


// FIELD MANUAL |

TERRA CONFLICTUS SETTING GUIDE

| CLR: WORLD-LEVEL 

SETTING GUIDE

GM + PLAYERS

FULL CANON

225 PAGES

VOL. II

SUPPLEMENT

— OPERATOR TACTICS CORE BOOK

TERRA CONFLICTUS 2066

EARTH

AFTER THE UPHEAVAL

THE WORLD DIDN'T END. **IT STOPPED PRETENDING.**

SEVEN POWERS. SIXTEEN THEATERS. THE DEEP GAME.

// THE UPHEAVAL // GENE-FORGED // LUMICITE-REACTIVE // SEVEN POWERS

NOT FACTION

FREELANCE / SPLICE



PT. I

THE WORLD

Upheaval. Surface game. Deep game.

PT. II

FACTIONS

Seven powers. Non-aligned. Opposition.

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Sixteen environments. Micro-worlds.

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Four eras. 2060 to 2104.

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WHAT PLAYS

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TERRA CONFLICTUS

2066 · SETTING GUIDE

An Operator Tactics Supplement by Jesse Alexander

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EARTH 2066

The coastline moved. Not all at once: over thirty years of surges, swells, and decisions about which neighborhoods were worth saving. What's left is a world that rebuilt inland or rebuilt vertical, and learned the difference between the two. Twelve million people in Lost Angeles. Eight million in a reconfigured Hong Kong. Six million in Gorodskie Ekho, half of it underwater and half of it pretending it's not. The maps that existed before 2031 are navigation hazards now. You use the new ones, or you learn firsthand what the old ones got wrong.

The factions didn't create the crisis. They organized it. When the cascade failures of 2031 through 2042 finished collapsing what remained of international governance, five power blocs stepped into the vacuum with doctrine, gene-forged soldiers, and supply chains calibrated for exactly this world. The North American Federation controls the Western Hemisphere. The Eastern Offensive holds the Eurasian steppe and the resource corridors east of the Urals. The Pacific Rim Collective runs the Indo-Pacific trade lanes. The PCU claims the Levant, East Africa, and the Saharan margins. The South Compact Alliance holds everything below the Tropic of Capricorn plus the Amazonian Metroplex. The lines between them are the most dangerous places on Earth. That's where operators work.

The gene-forged are not new. State programs have run for sixty years. Wolf-lineage soldiers who think in pack formation without training for it. Raven-lineage operators whose sensory augmentation runs around the clock and can't be dialed back. Bear-stock formations that absorb damage the way other soldiers absorb information: efficiently, without flinching. The programs produced results. The results walked away when their governments fell, or sold their contracts to whoever was paying, or found their way into a splice and kept working on terms they chose for themselves. There are more of them every year. The programs don't stop.

The surface game is water, territory, and N-REEs. Every major faction fights over the same four resources: freshwater, food logistics, energy production, and the rare earths that all of it runs on. Briefings frame this in faction-specific language: sovereignty claims, strategic infrastructure, population security. Under the language, it is the same fight it has always been. Who controls the resource controls who survives. The operators in the middle work for whoever is paying this month, and the people at the bottom live with whatever the outcomes produce.

The deep game is older and quieter. The Architects built something during the Upheaval that no faction has fully decoded. Lumicite, the glow-mineral found at installation sites across six continents, powers three major faction economies and sits at the center of the most concentrated conflict on Earth. What it actually is, and what the installations were actually built to do, is a different question. The factions think they know the answer. They are wrong. The correction will not come from a briefing room.

FIELD NOTE. Cayo Nkrumah, *Territories and Contested Zones*, 2061

"The water tower in Salter's Landing is a pre-war industrial tank, repainted by someone who knew what they were doing. Below it, a commissary with a generator that runs on two things: algae biofuel from the delta, and the specific stubbornness of the woman who keeps it running. She said she has no interest in faction politics. She said this in a town that gets faction aerial recon four times a week. She was not contradicting herself."

This is not a world at war. It is a world where war never fully stopped.

01/

THE UPHEAVAL

History doesn't repeat. It consolidates.

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History doesn't repeat. It consolidates.

WHAT CHANGED

The world did not end in a single event. It degraded through a sequence of compounding failures across three decades, and then stabilized around what survived.

The oceans rose 1.4 meters by 2035 and another 0.8 meters by 2055. The surge events did the real damage: not the baseline rise but the category-six storms that ran further inland than the models predicted, four, five, six times in a decade, grinding coastal infrastructure into something no longer worth insuring. Miami is a reef system. Most of Bangladesh is underwater during monsoon season and contested mud the rest of the year. Shanghai rebuilt behind a seawall that cost four times the original projection and holds, for now. Dhaka relocated. Port cities that could relocate did. The ones that couldn't built vertical or got buried.

The coastal retreat created a water class system that runs every economy on Earth. Tier One water is filtered, verified, and subscription-delivered. It is the baseline in NAF arcology districts, PCU administrative centers, and the Nordics' integrated civic infrastructure. Tier Two water is treated and municipally distributed, reliable in most major faction-controlled cities but subject to outages. Tier Three water is locally sourced, tested by whoever has the test kit, and not tested when there is no kit. Tier Four water is whatever is available. The distinction between Tier Three and Tier Four is the most important survