arrived in 2049 and can describe both cities from memory. She is wearing an OPEN KIT jacket with Basin access card fragments sewn to the collar — dead credential decoration that is not dead because the credentials are still valid.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SOUTHERN COMPACT

flood management officers and nominal governance presence. The sensor net's intermittent coverage is the district's defining feature.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

communications node — passive infrastructure in a building nobody would look at twice.

CIVILIAN NEED

Legal status regularization for climate migrants whose provisional citizenship has been in review for years. The labor that maintains the flood infrastructure deserves the citizenship the labor makes possible.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Camera maintenance gap schedules, tide-synchronized movement windows, neighborhood association introductions, black market access, Prometheus League signal identification, climate migrant network contacts, OPEN KIT surplus procurement.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A climate migrant family asks operators for help with a document irregularity. The irregularity is manufactured. The family does not know this. The SCA contact who cultivated them set it up to force them into a courier run.
- The Prometheus League communications node is in a building at a specific address. Operators can identify it through a specific signal characteristic if they know what to look for — a low-frequency pulse that syncs with the tide warning system's broadcast cycle.
- A hydrological data broker is offering a fragment that matches the projection document's data format. She did not generate it. She will not say where it came from. The fragment's metadata includes a timestamp from 2063 — the year the projection was classified.

- The tide schedule has been adjusted today without a public announcement. The Compact flood management officer on duty cannot explain why the adjustment was made. The adjustment moves the high-tide window thirty minutes earlier, which changes every evacuation routine in the district.
- Two climate migrant workers are repairing a camera. The camera has been 'malfunctioning' for six months. They are maintaining the malfunction, not fixing it. The gap they are preserving covers the Prometheus League's communications node.
- A neighborhood association representative approaches operators. Someone has been using the flood evacuation routes for movement that doesn't match the evacuation pattern. He has a map. The movement pattern matches SCA Jaguar operational doctrine.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The Prometheus League communications node activates — a brief, encrypted burst on a frequency the Compact's sensor net is not monitoring because the frequency is allocated to flood management emergency channels. The burst contains coordinates in the deep interior.
- A climate migrant cooperative meeting in a flood-zone building that will be underwater in three hours. The meeting is about citizenship documentation. The urgency is about the tide. Both timelines are real.
- The SCA contact who has been cultivating courier families arrives in the district after dark, moving through the camera maintenance gaps with the practiced ease of someone who has the schedule memorized.
- High tide arrives and the lower commercial zone floods. In the rising water, the old Buenos Aires street grid becomes visible — and someone is wading through it with a waterproof case, moving toward the Prometheus League's communications node along a route that follows the drowned city's old avenues.
- A neighborhood association security patrol encounters operators and asks what they are doing in the flood zone after dark. The question is friendly. The three people standing behind the patrol leader are not.
- A gene-forged Harpy Eagle operator, not in Compact uniform, lands on the Estuary District's highest structure and watches the district for forty minutes without moving. She is running a visual survey the Compact did not authorize. She is reporting to the Prometheus League.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The camera maintenance gaps are not malfunctions — they are maintained by climate migrant workers who benefit from the gaps. The neighborhood associations know. The Compact's flood management officers know the neighborhood associations know. The arrangement is fifteen years old. [TRUE]
- The Prometheus League's communications node in the Estuary District has been active for three years. Its signal syncs with the flood management emergency frequency. The Compact has never identified it because they have never looked at flood management channels for intelligence traffic. [TRUE]
- An SCA commercial contact has been cultivating three climate migrant families as unwitting couriers for four years. The families believe they are carrying commercial documents. They are carrying hydrological data fragments. [TRUE]
- The neighborhood associations have a contingency plan for what happens if the Compact's flood management infrastructure fails. The plan does not include the Compact. [TRUE — and the plan is more detailed than anything the Compact's emergency management office has produced]
- The old Buenos Aires grid visible at low tide contains sealed infrastructure that has not been accessed since the flooding began. Something in that infrastructure is still drawing power. [UNCERTAIN — the power draw is measurable but the source has not been identified]
- A GHOST KIT JOURNAL writer in the Estuary District has been documenting the camera maintenance gap schedule for two years. She publishes it as poetry. The poetry is accurate enough to use as an operational tool. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

CLIMATE MIGRANT COOPERATIVE COORDINATOR LUCIA FUENTES

Estuary District, arrived 2049 — the woman who can describe both cities from memory

CAN GET Climate migrant network access, Estuary District movement patterns, the SCA contact who has been cultivating migrant families as couriers, the camera maintenance gap schedule, neighborhood association introductions.

WANTS Legal status regularization for 23 cooperative members whose Compact citizenship documentation has been in review for over a year. The review is the mechanism. The citizenship is the point.

FEARS	That the SCA contact has enough leverage over the cooperative members to make them impossible to protect — and that protecting them will require exposing the courier operation, which will trigger Compact administrative reviews that revoke provisional status for everyone involved.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The document irregularity that the SCA contact manufactured has put one cooperative family in a Compact administrative review. The review is routine. It is also an excuse to revoke their provisional status. The family has been maintaining a camera for six months. The camera covers the Prometheus League's communications node. If the family loses status, someone else maintains that camera — and might actually fix it.

DISTRICT 3 BUILDING FRONT — MID-LEVEL CONSTRUCTION ZONE

SECURITY	light (construction site security — private contractors)
INFRASTRUCTURE	under construction
CIVILIANS	sparse (construction crews, engineers, site managers)
SURVEILLANCE	cameras (construction site, not Compact security net)
FACTION PRESSURE	NAF technical presence (construction contracts)
BLACK MARKET	moderate
MOBILITY	restricted (active construction)

FUNCTION The city's growing edge — the twenty-year cross-section of construction phases that makes New Buenos Aires's adaptation history physically legible, and the current construction front where NAF technical contractors are embedded in city expansion infrastructure. The district smells like concrete dust, welding flux, and the ozone signature of heavy power tools. The acoustic signature is industrial: jackhammers, generators, the constant metallic percussion of a city building itself one elevation layer at a time.

CONTROLLER	Compact construction authority officially. NAF technical contractors manage the current construction phase through agreements that give them access the Compact has not fully mapped. The camera network is contractor-operated, not Compact-operated. NAF manages the maintenance contract.
DRAW	• NAF technical expertise — the reason NAF's influence in the city has grown faster than its diplomatic presence would suggest. • The city's construction history in cross-section — each elevation layer corresponds to a specific phase of post-Upheaval adaptation. • Access to the city's infrastructure backbone — water, power, communications — through the construction phase connecting to it. • The specific operational freedom that active construction sites provide — noise, movement, restricted access that creates its own cover. • The pre-Upheaval underground infrastructure breach — a sealed section the Compact has classified and not acted on.
RISK	• NAF technical contractors have access to the city's infrastructure backbone at the connection phase. Three of them are intelligence assets the Compact has not identified. • A construction crew has broken through a sealed section of pre-Upheaval underground infrastructure. The Compact's response: classify and assign to an office that has not acted. • The camera network is NAF-managed. What the cameras see, NAF's intelligence operation sees. • Three construction workers who arrived four months ago on a NAF technical crew have not been on any NAF crew manifest since month two. They are still on site. Nobody has asked why.
SCARCITY	• Camera coverage independent of NAF's maintenance contract — the Compact has no surveillance infrastructure in the Building Front that NAF does not manage. • Access to the pre-Upheaval underground breach — classified, guarded by a construction crew chief who is waiting for direction that hasn't come. • NAF contractor access logs that haven't been reviewed or sanitized. • Construction workers willing to discuss the three unmanifested personnel still on site.

UNDER-SYSTEM

NAF's technical investment in New Buenos Aires's construction infrastructure gives NAF physical access to the city's backbone at the point of connection. This access has been commercially contracted, legally documented, and operationally used for intelligence purposes for seven years. The Compact's technical oversight of the construction contracts is thorough at the commercial level and non-existent at the access level. The infrastructure modifications the contractors have been making match the NAF contingency plan's Phase 2 preparations.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The Compact construction authority inspector who flagged the two-year-old anomaly in NAF contractor access logs presents her findings to her supervisor. The supervisor recognizes what the anomaly means. The recognition triggers a review that exposes seven years of NAF intelligence collection through construction infrastructure. NAF's technical investment becomes NAF's intelligence operation in the Compact's official assessment. Every active construction contract enters review. The Building Front stops building.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Compact construction authority + NAF technical contractors (parallel operations, nominally coordinated, practically separate chains of command).

ECONOMY

Construction labor, technical procurement, infrastructure materials. The construction economy is the second-largest employer in the city after the Compact government itself.

RISK

The 40-minute camera maintenance window — when NAF's contractor runs scheduled maintenance on the Building Front's coverage, creating a gap the Compact does not monitor because the Compact does not operate the cameras.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Construction site security — private contractors, not Compact forces. Night shift is when the three unmanifested workers are most active.

ECONOMY

Gray-market construction materials, infrastructure component procurement that operates outside the Compact's commercial oversight, the pre-Upheaval underground breach's informal exploration by construction workers who are not waiting for the Compact to act.

RISK

The pre-Upheaval underground breach. Construction workers have been exploring it after hours. What they have found has not been reported to the Compact because the Compact told them to stop looking and they did not stop.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Building Front at midday — three construction phases visible simultaneously in cross-section, the oldest pre-Upheaval building materials at the top, the 2050s adaptation layer in the middle, and the current construction front at the bottom connecting to infrastructure that runs under water the city hasn't reached yet. NAF technical contractors on every level. The Patagonian wind carries concrete dust horizontally through the open framework and the construction crews work angled into it, the same posture the city above uses at every intersection.

FACTIONS PRESENT

NAF AURORA RANGERS

technical contractor infrastructure — seven years of embedded access to the city's construction backbone. Three identified intelligence assets. An unknown number unidentified.

SOUTHERN COMPACT

construction authority oversight — thorough commercially, blind operationally.

CIVILIAN NEED

Construction employment continuity — the Building Front's workers depend on the contracts that NAF's technical investment funds. Exposing NAF's intelligence operation threatens the construction economy that employs thousands.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Construction site cover identity, NAF contractor contact, infrastructure backbone access, camera maintenance window schedule, pre-Upheaval underground breach approach, construction crew intelligence on unmanifested personnel.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A construction crew has found the pre-Upheaval underground infrastructure breach. The crew chief is waiting for Compact direction. The Compact classification response arrived this morning. She is not sure the classification applies to what they found — the sealed section contains something the classification protocol was not designed to address.
- A NAF technical contractor approaches operators. He is not an intelligence asset. He has found something in the infrastructure documentation that he thinks someone should see — a series of access requests from three years ago that do not correspond to any active construction phase.
- The camera network maintenance contractor is running a scheduled maintenance window. During the window, there is a 40-minute gap. The three

unmanifested workers use the gap consistently. Today, someone else is using it too.

- An SCA technical observer is in the Building Front on a commercial permit. She is photographing the construction phase documentation systematically. The permit does not cover that. Her camera equipment includes a signal analyzer that is not standard for commercial photography.
- A Compact construction authority inspector has flagged an anomaly in the NAF contractor access logs. The anomaly is two years old. She is the first person to flag it. She is asking questions that make her supervisor uncomfortable.
- Three construction workers who arrived four months ago with a NAF technical crew have not been on any NAF crew manifest since month two. They are still on site. One of them is working on the infrastructure connection that runs directly to the Itaipu Liaison Offices' power grid.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The pre-Upheaval underground breach is being explored after hours by construction workers with headlamps and the specific curiosity of people who build things for a living and have found something that was built before them. They have mapped three hundred meters of sealed corridor.
- One of the three unmanifested NAF workers is in the infrastructure spine after dark, running a diagnostic on a communications junction that connects the Building Front to the Assembly Quarter's network backbone. The diagnostic is not on any work order.
- A NAF technical contractor meets an Aurora Ranger contact at the construction site perimeter. The meeting is brief. The contractor hands over a data device. The Ranger leaves on foot toward the Interior Gate.
- Construction site security responds to a motion alert in a section that should be unoccupied. The alert was triggered by someone moving through the pre-Upheaval underground breach from the other direction — someone who entered from below, not from the construction site.
- A Compact Puma operator, off duty and in civilian clothes, is in the Building Front after dark. She is not here on Compact business. She is here because a gene-forged colleague in Stage 2 Drift told her the construction site's noise and vibration help with the sensory overload. She is watching a friend deteriorate.
- The construction authority inspector who flagged the access log anomaly is working late, cross-referencing contractor records with Compact infrastruc-

ture access protocols. She has found seven years of discrepancies. She is deciding whether to file her report or talk to someone first.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The pre-Upheaval underground breach contains sealed infrastructure that predates the flooding by decades. Something in that infrastructure is still drawing power from a source the construction crew cannot identify. [PARTIALLY TRUE — power draw is measurable but intermittent]
- NAF's technical contractors have been making infrastructure modifications that do not appear on any construction plan the Compact has approved. The modifications match a pattern consistent with pre-positioning for infrastructure control. [TRUE]
- Three construction workers on site are not on any NAF crew manifest. They arrived with a NAF technical crew four months ago. Their work assignments are legitimate. Their identities are not. [TRUE]
- The construction authority inspector who flagged the access log anomaly has been offered a transfer to a different district. The offer came from within the Compact administration. She has not accepted. [TRUE — and the transfer offer originated from an office that reports to one of the three Assembly members who knows the projection]
- The Building Front's camera network records everything it sees. NAF manages the maintenance contract. The recordings are stored on NAF-contracted servers. The Compact has never requested access to the recordings. [TRUE]
- The pre-Upheaval underground corridor that the construction crew mapped extends further than three hundred meters. It connects to sealed infrastructure under the Estuary District. The old Buenos Aires grid visible at low tide is the surface expression of something that continues underground. [UNCERTAIN — the crew mapped 300 meters before the Compact's classification order arrived]

CONTACTS

COMPACT CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY INSPECTOR ELENA PAREDES

The first person to flag the NAF contractor access log anomaly

CAN GET Seven years of NAF contractor access discrepancies, the infrastructure modification pattern, the identities of the three unmani-

fested workers, the pre-Upheaval breach classification documentation.

WANTS Someone in the Compact administration to take her findings seriously before the transfer offer becomes a transfer order. She has been an inspector for twelve years. She knows what an access anomaly looks like and she knows when someone doesn't want her looking at one.

FEARS That the transfer offer means the anomaly is not an oversight — it is a policy decision made above her clearance level, and her investigation has walked her into the gap between what the Compact officially knows and what it has decided not to see.

CURRENT PRESSURE The transfer offer has a seven-day acceptance window. Four days remain. Her supervisor has stopped answering her messages about the access log findings. The silence is its own answer.

DISTRICT 4 ITAIPU LIAISON OFFICES

INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT HUB

SECURITY	active
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (purpose-built, critical infrastructure)
CIVILIANS	sparse (joint management staff, diplomatic observers)
SURVEILLANCE	comprehensive (all parties monitor)
FACTION PRESSURE	joint (Compact + SCA + NAF observers)
BLACK MARKET	none (too watched)
MOBILITY	checkpointed

FUNCTION	The administrative nerve center for Itaipu Dam joint management — the bureaucratic achievement that keeps both the SCA's northern agriculture and the Compact's river network alive, and the one piece of Basin governance that cannot be unilaterally controlled by anyone. The district smells like institutional air conditioning, coffee from the committee's shared kitchen, and the ozone signature of real-time hydrological monitoring equipment running continuously. The acoustic signature is the controlled hum of critical infrastructure management — quiet voices, keyboard input, the periodic tone of flow-data updates.
CONTROLLER	Joint management committee: Compact chair, SCA observer, NAF observer. In practice, the Compact controls operational decisions by maintaining the most technically competent staff. Both the SCA and NAF have separately attempted to compromise this staffing advantage three times. The committee's session room has the most complete surveillance picture in the Basin — every party monitors, nobody has complete coverage of anyone else.
DRAW	• The most accurate real-time hydrological data in the Southern Hemisphere — the dam's operational picture. • The joint management committee's documented decision-making record — the most politically sensitive document series in the Basin. • Access to technical staff who actually understand the dam's operational parameters — and who therefore understand what a 40-year projection means for long-term operational logic. • The one location in the city where SCA and NAF representatives are physically present simultaneously, in a context that requires them to interact with Compact technical authority.
RISK	• The SCA observer has been receiving private hydrological briefings from a source the Compact's liaison staff have not identified. • A technical staff member has run a personal simulation of dam operations under a 40-year scenario. He has not shared the results. He has not destroyed them. The simulation is on a personal device he keeps on his person. • The SCA renegotiation technical annex references data inconsistent with the official figure — someone has given them a number, and the committee's next session will require addressing the discrepancy. • Every conversation in the Liaison Offices is recorded by at least two parties. The question is always which two.

SCARCITY

• Unmonitored communication channels — the Liaison Offices' surveillance density means every interaction is observed. • Technical staff willing to discuss the 40-year scenario without authorization. • Committee session records that have not been redacted by at least one party. • Access to the dam's operational parameters without triggering the joint monitoring protocols that alert all three parties simultaneously.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The dam's joint management framework holds because the SCA and the Compact each need the other to not control Itaipu unilaterally more than they need to control it themselves. A 40-year aquifer projection changes this calculus — if the aquifer has a finite timeline, the party that controls Itaipu at the end of that timeline controls what comes after. The dam's joint management framework was built for an 80-year scenario. It was not built for a 40-year one.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The SCA observer's private briefing source provides a data point that the observer raises in committee session. The data point is close enough to the real projection to force a response. The Compact's technical director — who has the personal simulation on a device in his pocket — must answer a question he can only answer truthfully by confirming what three Assembly members have been suppressing. The committee session becomes the disclosure event. Neither the Compact nor the SCA planned this. The dam's flow data continues on the main display while the political framework that governs it collapses in the room behind it.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Joint management committee — Compact chair, SCA and NAF observers. Sessions run on published schedules. The real negotiations happen in the corridor between sessions.

ECONOMY

Technical operations, committee sessions, diplomatic observation. The Liaison Offices' economy is political — access, information, and the careful management of what each party knows the others know.

RISK

The SCA observer's private briefing source. She is meeting them today. The meeting is not logged. The technical director is in the next room, the personal simulation device in his pocket, calculating whether to answer the next question honestly.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Compact operations staff — night shift is Compact-only, by joint committee agreement. This is the one piece of the framework the SCA has been trying to renegotiate for four years.

ECONOMY

Dam operations continue. The night shift runs the most critical infrastructure in the Basin with the least oversight. The operational staff who do this work are the most important people in the southern hemisphere. Nobody tells them that.

RISK

The technical staff member who ran the 40-year simulation has the results on a personal device that is not on the Compact's secure system. He works the night shift. The night shift is when he ran the simulation. He has been carrying the results for three months.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The joint management committee in session — Compact technical staff at the operational consoles, SCA and NAF observers at the table behind them, the dam's real-time flow data on the main display, and the 40-year aquifer projection sitting three kilometers away in an Assembly building sub-basement where three of the twelve people in this room know it exists. The flow data is beautiful. The flow data is what the Basin's independence actually looks like: numbers on a screen that keep forty million people alive.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SOUTHERN COMPACT

joint management committee chair and operational staff. Technical competence is the Compact's control mechanism.

SCA PHANTOM VIPERS

observer delegation with an intelligence collection operation running through private briefings the Compact has not mapped.

NAF AURORA RANGERS

observer delegation with technical staff who have been assessing the dam's infrastructure for contingency planning purposes.

CIVILIAN NEED

Operational continuity — the technical staff who run the dam need the joint management framework to hold because they are the people who understand what happens to forty million people if it doesn't.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Joint management credentials (if obtainable), committee session observation, technical staff contact, operational data access (partial), the SCA observer's briefing schedule (if operators can identify her source).

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- The SCA observer asks the technical director a question about long-term dam operational parameters. The question is specific enough that the director recognizes it as informed by data closer to the real projection than the official figure. He gives a technically accurate answer that avoids confirming. The observer writes something down.
- A Compact liaison staff member notices operators in the building and asks for identification. The identification check is routine. The liaison staff

member's follow-up question — about what operators know about the renegotiation technical annex — is not routine.

- The NAF observer's technical assessment of the dam's infrastructure includes measurements that correspond to the contingency plan's Phase 2 parameters. The assessment is documented as routine. The measurements are not.
- A committee session runs longer than scheduled. The session's agenda included a routine review of extraction rates. The discussion that extended the session was about a discrepancy between reported extraction and modeled output. The discrepancy is small. It is also consistent with a 40-year scenario.
- The technical director asks operators for a private meeting. He does not explain the subject. He asks if they have secure communications that are not on the Compact's network. He asks this in a corridor where the surveillance density makes the question itself a risk.
- An Itaipu operational staff member from the night shift is in the building during the day, which is unusual. She is delivering a maintenance report. The report includes data she flagged because it is inconsistent with the dam's published operational parameters. The inconsistency has been present for six months. She is the first person to flag it.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The technical director is on the night shift. He is running additional calculations on his personal device in the operational center. The calculations are visible on a screen the Compact's surveillance system records. He has positioned himself so the screen faces a wall. The positioning is deliberate but not effective — the ceiling camera has the angle.
- A Compact night-shift operator receives a communication on a channel that should be dormant. The communication is from the Prometheus League's interior network. It requests a specific piece of dam operational data that would only be useful if the requester already knew the 40-year projection.
- The SCA observer's private briefing source arrives at the Liaison Offices after hours. The source is not SCA. The source is not Compact. The source is a technical contractor from the Building Front who has been running infrastructure assessments that include the dam's power supply connections.
- A power fluctuation in the Liaison Offices' monitoring systems lasts eleven seconds. During those eleven seconds, the dam's flow data display shows a number that corresponds to the 40-year extraction scenario. The technical director is the only person in the room. He photographs the display. The fluc-

tuation corrects. He deletes the photograph. He does not delete the metadata.

- Two Compact night-shift operators are discussing whether to report an anomaly in the dam's extraction-rate data. The anomaly has been present for six months. Reporting it triggers a review that will require accessing the classified projection to explain. Not reporting it means the operational data the committee uses for decision-making is incomplete.
- The NAF observer, who should not be in the building during the Compact-only night shift, is in the building. She has joint committee credentials that authorize 24-hour access. The credentials are legitimate. The SCA observer does not have equivalent credentials. This disparity has not been discussed in committee.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The dam's operational staff have been quietly adjusting extraction rates for six months without committee authorization. The adjustments are small. They are consistent with someone who knows the 40-year projection trying to extend the timeline without announcing what they know. [TRUE]
- The SCA observer's private briefing source is a NAF technical contractor who is selling to both sides. The contractor does not know the SCA observer and the NAF observer are receiving the same data through different channels. [PARTIALLY TRUE — the source is selling to both, but the data packages are different]
- The technical director's personal simulation of 40-year dam operations produces a result that is worse than the classified projection. The projection assumes current extraction rates. His simulation accounts for the rate increases both the SCA and NAF have been requesting. [TRUE — and the simulation's result reduces the timeline from forty years to twenty-eight]
- The joint management committee's Compact-only night shift provision was included in the original agreement because the Compact negotiator who wrote it knew the night shift would provide unmonitored operational access. That negotiator is now one of the three Assembly members who knows the projection. [TRUE]
- The dam's flow data display has shown anomalous readings three times in six months. Each anomaly lasted less than fifteen seconds. Each corresponded to extraction scenarios that assume a shorter aquifer timeline. The anomalies are not malfunctions. Someone is testing what the display would show under different parameters. [TRUE — and the someone is the technical director, using the night shift to run scenario modeling]

- The Liaison Offices' surveillance system records from the last three months contain evidence that would confirm the projection's existence to anyone who knew what to look for. The recordings are stored by the Compact. The Compact has not reviewed them. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

ITAIPU TECHNICAL DIRECTOR GABRIEL MOREIRA

Compact joint management staff – carrying a simulation he cannot share and cannot destroy

CAN GET Dam operational data, joint management committee records, the 40-year simulation results (which show 28 years at requested extraction rates), the SCA observer's private briefing source identification (he does not know who it is but he knows the briefings are happening).

WANTS To not be in possession of a simulation that, if surfaced, either exposes the classified projection or forces him to explain why he ran it without authorization. He also wants someone to understand that the real number is not forty — it is twenty-eight, and nobody except him knows that yet.

FEARS That the SCA renegotiation technical annex — which references data closer to the real projection — is going to reach the committee before he has decided what to do with his simulation. If the committee engages with the 40-year figure without knowing about the 28-year figure, the renegotiation will be built on a number that is already obsolete.

CURRENT PRESSURE The SCA observer asked him a technical question this morning that he could only answer correctly by acknowledging the 40-year scenario is real. He gave a technically accurate answer that did not acknowledge the scenario. The observer wrote something down. The observer's next briefing is in 48 hours. The follow-up question will be harder to dodge.

DISTRICT 5 PORTENO MARKET — COMMERCIAL HUB

SECURITY	active (Compact commercial oversight)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable
CIVILIANS	packed
SURVEILLANCE	cameras + Compact commercial inspectors
FACTION PRESSURE	SCA commercial / NAF technical / Compact administration
BLACK MARKET	moderate
MOBILITY	open

FUNCTION New Buenos Aires's commercial center — the economic hub through which the Compact's trade flows, and the district where SCA commercial operations, NAF technical contractors, and the city's gene-forged informal network intersect. The market smells like grilled meat, spilled mate, hydraulic fluid from gene-forged calibration work, and the specific chemical signature of Compact commercial inspection sealant on shipping containers. The acoustic signature is commerce: negotiation, argument, laughter, the clatter of trade conducted at the intersection of three faction economies.

CONTROLLER Compact commercial administration. SCA commercial operations are the second-largest economic force in the market. Both are watched by the other. The gene-forged informal network operates in the space between both — the strongest independent gene-forged support structure outside the faction programs, because the Compact's independence means no single faction controls who gets what.

DRAW	• Basin-wide trade access — the Compact's commercial leverage in physical form. • SCA commercial offices — where Basin economic negotiations happen at the working level. • NAF technical contractors — the visible face of NAF's technical investment. • The gene-forged informal network — the strongest independent gene-forged support structure outside the faction programs. • The hydrological data black market — fragments consistent with the projection's data format, circulating for six months. • OPEN KIT and Ironweld surplus outlets — the Basin's reconfigurable aesthetic in its commercial form. • Acoustic Weird performances in the market's after-hours spaces — the Dead Stack Collective's Basin chapter running events that double as informal network gatherings.
RISK	• SCA Phantom Viper cell members using commercial cover. Two confirmed sightings in six months; full cell composition unknown. • The hydrological data black market runs through the market's document trade infrastructure. The Compact manages it rather than closes it — managing it gives them intelligence on who is buying. • NAF technical contractors purchasing equipment with non-commercial applications. Individual purchases legitimate; 18-month pattern is not. • The unidentified buyer — four months, multiple fragments, no faction affiliation. The Compact's intelligence operation is converging. • A Puma operator in Stage 2 Drift has been in the market for three days. She needs calibration the Compact's restricted services will not provide.
SCARCITY	• Gene-forged calibration components not routed through SCA or NAF controlled distributors. • Commercial cover that doesn't trigger Compact commercial inspection review. • Hydrological data fragments with verified provenance — many fragments circulate; few can be traced to the actual projection document. • Market intelligence that has not already been collected by the Compact's operation on the black market. • Stage 2 Drift treatment from anyone equipped for non-PRC gene-forged templates.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Porteno Market's hydrological data black market is the Compact's intelligence collection on who wants the projection data — and therefore who already suspects the 80-year figure is wrong. Three buyers in the last six months have purchased fragments with specific parameters. Two of them are SCA. One of them the Compact has not identified. The unidentified buyer's purchase pattern suggests reconstruction, not leverage — they are trying to verify the number, not sell it.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The Puma operator in Stage 2 Drift progresses to Stage 3 in the market. Caridad cannot manage Stage 3 alone. The Compact's gene-forged support restrictions prevent official response. The informal network activates its emergency protocol — and the emergency protocol involves contacting a PRC-affiliated physician who is not equipped for Compact gene-forged templates. Someone is going to get hurt in a way that surfaces the policy failure publicly. The Assembly will have to respond to two crises simultaneously: the projection and the gene-forged support gap.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Compact commercial inspectors + SCA commercial management staff. The market runs on parallel authority structures that cooperate when it's convenient and compete when it isn't.

ECONOMY

Legitimate Basin trade, commercial negotiations, NAF technical procurement. The Dead Stack Collective runs a daytime material exchange — modular kit components, SOLDER hardware, salvage from construction sites — that functions as the scene's economic layer.

RISK

Phantom Viper cell members in commercial cover. The Compact's surveillance picture has two of them. Caridad's informal network has four. The cell has more.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Market security contractors — Compact-contracted, not Compact-employed. The distinction matters after dark when the contractors' loyalty runs to the market's commercial ecosystem, not the Compact's political interests.

ECONOMY

The sophisticated layer of the black market: hydrological data fragments, gene-forged informal network after-hours operations, interior passage arrangements. Acoustic Weird performances in warehouse spaces where the Dead Stack Collective's Basin chapter runs gatherings that are simultaneously cultural events and intelligence exchanges.

RISK

The unidentified hydrological data buyer. The Compact's intelligence operation on the black market has been trying to identify them for four months. They surface briefly, purchase, disappear. Their operational discipline is better than any faction's commercial cover in the market.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Porteno Market at midday — four SCA commercial staff at a table with three NAF technical contractors discussing a Basin trade agreement, while twelve meters away a gene-forged Puma operator in Stage 1 Drift is getting calibration support from Caridad, an independent technician who does this off-books because the Compact's gene-forged support infrastructure is for faction programs and she is not in one. Caridad's workstation is set up in a market stall between an Ironweld surplus vendor and a GHOST KIT JOURNAL distribution point. The Puma operator's visible modification display codes — subdermal plating at the wrist, the specific scarring pattern of Compact-program genetic integration — mark her as someone whose body was built by a state that will not maintain it.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SCA PHANTOM VIPERS

cell members in commercial cover, managing the commercial infrastructure that funds the pre-positioned operation.

NAF AURORA RANGERS

technical contractors whose procurement patterns are individually legitimate and collectively suspicious.

SOUTHERN COMPACT

commercial administration and the intelligence operation that manages the hydrological data black market.

CIVILIAN NEED

Gene-forged calibration access — the Compact's support restrictions mean independent gene-forged operators can only get maintenance through the informal network. The network is running out of components and the operators are running out of time.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Commercial cover identity, Basin trade network access, gene-forged informal network introductions, black market access, Phantom Viper identification data, NAF procurement pattern intelligence, Dead Stack Collective scene contacts, Acoustic Weird event access.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- A hydrological data broker in the market is selling a fragment that operators can identify as coming from the classified projection document. She will not say who her source is. The fragment's data format matches the Itaipu data archive's output specifications.
- An SCA commercial staff member and a NAF technical contractor are having a conversation that started as a commercial dispute and has become something the market's Compact inspector should hear. She is not hearing it — she has been redirected by a minor compliance issue on the other side of the market. The compliance issue was manufactured.
- A gene-forged Puma operator approaches operators. She needs calibration support and has been turned away from three Compact-affiliated providers. She knows why — the gene-forged support restrictions. She wants to know if operators know someone else. Her visible modifications are running hot. The subdermal plating at her temple is discolored. She has days, not weeks.
- A Phantom Viper cell member in commercial cover makes a purchase that operators can identify as inconsistent with their cover role — the purchase includes components used in communications encryption, not commercial trade. She does not notice operators noticing.
- An NAF technical contractor's procurement list includes a component with one non-commercial application: infrastructure control system override. The Compact commercial inspector has flagged it for review. The contractor is asking questions about the review timeline with an urgency that suggests the component is time-sensitive.
- The unidentified hydrological data buyer surfaces — briefly, at a specific vendor, purchasing a fragment. They are gone before the Compact's surveillance operation can reposition. Operators who are in the right place see a face, a build, a movement pattern that matches no known faction's operational training.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- Caridad is in her market stall after hours, working on a gene-forged operator whose modifications are failing. The work is delicate. The components she is using are the last of her supply. The Dead Stack Collective's Basin chapter is running an Acoustic Weird event two stalls down — the sound provides cover for the calibration work's distinctive high-frequency signature.
- The Compact's market intelligence operation makes a move on the hydrological data black market — a Maned Wolf operative in commercial cover purchases a fragment and follows the transaction chain. The chain leads to a vendor who is also selling to the unidentified buyer. The Maned Wolf and the buyer are converging on the same source.
- Two Phantom Viper cell members meet after hours in the market. Their meeting is brief. One of them is the Compact intelligence asset who does not know she is a cell member. She passes information about Compact intelligence priorities. She receives information about SCA commercial operations. Both exchanges are genuine. Both are cover for what she is actually doing, which she has not told either side.
- A gene-forged Puma operator in Stage 2 Drift collapses in the market's after-hours commercial zone. Caridad is fifteen minutes away. The Compact's restricted medical services are closer but will not treat an independent operator. The market security contractors are not trained for gene-forged medical emergencies. Someone has to make a decision in the next four minutes.
- An interior passage broker offers operators a route to the deep Patagonian interior that bypasses the Interior Gate checkpoint entirely — a route through the pre-Upheaval underground infrastructure that connects the Estuary District to terrain south of the city. The broker does not know where the route comes from. She knows it works because three people have used it in the last month.
- The Dead Stack Collective's Acoustic Weird event draws a crowd that includes SCA commercial staff, NAF technical contractors, climate migrant workers, gene-forged operators from four different programs, and one person whose modification display codes mark them as bespoke commission — not faction program, not commercial stock. Custom-built. The bespoke operator watches the crowd with the patient attention of someone who is here to identify, not participate.

RUMORS (1D6)

- Caridad has identified four Phantom Viper cell members — two more than the Compact's intelligence operation. She identified them through their gene-forged calibration needs, which they cannot source through SCA channels without breaking commercial cover. [TRUE]
- The hydrological data black market is the Compact's intelligence collection tool. The Compact manages it rather than closes it because managing it gives them a picture of who suspects the 80-year figure is wrong. [TRUE]
- The unidentified buyer is reconstructing the projection independently from fragments. They are not trying to sell the number or leverage it. They are verifying it. Someone sent them to check. [TRUE — but who sent them is the question underneath every other question]
- The Dead Stack Collective's Basin chapter has been documenting the Porteno Market's faction presence through Acoustic Weird event attendance patterns. Their documentation is more comprehensive than the Compact's market intelligence operation. [PARTIALLY TRUE — the documentation exists; its comprehensiveness is debatable]
- A gene-forged operator in the market's informal network is not what she appears. Her modification display codes are wrong — the visible plating patterns do not match any known faction program's integration methodology. She is either bespoke commission running faction cover or faction program running bespoke cover. [TRUE — and which one determines whether the informal network has been compromised]
- The Compact commercial inspector who flagged the NAF procurement pattern was reassigned. Her replacement has not flagged anything in four months. The replacement was recommended by a NAF technical contractor. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

INDEPENDENT GENE-FORGED TECHNICIAN 'CARIDAD'

No faction affiliation, Porteno Market — the informal network's most important person

CAN GET The gene-forged informal network's complete picture in New Buenos Aires, the Phantom Viper cell members she has personally identified (four, including two the Compact hasn't), the unidentified hydrological data buyer's physical description, gene-forged calibration services for any template.

WANTS	A supply chain for calibration components that does not route through either SCA or NAF controlled distributors. The current supply runs through a gray-market channel that is being squeezed by both factions simultaneously — the SCA to control the information flow, the NAF because the components have dual-use applications.
FEARS	That the Compact's gene-forged support restrictions — which exist to maintain neutrality across faction programs — are going to get someone in the informal network killed before anyone in the Assembly recognizes the policy problem. The Puma in Stage 2 Drift is the immediate crisis. The policy is the structural one.
CURRENT PRESSURE	A Puma operator in Stage 2 Drift has been in the market for three days. She will not go to the Compact's medical services. Caridad cannot handle Stage 2 alone — she needs components she does not have and expertise she cannot access through any channel the Compact's restrictions leave open. She needs help and she needs it today.

DISTRICT 6 INTERIOR GATE

THE DARK ZONE ACCESS

SECURITY	light (Compact checkpoint — single vehicle inspection point)
INFRASTRUCTURE	stable (checkpoint) / none (beyond)
CIVILIANS	sparse (travelers, freight crews, people who are leaving)
SURVEILLANCE	Compact cameras (checkpoint only) / dark zone beyond
FACTION PRESSURE	Compact at checkpoint / Prometheus League dominant beyond
BLACK MARKET	heavy
MOBILITY	checkpointed (inbound/outbound) / dark zone (beyond)

FUNCTION	The city's edge and the entry point to the deep Patagonian interior — south of the 46th parallel, where no faction has the logistics to maintain a garrison, the wind is constant, and the Prometheus League has been operating without significant opposition for eight years. The checkpoint smells like diesel exhaust, wind-carried dust from the pampas, and the specific cold mineral scent of Patagonian air at altitude. Beyond the checkpoint, the acoustic signature changes: the city's background noise drops away and the wind becomes the dominant sound, carrying distances that make operators recalibrate their sense of space.
CONTROLLER	Compact at the checkpoint. The Prometheus League controls everything south of the first ridge. The transition is not violent — it is a jurisdictional fact, maintained by geography and by the League's patient operational presence. The checkpoint inspector is thorough but not hostile. She knows everyone who passes regularly. That knowledge is the surveillance.
DRAW	• Access to the deep interior and the Prometheus League's network. • The interior communities — sparse, independent, and running water management infrastructure they have built from scratch over a decade without faction support. • The Prometheus League's communications and logistics infrastructure. • The specific kind of operational freedom the dark zone provides — no faction surveillance past the checkpoint. • The biggest sky in any operational environment. The open country feels wrong after every other theater because the scale is honest.

RISK

• The checkpoint logs every vehicle and person. The cross-reference intelligence operation has been running for eight months, correlating Interior Gate traffic with Porteno Market activity. • The Prometheus League's presence in the interior is not a secret. Both SCA and NAF have sent reconnaissance teams. Neither has found the League's actual operational infrastructure because it is community infrastructure. • A Prometheus League operative has been in New Buenos Aires for three weeks on a specific acquisition task. She is going to try a different approach at the Interior Gate today. • The interior communities know about the classified aquifer projection. They have known for two years. Their water management decisions have been based on the 40-year figure. • The dark zone is dark. Harpy Eagle gene-forged make air asset tracking effectively impossible. Maned Wolf operators patrol the treeline with the patient long-range awareness of something that learned surveillance from the pampas.

SCARCITY

• Passage documentation that survives the checkpoint cross-reference operation — any pattern inconsistency is flagged within 48 hours. • Interior community trust — earned over weeks, not purchased over drinks. • Communication channels that work beyond the first ridge without using the Prometheus League's infrastructure. • Maps of the interior that include the communities' independent water management infrastructure — the League has the only complete version.

UNDER-SYSTEM

The interior communities' independent water management is what makes the Compact's aquifer strategy viable in the long term — the communities' distributed low-extraction practices are what the Basin's water management actually looks like at the 40-year timeline. The Compact's governance team does not know this because they have not asked the interior communities. The Prometheus League knows it because they have. The communities' infrastructure is the answer to the question the Compact does not know it should be asking.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The checkpoint cross-reference operation identifies the Prometheus League logistics chain — seven different parties, individually legitimate manifests, collectively a supply network. The Compact intelligence officer presents the finding to Base Command. The Compact responds by restricting interior access. The interior communities, who have been managing the Basin's actual water future for two years, lose their connection to the city. The Prometheus League's contingency activates. The communities' governance framework becomes visible not through recognition but through crisis — and the framing shifts from 'governance achievement' to 'governance challenge.'

DAY

AUTHORITY

Compact checkpoint — single inspector, thorough but not hostile. She has been running this checkpoint for six years. She knows the manifests, the faces, the vehicle weights. Her knowledge is more effective than any sensor net.

ECONOMY

Legitimate interior freight, community supply runs, the visible layer of interior access. The Prometheus League's dark zone aesthetic filters through the checkpoint — OPEN KIT in high-altitude configurations, the visual language of patience.

RISK

The checkpoint log. Everything that passes is recorded. The cross-reference intelligence operation has been running for eight months and is three connections from presenting its findings. The inspector knows her log is being analyzed. She has not been told what the analysis has found.

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The checkpoint closes. Beyond the checkpoint, nothing — or rather, the Prometheus League's operational presence, which is not nothing but is not acknowledged by anyone who maintains a relationship with the Compact.

ECONOMY

Everything that cannot pass the checkpoint. The League's logistics. The interior communities' supply chains. Movement that uses the dark zone's surveillance gap for purposes the checkpoint was built to prevent.

RISK

The dark zone is dark. What happens in the first twenty kilometers south of the checkpoint after dark is known only to the people who went there and came back. The Patagonian wind erases tracks. The Harpy Eagles see everything from elevation. The Maned Wolves hear everything from the treeline.

SIGNATURE IMAGE

The Interior Gate checkpoint at dusk — a single Compact inspector logging a freight vehicle while the Patagonian wind comes down from the ridgeline beyond. In the truck's cargo manifest, among the legitimate community supplies, something that the inspector will flag tomorrow when she does her cross-reference review. The sky behind the ridgeline is the biggest thing in the scene — open and cold and carrying the light of a sunset that reaches from horizon to horizon without a single structure to interrupt it. The inspector has seen this sunset six thousand times. She still looks up.

FACTIONS PRESENT

SOUTHERN COMPACT

checkpoint administration — the single inspector who is simultaneously the city's border control and the intelligence operation's primary data source.

PROMETHEUS LEAGUE

dominant beyond the first ridge. Harpy Eagle and Maned Wolf gene-forged operating by rules the Compact officially cannot see. The League's dark zone aesthetic — high-altitude patience, the wardrobe of the pampas — is the visual language of the interior.

CIVILIAN NEED

Interior community access to the city — supply runs, medical support, the Assembly meeting that Fernanda Quispe has been trying to get for three weeks. The communities need the Compact to recognize that governance extends to them, not over them.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Interior passage documentation, checkpoint cross-reference pattern data, Prometheus League contact (if operators demonstrate non-faction affiliation), interior community introduction (through Fernanda Quispe), dark zone operational freedom.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

- The Prometheus League operative who has been in the city for three weeks arrives at the checkpoint with a freight manifest for legitimate community supplies. The manifest is correct. The vehicle weight is 40 kilograms over. The inspector notices. The operative does not know the inspector notices.
- An interior community representative is at the checkpoint on the inbound side, coming into the city for the first time in two years. She has requested a meeting with an Assembly member. The request has been in administrative review for three weeks. She is wearing OPEN KIT in a high-altitude configuration that marks her as someone who has been in the deep interior long enough to dress like the pampas.
- An SCA reconnaissance team is at the checkpoint with permits for an 'agricultural survey.' Their equipment loadout is not agricultural survey standard. The inspector processes them without comment. She photographs the equipment list from memory after they pass.
- The checkpoint inspector shows operators a vehicle log entry from six weeks ago. The vehicle passed outbound. It has not returned. The manifest listed medical supplies for a specific community that has no record of receiving them. The vehicle's registration traces to a commercial entity in the Porteno Market that does not exist.
- A NAF Aurora Ranger in civilian cover — the same one from the Highland Assembly Quarter — arrives at the checkpoint. She has a valid interior passage permit obtained three days ago. The permit is legitimate. The purpose stated on the permit — 'technical infrastructure assessment' — is not.
- The Prometheus League operative and the interior community representative recognize each other at the checkpoint. The recognition is brief and entirely invisible to the checkpoint inspector. Neither of them acknowledges it to operators. The recognition means they have met in the interior, which means the operative's acquisition task connects to the communities.

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

- The checkpoint is closed. Movement beyond the city's edge is visible as headlights on the access road — someone is transiting the dark zone without checkpoint authorization. The headlights go dark at the first ridge.
- A Prometheus League signal arrives on operators' comms — a brief, encrypted burst containing coordinates and a time. The coordinates are twenty kilometers south of the checkpoint. The time is tomorrow at dawn.
- A Harpy Eagle gene-forged lands on the checkpoint structure after dark, rests for four minutes, and departs south. The gene-forged is not in Compact uniform. The modification display codes visible on her hands — the specific scarring pattern of League-program integration — mark her as Prometheus. The checkpoint's cameras are not active. Nobody records the landing.
- Interior community supply vehicles arrive at the checkpoint perimeter from the south, waiting for dawn and the checkpoint's opening. The drivers sleep in their vehicles. The vehicles carry community-grown food, hand-built water management components, and GHOST KIT JOURNAL copies that will be distributed in the Estuary District by morning.
- A Maned Wolf operator, identifiable by the long-range surveillance posture that experienced operators recognize as the product of years on the pampas, is watching the checkpoint from the first ridge south. The wolf has been there for three hours. The wolf has been there every night for a week. The wolf is assessing the cross-reference intelligence operation's timeline.
- An explosion of sound from the dark zone — not weapons fire, not industrial. Acoustic Weird. A Dead Stack Collective performance somewhere in the first twenty kilometers, audible because the Patagonian wind carries sound at distances the performers did not anticipate. The sound is strange and deliberate and it means someone is in the dark zone who treats the dark zone as a venue, not a threat.

RUMORS (1D6)

- The interior communities' source for the 40-year projection was a Compact hydrologist who gave it to a community water engineer in 2064 because she calculated the communities would protect the aquifer rather than exploit it. [TRUE]
- The Prometheus League's interior operational infrastructure is indistinguishable from community infrastructure because it is community infrastructure. The League provides technical expertise. The communities provide legitimacy. The arrangement has worked for eight years. [TRUE]

- A route through the pre-Upheaval underground infrastructure connects the Estuary District to terrain south of the city, bypassing the Interior Gate checkpoint entirely. Three people have used it in the last month. [TRUE — and the route passes through the sealed section the Building Front construction crew breached]
- The checkpoint inspector has been running her own analysis of the cross-reference intelligence operation's data. Her analysis reaches a different conclusion than the Compact intelligence officer's. Her conclusion: the seven-party pattern is not a League logistics chain. It is an interior community governance network. [TRUE — and her conclusion is correct]
- The deep Patagonian interior south of the 46th parallel contains communities whose water management infrastructure is more sophisticated than anything the Compact has built. At least three communities have achieved sustainable extraction rates that would extend the aquifer timeline beyond the 40-year projection — possibly to sixty years. [TRUE — and this is the data the League wants the Assembly to see]
- The Harpy Eagle gene-forged who patrol the interior have been seen carrying GHOST KIT JOURNAL copies that contain technical specifications for distributed water management systems disguised as poetry and personal narrative. The journals circulate in the Estuary District. The specifications are accurate. [TRUE]

CONTACTS

INTERIOR COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE FERNANDA QUISPE

Deep Patagonian interior, 46th parallel community network — three days in the city, no meeting

CAN GET Interior community water management data (the real picture, based on 40-year projection planning), the Prometheus League's interior operational footprint (partial), the source that gave the interior communities the classified aquifer projection two years ago.

WANTS The Assembly meeting she requested three weeks ago — specifically with an Assembly member who knows the classified projection and can engage with what the interior communities have done with that information. She wants to present two years of governance achievement, not petition for recognition.

FEARS That the Compact will respond to the interior communities' independent water management as a governance challenge rather than a resource asset. She has watched the Assembly's administrative review process bury requests from the interior for a decade. This one is different. She is not sure the Assembly knows it is different.

CURRENT PRESSURE Her administrative review has been deprioritized twice. She is starting to think the deprioritization is intentional. She is right — one of the three Assembly members who knows the projection is blocking it because the communities' source connects to him. She does not know this. She knows that Alba sent her and Alba is waiting for a report and the report hasn't come and the silence is becoming its own message to the communities about what the Compact thinks of them.

09/

NORDICS NETWORK ARCOLOGY

PCU-ADMINISTERED | EARTH 2066

The arcologies are self-sufficient. The people inside them are not.

OVERVIEW

Scandinavia did not wait for the world to stabilize. While every other bloc was fighting over water, the Nordics built city-states that didn't need anyone else's water, power, or food. The arcologies are self-contained by design -- geothermal energy, hydroponic production, closed-loop water systems, internal manufacturing. The most livable places on Earth in 2066. The most watched. Every faction wants access to Nordic technology and the neutral ground the NAN provides. The Nordics sell both, at prices calibrated to keep every faction equally irritated and equally dependent.

The NAN claims neutrality as a founding principle. That claim is a product. The Nordics have never been neutral -- they are simply better at performing neutrality than anyone else in the world. The technology they license to other factions includes, in every case, a persistent Nordic monitoring channel. Every faction's geothermal tap, every licensed water treatment system, every food production module running Nordic architecture has a Nordic eye inside it. The factions either don't know or have decided the access is worth the cost. The NIA has never confirmed or denied the channels exist.

The load-bearing fact of this hub sits 200 meters below Arcology Three's residential core: GAIA-3, the geothermal management AI balancing power, heat distribution, and water treatment for eighty thousand residents. GAIA-3 is running on a thermal pressure model built in 2041, before deep-subduction events in 2058 altered the Scandinavian Plate's signature. A classified update commissioned in 2063 and finalized in 2064 shows GAIA-3 operating within 6% of cascade threshold. The failure window is 18 to 24 months. Fixing it requires a 72-hour external access window -- the first time GAIA-3 has been externally accessible since 2041. NIA Director Ingrid Solberg has not authorized the upgrade. She has her reasons. They are not the reasons she has given her deputy.

Four months ago, Solberg arranged for the classified pressure model to be accessible to PRC intelligence assets operating inside the NAN. She wants to see who comes for the 72-hour window. The NAN's neutrality has always been enforced by knowing more about the factions operating inside it than they know about each other. The window is a test. The eighty thousand residents of Arcology Three are the stakes she has set for it.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

Territory: Independent / NAN Infrastructure: stable surface / failing sub-level Surveillance: visible cameras + informant net Civilian mood: compliant / quietly stratified Faction pressure: contested (multi-faction covert) Black market: light (access-tier forgery only) Diplomatic status: neutral (performed) Chokepoint: GAIA-3 geothermal AI, Arcology Three

HUB SIGNATURE

Engineered acoustic calm. The Nordics designed their interior spaces to feel safe -- systems run quietly because quiet is a specification, not an absence of surveillance. Cameras don't hide because they don't need to. The security infrastructure is visible, and the visibility is the message. Geothermal mineral smell in the infrastructure levels. Clean recycled air in residential zones. Greenhouse organic from the food production floors. The temperature gradient between exterior Nordic air and interior managed climate is the first thing outsiders notice -- it stops being comfortable around day three, when operators start to register that nothing here is natural and everything is optimized.

THE SCENE — NORDICS ARCOLOGY NETWORK

The arcologies are where Splice Punk looks most out of place and therefore most precisely itself. Nordic minimalism is survival architecture at its most refined: every surface optimized, every system visible because visibility is a specification, engineered acoustic calm maintained at a precise range that feels controlled rather than natural, cameras that don’t hide because they don’t need to. Against that backdrop, a GHOST KIT jacket reads as a political statement without saying a word. The contrast is the point. The Nordics accommodate everyone at sufficient price, the operator circuit passes through constantly, and every operator who passes through brings the scene as carried cargo that the NAN’s security architecture has calculated is more valuable to observe than suppress.

SCAFFOLD STYLE — Flooded London’s residential aesthetic label, clothes of people who live above the flood line rather than work through it — sells better in Nordic transit facilities than anywhere else in the OT world. The softer, more permanent-feeling silhouette reads as civilian in a way that matters at a check-

point sophisticated enough to know the difference. ARCHIVE NINE's white-9-on-black square has appeared as graffiti in six documented NAN infrastructure sub-level locations; Burn Archive recorded all six before security removed them with a speed confirming the Nordics were paying closer attention than their cameras implied. OPEN RELAY comms traffic runs through the arcologies on frequencies the NAN architecture has chosen not to prioritize, which is the Nordics' method of extracting intelligence value from transit flow while maintaining their position of studied non-participation. Dr. Mikkelsen's geothermal AI lab sits two floors below a transit hub where the OPEN RELAY is currently routing traffic around her monitoring architecture. She is aware of neither. She would find only the lab interesting.

Nordic-forged — polar bear, wolverine, snowy owl stock — do not export and go freelance rarely enough that it remains a pattern rather than a trend. The ones who pass through the arcology transit system are unmistakable: too controlled, with a quality of attention the scene reads correctly as something built for an environment where every variable has been optimized except human decision. They do not blend into the Splice aesthetic. They occupy the same space with the specific courtesy of people who are very clear about who they are and don't need agreement from the room. The Nordics find this appropriate. The Splice scene finds it useful — a Nordic-forged in the transit lounge attracts the kind of NAN security attention that routes surveillance away from whatever is actually happening in the adjacent corridor.

LAWS AND CIVIC STRUCTURE

Aggressively enforced: Unauthorized access to infrastructure sub-levels; credential fraud; undisclosed recording in classified zones

Selectively weaponized: Residential tier eligibility reviews; research credential audits; 'voluntary cooperation' with NSF inquiries

Feared punishments: Access tier downgrade (loss of full amenity allocation); residency revocation and expulsion; placement on the NIA's undisclosed monitoring registry

Civic rituals: Quarterly Allocation Reviews -- public posting of tier assignments with no appeals process; the Greenhouse Tours (curated civilian visits to food production levels, which function as NIA loyalty demonstrations); GAIA-3

Status Broadcasts, a brief daily system-health report that has read 'nominal' every day since 2041

FACTIONS

NORDIC INFRASTRUCTURE AUTHORITY (NIA)

OBJECTIVE Keep the NAN's leverage architecture intact -- which this week means running Solberg's honey trap to completion, loading the 2064 pressure model into GAIA-3 through the 72-hour window on NIA terms, and using the window to upgrade the monitoring channels in every faction's licensed Nordic infrastructure simultaneously.

ASSETS Complete physical control of all NAN infrastructure including access, power, and communications; a monitoring channel in every licensed system operated by any faction globally; the flag suppression system that controls who moves through the Threshold; Haugen's unauthorized pressure model copy as an asset rather than a liability.

DEPENDENCY The NAN's reputation for neutrality -- which is the product the NIA sells and the thing that makes every faction willing to operate inside an environment where the NIA has total infrastructure control. Neutrality compromised is leverage lost.

VULNERABILITY Solberg's suppression of the PRC flag entries. If that record surfaces before she's ready, it looks like NIA complicity in a covert operation targeting NAN infrastructure. It will look that way even if her explanation is accurate.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Administrative holds, access credential reviews, residency flag activations -- all deniable and all effective
- 2: Formal NIA security inquiry -- which involves NSF access and creates a record that all factions in the Exchange can eventually see
- 3: Deep Infrastructure lockdown -- shuts the problem in, shuts everyone else out, and makes the GAIA-3 situation worse
- 4: Threshold closure -- the NAN goes dark, every faction's diplomatic mission is trapped or expelled, and the NAN's neutrality claim is over

OFFER	Access authorizations; residency upgrades; flag suppression for identities that need to move freely; the most accurate intelligence on faction activity in the NAN of any entity in the world
DEMAND	Information about who is coming for the 72-hour window and from which direction -- Solberg needs to know all the players before she opens the access
IF DAMAGED	NIA credibility collapse means every faction simultaneously attempts to establish direct infrastructure control. The NAN becomes a contested zone within 90 days. The eighty thousand residents of Tier 1 Core lose the most livable environment on Earth. The Outer Ring loses the only buffer keeping them inside the NAN's emergency calculus.

NORDIC SECURITY FORCE (NSF)

OBJECTIVE	Maintain NAN security through visible deterrence and non-lethal response -- this week, specifically, keep the Exchange Quarter's multi-faction intelligence collision from going loud while Solberg's operation runs.
ASSETS	Complete physical security coverage of the NAN with the most professional non-lethal response capability on Earth; standing authority for force in Deep Infrastructure without supervisor approval; a watch commander network that has, in at least two cases, been compromised by NIA Infrastructure Command oversight they weren't read into.
DEPENDENCY	The doctrine that visibility is deterrence. The NSF's authority derives from the NAN's political stability -- it evaporates the moment the NAN's political costs to operate inside become too high for any faction.
VULNERABILITY	The watch commanders who have been logging anomalies as routine on NIA instruction. If that pattern becomes visible to NSF command, the question of what the NIA has been suppressing becomes an internal NSF inquiry that Solberg cannot control.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Visible presence increase -- more officers, more patrol frequency, observed without contact
- 2: Identity verification sweeps -- everyone moving through affected sectors gets credential-checked
- 3: Sector lockdown -- movement restricted, access to critical zones suspended, all factions officially notified
- 4: Full facility response -- NSF operates at maximum authorized capacity; standing non-lethal force authorization extends beyond Deep Infrastructure; this has never happened in the NAN

OFFER Patrol schedule information; checkpoint timing and blind spots; the specific watch commanders who are receiving NIA Infrastructure Command override instructions

DEMAND Evidence of the specific threat they are not being told about so that they can respond to it professionally rather than being managed around it

IF DAMAGED NSF credibility loss means every faction's covert operation in the NAN runs without the implicit threat of non-lethal professional response. The Exchange becomes a fire zone. Every faction that has been operating under the assumption of NSF deterrence recalculates simultaneously.

PRC BLACK LOTUS CELL (EXCHANGE QUARTER)

OBJECTIVE Access the GAIA-3 system during the 72-hour upgrade window and install a kill switch in GAIA-3's thermal pressure regulation architecture. Not a backdoor -- a kill switch. A faction with the ability to crash the NAN's infrastructure on command has leverage over every entity operating inside it, including the NIA.

ASSETS The classified 2064 pressure model; diplomatic cover in the Exchange Quarter that Solberg's flag suppression has kept operational; four months of operational planning for the 72-hour window; a technical capability that is specifically designed for GAIA-3's architecture.

DEPENDENCY Solberg authorizing the 72-hour window. Black Lotus cannot create the access -- they can only exploit it. They have been waiting for four months. Their window of operational security is closing as Solberg extends the timeline.

VULNERABILITY The NIA honey trap, which they do not know is running. They believe they are the most sophisticated operation in the NAN. They are operating inside a facility designed by someone who has been watching them for four months and who has used their presence to flush out three other intelligence operations they didn't know were running.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Continued waiting -- Black Lotus is patient and their cover is intact
- 2: Attempt informal access -- Haugen's path, which they have mapped and which is the test Solberg is running
- 3: Force the window -- create a GAIA-3 incident that requires emergency external access, which opens the window under conditions that are not Solberg's
- 4: Kill switch through physical access to the hardware -- Deep Infrastructure intrusion, which requires dealing with the two security officers and accepting that the operation is no longer covert

OFFER The classified 2064 pressure model (they don't know Solberg already has it); the kill switch architecture, which reveals the specific vulnerability in GAIA-3's regulation system that makes the kill switch possible

DEMAND Access. That is all they have wanted for four months.

IF DAMAGED Black Lotus neutralized means the PRC loses its primary covert operation in the NAN and its intelligence advantage on Nordic infrastructure. PRC command will send a replacement operation. The replacement will know about the honey trap. Solberg will have changed the conditions by then. Probably.

THE CLEARANCE NETWORK

OBJECTIVE Keep the NAN's access tier system intact and unequal -- because inequality is what makes the Clearance Network's product valuable. This week specifically: manage the intelligence collision building in the Exchange Quarter without becoming collateral damage in it.

ASSETS The most complete registry of unofficial identities operating in the NAN; distribution infrastructure through both the Exchange Quarter and Outer Ring; Vanya Lindqvist's leverage position, which has not yet been used; relationships with every faction's intelligence operation because every faction has bought credentials at some point.

DEPENDENCY The NAN's continued existence as a premium destination. If the NAN becomes a contested zone, the Clearance Network's product loses its value. They are more invested in NAN stability than the NIA suspects.

VULNERABILITY Vanya Lindqvist's registry. If the NIA moves on her before she uses it, the Network loses its primary intelligence asset and its leverage position. If she uses it unilaterally, the Network loses the controlled release they need to remain operationally viable afterward.

ESCALATION

Ladder

ESCALATION

- 1: Color-coded door marks -- warning the Network's assets about elevated interest
- 2: Asset extraction -- moving key personnel out of the NAN before they become a liability
- 3: Controlled intelligence release -- Lindqvist's registry deployed selectively to create a faction collision that consumes the threat
- 4: Network dissolution and scatter -- the Clearance Network stops existing as a unified entity and its principals become untraceable individuals

OFFER Cover credential packages for any access tier; the complete registry of unofficial intelligence presences in the NAN; Lindqvist's assessment of which faction's operation is most advanced and most dangerous

DEMAND A Tier 1 medical allocation for Vanya Lindqvist. Everything else is negotiable.

IF DAMAGED Clearance Network neutralized means every faction's unofficial presence in the NAN loses its credential infrastructure simultaneously. The Exchange Quarter's intelligence operations collapse into direct action -- which the NSF's non-lethal doctrine was not designed for.

HUB WILDCARDS

DR. ERIK HAUGEN

NIA DEPUTY DIRECTOR, INFRASTRUCTURE

Haugen has the 2064 classified pressure model on a personal device. He acquired it because he wrote part of it. He has been trying to get it loaded into GAIA-3 for eight months through informal means because Solberg's formal process keeps being delayed. He does not know that Solberg is watching his attempts and using them to test the informal access route Black Lotus intends to use. He does not know that Solberg told him tonight to 'try everything' because tonight is the night she needs to know if the informal route works.

Haugen is not a villain and not a fool. He is a person who identified a genuine threat, calculated a genuine solution, and has been operating for eight months in a system that has used his genuine concern as a tool without telling him. If he learns what Solberg has been doing, his response is the variable that changes everything. He has the pressure model. He knows the hardware. He knows where the 8% reduction option lives in the regulator array. He does not need Solberg to act.

Current Status: In Deep Infrastructure tonight, running the informal access test Solberg sent him in to run, with no idea he is running it for her

The Deliberate Blank: Whether Haugen loaded the model tonight and what he found -- left for the table to determine

VANYA LINDQVIST

CLEARANCE NETWORK, OUTER RING COORDINATOR

Lindqvist has the most operationally valuable single asset in the NAN: a complete, current registry of every non-official intelligence presence inside Arcology Three, with faction affiliations, cover identities, and the credentials she sold them. She has had this for years. She has never used it as leverage because the Clearance Network's value depends on client confidentiality.

Two months ago she applied for a Tier 1 medical allocation -- she is pregnant, her Outer Ring allocation does not include prenatal care, and she needs a different tier. The denial came back with a handwritten note: 'when you are ready to discuss your records, the allocation will follow.' Someone in the NIA knows what she has and wants it on NIA terms.

She has not responded because she doesn't know if the note is from Solberg's operation or from an NIA official who is not inside Solberg's operation and would use the registry differently. The distinction matters. She is three months pregnant. She has two more months before the medical timeline becomes urgent.

Current Status: Outer Ring, watching, not yet committed to any course of action

The Deliberate Blank: Who sent the note -- and whether it was Solberg or an NIA official acting independently, which would mean there is a second NIA operation running inside the honey trap

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_____

DOWNTIME PROCEDURES

ACQUIRE NAN ACCESS CREDENTIALS

What: Work through the Clearance Network to obtain a cover identity with a specific access tier -- Outer Ring, Tier 1 residential, Exchange Quarter diplomatic, or Greenhouse research.

Cost: Currency plus a piece of information the Clearance Network doesn't already have. Lindqvist sets the value of the information.

Gain: A credential package that passes automated biometric checks and survives a routine manual review.

Fallout: The Clearance Network now has the operator's real identity cross-referenced against their cover. If the Network is compromised, pressured, or makes a deal, that cross-reference moves. Also: Lindqvist may ask for a favor instead of information, at her discretion and timing.

RUN A PASSIVE INTELLIGENCE FEED

What: Establish a position in the Exchange Quarter, Outer Ring, or Tier 1 Core and run an observation cycle -- 24 to 72 hours, blend in, collect pattern data.

Cost: Time and a functional cover identity for the relevant tier. Exchange Quarter requires diplomatic-level credentials.

Gain: One confirmed faction contact's movement pattern, one unscheduled event the operator was present for, and one rumor-quality intelligence item from the passive feed.

Fallout: Exposure duration creates recognition risk. After 48 hours in any single sector, one NPC in that sector can identify the operator on sight. After 72 hours, one NIA informant has flagged the operator's presence for review.

ACCESS NIA INFRASTRUCTURE LOGS

What: Use a contact inside NIA Infrastructure Command, the Spine's data conduit, or a compromised terminal to pull specific log data -- variance records, access authorizations, flag suppression entries.

Cost: Favor with the contact or physical access to a terminal that carries exposure risk.

Gain: One complete log set for a specific system, time range, and authorization level -- enough to answer one operational question definitively.

Fallout: The log pull creates a query record in the NIA's system. The record routes to a human reviewer. The reviewer's timeline depends on the access level -- routine terminal queries take 6 hours to review; Infrastructure Command-level access takes 90 minutes. If the pull is traced, the NIA does not arrest -- they watch and wait for the network.

HUB RUMOR TABLES

CONTRACTOR AND TECHNICAL STAFF CHATTER (1D6)

OUTER RING STREET FEED (1D6)

EXCHANGE QUARTER INTELLIGENCE FEED (1D6)

CLINIC AND MEDICAL ALLOCATION GOSSIP (1D6)

ESCALATION TRACKS

TRACK 1: GAIA-3 CASCADE PROBABILITY

The cascade probability increases when: GAIA-3's load increases, when the 72-hour window is delayed past 18 months from the classified model's completion date, or when Haugen's informal access attempts fail and he escalates his approach. The probability decreases only with the formal upgrade or the 8% Greenhouse reduction.

Stage 1 (current): 34% within 18 months: Status reads nominal. Outage frequency in Outer Ring: 3 per week. Haugen's attempts: ongoing. Honey trap: active. No faction outside the NIA knows the real numbers.

Stage 2: 45% within 12 months: Variance nodes in the Spine cross 8% -- triggering NIA anomaly protocol. Solberg manually adjusts the threshold for the third time. An NIA board member files a query. Outage frequency: 5 per week. First heat-stress medical intake from Outer Ring population.

Stage 3: 60% within 6 months: Haugen goes outside official channels. GAIA-3 variance becomes visible in Tier 1 Core -- lights flicker, water pressure inconsistencies. Tier 1 residents start noticing. Exchange Quarter intelligence operations pick up the pattern. Black Lotus moves to active phase.

Stage 4: Emergency: GAIA-3 cascade sequence initiates. Four-hour stabilization window. Outer Ring: no emergency protocol, residents on their own. Tier 1 Core: partial heat and water loss. Greenhouse: power brownout. Eighty thousand

people and the most livable place on Earth becomes a crisis management problem.

TRACK 2: HONEY TRAP RESOLUTION

The trap closes when Solberg has identified all covert intelligence assets that moved on GAIA-3's vulnerability. The trap collapses if any faction identifies it as a trap, if Haugen learns his role in it, or if the GAIA-3 situation escalates past Stage 2 before the trap concludes.

Stage 1 (current): Active, controlled: Black Lotus identified. Three additional faction assets identified through Black Lotus's movements. Haugen's informal access attempts being monitored. Flag suppression active. Lindqvist's registry outstanding.

Stage 2: Complications: A second faction identifies the honey trap. They do not reveal it -- they begin running a parallel operation to exploit Solberg's distraction. The Exchange Quarter's intelligence collision accelerates.

Stage 3: Trap becomes visible: Flag suppression records surface through the Threshold's log chain. NSF internal inquiry begins. Diplomatic missions in the Exchange receive official notification of 'security review.' Black Lotus knows they are blown. They move to Stage 3 on their own ladder.

Stage 4: Controlled detonation or loss of control: Solberg opens the 72-hour window on her terms with all actors identified -- the trap works. OR: Black Lotus forces the window before Solberg is ready, the monitoring channel upgrade fails, and the NIA's intelligence advantage over faction infrastructure resets to zero.

OPERATIONS MAP

SPATIAL NOTES

Chokepoints: Spine Junction 4 (primary transit chokepoint -- all movement between arcologies passes here); Deep Infrastructure sub-level access stairwell (single entry point, logged, monitored); Threshold processing station (the only exit from the NAN)

Dark Zones: The Outer Ring's camera gaps -- known to Lindqvist, known to the Clearance Network's enforcement arm, unknown to NSF and NIA; the maintenance shaft sightline to Deep Infrastructure from Greenhouse Level sub-level 2 (4 seconds, unsurveilled); the transit pod sensor blind spot at Junction 7 during automated maintenance routes (40 seconds)

Faction Territory Lines: NIA: The Spine, Deep Infrastructure, Greenhouse Levels -- complete control, no contested claim; NSF: Tier 1 Core, Threshold -- presence-dominant, not infrastructure-dominant; Clearance Network: Outer Ring -- operational control without official presence; Black Lotus: Exchange Quarter PRC Liaison Office -- diplomatic protection, shrinking operational security

Mobility Corridors: Transit pod system (logged, monitored, fastest); maintenance shaft network (partial, requires specific access points, not logged below sub-level 2); Outer Ring pedestrian corridors (open, camera gaps exploitable with Lindqvist's map); The Spine on foot at night (legal, unusual, watched by the two-person duty watch who have nothing else to do)

Key Distances: Exchange Quarter to Deep Infrastructure: requires Spine transit (logged) plus sub-level authorization; Outer Ring to Greenhouse Levels: one tier jump, requires Clearance Network credentials or NIA Agricultural Division authorization; Any sector to Threshold: open transit, but departure is logged and monitored as carefully as arrival

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MISSION SEEDS

SEED 1: THE INFORMAL ROUTE

Objective: Dr. Haugen needs to know if the informal GAIA-3 loading route works -- specifically, whether someone without NIA authorization can load the 2064 pressure model through the maintenance terminal access in Deep Infrastructure.

Clock: Tonight's after-hours window is open. Haugen is inside. Black Lotus is watching Haugen. Solberg is watching Black Lotus watch Haugen. The window closes at 0600.

Complication: The maintenance terminal access route works. Loading the model takes 8 minutes. Installing a kill switch through the same route takes 12 minutes. Black Lotus has been ready for four months. Haugen has been practicing for eight. The operators are

the third party in a room with two people who have very different plans for the same 12-minute window.

SEED 2: LINDQVIST'S REGISTRY

Objective: Acquire Vanya Lindqvist's complete registry of unofficial intelligence presences in Arcology Three before either the NIA or any of the faction assets in the registry does.

Clock: Lindqvist is 3 months pregnant and has a 2-month window before medical urgency forces her hand. Someone sent her a note. She is deciding. When she decides, the registry moves once and the window closes.

Complication: The registry is worth more than the mission. Every faction in the NAN would pay for it. Acquiring it for any single buyer ends the Clearance Network, exposes every faction's covert operation simultaneously, and makes the operators the people every faction in the Exchange Quarter wants to find.

SEED 3: THE 8% SOLUTION

Objective: Adjust the Greenhouse Levels' geothermal thermal pressure regulators to reduce GAIA-3's load by 8% -- which moves the cascade probability below 20% and removes the urgency of the 72-hour window.

Clock: Deep Infrastructure access requires either Solberg's authorization or a route that Haugen spent 8 months mapping and that Black Lotus has been watching him map. Solberg will not authorize this -- it ends her honey trap before it concludes.

Complication: The 8% reduction requires rationing across all NAN arcologies within 60 days. Rationing destroys the NAN's primary diplomatic leverage. Every faction in the Exchange Quarter revises their assessment of Nordic technology's value. The NAN survives GAIA-3 and loses everything else.

SEED 4: EXTRACT THE HELD FIGURE

Objective: Get the man in the Threshold's six-day administrative hold out of the NAN before whoever placed the hold decides a 6-day delay isn't enough.

Clock: The unlogged Exchange Quarter conference session occurs in 72 hours. The held figure knows it is happening without him and knows what that means. When the session concludes, his reason for being held disappears -- and so does the reason to keep him alive.

Complication: Solberg placed the hold. Getting him out requires either Solberg's release, a flag suppression code, or a physical extraction through the Threshold -- the single most monitored point in the NAN. He knows what the session was for. That knowledge is either leverage or a death sentence depending on who's asking.

SEED 5: THE HONEY TRAP'S THIRD PARTY

Objective: Identify the second NIA operation running inside Solberg's honey trap -- the official who sent Lindqvist the handwritten note and who may or may not be acting with Solberg's knowledge.

Clock: Lindqvist's 2-month medical window. If the second operation reaches Lindqvist's registry before the operators do, the registry's contents move inside the NIA and every faction asset in the NAN is burned simultaneously.

Complication: If the note was from Solberg, the second operation doesn't exist and the operators have inserted themselves into Solberg's controlled intelligence architecture. If the note was from an independent NIA official, the operators are the first people who know about both operations -- and Solberg will notice that they know.

SEED 6: THE GENE-FORGED BEAR

Objective: Determine what the polar bear in Greenhouse Level Holding Bay 3 has been responding to for two weeks -- specifically what changed in sub-level access shaft 4 that the bear registered before any monitoring equipment did.

Clock: Mikkel Sorensen's behavioral report was closed twice. A third report will result in his removal from the program. He has the recording of the 40-second pitch change from last night. The pitch change is not equipment drift.

Complication: The bear is responding to GAIA-3. Specifically, to a thermal signature change in the heat exchanger that corresponds to the 12-second variance from two nights ago. The variance was not self-correcting. Someone pushed GAIA-3 back into range from inside the system. The bear noticed before any human did. Getting to the bear requires Greenhouse Level authorization. The NIA Agricultural Division manager whose authorization would be required is the same official who closed both of Sorensen's reports.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

IF GAIA-3 FAILS

Heat and water loss across Arcology Three. The four-hour stabilization window. Tier 1 Core: partial evacuation to Arcologies One and Two under a cross-arcology protocol that has not been tested since 2051 and does not cover forty thousand people. Outer Ring: no protocol. Twelve thousand people making decisions on their own in a building not rated for extended cold exposure. The NAN's demonstration that the Nordic model works ends in real time, globally broadcast, in the most watched location on Earth. Every faction simultaneously reassesses the value of Nordic technology licenses -- and the monitoring channels built into every licensed system become the most valuable intelligence asset on Earth, now that the NAN's leverage is gone and nobody can make the NIA give them up.

IF THE HONEY TRAP CONCLUDES SUCCESSFULLY

Solberg opens the 72-hour window on her terms. GAIA-3 is upgraded. Every faction's licensed Nordic infrastructure simultaneously receives the NIA's new monitoring architecture upgrade. The NAN's surveillance capability over global faction infrastructure doubles. Black Lotus is identified, neutralized, and expelled through the Threshold without a diplomatic incident. The NAN is more stable than before the trap was set. Dr. Haugen learns what his eight months of informal access attempts were used for. His response is the variable nobody in the NIA planned for -- because Solberg was watching what he did, not what he would do when he found out.

IF BLACK LOTUS INSTALLS THE KILL SWITCH

The PRC has the ability to crash the NAN's infrastructure on command. They do not use it immediately -- the value of a kill switch is in having it, not in pulling it. Every faction in the Exchange Quarter continues operating under NAN neutrality while the PRC holds a card that changes every negotiation. The NIA knows the kill switch is installed. The NIA does not know if the monitoring channels built into the NAN's licensed systems are still intact or whether Black Lotus found and removed them during the 72-hour window. Solberg's honey trap succeeded in identifying Black Lotus and failed to stop them. The NAN's neutrality is now guaranteed by a faction with a kill switch, which is not neutrality.

IF LINDQVIST'S REGISTRY GOES PUBLIC

Every unofficial intelligence presence in Arcology Three is simultaneously burned. Every faction's covert operation collapses. The Exchange Quarter goes through forty-eight hours of operational chaos as assets extract, covers are abandoned, and three diplomatic incidents occur simultaneously. The NSF handles all of it non-lethally and professionally and is completely overwhelmed. When the chaos resolves, the NAN has fewer covert operations than at any point since its founding -- for approximately six months, until the factions rebuild. Vanya Lindqvist is in Tier 1 Core with a full medical allocation. The Clearance Network no longer exists. The NAN is quieter and less watched and less powerful than it has been in twenty years.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

These are not gaps. They are features.

- The identity of the third party who accessed the GAIA-3 storage node at 0318 using Haugen's authorization code -- determine at the table
- Whether Haugen loaded the 2064 model during tonight's after-hours session, and if so, what he found when he compared it to what GAIA-3 is actually running
- The specific purpose of the NIA's monitoring channels in licensed faction systems -- what data is flowing back, and whether any faction has noticed
- The held figure's name and what he was actually in the NAN to do -- the operators are the first people he will tell, if they get to him
- The handwritten note's author -- Solberg or an independent NIA official -- and what the answer changes about every assumption the operators have made
- The gene-forged program's actual purpose -- the polar bears, wolverines, and snowy owls are not domestic. They are not exported. They are tested for something. Determine what at the table.

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime in social spaces across the arcology sectors. Off-duty moments produce edges, debts, or exposures -- no pure recovery.

1. CREDENTIAL EXPOSURE. An off-duty NSF officer, three drinks in, describes the variance threshold adjustments and the board review Solberg avoided. He doesn't remember saying it. You now understand exactly how much pressure the NIA is under and why no one will officially acknowledge it.

2. CONTACT MADE. Bjorn Halvorsen, drunk and angry, corners you with his transfer application story. He wants to know if you think the NIA is deliberately holding it. The answer he gets shapes whether he starts leaking classified data or decides you're not worth the risk.

3. DEBT INCURRED. Vanya Lindqvist finds you in a Tier 1 common space -- technically off-limits for her tier, which means she came looking. She offers you registry access in exchange for one favor, undefined and redeemable within 30 days. The favor will be specific and expensive.

4. EQUIPMENT LOST. Your secure comms device is lifted from a social space. Whoever has it now has 72 hours of location cache showing every contact point you've made in the arcology. The device goes dark at 0600 tomorrow morning.

5. LOCALLY RECOGNIZABLE. You handle a situation -- calm someone down, cover a tab, intervene in a dispute -- and word travels. By morning, you're the person one NSF faction's support network is routing requests through. A different NSF faction's file now has your photograph and a behavioral assessment.

6. SECRET LEARNED. Dr. Petra Lindqvist sits down across from you and says three sentences about what the 0300 data pull was really for. She doesn't ask questions. She just needed someone outside the NIA to know. What you do with that information is not her problem anymore.

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 THE SPINE

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: sparse Surveillance: cameras + drone sweep Faction pressure: dominant NIA Contamination: none Black market: none Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION The central transit and logistics corridor linking all NAN arcologies -- pressurized transit tubes, maintenance access shafts, and the primary data conduit for GAIA-3's distributed sensor network.

CONTROLLER On paper: Nordic Infrastructure Authority. In reality: NIA, with NSF hardpoints at every junction and a sub-system of autonomous monitoring drones that answer directly to NIA Infrastructure Command, not NSF field officers.

DRAW Transit between arcologies without surface exposure / maintenance contract access / the only legal route to Deep Infrastructure sub-levels / NIA credentialing office

RISK Credential checks at every junction -- automated biometric with NSF backup / NIA monitoring drones that log all movement patterns and flag anomalies to a human reviewer within 4 hours / no civilian presence to blend into / transit tube access requires a logged destination

SCARCITY Unmonitored time / unlogged movement / any route to Deep Infrastructure that doesn't pass an NIA checkpoint

> **UNDER-SYSTEM**
>
> The Spine's data conduit carries GAIA-3's sensor feeds from seventeen distributed monitoring nodes across Arcology Three's sublevels. Three of those nodes have been returning anomalous variance data for eleven months. The NIA's anomaly-response protocol classifies variance below 8% as within acceptable drift. The nodes are at 7.4%. The protocol was written using the 2041 pressure model.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If the variance nodes cross 8%, the NIA's protocol triggers an automatic Infrastructure Alert -- which requires a system review, which requires external access to GAIA-3, which opens the 72-hour window before Solberg is ready. She has had the threshold manually adjusted twice. She cannot do it a third time without a formal NIA board review.

DAY

AUTHORITY

NIA Infrastructure Command -- full staffing, active human review of all drone logs

ECONOMY

Maintenance crew rotations, credentialed transit, NIA administrative movement

RISK

Identity verification at every junction; NIA staff who recognize faces

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Automated systems with a two-person NSF duty watch; drone logs queue for morning review

ECONOMY

Reduced transit -- automated only; the window where unlogged movement becomes possible if the drone pattern is known

RISK

Automated systems that are harder to charm and easier to trigger; the two NSF officers who have nothing to do but watch monitors

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A transit pod arrives at Junction 7 on schedule, opens, and no one gets out. The NIA monitoring log records the pod as empty. The pod's internal sensor recorded two heat signatures for forty seconds. The discrepancy is in a queue that will be reviewed at 0800.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS — THE SPINE

SENIOR TECHNICIAN BJORN HALVORSEN

NIA Infrastructure Maintenance, Spine Sector Lead

CAN GET The current variance readings from all seventeen GAIA-3 sensor nodes, the anomaly-response protocol thresholds and their revision history, and the maintenance shaft access schedule for the coming week.

WANTS A transfer to Arcology One's infrastructure team -- he applied fourteen months ago and the application has been in review since. He believes it is being held. He is correct.

FEARS That the reason his transfer is being held is connected to the node variance data he has been quietly logging in a personal record for the past eight months.

CURRENT PRESSURE He ran the numbers against the 2041 pressure model last week and the numbers don't add up. He has not yet found the 2064 classified model. He is close enough that someone in the NIA flagged his personal log access three days ago.

NSF CORPORAL SIGRID AAS

Night Duty Watch, Junction 3

CAN GET The night transit schedule, the drone sweep pattern including the unpublished variance from the published schedule, and the specific 4-second window in the 0300 diagnostic where the pod sensor network broadcasts simultaneously.

WANTS For the unregistered drone she flagged six weeks ago to be officially investigated instead of reassigned to 'routine anomaly' status by her watch commander.

FEARS That the drone she flagged is connected to something her watch commander knows about and chose to suppress -- which would mean her commander is either compromised or following orders she wasn't read into.

CURRENT PRESSURE She filed a second flag on the drone yesterday under a different category to create a record that couldn't be collapsed into the same 'routine anomaly' file. Her watch commander has not yet seen it.

DR. PETRA LINDQVIST

NIA Infrastructure Command, Data Systems

CAN GET The full packet-volume logs for the GAIA-3 data conduit including the 12%-above-baseline anomaly from three nights ago and the source address for the data pull.

WANTS The 0300 diagnostic window closed before she could trace the source address to a physical terminal. She wants twenty uninterrupted minutes with the log before her supervisor's morning review.

FEARS Her supervisor, who has been notably incurious about the 0300 data pull and who was in the building when it happened.

CURRENT PRESSURE The source address routed through a transit pod maintenance terminal -- a terminal that is, technically, on the NIA's internal network but is not assigned to any staff member and has no authorized users.

DISTRICT 2 TIER 1 CORE (ARCOLOGY THREE RESIDENTIAL)

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: packed Surveillance: cameras (visible) Faction pressure: dominant NIA/NSF Contamination: none Black market: none Mobility: open (within tier)

FUNCTION The residential heart of Arcology Three -- eighty thousand credentialed residents across tiered amenity zones. Research personnel in the upper floors. Service personnel in the mid-levels. A waiting list for everyone below.

CONTROLLER NIA Residential Authority manages allocation. NSF maintains visible presence at every amenity junction. The cameras do not hide because their visibility is the point -- the NAN's security doctrine is deterrence through transparency, which works until it doesn't.

DRAW	Full amenity allocation for credentialed residents / the most stable living environment on Earth / access to the Greenhouse Levels' food production output / the perceived safety of being inside the system
RISK	Quarterly allocation reviews that can revoke residency with 30-day notice / NSF presence dense enough that any unusual behavior reaches a supervisor within an hour / a social culture where everyone knows everyone and strangers are a visible anomaly / no operational anonymity
SCARCITY	Privacy / unmonitored space / any route between amenity zones that doesn't pass a camera / residents willing to discuss what they've noticed

UNDER-SYSTEM

The eighty thousand residents of Tier 1 Core sit directly above GAIA-3's cascade threshold. The classified pressure model puts the failure probability at 34% within 18 months at current load. Failure means: heat distribution collapse in sub-levels 1 through 4, water treatment pressure loss across the residential zones, and a power brownout sequence that GAIA-3's backup protocols are not calibrated to manage under the new thermal signature. The NIA's public-facing systems show GAIA-3 status as nominal. It has read nominal every day since 2041.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

A brownout sequence in Tier 1 Core would require emergency reallocation of 40,000 residents to Arcologies One and Two. The NAN's cross-arcology emergency protocol was last tested in 2051. The Outer Ring has no emergency allocation -- its residents are not in the protocol.

DAY

AUTHORITY

NSF residential patrol -- visible, professional, non-lethal by preference and doctrine

ECONOMY

Amenity access, research work cycles, the visible commerce of a community that believes itself secure

RISK

Social visibility -- operators read as outsiders within minutes

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Reduced NSF patrol; residential AI monitors all common spaces; human review on a 6-hour lag

ECONOMY

The conversations that happen when the visible cameras are all the surveillance there is -- which is never true, but residents believe it

RISK

Residential AI flagging behavioral anomalies; the 6-hour lag that creates a window and a trap simultaneously

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A family eating dinner in a transparent-walled common area, visible from the corridor, relaxed. The camera above them is mounted at eye level, lens outward, housing labeled with the NIA's residential safety program logo. The family knows it is there. They stopped noticing it in week two.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS — TIER 1 CORE

DR. SOREN MAGNUSSON

Senior Research Coordinator, Arcology Three

CAN GET The research credentialing system's current roster including all visitors operating under research cover, the quarterly allocation review board's schedule including unannounced sessions, and his assessment of which residents are NIA informants -- which is more accurate than operators will expect.

WANTS The residential review notice on his assistant to be resolved before she loses her allocation. She has been flagged because she asked about sub-level access zones on the Greenhouse tour.

FEARS That the review notice is not administrative. That someone flagged his assistant because of the questions she asked -- which means someone was listening on the tour who wasn't listed on the tour manifest.

CURRENT PRESSURE He submitted a formal inquiry about the review notice four days ago. The NIA Residential Authority confirmed receipt and has not responded. That is not how the process normally runs.

MARTA ERIKSSON

NIA Residential Authority Clerk, Mid-Level

CAN GET The unscheduled allocation board meeting that occurred six days ago, the three names reviewed at that meeting, and the flag category used -- which is not a standard residential category and does not appear in the public residential code registry.

WANTS Her name taken off the unscheduled meeting's minutes. She was listed as an attendee. She was not in the room. Someone put her name there and she doesn't know why.

FEARS That whoever put her name in the minutes did it to create cover, or to implicate her, or both -- and that asking about it will make whichever of those things it is worse.

CURRENT PRESSURE She found the meeting in the system logs by accident while running a routine audit. She has not told anyone. She made a copy of the entry and has been carrying it for three days.

INGRID VOSS

Service-Level Resident, Maintenance Worker

CAN GET	The sub-level access stairwell's informal use patterns -- who uses it, when, and what they bring -- and the power variance events she has been tracking by feel for the past eight months, including their frequency increase over the last six weeks.
WANTS	For someone to tell her what the variance means. She has lived directly above the sub-levels for eleven years and she knows the difference between normal system drift and something building.
FEARS	That if she asks officially, the answer will be 'nominal' and she will receive a welfare check she didn't ask for.
CURRENT PRESSURE	The variance last night lasted three seconds instead of two. She has a notebook with every event dated and timed. The notebook is under her mattress.

DISTRICT 3 THE EXCHANGE QUARTER

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: normal Surveillance: cameras + informant net Faction pressure: contested (all factions) Contamination: none Black market: light Mobility: open (checkpointed entry)

FUNCTION	The NAN's diplomatic and commercial hub -- accredited faction embassies, licensed technology exchange offices, international research partnerships, and the meeting rooms where the conversations that cannot happen anywhere else are held.
CONTROLLER	On paper: NAN Diplomatic Authority, jointly administered. In reality: every faction runs intelligence operations here under diplomatic cover, the NIA monitors all of them, and the NSF's non-lethal doctrine means that overt moves inside the Exchange have political consequences that outlast the mission. Every faction knows every other faction knows this. They operate accordingly.
DRAW	Faction embassy access and cover identities / technology licensing negotiations / the only place in the NAN where all six blocs are physically present / black-market access-tier credentials through the Clearance Network's Exchange office

RISK	The densest informant network in the NAN -- every faction's intelligence assets are watching every other faction's intelligence assets / diplomatic incident exposure for any operation that goes loud / NSF's response is fast, professional, and permanently logged / the NIA has a monitoring office two floors above every embassy
SCARCITY	A genuinely private conversation / a meeting that isn't being observed by at least two factions / an identity that hasn't been flagged by someone

UNDER-SYSTEM

The PRC's diplomatic mission in the Exchange Quarter -- officially the Pacific Rim Coalition Cultural and Technology Liaison Office -- is running a covert intelligence cell designated Black Lotus. Four months ago, Black Lotus acquired the NIA's classified pressure model for GAIA-3. They have not acted on it. They are waiting for Solberg to authorize the 72-hour upgrade window. When she does, Black Lotus intends to be inside GAIA-3 before the window closes. What they plan to install is not a backdoor. It is a kill switch.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If Black Lotus's presence in the GAIA-3 upgrade window becomes known before they act, every faction in the Exchange will simultaneously attempt to either exploit or neutralize the operation -- the resulting intelligence collision will make the Exchange Quarter operationally uninhabitable for months and end at least three diplomatic cover arrangements the NIA has spent years building.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Diplomatic protocol -- faction liaisons, NAN Diplomatic Authority administrators, visible NSF presence that exists to remind everyone what the rules are

ECONOMY

Technology licensing, formal negotiations, accredited research exchange

RISK

Everyone watching everyone; diplomatic incident exposure; the NIA monitoring office logging everything

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The operations that can't run during protocol hours -- dead drops, asset meetings, the actual work

ECONOMY

Intelligence trade -- information moving between factions that officially have no contact with each other

RISK

Operations running simultaneously from multiple factions in the same physical space; the chance of a collision that nobody planned for

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A NAF diplomat and a PRC technology liaison are having coffee in the Exchange atrium, laughing at something. They have met here every Tuesday for eight months. Neither of them is a diplomat or a technology liaison. They are running a dead drop exchange in full view of three security cameras because the cameras create the cover story.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS — THE EXCHANGE QUARTER

AMBASSADOR YUKI TANAKA

NAF Cultural Liaison, Exchange Quarter (cover: intelligence officer)

CAN GET NAF's current assessment of every faction's covert posture in the Exchange, the dead drop schedule she shares with the PRC liaison she meets for coffee, and her read on the PRC's operational tempo shift over the past four months -- which she has noticed but not yet explained.

WANTS Confirmation that the PRC tempo shift is connected to something actionable, not just a routine asset rotation. She has been running on the wrong hypothesis for six weeks.

FEARS That she has been feeding the NIA accurate intel about NAF operations in the Exchange for three years -- a channel she established voluntarily, for reasons she has never disclosed to NAF command.

CURRENT PRESSURE The PRC liaison she meets for coffee canceled their last two sessions without explanation. He has never canceled before. She has been building a new hypothesis and it is close to correct.

HENRIK STRAND

NAN Diplomatic Authority, Conference Logistics

CAN GET The scheduling records for all Exchange conference rooms including the unlogged sessions, the cleaning crew's actual movement schedule versus the posted schedule, and the identity of the figure who has been using the Exchange atrium between 0200 and 0400 three times this month.

WANTS For the unlogged sessions to stop. They create liability he is absorbing. He knows they are NIA-sanctioned. He has not been told why.

FEARS That knowing they are NIA-sanctioned and not knowing why is the most dangerous position he can be in if something goes wrong.

CURRENT PRESSURE A fourth unlogged session appeared on the calendar this morning, scheduled for 72 hours from now. The attendee list is a single NIA authorization code he has never seen before.

THE COURIER

Clearance Network, Exchange Quarter Distribution

CAN GET The Clearance Network's full current cover-package inventory for Exchange Quarter use, the identity of every active Clearance Network client with Exchange credentials, and the sealed package he delivered to the PRC Liaison Office -- he knows what is in it because he always opens them.

WANTS Safe passage for his sister out of the Outer Ring and into a Tier 1 allocation. She has been on the waiting list for two years. She is three months pregnant.

FEARS The Clearance Network's coordinator finding out he opens the packages. She would not respond professionally.

CURRENT PRESSURE The package he delivered to the PRC Liaison Office contained a printed document. He read enough to understand it was a technical schematic. He did not understand what the schematic was for. He has been thinking about it for four days.

DISTRICT 4 OUTER RING

Security: light Infrastructure: strained Civilians: packed Surveillance: cameras (sparse) Faction pressure: low Contamination: none Black market: heavy Mobility: open

FUNCTION The service and labor tier that makes Tier 1 Core function -- maintenance workers, logistics staff, food production labor, and the people whose residency applications were 'quietly declined' from the upper tiers. The NAN's climate controls run four hours on, two off here. Nobody official has explained why.

CONTROLLER On paper: NIA Residential Authority. In reality: the Outer Ring runs itself. The NSF presence is thin and the camera network has gaps that were never repaired. The Clearance Network operates openly here -- everyone knows what they sell and who to ask.

DRAW The only affordable housing in the NAN / the Clearance Network's access-tier credential services / black-market bio-mod maintenance from pre-certified technicians who lost their certification for reasons that were mostly political / the real information economy of the NAN -- what Tier 1 doesn't talk about

RISK	Allocation review can revoke Outer Ring residency with 7 days notice, not 30 / the climate control failures are unpredictable and the housing stock is not built for them / the Clearance Network's protection of its territory is real and not non-lethal / no emergency protocol if GAIA-3 fails -- the Outer Ring is not in the NAN's evacuation plan
SCARCITY	Climate stability / medical care above basic allocation / any leverage against the allocation system / residency security

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Outer Ring's climate control failures are not random degradation. They are the consequence of GAIA-3 redistributing geothermal load to maintain Tier 1 Core's stability as the pressure variance builds. Every 2-hour outage in the Outer Ring represents a load transfer that is keeping the cascade threshold stable by 0.3%. There are approximately 12,000 people in the Outer Ring. The NIA's load model treats them as an available buffer.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If GAIA-3's cascade probability increases past 40%, the NIA's automated load model will extend Outer Ring outages to 4 hours off. At that point, the Outer Ring's housing stock -- not built for extended cold exposure -- begins producing medical casualties in the older and younger population within 72 hours.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Notional NIA Residential Authority -- one inspector for the entire Outer Ring, who everyone knows and who knows everyone

ECONOMY

Service labor, maintenance rotations, the informal exchange economy of people who know the NAN's real infrastructure

RISK

The allocation review inspector, who is more perceptive than his thin presence suggests

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

The Clearance Network -- not aggressively, just present enough that everyone knows who to go to

ECONOMY

Clearance Network credential sales, black-market bio-mod calibration, the information trade that feeds every faction's intelligence assets in the Exchange

RISK

The Clearance Network's enforcement arm, which is patient and thorough about people who create problems

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A corridor of housing units at 0400, climate system off, residents in their apartments with coats on. Not panicking. Not complaining. Waiting the two hours out the way they always do. One apartment has a light on. Inside, a woman is sitting at a table with a notebook, writing down tonight's outage start time and temperature reading. She has been doing this for three years. She has a very complete dataset.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS — OUTER RING

VANYA LINDQVIST

Clearance Network, Outer Ring Coordinator

CAN GET The Clearance Network's complete registry of every non-official intelligence presence inside Arcology Three -- names, faction affiliations, cover identities, and the credentials she sold them. This is the most comprehensive account of who is actually operating in the NAN. Also: the identity of the maintenance crew member making the alternating-shift visits.

WANTS A Tier 1 medical allocation for herself. She is three months pregnant and her Outer Ring allocation does not include prenatal care above basic level. She applied for a tier upgrade two months ago. It was denied without explanation.

FEARS That the denial is connected to someone in the NIA who knows what her registry contains and wants leverage over her before she decides to use it.

CURRENT PRESSURE She received a second denial letter yesterday with a note attached -- not official, handwritten -- that said 'when you are ready to discuss your records, the allocation will follow.' She has not responded. She is deciding what she actually wants.

RASMUS LUND

NIA Outer Ring Inspector

CAN GET The Outer Ring's real infrastructure stress data, the complete outage log for the past three years including the frequency increase over the past six months, and his assessment of which residents are feeding the Clearance Network's intelligence pipeline.

WANTS For someone with NIA access to explain why the outage frequency is increasing. He has submitted three formal inquiries. All three were closed with 'within acceptable parameters.'

FEARS That the acceptable-parameters answer is being used to prevent him from seeing something he would act on if he understood it.

CURRENT PRESSURE Ingrid Voss -- the woman with the outage notebook -- gave him her dataset last week. He has been running it against the NIA's public infrastructure reports. The numbers do not match.

FATIMA OSEI

Outer Ring Resident, former NIA Data Technician

CAN GET The NIA's internal data classification system including the flag category used in the unscheduled Tier 1 Core allocation review -- she wrote part of that system before her own residency was reviewed and she ended up in the Outer Ring.

WANTS For her NIA data technician credential to be reinstated. She was removed for 'data access irregularities' that she believes were a pretext. She has documentation.

FEARS That her documentation includes something the NIA would prefer she hadn't kept.

CURRENT PRESSURE She was approached last week by a man she didn't recognize who asked if she still had access to the NIA's historical classification logs. She said no. She does.

DISTRICT 5 GREENHOUSE LEVELS

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: sparse Surveillance: cameras + informant net Faction pressure: dominant NIA Contamination: none (controlled) Black market: none Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION Arcology Three's food production floors -- geothermal-powered hydroponic arrays, lab-cultured protein facilities, and the gene-forged animal program that produces the NAN's most closely held biological assets. Everything labeled. Everything logged. Everything watched.

CONTROLLER NIA Agricultural Division, with NSF security teams that are heavier here than anywhere except Deep Infrastructure. The gene-forged program -- polar bears, wolverines, snowy owls -- is not exported, not for sale, not discussed in official communications. Its existence is known. Its purpose is not.

DRAW The food supply for all NAN arcologies / access to the gene-forged program's research outputs for those cleared to know about them / agricultural technology that every faction wants to license and the NIA sells at carefully rationed terms

RISK	NSF security presence that treats Greenhouse access as a privilege, not a right / the gene-forged program's holding areas are in a section that requires NIA Agricultural Command authorization -- separate from standard Greenhouse clearance / any contamination incident triggers a facility lockdown that can last days / the NIA's agricultural research output is classified at the same level as the GAIA-3 pressure model
SCARCITY	Unescorted access / any information about the gene-forged program that isn't in the public-facing tour materials / the specific geothermal feed data that shows how much of Arcology Three's power budget is allocated to Greenhouse versus residential versus sub-level

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Greenhouse Levels consume 23% of GAIA-3's total output. The classified pressure model shows that reducing Greenhouse allocation by 8% would push GAIA-3's cascade probability below 20% without the upgrade window. The NIA Agricultural Division has been given no indication that such a reduction is being considered. Director Solberg's honey trap requires GAIA-3 to remain at current load to keep the 72-hour window as the only solution. The 8% reduction would end the test before the test produces results.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

An 8% Greenhouse reduction would require rationing across all NAN arcologies within 60 days. Rationing in the most food-secure location on Earth would end the NAN's primary diplomatic leverage -- the demonstration that the Nordic model works. Every faction currently in the Exchange Quarter would revise their assessment of Nordic technology's value. Solberg knows this. It is why the 8% option was never formally proposed.

DAY

AUTHORITY

NIA Agricultural Division staff -- credentialed researchers, production technicians, NSF escorts for any non-staff access

ECONOMY

Agricultural production, research, the Greenhouse Tours that bring Tier 1 residents through on quarterly rotation

RISK

NIA staff who know every credentialed person in the facility and will notice anyone who isn't one

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Skeleton production crew for continuous-cycle systems; NSF security teams run heavier at night because the facility is more valuable with fewer witnesses

ECONOMY

Uninterrupted production cycles; the gene-forged holding areas are fed and monitored by a two-person night team that has worked together for six years and does not like surprises

RISK

NSF teams with standing authorization to use non-lethal force without a supervisor's approval -- the only place in the NAN where that authorization exists

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A hydroponic bay running a full growth cycle at 0300, lights on full spectrum, the smell of growing things in a climate that would freeze them outside. At the far end of the bay, behind a door that is not on the public floor plan, something large moves. The sound it makes is not mechanical.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS — GREENHOUSE LEVELS

DR. ASTRID BERG
NIA Agricultural Division, Geothermal Allocation Research

CAN GET The Greenhouse Levels' actual geothermal consumption data, the allocation variance history for the past 18 months, and the specific calculation that shows an 8% reduction would move GAIA-3's cascade probability below 20% -- a calculation she completed six months ago and submitted to Director Solberg's office.

WANTS A response to her submission. She received an acknowledgment. She has received nothing since.

FEARS That the non-response means her calculation has been read, understood, and set aside for reasons she has not been given. She is correct.

CURRENT PRESSURE She was told last week that her Greenhouse access pass would not be renewed at the quarterly review -- an administrative note, no explanation. Her pass expires in nine days.

OFFICER LARS NANSEN

NSF, Greenhouse Night Security Lead

CAN GET The gene-forged holding area's current behavioral status, the location and schedule of the NSF's standing non-lethal-force authorization zones in the facility, and the identity of the figure who accessed the geothermal feed monitoring station after hours last Thursday.

WANTS For the after-hours access to be officially investigated rather than logged as 'authorized research activity' by his watch commander -- the same watch commander who logged the unregistered Spine drone as a routine anomaly.

FEARS That his watch commander is the same officer in both cases, and that pattern means something he does not want to be right about.

CURRENT PRESSURE He pulled the after-hours pass record and the issuing authority is an NIA code -- the same code that authorized the Exchange Quarter's unlogged conference room session.

MIKKEL SORENSEN

Gene-Forged Night Team, Senior Handler

CAN GET The gene-forged program's current behavioral data for all three species, the 2-degree temperature anomaly in Holding Bay 3 and his theory about its cause, and the sub-level access shaft that is audible from the holding area -- including what the sound told him last night that it has never told him before.

WANTS For someone to take the Bay 3 temperature anomaly seriously. He filed a report. His supervisor closed it as equipment drift. The equipment is not drifting.

FEARS The polar bear. Not what it will do -- what it knows. He has been working with it for four years and he has a framework for its behavior that his supervisor considers unprofessional. The bear has been pacing toward the sub-level access shaft for two weeks.

CURRENT PRESSURE Last night the sound from the shaft changed pitch for forty seconds. He has a recording. He does not know what the change means. He knows it matters.

DISTRICT 6 DEEP INFRASTRUCTURE

Security: lockdown Infrastructure: failing Civilians: none Surveillance: cameras + drone sweep Faction pressure: dominant NIA Contamination: geothermal mineral (sub-level 4+) Black market: none Mobility: barricaded

FUNCTION The physical hardware of GAIA-3 -- heat exchangers, geothermal tap interfaces, thermal pressure regulators, water treatment pressure systems, and the primary and backup power distribution nodes for Arcology Three. The most critical infrastructure in the NAN and the least visited.

CONTROLLER NIA Infrastructure Command, exclusively. Access requires individual authorization from Director Solberg's office. There is no workaround. The six people who have regular authorized access know each other by face. Two of them are NIA security officers whose job is specifically to notice anyone who isn't the other four.

DRAW	GAIA-3's physical hardware -- the only place where the 72-hour upgrade window can be executed / the thermal pressure regulators that could be adjusted to reduce Greenhouse allocation by 8% / the 2064 classified pressure model's physical data storage, separate from the network copy
RISK	The most restricted access in the NAN -- no cover identity works here, only actual NIA authorization / the two security officers whose only job is to know who belongs and act immediately on who doesn't / geothermal mineral contamination below sub-level 4 that requires respiratory protection / GAIA-3's automated response protocols, which include a facility seal that prevents egress if an intrusion event is logged
SCARCITY	Access -- there is no legitimate route that doesn't go through Solberg's office / time -- any unauthorized presence triggers a log entry that reaches Infrastructure Command within 90 seconds / the pressure regulators -- physically accessible but any adjustment is logged in real time

UNDER-SYSTEM

GAIA-3's physical hardware is running the 2041 pressure model in firmware. The classified 2064 model exists in a separate storage node that is air-gapped from the main system -- it was never loaded because loading it requires the 72-hour external access window. Dr. Erik Haugen has a copy of the 2064 model on a personal device. He has been in this facility nine times in the past eight months, each time on legitimate maintenance authorization. He has been trying to find a way to load the model without triggering the formal window process. Each attempt has taught him that it cannot be done without Solberg's authorization. He does not know that Solberg knows about his attempts. He does not know that Solberg wants him to find a way -- because if Haugen can load the model informally, Black Lotus can install their kill switch the same way, and Solberg needs to know that before she opens the window.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If GAIA-3's cascade threshold is crossed -- by load increase, by an attacker who reached the hardware, or by the 2041 pressure model's error accumulating to a critical point -- the automated response sequence will attempt to stabilize by shedding load from the Outer Ring first, then from Tier 1 Core's secondary systems, then from Greenhouse. The sequence will not stabilize a cascade. It will extend the time before total failure by approximately four hours.

DAY

AUTHORITY

NIA Infrastructure Command -- four authorized staff plus two dedicated security officers, all on first-name terms

ECONOMY

Maintenance, calibration, the routine work of keeping the most important system in the NAN running on a model that was accurate in 2041

RISK

Six people who know exactly who belongs here; Solberg's office reviewing every access log within 2 hours

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Two authorized maintenance staff on rotating shifts; the two security officers do not rotate

ECONOMY

Nothing scheduled. The equipment running. The security officers watching monitors. The thing Haugen is trying to figure out.

RISK

Two security officers with standing authorization for force and a facility seal they can trigger in 8 seconds; GAIA-3's own automated protocols

SIGNATURE IMAGE

Sub-level 4, the primary heat exchanger bay. The sound of GAIA-3 running -- a low-frequency hum that becomes tactile in the chest after two minutes of exposure. The air tastes of minerals and something faintly electrical. The pressure gauges on the regulator array are all in the green range. The green range was calibrated in 2041.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS — DEEP INFRASTRUCTURE

DR. ERIK HAUGEN

NIA Deputy Director, Infrastructure

CAN GET The 2064 classified pressure model -- the complete failure probability data, the cascade threshold calculations, and the 8% Greenhouse reduction option that Solberg suppressed. Also: his map of every access attempt he has made on the GAIA-3 system over eight months and what each one taught him about the informal loading process.

WANTS For the upgrade to happen before the failure window closes. Not through Solberg's honey trap -- he doesn't know about that. Through any mechanism that loads the 2064 model before GAIA-3 crosses the cascade threshold.

FEARS That he has been wrong about Solberg's reasoning and that the eight months he spent trying to find an informal path have been observed and used for a purpose he wouldn't have agreed to.

CURRENT PRESSURE Solberg called him into her office this morning and told him the access request he submitted last night was approved. She told him to go tonight. She told him to try everything he had tried before. She did not explain why. He is going tonight.

SECURITY OFFICER KARIN DAHL

NIA Deep Infrastructure Security

CAN GET The complete access log for Deep Infrastructure including the unscheduled maintenance sequence that ran last night 0.4 seconds long, and the authorization code used to access the 2064 storage node at 0318 -- which she pulled this morning and has not yet reported because she is trying to understand it first.

WANTS For someone to tell her whether what she found in the log means her colleague is compromised or whether her colleague's authorization was lifted. She is not asking because both answers are bad and she needs to know which one is true before she calls it in.

FEARS That her colleague is the one who was sedated. That she doesn't know who sedated him or when, because she was watching the monitors and he was fine, and then he wasn't.

CURRENT PRESSURE She pulled the facility's internal camera feed for the window around the sedation event and found a 4-minute gap. The gap is not on the official log. She created a backup before the automated archive cycle deleted the source.

INES MOLLER

NIA Infrastructure Command, Night Maintenance

CAN GET The full variance log for GAIA-3's thermal pressure feed including the events she has been noting in her personal record because the official 'within parameters' designation stopped feeling accurate about four months ago.

WANTS For the 12-second variance from last night to be explained by someone who understands what it means. She knows what a self-correcting variance looks like. Last night's was not self-correcting. The system was pushed back into range.

FEARS Calling in an alert that gets logged as 'operator error' on the official record, which is what happened the last time she called in a variance outside normal parameters.

CURRENT PRESSURE Haugen was in the regulator room when the variance happened. He was on an after-hours access authorized by Solberg. He was alone. When she asked him about the variance on his way out, he said 'I know' and kept walking.

DISTRICT 7 THE THRESHOLD

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: normal Surveillance: cameras + biometric Faction pressure: low Contamination: none Black market: none Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION	The NAN's controlled entry and exit zone -- the physical location where the performance of neutrality is most visible and its limits are most enforced. Visitor processing, residency credential verification, diplomatic arrival and departure, and the quiet machinery of deciding who the NAN is and isn't.
CONTROLLER	NIA Border Authority. The checkpoint staff are polite, thorough, and have access to a flag system that can hold any entry for review without explanation. The NSF presence is visible. The NIA monitoring presence is not.
DRAW	The only legal entry point to the NAN / the departure route -- which is monitored as carefully as arrival / the processing office where residency applications are submitted and where the quiet declines happen / the last place where someone leaving can be stopped
RISK	Biometric verification against a registry that includes every flagged identity the Clearance Network has ever used / the NIA's flag system, which can hold someone indefinitely under 'administrative review' / departure monitoring -- what you take out is logged as carefully as what you bring in
SCARCITY	Unlogged passage / any entry or exit that isn't processed through the official system / a residency application that the NIA hasn't already decided the outcome of before it was submitted

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Threshold's biometric registry is cross-referenced in real time with the NIA's intelligence database -- including a feed from the Exchange Quarter's informant network. Three of the current diplomatic mission staff from the PRC -- Black Lotus assets -- are flagged in the intelligence database. They are not flagged in the biometric system. Director Solberg issued a suppression order on their flags four months ago, when she began running the honey trap. They can leave. She needs them able to leave -- on the schedule she controls, not theirs.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

If the honey trap concludes before Solberg is ready -- if Black Lotus moves on GAIA-3 independently, or if another faction's intelligence assets identify what Black Lotus is doing and act on it -- Solberg's flag suppression becomes evidence of NIA complicity in the attack on Arcology Three's infrastructure. Every operator in the NAN becomes a potential witness. The Threshold becomes the only exit, and Solberg controls it.

DAY

AUTHORITY

NIA Border Authority, full staff -- cheerful, efficient, and watching everything

ECONOMY

Arrivals, departures, residency processing -- the visible work of a facility that wants to appear open

RISK

The flag system; the staff who are better at reading people than their polite manner suggests

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Reduced staff, automated biometric primary, human review for flags only

ECONOMY

The quiet holds -- 'administrative review' detentions that occur between 2200 and 0600 when the diplomatic staff aren't watching

RISK

The automated system, which follows Solberg's suppression protocols without context; the specific NIA officer who manages the overnight hold list and answers to nobody at night except Infrastructure Command

SIGNATURE IMAGE

A family of four in the arrivals processing queue, all of them holding their credentials with the particular grip of people who have prepared for this. The Border Authority officer processing them is kind, asks good questions, and enters something into her system after the family passes through. What she enters is not in the official processing record.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

CONTACTS — THE THRESHOLD

BORDER AUTHORITY SENIOR OFFICER MAJA HOLM

NIA, Threshold Day Shift Lead

CAN GET The current administrative hold list including the six-day hold with Solberg's authorization code, the flag suppression entries for the three PRC assets and the date they were suppressed, and the print-out her colleague left face down -- which is a log of every suppressed flag activated at a departure station in the past four months.

WANTS For someone above her pay grade to take responsibility for what the suppression logs mean before they become her problem. She has done nothing wrong. She is worried that is not the relevant criterion.

FEARS That her colleague who left the printout is going to be held responsible for something, and that she is the next name in the chain of custody.

CURRENT PRESSURE She pulled the suppression authorization codes this morning and traced three of them to an NIA Infrastructure Command clearance level she has never seen used at the Threshold before. The fourth is from Solberg's office directly.

PROCESSING OFFICER NILS BAKKE

NIA, Threshold Overnight

CAN GET The complete overnight hold list including the 0318 entry with Haugen's authorization code and the figure it applies to -- a name that does not appear in the NAN's residency, visitor, or diplomatic registries, which should be impossible.

WANTS For the 0318 entry to be explained by someone with NIA Infrastructure Command access before his morning debrief. He has to report it. He wants to understand it before he does.

FEARS That reporting it accurately will implicate Haugen's authorization code in two separate anomalous events in one night, and that Haugen has been kind to him since his posting here and he does not want to be the person who creates that record.

CURRENT PRESSURE He ran the name from the 0318 entry through every registry he has access to -- nothing. He ran it through the NIA's internal staff directory -- nothing. He ran it through the Exchange Quarter's diplomatic roster and found a partial match with a name that was withdrawn from the roster six months ago with no explanation.

THE HELD FIGURE

Administrative Hold, Day 6

CAN GET Whatever brought him to the NAN in the first place -- which he has not disclosed in six days of 'administrative review' -- and his read on who in the NIA placed the hold and why it is specifically six days rather than less or more.

WANTS Out. Not in the dramatic sense. Just processed, cleared, and allowed to leave. He came here for a meeting that he believes has already happened without him because of the hold.

FEARS That the meeting happened without him and that whoever took his place in it knew exactly when the hold would be lifted.

CURRENT PRESSURE He has been counting. Six days is the exact duration needed for the Exchange Quarter's unlogged conference session to occur, conclude, and all parties to depart. He knows who placed the hold. He has not said so because saying so is the one thing that keeps the hold permanent.

10/ SAHARAN OASIS NET-WORK

PCU-ADMINISTERED | EARTH 2066

Shade is privilege. Cool air is class. The cisterns know who's compliant.

OVERVIEW

The PCU built a gleaming city in the middle of the world's largest desert and called it proof that their way works. Solar-powered desalination towers ring the perimeter. Plasma emplacements crown every wall. The palace complex at the center hasn't changed its security rotation in six years. Three hundred thousand people live here, all of them downstream of a single decision: who gets water and who waits.

The city functions as a demonstration project and a weapon simultaneously. Visitors see the gleam. Operators see the chokepoint. The main desal membrane array at Southern Processing is aging past its rated tolerance. The Prophet's inner circle approved a STRATEGIC DEFERRAL on the repair contract when the lead engineer's maintenance report crossed their desk -- because fixing it requires importing ACU water-tech specialists, and ACU presence inside Southern Processing is unacceptable to PCU security doctrine. The report has been classified. The membranes are still degrading. The water still looks clean.

That deferral is the load-bearing fact of this city. Every district, every faction, every contact -- the pressure running through all of it traces back to one aging membrane array and the decision not to fix it.

HUB-LEVEL TAGS

Territory: PCU core Infrastructure: strained Surveillance: informant net + drone sweep Civilian mood: compliant surface / high subsurface tension Black market: heavy (water-adjacent) Primary resource: water (rationed) Climate: extreme heat / sandstorm-active Wild card: SNF presence at city margins

THE FAILING UNDER-SYSTEM

Southern Processing Membrane Array B-7 is running 22% over rated sediment tolerance. The PCU's own maintenance report -- filed by Chief Engineer Farrukh Tashkentov, now on administrative reassignment -- projects membrane failure within 14 to 20 months. After that, the treatment output remains clear to visual inspection for approximately 8 to 12 days before biological contamination becomes detectable. The PCU has the ACU repair contract number. They have not called.

The maintenance report exists in one classified copy inside the palace complex and one unofficial copy that Tashkentov copied to a sealed datacard before his reassignment. The Prophet's office believes the second copy was destroyed. It was not.

THE SCENE — SAHARAN OASIS NETWORK

Desert Splice Punk is the scene that knows exactly how to move through a checkpoint. The PCU city is the most surveilled operational environment in the OT world, and the underground youth culture that developed beneath that surveillance draws from a deep well of precedent: the Gulf's underground rave circuit that ran for two decades of official prohibition before the Upheaval consolidated it, Cairo street style that survived every attempt at standardization, North African traditions of navigating official culture while keeping something true underneath. The Saharan scene does not announce itself at distance. It reads at close range, to the right people. The PERIMETER SOFT checkpoint AI flags loud, tactical, and faction-surplus; the scene learned years ago to dress for the algorithm.

Water tokens worn as official status markers become dead-credential decoration in the scene: expired allocation tokens, void-stamped coolant access cards, old cistern permits on chains alongside standard HELIX STANDARD badge jewelry. The specific bureaucratic calligraphy of PCU resource documentation — the water token's seal, the Prophet's administrative mark on allocation stamps — stripped of institutional context and worn as collage material. NULLMARK signal hygiene hardware is a style object here because in a surveillance city, the thing that makes you invisible is worth displaying. BARE KIT's off-grey is the tactical choice for movement through PCU checkpoint AI. DEAD STACK COLLECTIVE's Saharan market inventory includes expired Prophet's Seal administrative cre-

dentials that are legally dangerous to wear and therefore extremely common as jacket patches. The Commander's compliance watchers photograph them and the Commander's legal division has been deciding what to do about it for three months.

PCU-forged who go freelance — jackal, fennec, falcon stock — strip the Prophet's mark from their kit and replace it with splice unit patches, wearing heat-adapted augmentation visibly in ways PCU doctrine absolutely forbids. The fennec's subdermal cooling mesh worn with deliberate wardrobe gaps in the Southern Market's shade structures. The falcon's altitude-adapted optics covered with hand-painted eye covers that announce rather than conceal. The Compliance Watcher who regularly walks the market's evening hours has been photographing the same three stalls for six weeks without making contact, which means either the investigation is ongoing or someone further up the Doctrine chain has told them to let it run and watch where it goes. The scene has noticed both possibilities and is operating as if it's the second one.

LAWS AND CIVIC RITUALS

Aggressively Enforced

- Water token tampering -- penalty: 90-day rationing suspension, name added to Compliance Watch
- Unauthorized entry to any Processing Zone -- penalty: indefinite detention, no appeal timeline
- Unlicensed communication equipment -- penalty: equipment seizure, 30-day facility hold

Selectively Weaponized

- Public assembly ordinance -- technically requires permits; applied against any gathering the faith considers seditious
- Residency verification -- technically applies to all; audits concentrate on non-PCU-aligned neighborhoods
- Contraband goods classification -- water filtration equipment bought outside sanctioned channels is contraband; this is how the PCU keeps the black market visible and controllable

Feared Punishments

- Reassignment to exterior labor zones -- loss of indoor cooling access, effectively a death sentence for older residents
- Token suspension -- three hundred thousand people understand that a 90-day suspension in high summer is not a fine
- Faith tribunal review -- no defined timeline, no defined outcome, no appeal process

Civic Rituals

- Morning water distribution call -- broadcast citywide, names rationing allocations by district. The pauses before low-allocation announcements have become audible.
- Sandstorm prayer cycle -- PCU-mandated communal prayer at storm approach. Serves as a population census; absence is noted.
- Annual Bounty Declaration -- the Prophet's office announces water surplus numbers. No independent body has ever verified the figures. Everyone knows this.

[DISTRICTS]

FACTIONS

PCU INNER COUNCIL

OBJECTIVE Maintain the appearance of full operational competence while managing the B-7 deferral -- specifically, prevent the maintenance report from reaching civilian channels, rival intelligence, or Dr. Al-Miraj's external contacts before the political calculus for requesting ACU help shifts in the Council's favor.

ASSETS Complete administrative control of the city, Dune Specter military force, faith tribunal judicial authority, the compliance registry as a population management tool, classified copy of the B-7 maintenance report.

DEPENDENCY The membrane array continuing to function long enough that the deferral remains defensible -- and the population not knowing the alternative.

VULNERABILITY Three separate copies of information they consider controlled: Tashkentov's datacard, the data broker's partial document, and Dr. Al-Miraj's independent calculations. They know about none of these.

ESCALATION

1: Surveillance increase, compliance audit acceleration / 2: Targeted reassignments, exit clearance freezes / 3: Faith tribunal proceedings against identified information sources / 4: Processing Zone lockdown, Dust Belt census sweep converted to mass reassignment

OFFER Exit clearance for operators who deliver the datacard and seal the information leak. Tier One allocation for any civilian who provides actionable intelligence. Research access for any faction that helps them manage Dr. Al-Miraj quietly.

DEMAND The datacard. Silence from Dr. Al-Miraj. Confirmation that no external faction has the B-7 data.

IF DAMAGED The faith structure that makes PCU control function depends on the Prophet's competence appearing unquestionable. A public B-7 failure converts a political problem into a succession crisis. The Dune Specters hold the city while the Council fractures.

SAHARAN NOMAD FEDERATION (SNF)

OBJECTIVE Keep Sand Gate operational, keep the passage business running, and avoid being caught in the center of whatever is about to happen to the city's water system -- which the SNF has known about for three months from their own sources.

ASSETS Complete desert approach intelligence, the calibration window schedule, the ACU technical advisor at Sand Gate, caravan routes connecting the Oasis to three other cities, and information discipline that most factions can't match.

DEPENDENCY The PCU's continued willingness to tolerate Sand Gate. The SNF cannot fight the PCU militarily. They can make the PCU's desert operations unworkable. Both parties know this.

VULNERABILITY If the B-7 situation becomes public, the PCU will need someone to blame for the information leak. The SNF is an available candidate. They have been careful. They may not have been careful enough.

ESCALATION

1: Information withdrawal -- stop selling anything useful / 2: Route pricing becomes prohibitive / 3: Guides disappear from Sand Gate without announcement / 4: Sand Gate closes. The SNF is no longer in the city's periphery.

OFFER Desert extraction for any party that needs to leave the city outside official channels. The calibration window schedule. Dr. Diallo's technical assessment. An introduction to their network of oasis-city informants.

DEMAND No operator who buys SNF services gets taken by PCU intelligence afterward. No faction uses SNF passage routes to move anything that traces back to the SNF if discovered.

IF DAMAGED The SNF pulls entirely from the city's periphery. Every desert-side operation loses its intelligence baseline. The PCU gains a pretext for closing Sand Gate and installing a checkpoint -- which makes the approach lane a harder problem for everyone.

AFRICAN COALITION UNION (ACU)

OBJECTIVE Get Dr. Diallo into Southern Processing to assess and repair B-7 -- which means either convincing the PCU to request ACU assistance or finding another way to make the repair happen before the failure window closes.

ASSETS Dr. Amara Diallo with full B-7 repair capability, indirect intelligence from Kouyate in the Dust Belt, a repair contract number the PCU has and hasn't called, and the Obsidian Wardens' reputation from the 2066 water war as an implicit guarantee of competence.

DEPENDENCY A PCU invitation -- the ACU cannot enter Southern Processing without one. They have been waiting for that call for six weeks.

VULNERABILITY Dr. Diallo is operating at Sand Gate without official ACU cover. If the PCU decides to treat her presence as hostile intelligence activity rather than standby assistance, the ACU loses their in-city asset.

ESCALATION

1: Continue passive availability -- Dr. Diallo remains accessible at Sand Gate / 2: Formal ACU communication to PCU requesting consultation status acknowledgment / 3: Intelligence sharing -- release B-7 assessment data to a third party that can pressure the PCU / 4: Public disclosure of the maintenance deferral decision -- catastrophic for PCU, acceptable cost for ACU if the alternative is a three-hundred-thousand-person contamination event

OFFER Full membrane repair capability, technical documentation, a path to fixing the problem before it becomes a crisis. Also: the political cover of a documented ACU repair contract, which lets the Inner Council frame the repair as planned cooperation rather than emergency response.

DEMAND Official PCU request for consultation. Access to Southern Processing for Dr. Diallo and a three-person technical team. Acknowledgment in the repair record.

IF DAMAGED The ACU loses Diallo's position in the city. The repair window closes. The ACU begins preparing the public disclosure.

SONS OF THE SERPENT

OBJECTIVE They lost the 2066 water war. They have not stopped being interested in PCU water infrastructure. Their current operation is not sabotage -- it is intelligence gathering. They want to know when B-7 fails and be positioned to exploit the chaos, not cause it.

ASSETS One cell of three operatives currently active in Sand Gate and the Cistern Quarter. The copy of the sabotage protocol embedded in the Southern Processing control system -- they had it in 2066 and they still have it. They do not know if the protocol still works.

DEPENDENCY The B-7 failure happening on a timeline that gives them positioning time. If the ACU fixes the membranes, the Sons lose their window.

VULNERABILITY Leila bint Rashid at Sand Gate turned down their approach four months ago and knows what they look like. The PCU has a reasonably accurate operational profile of the 2066 cell leadership, some of whom are still active.

ESCALATION

1: Intelligence collection -- map the current city state and B-7 timeline / 2: Asset recruitment -- attempt to place one operative with direct access to Southern Processing / 3: Sabotage protocol test -- determine if the 2066 code still functions in the updated control system / 4: Activation -- timed to membrane failure onset, not as a cause but as an accelerant

OFFER The sabotage protocol itself, if operators want to use it. Intelligence on PCU water infrastructure vulnerabilities compiled since 2066. A clean exit from the city for operators willing to hand them one useful piece of information.

DEMAND Access to Southern Processing -- not physical entry, just someone who can confirm whether the 2066 protocol is still in the control system. One name. One shift schedule.

IF DAMAGED The cell withdraws from the city. The sabotage protocol remains wherever it is. A Sons command structure that has been planning this operation since 2066 sends a replacement cell within six months.

HUB-LEVEL WILDCARD CONTACTS

Farrukh Tashkentov | Former Chief Engineer, Southern Processing (reassigned, exterior labor facility, location classified)

Can Get: The second copy of the B-7 maintenance report -- if operators can reach him. His technical knowledge of the array including failure modes, sabotage vulnerabilities, and what a repair actually requires.

Wants: He wants the report to reach someone who can act on it before the failure window closes. He knows it didn't reach the right people the first time.

Fears: That the facility he's being held in will not let him go before the PCU has resolved the situation one way or another.

Current Pressure: He made contact three weeks ago with one person he trusted outside the city. He does not know if that message was received. He does not know if the person is still free.

KHALID IBN SAUD

PCU Media Mogul and Undisclosed Fourth Council Seat

CAN GET The Inner Council's actual decision-making process, including the vote that deferred the B-7 repair. Political leverage over PCU administrative appointments. Unofficial paramilitary units that operate outside Dune Specter command.

WANTS He voted against the deferral. He believes the decision was wrong and that the person who cast the deciding vote knew it was wrong. He wants that person's position on the Council.

FEARS Being identified as the fourth seat -- if that information becomes public, his political value to any party disappears and his personal risk multiplies.

CURRENT PRESSURE The message Dr. Al-Miraj received in Shade Market -- 'The deferral decision was four to one. Ask who voted no.' -- came from him. He sent it because he is running out of time to resolve this through internal channels.

DOWNTIME

1. RUN THE BLACK MARKET CIRCUIT

What: Spend time moving through Sand Gate and Shade Market's off-books networks, buying, selling, and listening.

Cost: Two days, one faction debt (a favor owed to a market broker), or 500 credits.

Gain: One piece of current-week intelligence from the Cistern Quarter, Sand Gate, or Shade Market rumor tables -- player's choice of district. Plus access to one unlicensed equipment item at market rate.

Fallout: A PCU Commerce Authority surveillance file opens on the operator. Not yet actionable -- but the next unlicensed transaction triggers a faith monitor referral.

2. WORK THE COMPLIANCE REGISTRY

What: Use a contact inside Faith Administration to run targeted lookups, clear a hold, or insert false compliance data for a specific resident.

Cost: A direct ask from Tariq Mansour (Cistern Quarter contact) and either 300 credits or a reciprocal favor.

Gain: Clear one compliance hold, advance one resident from Tier Three to Tier Two, or access the full compliance file for any named resident.

Fallout: Mansour's access log now shows the unauthorized entries. If the PCU audits his account -- which they do quarterly -- his exposure becomes the operator's exposure. Mansour knows this and will mention it.

3. DESERT PREPARATION

What: Work with SNF contacts at Sand Gate to map an approach route, learn desert survival protocols for the current weather pattern, and establish a contingency extraction point.

Cost: Three days and 800 credits, or one piece of information about PCU military operations that the SNF doesn't already have.

Gain: A mapped extraction route that bypasses the kill zone using the calibration window. The route is valid for 30 days before the SNF updates it.

Fallout: Leila bint Rashid now knows what the operator's exit plan looks like. She sells information. She hasn't sold this. Yet.

R&R

Roll when operators spend downtime in Sand Gate's tea stalls, Shade Market's off-hours social spaces, or the Dust Belt's informal gathering points after the patrol unit leaves. Every result produces a new edge, a new debt, or a new exposure.

HUB-LEVEL RUMOR TABLES

HUB RUMOR TABLE 1 — MARKET AND CIVILIAN SOURCES (1D6)

HUB RUMOR TABLE 2 — CONTRACTOR AND TECHNICAL SOURCES (1D6)

ESCALATION TRACKS

ESCALATION TRACK 1: THE INFORMATION LEAK

Tracks the spread of B-7 maintenance data from classified to public knowledge.

Stage 1 — Contained: The report exists in three copies (classified, datacard, partial broker copy) and one person's independent calculations. The PCU believes they control all of them. Operators can act at any stage without the city knowing the situation.

Stage 2 — Fracturing: One copy reaches an external party or a civilian channel. PCU responds with accelerated compliance audits and exit clearance freezes citywide. Shade Market contractors begin making contingency plans. The calibration window schedule price doubles at Sand Gate.

Stage 3 — Active Suppression: The PCU issues a formal information security decree -- unauthorized possession of any document 'pertaining to city infrastructure' becomes a faith tribunal offense. Dust Belt census sweep activated. Dr. Al-Miraj's residency status converted from delayed departure to formal detention.

Stage 4 — Public Break: The information reaches a channel the PCU cannot suppress -- external faction broadcast, SNF network distribution, or a Shade Market data sale that crossed a border. The Inner Council enters crisis mode. Ibn Saud moves to accelerate his internal challenge. ACU issues a formal consultation request with a 72-hour response deadline. The Dust Belt clinic medic's anomalous presentations become citywide news.

ESCALATION TRACK 2: THE MEMBRANE CLOCK

Tracks B-7 physical degradation independent of the information situation.

Stage 1 — Within Parameters: Current state. Output quality normal to visual inspection. Maintenance logs show deletion activity. The window for a standard repair is open.

Stage 2 — Threshold Crossed: Secondary filtration starts compensating visibly. Water pressure in the Dust Belt secondary system becomes irregular. The informal clinic logs increase. The repair window now requires emergency protocol -- faster, more expensive, requires ACU presence during active degradation.

Stage 3 — Silent Contamination: Output quality degrades below safe threshold while remaining clear to visual inspection. Dust Belt Block 3 presents first clinical cases. Southern Processing maintenance staff begin calling in sick. The PCU's own reserve supply covers the premium zones. The Dust Belt is on secondary system only.

Stage 4 — Failure Cascade: B-7 output is no longer suitable for consumption without advanced treatment the city does not have on-site. The PCU reveals the reserve supply exists, covering the palace complex and Shade Market. The Cistern Quarter allocation system collapses -- the token economy is worthless without supply. Dust Belt population is told to conserve. Three hundred thousand people understand what 'conserve' means in this city.

OPERATIONS MAP

CHOKEPOINTS

- Southern Processing inner checkpoint: single road in, biometric scan, Dune Specter control. Any approach requires credentialed cover.
- Sunwall kill zone: three-kilometer approach lane with sensor coverage. The calibration window is the only navigable gap.
- Cistern Quarter distribution windows: the only official water access points. Closing them is the PCU's most immediately effective population control measure.
- Palace Complex outer gate: single entry, face database scan response under three minutes. No approach without a cover identity at professional level.

DARK ZONES

- Dust Belt Blocks 4 and 7 after dark: minimal surveillance, no patrol presence, operational freedom at the cost of infrastructure hazard.
- Sand Gate after sundown: PCU drone logging stops at the boundary of the informal SNF operating area. Conversations here don't appear in PCU intelligence unless the SNF decides they should.
- Southern Processing sub-level instrument room during the skeleton night crew: two cameras, both on the standard 90-second drone-sync pattern. Three-second gap at the camera overlap point.

FACTION TERRITORY LINES

- PCU administrative control: Palace Complex, Cistern Quarter, Southern Processing, Sunwall (formal). Shade Market (nominal).
- SNF operational space: Sand Gate and the desert approach extending to the kill zone boundary. Informal presence in the Dust Belt through Kouyate.
- ACU footprint: Dr. Diallo at Sand Gate only. No city interior presence.
- Sons of the Serpent: three-person cell moving between Sand Gate and Cistern Quarter. No fixed position.

MOBILITY CORRIDORS

- The B corridor: maintenance access tunnel connecting Southern Processing to the Cistern Quarter water distribution system. Credentialed access only, drone-blind between junctions 3 and 7.
- The Shade Market service lane: connects Shade Market to the Sunwall logistics bay. Used for contractor supply. Night traffic is not fully logged.
- Dust Belt mutual aid routes: the block leaders' internal network uses a combination of basement corridors and rooftop crossings that no official map records. Fatou Diarra knows all of them.

MISSION SEEDS

SEED 1: DEAD LETTER

Objective: Locate and recover the Tashkentov datacard before the PCU or Sons of the Serpent reach it.

Clock: The PCU has identified Tashkentov's likely external contact and is running a compliance investigation that will reach them within 72 hours.

Complication: The contact Tashkentov trusted doesn't know what they're holding and has already mentioned it to a Cistern Quarter token broker who may or may not be an informant.

SEED 2: CONSULT

Objective: Get Dr. Diallo from Sand Gate into Southern Processing to assess the membrane array and begin repair without triggering the Inner Council's security response.

Clock: Dr. Diallo's visa status has triggered an administrative review -- she has approximately four days before she's formally expelled from the city's administrative zone.

Complication: The only path into Southern Processing that bypasses face-database screening requires using a Water Authority credential that belongs to someone who is currently alive and employed there.

SEED 3: THE BROKER'S COPY

Objective: Recover all copies of the B-7 maintenance document from the Shade Market data broker before a Sons of the Serpent buyer closes the purchase.

Clock: The buyer has already acquired one page and will return for the rest within 24 hours. After that, the Sons have enough to confirm the sabotage protocol status.

Complication: The broker sold the first page to someone who was not the Sons. That buyer is also in Shade Market and is also trying to acquire the rest. Operators may not know which buyer is which until a purchase is already in progress.

SEED 4: EXIT INTERVIEW

Objective: Extract Dr. Hana Al-Miraj from the city before the Inner Council converts her administrative delay into formal detention.

Clock: The compliance review process that can classify her as a detained asset takes 48 hours once initiated. Based on Khalid Ibn Saud's timeline, the initiation is coming in the next 36 hours.

Complication: Dr. Al-Miraj will not leave until she has transmitted her independent B-7 calculations to an external party who can act on them. This transmission will be visible to PCU signals intelligence the moment it leaves the city.

SEED 5: PROTOCOL TEST

Objective: Confirm whether the 2066 Sons of the Serpent sabotage code is still functional in the Southern Processing control system -- without triggering it.

Clock: The Sons' cell has already attempted one access probe that failed. A second probe will trigger a security response. The operators need to get inside the system first.

Complication: The only person with current access to the control protocol sub-system is a Water Authority supervisor who knows what's in the system and is already in contact with Dr. Diallo. Her cooperation requires explaining what operators are looking for. She will have questions about why they know to look.

SEED 6: ONE AGAINST FOUR

Objective: Identify and make contact with the Inner Council member who voted against the deferral -- Khalid Ibn Saud -- and determine whether his opposition can be leveraged into an official ACU consultation request.

Clock: The membrane clock is at Stage 2. The Inner Council knows it. A formal request to the ACU can only come from the full Council -- which requires either Ibn Saud prevailing internally or the three-vote majority being pressured from outside.

Complication: Ibn Saud sent Dr. Al-Miraj the message about the vote count. He did this to create external pressure. He did not anticipate that the operators working the situation would find him before he was ready to be found.

DESTABILIZATION AFTERMATH

IF THE B-7 INFORMATION BECOMES FULLY PUBLIC

The city does not immediately collapse. The PCU's reserve supply buys six to eight weeks of managed rationing in the premium zones. The Dust Belt gets no reserve allocation. The Inner Council fractures along the deferral vote line -- the three-vote majority needs the information to have come from hostile external sources, which is why the Sons of the Serpent become immediately useful to them as a narrative even if the Sons had nothing to do with the leak. Khalid Ibn Saud moves to consolidate his position in the resulting power vacuum. The ACU arrives formally and fixes the membranes. This is the correct outcome. The ACU now has a permanent presence in Southern Processing, which is what the deferral was designed to prevent.

IF OPERATORS FIX THE MEMBRANES THROUGH THE BACK CHANNEL

The repair happens. The water stays on. The information about the deferral decision stays classified. The Inner Council survives intact -- the three-vote majority owes their political lives to whoever facilitated the repair. That's a debt, and the PCU Inner Council is very specific about how debts are paid. Tashkentov stays at the exterior labor facility. The compliance registry continues running its undisclosed new metric. The Sons of the Serpent's 2066 sabotage protocol is still in the control system. The Dust Belt census sweep proceeds on its accelerated schedule. The city works exactly as designed.

IF THE SONS OF THE SERPENT ACTIVATE THE SABOTAGE PROTOCOL

The contamination is silent for 8 to 12 days. The Dust Belt presents first. By day five the informal clinic has more cases than it can manage. By day eight the PCU knows what is happening and does not announce it -- they activate the reserve supply for the palace complex, Shade Market, and Southern Processing staff housing. By day twelve the Cistern Quarter queue has not moved in 18 hours. The SNF closes Sand Gate and sends word to the desert network. ACU and Obsidian Wardens are staged within 72 hours of the public announcement -- which comes from an external faction broadcast, not the PCU. The city the PCU built to prove their way works becomes the evidence against them. The Prophet's location becomes relevant for the first time in six years.

IF OPERATORS REMOVE THE INNER COUNCIL'S CONTROLLING MAJORITY

Khalid Ibn Saud moves to the first seat. The ACU repair contract is called within 48 hours. Dr. Al-Miraj leaves the city with her research intact. Tashkentov's reassignment is reversed on paper. He is still at an exterior labor facility because nobody told the facility yet. The Dust Belt census sweep is suspended. The compliance registry's new metric is audited and its purpose is discovered: it was tracking residents who had made contact with non-PCU information sources. The three council members who were ousted have paramilitary units that are not Dune Specters. The city has a new power structure and an old armed opposition. Ibn Saud knows this. He called the repair contract first because he needed to show the population something before the shooting started.

DELIBERATE BLANKS

The following elements are intentionally undefined. They are invitations to the table.

The Inner Council’s Fourth Decision

The deferral vote was four to one. The supplement identifies Ibn Saud as the dissenting vote. It does not identify what the three-vote majority was protecting that made the deferral worth the risk. One of the three had a personal financial stake in the ACU’s primary competitor. One believed the membrane situation was less urgent than the maintenance report said. What the third one was thinking is for the table to determine.

Tashkentov’s External Contact

The engineer made contact with one person he trusted outside the city before he was moved to the exterior labor facility. The supplement does not name that person. They may be in the city or outside it. They may have received the message or not. The datacard they were meant to receive may be with them, lost, or in someone else’s hands. The shape of this blank determines how the Dead Letter mission seed unfolds.

The Water Authority Address

The hold order on the membrane servicing delivery came from an address that matches no staff directory entry. The Inner Council’s administrative suite is one

answer. A Sons of the Serpent asset with Water Authority system access is another. A third party with reasons to delay the repair that nobody has considered is a third. The table decides.

The Dust Belt's Block Leader Network

Fatou Diarra manages Blocks 3 through 6. The mutual aid network uses basement corridors and rooftop routes not on any official map. What the supplement does not define is what else moves through that network — what the block leaders know that they haven't told anyone outside the district, what debts they're carrying, and whether any of the pending-review residents they're protecting are pending review for reasons that would matter to operators. Scale to your table.

The Unnamed Sons Operative

The Sons cell has three members. The supplement does not name or describe the specific operative attempting to recruit a Water Authority asset. That operative is currently in the city, currently failing, and currently considering whether a different approach requires different assets. Whether that approach involves the operators is for the table to determine at first contact.

The Prophet

The Prophet's location has not been confirmed in six years. The Palace Complex is his administrative seat. Whether he is in it, whether the orders that emerge from it reflect his actual judgment or someone else's management of his authority, and what happens to PCU legitimacy if either answer becomes public — these are intentionally unresolved. The inner compound's overnight lights, the unlogged meetings, the fourth council seat that even Khalil knows exists but has been told never to log: all of it points toward something. The table decides what.

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 SOUTHERN PROCESSING

The city's life support runs through here. Twelve desalination towers arrayed along the southern wall, all feeding into Membrane Array B-7 -- the primary treatment stack for the city's potable output. PCU security is visible in layers: uniformed patrols, plain-clothed faith monitors, drone coverage that never has a gap, and one checkpoint on the single road in that scans everything twice. The workers know something is wrong with the membranes. They don't know what it means. Their supervisors know more. None of them have said it out loud.

Security: lockdown Infrastructure: strained Civilians: sparse (workers only) Surveillance: drone sweep + informant net Faction pressure: dominant PCU Contamination: none -- yet Black market: none Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION	Primary desalination and water treatment for the full city population.
CONTROLLER	PCU Water Authority on paper. Dune Specters in practice -- two rotating units, six-hour shifts, no civilian interface.
DRAW	The one place in the city where the real infrastructure lives / Maintenance access to the full water supply chain / Tashkentov's former workspace and any copies of his data he left behind
RISK	Checkpoint entry requires biometric scan and active work credential / Faith monitor teams rotate through worker shifts without announcement / Drone coverage includes acoustic sensors tuned for unauthorized recording / Workers who ask the wrong questions get reassigned
SCARCITY	Unofficial communication -- no personal devices in the Processing Zone / Off-record maintenance intel -- Tashkentov's reassignment spooked the remaining staff / ACU technical expertise -- exactly what the membranes need and exactly what the PCU will not import

UNDER-SYSTEM

Membrane Array B-7 is 22% over rated sediment tolerance and degrading. The repair window closed when Tashkentov was reassigned. The next one opens when the membranes fail.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Treatment efficiency drops silently for the first several weeks -- no visible change in output quality. By month two, secondary filtration starts compensating visibly. By month four, maintenance workers start calling in sick. By the time civilian cases appear, the city has six weeks of clean water in reserve and no repair contractor on site.

Signature Image

The drone pattern overhead repeats every 90 seconds. Workers on long shifts learn it without trying. The ones who have been here more than three years don't look up anymore.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PCU Water Authority supervisors, uniformed Dune Specter units at all entry points

ECONOMY

Maintenance shifts, instrument calibration, output logging, internal supply runs

RISK

Faith monitors rotating through shifts looking for ideological drift and communication violations

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Dune Specter units only -- civilian supervisors rotate out at 2000 hours

ECONOMY

Reduced shift skeleton crew, faster checkpoint processing for credentialed workers, smaller drone pattern

RISK

Skeleton crew means fewer witnesses and a narrower response window -- also means fewer people to notice what operators are doing

FACTIONS PRESENT

PCU Water Authority

Objective: Maintain output metrics and the appearance of normal operations -- specifically keep the membrane degradation data from reaching civilian channels or rival factions.

Assets: Full credentialed access to all Processing Zone infrastructure, direct line to Dune Specter command, faith tribunal referral authority over any worker.

Dependency: The membrane array continuing to function well enough that the deferral remains defensible.

Vulnerability: Three mid-level supervisors know the B-7 numbers. One of them has a sister in the Dust Belt on restricted ration.

Escalation Ladder: 1: Surveillance and personnel monitoring / 2: Worker reassignments and credential reviews / 3: Faith tribunal referrals, targeted detention / 4: Processing Zone lockdown, information blackout

What They Offer: Credentialed worker IDs, maintenance window schedules, access to water chemistry data going back five years.

What They Demand: Find who Tashkentov talked to. Recover the datacard. Document any external contact he made after reassignment.

If Damaged: Processing Zone security falls to Dune Specters exclusively. Worker morale collapses. Informal communication about B-7 accelerates.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS — SOUTHERN PROCESSING (1D6)

CONTACTS — SOUTHERN PROCESSING

YASMIN KHALIFA

Water Chemistry Technician, B-7 shift

CAN GET Accurate output chemistry data for the past 14 months, maintenance log anomaly reports, shift schedule for the monitoring floor.

WANTS Her younger brother is on a performance review that could result in exterior labor reassignment. She needs someone with PCU administrative access to close the file.

FEARS That the test she's running without authorization will show up in the instrument logs before she can pull it.

CURRENT PRESSURE She ran an unauthorized sediment tolerance comparison two days ago. The numbers confirm what Tashkentov's report said. She has not decided what to do with that yet.

SERGEANT IDRIS WALI

Dune Specter NCO, Processing Zone inner checkpoint

CAN GET Checkpoint blind spots during shift overlap, drone pattern timing, which maintenance windows the command unit doesn't flag for additional surveillance.

WANTS Passage for his wife and two children on an outbound SNF caravan. She is undocumented. The census sweep hits their district next month.

FEARS Being identified as anything other than fully compliant by faith monitor review.

CURRENT PRESSURE He was the NCO on duty the night Tashkentov's datacard copy was supposedly destroyed. He knows it wasn't. He doesn't know where it went.

REEM AL-FATTAH

Processing Zone Supply Coordinator

CAN GET

Inventory manifests for incoming and outgoing equipment, the crate at the receiving bay that has been sitting six days, access to loading dock during low-surveillance windows.

WANTS She wants to know who ordered the six-day hold on the incoming membrane shipment -- and who countermanded it.

FEARS Being connected to any investigation into the hold order. She asked the question once. She was told to drop it. She hasn't.

CURRENT PRESSURE The hold order came from a Water Authority address she doesn't recognize. She ran it against the staff directory. No match.

CIVILIAN NEED

Workers want to keep their jobs, their credentials, and their distance from whatever is wrong with B-7. They are not asking questions publicly. Several are asking them privately and finding no safe answer.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Worker credentials and shift schedules (via Wali or Al-Fattah). B-7 instrument logs and output chemistry records for the past 14 months (via Khalifa). The receiving dock during low-surveillance windows. The sub-level instrument room during the skeleton night crew's 3-second camera gap. Maintenance tunnel B corridor access from junction 3 to 7, which is drone-blind.

DISTRICT 2 THE CISTERN QUARTER

The distribution hub. Water tokens move through here from processing to population -- physical tokens first, digital balance updates every six hours, with a three-tier allocation system that tracks political standing without naming it directly. Tier One residents get full allocation plus reserve credit. Tier Three residents get survival minimum on 48-hour advance notice.

Everyone in the Cistern Quarter knows which tier they are and can read which tier anyone else is just by watching how they hold their token pouch.

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: packed Surveillance: informant net Faction pressure: dominant PCU Contamination: none Black market: light (filtration equipment, token resale) Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION	Water token distribution, allocation administration, population compliance registry.
CONTROLLER	PCU Faith Administration -- the compliance registry is the real instrument of control here.
DRAW	Daily water allocation / Token resale market (technically illegal, universally tolerated) / The only public notice boards in the city -- which means it's where information moves
RISK	Faith informants are densest here -- more ears per square meter than anywhere outside the palace / Token disputes are escalated to faith tribunal, not civil arbitration / Compliance registry audits can freeze a resident's allocation on filing, before any hearing
SCARCITY	Tier One status -- requires demonstrable faith compliance, not just token payment / Privacy -- the distribution queues are the city's most surveilled public space / Filter cartridges sold outside sanctioned channels -- high demand, steady enforcement

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Cistern Quarter's allocation database is the compliance record. It cross-references token usage, prayer attendance, census data, and faith tribunal outcomes to produce a compliance score updated weekly. The score is not published. It is felt.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Tier Three residents lose reserve credit first. Then Tier Two allocation windows shorten. Then the queue times stretch. Then people start calculating which neighbor has more tokens than they should. Token theft and information selling accelerate in parallel.

Signature Image

The allocation queue forms at 0600 regardless of the morning heat. By the time the distribution windows open, the line runs four abreast for two hundred meters. Nobody in the queue talks to strangers.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PCU Faith Administration clerks, two uniformed security units at distribution points

ECONOMY

Official allocation runs, compliance registry updates, public announcements on the notice boards

RISK

Faith informants in the distribution queue monitoring conversations and behavior

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Distribution closes at sundown. Security presence drops by half. Informal token market activates.

ECONOMY

Token resale, filtration cartridge black market, information exchange at the back of the tea stalls

RISK

Token theft -- organized crews working the informal market, targeting Tier One residents who carry reserve

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS — CISTERN QUARTER (1D6)

CONTACTS — CISTERN QUARTER

TARIQ MANSOUR

Faith Administration Compliance Clerk

CAN GET Compliance score lookups for any resident, allocation freeze and release authorization for Tier Two and Three, names of residents recently flagged for audit.

WANTS His mother is a Tier Three resident whose score is flagging for review. He wants her reclassified before the next audit cycle.

FEARS That his access log will show the unofficial lookups he has been running for the last three months.

CURRENT PRESSURE He ran a lookup on Farrukh Tashkentov's file two weeks ago out of curiosity. Tashkentov's compliance record has been purged entirely -- not zeroed, removed. That is not a standard administrative action.

NADIA YOUSSEF

Token Market Broker (unofficial)

CAN GET Token resale at current street rate, filtration cartridges from two suppliers, introduction to the informal information exchange network that runs through the tea stalls.

WANTS She wants clean documentation for a specific transaction that moved approximately 800 Tier One reserve credits last month -- something she can show if her books are audited.

FEARS The faith monitor who has been watching her stall for three consecutive nights.

CURRENT PRESSURE She knows about the unauthorized notice board posting. She didn't put it up. She is trying to identify who did before the faith monitors do.

HISHAM AL-RAWI

Retired Faith Administration Director, now residential

CAN GET Deep knowledge of how the compliance registry was designed and what its original metric set was -- before six weeks ago.

WANTS He wants the name of whoever authorized the new compliance metric. He was director for nine years. He was not consulted.

FEARS Being identified as dissident by the system he built.

CURRENT PRESSURE He knows the new metric well enough to reverse-engineer it from the public allocation data. He has been doing the math. He does not like what it predicts.

CIVILIAN NEED

Residents are trying to maintain their allocation tier and stay off compliance audit lists. The gap between Tier Two and Tier Three is the gap between reserve credit and survival minimum. Everyone in this district understands that arithmetic personally.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Compliance score lookups and allocation modifications (via Mansour, at personal risk to him). Introduction to the informal information exchange at the tea stalls (via Youssef). Deep institutional knowledge of the compliance registry's original and current metric sets (via Al-Rawi). The public notice boards — the only ones in the city — which means operators can push information here and have it reach the entire civilian population.

DISTRICT 3 THE SUNWALL

The perimeter. Plasma weapon emplacements every 400 meters along the outer wall, Dune Specter rotating units on six-hour cycles, and a kill-zone approach lane extending three kilometers into the desert where nothing moves without being logged. The Sunwall isn't just defensive infrastructure -- it's the city's most visible argument. You can see the emplacements from the desert at twenty kilometers. The PCU wants you to see them.

Security: lockdown Infrastructure: stable Civilians: sparse (military only) Surveillance: drone sweep + cameras Faction pressure: dominant PCU / Dune Specters Contamination: none Black market: light (military surplus leak) Mobility: checkpointed

FUNCTION	City perimeter defense, approach monitoring, controlled entry and exit management.
CONTROLLER	Dune Specter command -- formally PCU Military Authority, functionally the two Specter unit commanders who haven't rotated out in three years.

DRAW	The only legal exit route out of the city / Military surplus -- ordnance, gear, and vehicle parts that move through the supply chain and occasionally don't arrive at their destination / The one place in the city where Dune Specter personnel are slightly less monitored by faith administration
RISK	Kill-zone approach sensors log everything -- cross-desert movement is visible before operators reach the wall / Approach-lane drones operate on randomized patterns that are harder to predict than the city interior / Exit requires active compliance clearance -- anyone on a faith tribunal hold cannot pass
SCARCITY	Exit clearance for non-compliant residents / Dune Specter loyalty independent of faith doctrine -- they believe, most of them / Any communication with the desert beyond official channels

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Sunwall's kill-zone sensor network has a maintenance window every 96 hours for calibration. The window is 22 minutes and moves on a schedule that two Specter NCOs know and Faith Administration does not. The maintenance contractor who established that schedule left the city 14 months ago.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Exit clearances tighten first -- processing slows, backlogs build. Then the approach-lane drone pattern becomes more erratic as operators increase coverage without increasing equipment. Then someone in the kill zone at the wrong time becomes a political incident that both sides prefer not to document.

Signature Image

At dawn the plasma emplacements throw long shadows inward across the city. From inside the wall, they look like watch towers. From the desert, they look like what they are.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PCU Military Authority liaison present at Sunwall command during business hours

ECONOMY

Official entry and exit processing, supply convoy clearance, authorized personnel movement

RISK

Faith Administration liaison reviewing exit clearance requests for compliance alignment

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Dune Specter command only -- no civilian oversight from 2200 to 0600

ECONOMY

Military surplus redistribution through channels the supply chain technically doesn't have, low-traffic exit processing that doesn't always log both directions

RISK

The kill-zone sensor window. Operators who know the 22-minute calibration gap can move. Operators who don't know it can't.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS — SUNWALL (1D6)

CONTACTS — SUNWALL

CORPORAL FATIMA AL-RASHID

Dune Specter, Gate Processing Unit

CAN GET Exit clearance processing windows, which compliance holds are being enforced versus which are being quietly cleared, supply manifest anomalies from the past 30 days.

WANTS She wants her unit reassigned before the current Specter commanders' side arrangement gets uncovered and burns everyone around them.

FEARS Being identified as the source of any information that damages her unit's command structure.

CURRENT PRESSURE She witnessed a clearance override for the Water Authority employee. She logged it at the time. She has since been told the log entry was a system error and has been corrected.

TARIQ 'STONE' BASHIR

Dune Specter NCO, Wall Patrol

CAN GET The calibration window schedule for the next 30 days, the specific movement protocols that make the kill zone navigable during the window, contraband routing through the logistics bay.

WANTS He wants a clean exit for himself and three members of his fire team when the side arrangement collapses -- which he knows is coming.

FEARS The SNF contact at Sand Gate who also knows the calibration schedule and doesn't know that Stone knows she's talking to other buyers.

CURRENT PRESSURE The side arrangement with the SNF has a new variable: someone inside the palace complex recently started asking questions about the commanders' rotation schedule. Stone doesn't know who.

LT. COMMANDER AMIR JAVED

PCU Military Authority Liaison, Sunwall Command

CAN GET Official entry and exit clearance overrides, approach-lane sensor activation logs, formal communication with Dune Specter command.

WANTS He wants documentation that the two long-tenure Specter commanders are conducting unauthorized surplus movement. He has suspected it for months and needs something he can take to the palace.

FEARS Being wrong. A false accusation against Dune Specter command would end his career faster than doing nothing.

CURRENT PRESSURE He received a request from palace security three days ago asking for records of all exit clearances processed in the last 90 days. He doesn't know why. He complied. He made a copy first.

CIVILIAN NEED

Military personnel here have one operational need the faith administration doesn't fully address: clean exits. The Specter units who have been here long enough understand what the commanders' side arrangement implies for everyone beneath them when it collapses.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The 22-minute calibration window schedule for the next 30 days (via Stone). Exit clearance processing windows and compliance hold status (via Al-Rashid). Formal entry/exit documentation and sensor logs (via Javed, who wants something in return). Military surplus through the logistics bay. The one exit route out of the city that doesn't require active compliance clearance — if operators know the window and the geometry.

DISTRICT 4 SAND GATE

The Caravanserai. A PCU-adjacent trading post at the city's outer commercial edge -- technically inside the Sunwall perimeter, functionally its own place with its own rules. Water tokens, ammunition, calibrated weather forecasts, and desert passage intelligence trade at adjacent stalls. A PCU garrison six kilometers away pretends not to know the SNF guides who run it are there. The SNF guides who run it pretend not to notice the PCU drone that logs every transaction. The arrangement works because both sides need it to work.

Security: light Infrastructure: stable (self-maintained) Civilians: normal Surveillance: cameras (official) / informant net (SNF) Faction pressure: contested PCU / SNF Contamination: none Black market: heavy Mobility: open (toward desert)

FUNCTION Desert approach trading, passage intelligence, operator resupply and extraction staging.

CONTROLLER	PCU on paper. SNF in practice -- the four guide families who maintain the stalls control what information moves and what price it moves at.
DRAW	The calibration window schedule (sold by one specific SNF contact) / Desert passage guidance -- the SNF knows the safe corridors and sells that knowledge exclusively / Off-books resupply for operators who cannot move through official channels / The only place near the city where you can have a conversation that the faith monitors aren't in
RISK	Everything said in Sand Gate is eventually known by both the PCU and the SNF -- the question is which one finds out first / The SNF will not work for any faction that has tried to control them. They will work adjacent to all of them. / Weather in the desert approach lane can kill faster than a checkpoint -- the forecasts sold here are the difference
SCARCITY	Genuine loyalty -- every intermediary here serves at least two clients / Exit from the city outside official channels -- the SNF can arrange it, at a price, if they choose to / Calibrated trust -- Sand Gate runs on reputation, and reputations here are long-memory

UNDER-SYSTEM

Sand Gate's economic survival depends on both the PCU and the SNF believing the other doesn't know everything. The PCU drone logs every transaction. The SNF guides know which drone, know its pattern, and know which transactions it's not logging. If either party learns the other has more intelligence than they're pretending to have, the arrangement collapses.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

The SNF guides leave first -- they melt into the desert within a day. The non-SNF stall operators stay longer, trying to sell the remaining inventory. The PCU closes Sand Gate within 48 hours of SNF withdrawal and arrests whoever is still there.

Signature Image

The SNF guide at the weather forecast stall names tomorrow's wind direction without looking at any instrument. She has been asked how she knows. She says she grew up in the desert. The answer satisfies most people. It doesn't explain the day after tomorrow.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Nominal PCU administrative presence -- one clerk who mostly drinks tea

ECONOMY

Water tokens, standard supplies, weather forecasts sold at posted prices

RISK

PCU drone logging -- day transactions are recorded

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

SNF guides exclusively -- the PCU clerk leaves at sundown without being asked

ECONOMY

Passage intelligence, calibration window schedules, off-books operator resupply, introductions that don't happen during the day

RISK

SNF information asymmetry -- they know more about your situation than you know they know

FACTIONS PRESENT

Saharan Nomad Federation (SNF)

Objective: Maintain Sand Gate as a functional intelligence node and passage market -- not primarily for profit, but because a Sand Gate that collapses gets replaced with a PCU checkpoint, which serves nobody.

Assets: Deep desert navigation knowledge, caravan route maps the PCU doesn't have, informant network extending across the desert approach to three other oasis cities, the calibration window schedule.

Dependency: The PCU's continued willingness to pretend Sand Gate isn't what it is.

Vulnerability: Any operator who buys SNF passage and then turns up in PCU custody -- the SNF's value depends on their routes staying clean.

Escalation Ladder: 1: Information withdrawal -- stop selling anything beyond basics / 2: Route pricing escalation -- passage becomes very expensive / 3: Guide availability drops to zero with no explanation / 4: Sand Gate closes overnight. No forwarding address.

What They Offer: Calibration window timing, safe passage across the desert approach, off-books operator extraction, weather intelligence.

What They Demand: No faction affiliations disclosed inside Sand Gate. No surveillance equipment. No follow-up inquiries about who else is using the routes.

If Damaged: The guides dissolve into the desert. The passage knowledge goes with them. Every operator planning a desert-side extraction loses their timeline.

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS — SAND GATE (1D6)

CONTACTS — SAND GATE

LEILA BINT RASHID

SNF Guide and Weather Intelligence Broker

CAN GET	Desert passage for up to eight, calibration window timing for the next 96-hour cycle, weather intelligence for the three-day approach, introduction to the ACU technical advisor.
WANTS	She wants confirmation that a specific caravan route 180 kilometers south has not been compromised. Three of her cousins are on it.
FEARS	That the Sons of the Serpent contact who approached her four months ago identified her to PCU intelligence as a passage broker.

CURRENT PRESSURE She has been contacted twice in the past week by buyers she does not recognize who are asking specifically about Water Authority personnel movement. She has not sold anything to them. She is watching.

DAUD AL-SARIF

Independent Supply Broker

CAN GET Resupply for operators outside official channels, ordnance and gear at market rates, introduction to logistics contacts who move product through the Sunwall.

WANTS He wants to move a specific crate out of the city through the Sunwall logistics gap -- contents undisclosed, price negotiable.

FEARS That the crate's contents are already known to the PCU Military Authority liaison.

CURRENT PRESSURE He received an offer two days ago to broker a product introduction between a buyer he doesn't know and a seller he doesn't trust. He turned it down. The buyer came back. He turned it down again. The buyer left without argument, which bothers him more than pressure would have.

DR. AMARA DIALLO

ACU Water Technology Specialist (unofficial presence)

CAN GET Membrane array repair consultation, ACU technical documentation for B-7 equivalent systems, introduction to ACU coordination channels outside official PCU access.

WANTS She wants to know if the PCU is going to ask for her help before the membrane window closes or after.

FEARS That her presence here has been noted by PCU intelligence and that her visa status is currently under administrative review that she has not been officially notified of.

CURRENT PRESSURE She has been in the city six weeks waiting for a contact that has not materialized. Yesterday she received an unofficial message from the Southern Processing supervisor she's been in contact with: 'Do not wait much longer.'

CIVILIAN NEED

Traders and stall operators here need the arrangement to hold. They need both the PCU and the SNF to keep pretending they don't know exactly what the other knows. The day that stops being true is the day this district ceases to exist.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Desert passage for up to eight (via Leila, price and conditions apply). Calibration window timing for the current 96-hour cycle. Weather intelligence, three-day forecast. Off-books resupply outside official channels (via Al-Sarif). Dr. Amara Diallo's full technical assessment of B-7 and introduction to ACU coordination channels. The one place in the city where a conversation doesn't automatically reach the faith informant net.

DISTRICT 5 THE PALACE COMPLEX

The Prophet's seat. The administrative and religious center of PCU authority in the oasis -- a compound within the compound, walled inside the city walls. The security rotation has not changed in six years. Every faction that has tried to map it from the outside has produced a different picture, which means at least some of those pictures are what the PCU wanted them to see.

Security: lockdown Infrastructure: stable Civilians: sparse (vetted staff only) Surveillance: cameras + drone sweep + informant net Faction pressure: dominant PCU / Inner Council Contamination: none Black market: none Mobility: barricaded

FUNCTION PCU administrative command, religious authority, intelligence coordination.

CONTROLLER The Inner Council -- three named advisors, one unknown fourth seat. The Prophet does not appear publicly inside the complex. His orders do.

DRAW	The classified copy of Tashkentov's maintenance report / Khalid Ibn Saud's actual policy influence on the Inner Council / The identity of the fourth council seat -- every faction has a different theory
RISK	No approach that hasn't been profiled against a face database in under three minutes / Every domestic worker inside the complex was vetted at faith tribunal level / The Inner Council has advance notice of most external intelligence operations against them -- the question is which ones they don't know about
SCARCITY	Access -- the Palace Complex is the hardest target in the city by design / Neutral parties -- everyone inside is accountable to the council / Separation between policy and faith -- the two are the same here

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Palace Complex runs on the assumption that the Prophet's authority is not only legitimate but unquestionable. The maintenance deferral is the first major internal decision that required suppressing information from the city's own population. The Inner Council made that call. They are now in the position of managing the suppression, which is different from making a single decision.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Nothing visible happens immediately -- the Complex is designed to absorb pressure without showing it. The first sign is acceleration: faith tribunal reviews increase, compliance registry audits widen, Dune Specter deployment patterns change without announced justification. The second sign is the Inner Council meeting twice in one day.

Signature Image

The outer wall of the Palace Complex faces the Cistern Quarter's main plaza. It has no visible cameras, no posted guards, and no markings of any kind. Everyone in the plaza keeps their eyes forward when they pass it.

DAY

AUTHORITY

Administrative functions -- council advisors present, outer-ring staff handling correspondence and logistics

ECONOMY

Policy execution, intelligence review, faith doctrine distribution to district administrators

RISK

Being identified as an operator on a profiling run -- the face database response time is under three minutes

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Inner security only. The administrative staff rotate out. The people who stay overnight are not administrative.

ECONOMY

Nothing officially. The Inner Council has held three unlogged meetings in the past month.

RISK

The inner security unit that operates overnight does not have a posted mandate or a public chain of command

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS — PALACE COMPLEX (1D6)

CONTACTS — PALACE COMPLEX

MIRIAM NASSAR

Former Palace Domestic Staff (escorted out day one of encounter table)

CAN GET Spatial knowledge of the outer-ring Complex layout, staff rotation schedules from her last week, the name of the council advisor who hasn't been seen in three weeks.

WANTS She wants to know what she did. She has been trying to contact her supervisor inside and getting no response. She is frightened in a way that has started to look like resolve.

FEARS That whatever she inadvertently saw or heard -- she doesn't know exactly what -- will be traced back to her before she can make it not matter.

CURRENT PRESSURE She told her neighbor about the document courier's reaction last week. She told nobody else. She now believes someone inside the Complex saw her watching.

HASSAN KHALIL

PCU Inner Council Administrative Courier (external-facing)

CAN GET Scheduling for outer-gate deliveries, which external parties have had approved access to the Complex in the past 60 days, the general category of the unlogged meetings without their content.

WANTS He wants out of the city permanently -- not extracted dramatically, just a clean departure clearance that doesn't require faith tribunal review.

FEARS The fourth council seat. He doesn't know it's Ibn Saud. He knows it exists. He has been instructed never to log its correspondence.

CURRENT PRESSURE He handled the package that the receiving officer rushed inside. He knows what category of document it was. He doesn't know the specific content. He knows that after it arrived, the meeting configuration changed.

DR. HANA AL-MIRAJ

PCU Water Reclamation Specialist (detained, Shade Market)

CAN GET World-leading expertise in desalination membrane systems, water reclamation technology, and desertification reversal -- including, specifically, B-7 equivalent membrane failure timelines and repair protocols.

WANTS She wants to leave the city. She came here for a two-day research consultation and has been here nine days. Nobody has told her directly that she cannot go. Her exit clearance requests have produced no response.

FEARS That she already knows more about the B-7 situation than the Inner Council wants her to -- she ran the numbers from publicly available output data on day three of her stay.

CURRENT PRESSURE She has been contacted by someone inside Southern Processing who asked if she was available to consult on a

maintenance emergency. She has not yet responded. She is deciding what responding means.

CIVILIAN NEED

The vetted domestic staff here are trying to be invisible. Not compliant — invisible. The distinction matters. Compliance is a score. Invisibility is the absence of being noticed at all. Miriam Nassar has lost that invisibility and doesn't know how.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Spatial knowledge of the outer-ring Complex layout and staff rotation schedules (via Nassar, who is frightened enough to talk). Outer-gate delivery scheduling and approved access records from the past 60 days (via Khalil, who wants permanent departure clearance). Full technical expertise on B-7 membrane failure timeline and repair options (via Al-Miraj, physically in Shade Market but reachable through the contact channel). The category and timing of three unlogged Inner Council meetings — not the content, but enough to build a picture.

DISTRICT 6 SHADE MARKET

The premium zone. Climate control runs hardest here -- operators who arrive from the desert feel the cold in their lungs before anything else. Contractors, technical staff, visiting faction representatives, and anyone with enough money to be inconvenient all live and operate here. Shade Market is the city's negotiating floor. Every faction that wants something from the PCU passes through here first. The PCU uses it to watch them. The factions use it to watch each other.

Security: active Infrastructure: stable Civilians: normal (contractor-class) Surveillance: cameras + informant net Faction pressure: contested (mul-

tiple) Contamination: none Black market: heavy (technical equipment, data) Mobility: open

FUNCTION High-end contractor accommodation, technical services market, faction-adjacent negotiation space.

CONTROLLER PCU formally, but enforcement here is calibrated -- too aggressive and the contractors leave, which the PCU cannot afford.

DRAW The best climate control in the city / Off-books technical equipment including bio-mod calibration and unlicensed comm gear / A place where faction representatives interact without it being a declared contact / Dr. Hana Al-Miraj, currently staying at the Crescent House residential block

RISK PCU surveillance here is data-heavy rather than presence-heavy -- cameras and informants rather than patrols / Technical equipment sales are logged by PCU intelligence even when the seller thinks they aren't / Faction representatives here are playing the same game you are -- nobody is off-duty

SCARCITY Genuine neutrality -- even the most independent contractors here have a reporting relationship / Bio-mod maintenance for pre-2055 stock -- one person in Shade Market does this work and she is not easy to reach / Trust -- Shade Market's economy runs on reputation, and reputations here travel between factions

UNDER-SYSTEM

Shade Market's climate control pulls from the same power allocation as residential zones in the Dust Belt. When Shade Market runs at full capacity, which is most of the time, Dust Belt cooling hours shorten. This is a design feature, not a flaw.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Contractor confidence drops first -- rumors accelerate faster in Shade Market than anywhere in the city because the population talks. Technical specialists begin making contingency plans. Faction representatives begin filing departure requests that the PCU is very slow to process.

Signature Image

The cold hits at the Shade Market entrance checkpoint. It is the kind of cold that only exists because someone decided it should. The contractors who have been here more than a month stop noticing it. Dr. Al-Miraj has been here nine days and still pauses every time she walks in.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PCU Commerce Authority -- permit reviews, contractor registration, price monitoring

ECONOMY

Technical services, contractor support, legitimate equipment sales, consultation appointments

RISK

PCU Commerce Authority identifying unlicensed equipment sales and referring to faith administration

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Informant net and camera coverage; the formal PCU presence leaves; the actual surveillance intensifies

ECONOMY

Off-books technical equipment, data sales, introductions between parties who don't want to be seen meeting, and whatever the faction representatives are actually doing

RISK

Shade Market is where faction intelligence collection concentrates -- every conversation is potentially being recorded by at least one party who isn't you

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS — SHADE MARKET (1D6)

CONTACTS — SHADE MARKET

DR. HANA AL-MIRAJ

PCU Water Reclamation Specialist (see also Palace Complex)

CAN GET Complete technical assessment of B-7 membrane failure timeline, repair protocol options with and without ACU involvement, the message she sent and who she sent it to.

WANTS She wants out of the city. She also wants the membrane fixed. She has calculated that these two goals may not be compatible on the same timeline.

FEARS That the PCU will use her departure as leverage once they've decided they need her cooperation -- which, from her read of the timeline, is approximately two months away.

CURRENT PRESSURE The message she received last night contained one sentence: 'The deferral decision was four to one. Ask who voted no.'

YUSRA AL-ZAHRANI

Bio-Mod Calibration Technician

CAN GET Bio-mod calibration for pre-2055 SCA and EO stock, unlicensed maintenance for operators outside faction supply chains, introductions to technical clients who need things that don't appear in any official record.

WANTS She wants calibration parts for a specific bio-mod platform she cannot source through official channels -- a Dune Specter client's implants are running outside tolerance and she cannot fix them without the part.

FEARS That the PCU Commerce Authority knows she exists and is deciding whether her client list is valuable enough to protect or incriminating enough to act on.

CURRENT PRESSURE A Dune Specter NCO client told her three days ago that his unit had been given new deployment parameters. He didn't explain what they were. He asked her to have his calibration done in the next 72 hours.

TARIQ MOUSSA

Independent Data Broker

CAN GET The copy of Tashkentov's maintenance report (he doesn't know what it is), technical equipment off-books including unlicensed comm gear and one EO-manufactured signal jammer, introduction to the faction representative currently operating in Shade Market.

WANTS	He wants to know what he has before he sells it to the highest bidder. Two buyers came to him today. He recognized one of them. He did not recognize the other one. The one he didn't recognize offered more.
FEARS	That if the document is what the buyers' urgency implies it is, holding it makes him a target from at least two directions.
CURRENT PRESSURE	He sold one page of the document to a buyer who paid well and left immediately. He still has the rest. He hasn't told the remaining buyers that the copy is now incomplete.

CIVILIAN NEED

Contractors and technical specialists here are running one calculation: how bad does it have to get before leaving is worth the clearance process? The gap between what public information warrants and what the actual situation warrants is where operators work.

OPERATOR ACCESS

Complete B-7 technical assessment and repair protocol options (via Al-Miraj, the most valuable single asset in the city). Bio-mod calibration for pre-2055 SCA and EO stock, plus introductions to undisclosed-need technical clients (via Al-Zahrani, requires discretion and a parts favor). The partial Tashkentov maintenance report and one EO-manufactured signal jammer (via Moussa, who knows he's holding something dangerous and wants to move it fast). The only space where multiple faction representatives are accessible simultaneously without a formal contact declaration.

DISTRICT 7 THE DUST BELT

The outer residential zone. Rationed cooling hours. Water token allocations at the low end of Tier Three. The buildings here were designed for a population of 80,000 and currently house closer to 140,000, the difference being composed entirely of people the compliance registry describes as

'pending permanent residency review.' Pending review can last years. During that time, residents receive survival minimum allocation and no path to appeal.

Security: light (patrol presence) / none (after dark) Infrastructure: failing Civilians: packed / displaced Surveillance: informant net (sparse) Faction pressure: low / ACU informal presence Contamination: none (for now) Black market: heavy Mobility: open (internally) / checkpointed (exit)

FUNCTION Overflow residential. The compliance registry's discard population. Where the city puts people it needs but doesn't fully count.

CONTROLLER Nominally PCU district administration. Actually the block leaders who emerged organically because someone had to coordinate the shared water allocation.

DRAW The lowest cost of living in the city / The most operational freedom in the city -- informant density is low, patrol presence is minimal after dark / The block leaders' informal mutual aid network, which functions as the only reliable social infrastructure in the district

RISK Infrastructure is genuinely failing -- wiring, sewage, and water delivery are all past maintenance windows / Population density means disease spreads fast if water quality degrades even marginally / PCU district administration uses Dust Belt census sweeps as compliance enforcement tools against the wider city -- threatening sweep acceleration is a political lever

SCARCITY Cooling hours -- Shade Market's climate control runs on the same allocation / Medical care -- the one informal clinic serves the entire district on donated supplies / A path to Tier Two status -- residents on pending review cannot advance their compliance score regardless of behavior

UNDER-SYSTEM

The Dust Belt's water delivery runs through a secondary pipe system branching off the main Cistern Quarter network. The secondary system has never been load-tested at current population density. If the B-7 membranes fail and output quality degrades silently, the Dust Belt population will show the first clinical indicators -- their supply runs hotter and slower, with less dilution than the premium zones receive.

WHEN THE SYSTEM STRAINS

Cooling failures first -- when the allocation competition with Shade Market tips, Dust Belt residents lose hours. Then water pressure irregularities. Then the informal clinic starts logging presentations it can't explain. By the time PCU district administration acknowledges a problem, the block leaders have already organized.

Signature Image

The cooling ration ends at 1400. The district's temperature climbs four degrees in the next forty minutes. The residents who have been here long enough move inside before the cutoff. The ones who haven't been here long enough learn the timing the first time it happens to them.

DAY

AUTHORITY

PCU district administration -- two clerks, one patrol unit, minimal enforcement

ECONOMY

Informal labor market, black market goods moving through shared residential spaces, the mutual aid network doing its actual work

RISK

PCU district administration running spot compliance checks that can freeze allocations without notice

NIGHT

AUTHORITY

Block leaders. The patrol unit leaves. The district belongs to its residents.

ECONOMY

Same as day but less watched -- medicine, information, food supplementation, and the conversations that happen when no one official is present

RISK

Infrastructure failure -- the wiring in Blocks 4 and 7 is live in ways it shouldn't be, and the block leaders know which corridors to avoid after rain

ENCOUNTERS — DAY (1D6)

ENCOUNTERS — NIGHT (1D6)

RUMORS — DUST BELT (1D6)

CONTACTS — DUST BELT

FATOU DIARRA

Block Leader, Blocks 3-6

CAN GET Communication routing through the mutual aid network, current census data for pending-review residents, the informal clinic's anomalous presentation logs, and an introduction to the ACU-adjacent contact.

WANTS She wants the census sweep stopped or delayed long enough to move approximately 40 pending-review residents to protected status. She knows this is not a small ask.

FEARS That the PCU already has enough information to run the exterior labor reassignment without completing the sweep -- the sweep is to confirm, not to find.

CURRENT PRESSURE The informal contact who arrived from Sand Gate last night told her something about Southern Processing. She has been sitting with it for two hours and has not decided what to do.

DR. SEKU MENSAH

Informal Clinic Medic

CAN GET Contamination indicator data from the past three weeks, off-books medical treatment for operators, the specific supply pipeline that keeps the clinic running.

WANTS He wants someone outside the district to actually read his anomalous presentation report. The district administration filed it. He knows what 'filed' means here.

FEARS That the third patient he logged two days ago worked a maintenance shift at Southern Processing a week before presenting. He has not put this in the official report.

CURRENT PRESSURE He received a supply delivery yesterday that included a vial of water chemistry testing reagent he did not order and cannot source. There was a note: 'Test Block 3 tap. Then the main line.'

AMARA KOUYATE

ACU-Adjacent Independent Contact

CAN GET Medical supply pipeline, limited technical assistance for infrastructure repair, and a direct line to Dr. Amara Diallo at Sand Gate.

WANTS He wants to know if the ACU is going to activate -- he went independent, but he still has loyalties, and if the water system is failing he wants his former unit to know.

FEARS PCU intelligence identifying him as an ACU asset when he is no longer one -- the distinction matters to him but would not matter to a faith tribunal.

CURRENT PRESSURE He told Fatou Diarra last night what he heard at Sand Gate. He heard it from Dr. Diallo. The information was that B-7 has less time than the PCU's own estimate says. Dr. Diallo ran her own numbers.

CIVILIAN NEED

Pending-review residents need two things: to stay off the census sweep list long enough to advance their compliance status, and to maintain water access at survival-minimum allocation. Both are under pressure. The block leaders are coordinating. The PCU knows. Neither side has moved yet.

OPERATOR ACCESS

The mutual aid network's internal routing — basement corridors and rooftop crossings not on any official map (via Fatou Diarra, if operators earn her trust). Three weeks of anomalous clinical presentations already filed and forgotten by district administration (via Dr. Mensah, who needs someone external to care). A direct line to Dr. Amara Diallo at Sand Gate (via Kouyate). The most operational freedom in the city after dark: minimal informant density, no patrol presence, and a population with reasons to want outside assistance.

LOCATION REFERENCE

Quick index of all eighteen operational locations and primary control status as of Earth 2066.

CH	LOCATION	TYPE	CONTROL
01	NEO-TOKYO	City Hub	PRC TERRITORY
02	ARCADIA	City Hub	NAF TERRITORY
03	FLOODED LONDON	City Hub	NAF-ADJACENT / CONTESTED
04	ISTANBUL	City Hub	MULTI-FACTION CONTESTED
05	KALEMIE	City Hub	EO-ADJACENT / INDEPENDENT
06	AMAZONIAN METROPLEX	City Hub	SCA TERRITORY
07	NEW BATAVIA	City Hub	VW-ADJACENT / MARITIME HUB
08	NEW BUENOS AIRES	City Hub	NRD TERRITORY
09	NORDICS ARCOLOGY NETWORK	City Hub	PCU-ADMINISTERED
10	SAHARAN OASIS NETWORK	City Hub	PCU-ADMINISTERED
11	INDO-PAKISTANI FORBIDDEN ZONE	Territory	CONTESTED TERRITORY
12	THE SHATTER BELT	Territory	CONTESTED TERRITORY
13	EURASIAN STEPPES	Territory	EO / PRC CONTESTED
14	LAKEFIRE CORRIDOR	Territory	NAF-ADJACENT / CONTESTED

CH	LOCATION	TYPE	CONTROL
15	JAVA SCATTER	Territory	MULTI-FACTION / MARITIME
16	PATAGONIAN BASIN	Territory	NRD TERRITORY / INDEPENDENT ENCLAVES
17	ANTARCTIC PENINSULA OASIS	Territory	INTERNATIONAL / CONTESTED
18	THE HIGH GROUND	Territory	MULTI-FACTION ORBITAL

OPERATIONAL NOTES

Control Codes. Designations reflect the dominant power as of Earth 2066. "Contested" means two or more major factions have active operations without dominance. "Adjacent" means administrative or resource relationships without full control.

Stress Escalation. The stress condition in each location reflects the default operational state as of Earth 2066. When a location's stress escalates to critical, run its Destabilization Aftermath. Do not reset the location to baseline.

Inter-Location Connections. Factions operate across multiple locations simultaneously. The Null Collective, Shadowhand Syndicate, BAFO, and Free Zone Dispatch all have assets in two or more locations. Destabilizing a faction in one location registers in the next.

Travel Time. Between locations on the same landmass: 1 downtime action. Intercontinental or orbital: 2 downtime actions. The High Ground adds 1 additional action for launch window.

FACTION INDEX

Where each major faction operates in this book. Use this to run cross-location faction continuity.

MAJOR POWERS

NAF (North Atlantic Federation). Primary: Flooded London, Arcadia, Lakefire Corridor. Secondary: Istanbul, Eurasian Steppes.

SCA (Southern Continental Authority). Primary: Amazonian Metroplex, Patagonian Basin. Secondary: Saharan Oasis Network, Java Scatter.

EO (Eurasian Operations). Primary: Eurasian Steppes, Kalemie, Shatter Belt. Secondary: IPFZ, Istanbul.

PCU (Pacific Coalition Union). Primary: Saharan Oasis Network, Nordics Arcology Network. Secondary: New Batavia, Java Scatter.

PRC (Pacific Rim Coalition). Primary: Neo-Tokyo, Eurasian Steppes. Secondary: IPFZ, The High Ground.

VW (Vereinigte Welt). Primary: New Batavia. Secondary: New Buenos Aires, Nordics Arcology Network.

NRD (Nordic Regional Directorate). Primary: New Buenos Aires, Patagonian Basin. Secondary: Nordics Arcology Network, Antarctic Peninsula Oasis.

INDEPENDENT & NON-ALIGNED

Null Collective. Neo-Tokyo (Sub-2 interface station), IPFZ (Archive Ruins), Eurasian Steppes (substrate monitoring), The High Ground (orbital relay access). Objective: substrate interface and what it finds when it looks back.

Heralds of the Storm. IPFZ (dominant territorial control). The dispersal project timeline is converging with the chemical supply crisis. No confirmed cells outside the Zone. The dispersal project is designed to operate globally.

BAFO. Present across all locations as monitoring, intelligence archive, and occasional operational asset. Not a faction that takes sides. A faction that collects information and deploys it when the collection period is over.

Free Zone Dispatch. New Batavia (primary hub), Java Scatter, Istanbul, Kalemie. The independent logistics network that moves materials when no faction's infrastructure reaches.

Shadowhand Syndicate. Neo-Tokyo, Istanbul, Shatter Belt. The extraction-focused criminal network that sells to the highest bidder, which changes by quarter.

ROLL TABLES

Quick reference tables for running any location in this book.

D12: WHAT DID THE OPERATOR WALK INTO?

D12	RESULT
1	A faction hand-off. Two contacts meeting in the operator's way.
2	A surveillance sweep. Automated or human. Either way, the timing is bad.
3	A civilian emergency that will attract authority attention within minutes.
4	A faction asset moving something not supposed to move through this district.
5	A known contact, off-schedule and acting wrong.
6	A checkpoint that wasn't there yesterday.
7	Infrastructure failure in progress. Someone will blame the operators.
8	A competitor operator team from an unknown faction, same objective.
9	Evidence that the mission brief was wrong about something specific.
10	A civilian who knows exactly who the operators are and wants something for staying quiet.
11	Two faction assets in a dispute that will escalate in thirty seconds without intervention.
12	The location the operators needed is gone. Someone got there first.

D10: CONTACT RELIABILITY

D10	RESULT
1	Burned. Contact has been compromised. They know it. They haven't told the operators.
2	Spooked. Contact delivers but demands double the agreed price for reasons they won't explain.
3	Late. Contact arrives on schedule but the information is 48 hours old.
4	Partial. Contact delivers half the agreed intelligence. The other half is being sold separately.
5	Accurate. Clean delivery. No complications.
6	Accurate. Clean delivery. Contact has a favor owed and this is when they collect it.
7	More than asked. Contact delivers the requested intelligence plus something unasked for. The extra is the more important piece.
8	Early. Contact reaches out before the meet. The information requires immediate action or it expires.
9	Authenticated. Verified from two independent sources. Correct. The implications are worse than expected.
10	The contact is not who they said they were. The intelligence is still accurate. Their actual faction alignment changes everything.

D8: POST-MISSION COMPLICATION

D8	RESULT
1	The target was moved before the mission started. Someone tipped the location.
2	A faction not in the briefing has now identified the operator team.
3	The objective was completed successfully. The objective was the wrong one.
4	Extraction was clean. The exfil route is now under surveillance by an unidentified party.
5	A civilian witnessed something. They haven't reported it yet.
6	The patron's debrief reveals the mission was cover for a secondary operation the operators weren't told about.
7	Physical evidence left at the site will be found within 72 hours.
8	Success. One faction's position improved. Another faction noticed and knows who did it.

D6: R&R GONE WRONG

D6	RESULT
1	Contact made: a useful introduction to someone the operators will regret knowing.
2	Feud started: something said or overheard that will surface at the worst time.
3	Equipment lost: a secondary item that holds more information than intended.
4	Secret learned: actionable intelligence that comes with an implied obligation.
5	Debt incurred: a favor owed to someone whose definition of favors is expansive.
6	Locally recognizable: the operators are known in this location now. One faction sees an asset. Another sees a problem.

COLOPHON

Operator Tactics: Cities & Territories. Edition 1. Designed by Jesse Alexander. Published 2026.

Set in IBM Plex Sans (body), Archivo Narrow (display), IBM Plex Mono (codes), Newsreader (italic). All Open Font License. Printed on uncoated stock at A5 trim.

Voice and structure follow the Shadowdark discipline: declarative, no hedging, action verbs, second-person address. Flavor lives inside mechanics, not beside them.

The Splice Punk x TDR aesthetic governs every visual decision. The surface game is territory. The deep game is what the territory was built on top of.

Compatible with the Operator Tactics core rulebook and the Terra Conflictus 2066 Setting Guide.

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01 BRIEF PG 1

TEN CITIES. EVERY FACTION HAS AN OPERATION RUNNING. YOU ARRIVE IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.

Hubs & Cities is the first volume of the Cities & Territories companion to the Operator Tactics core rulebook. Ten locations: the cities, arcology networks, and maritime centers where operators take contracts, recover, and run intelligence.

Each hub is built to full GM-table density: districts with day/night splits and under-systems, faction profiles with escalation ladders, wildcard contacts, rumor tables, downtime options, mission seeds, and destabilization aftermath.

Every faction is already running its operation. The operators arrive in the middle of it.

10	3-5	100+	D12/D10
CITY HUBS	FACTIONS EACH	MISSION SEEDS	ROLL TABLES

REQUIRES THE OPERATOR TACTICS CORE RULEBOOK. VOL. II: TERRITORIES & THEATERS COVERS THE REMAINING 8 LOCATIONS.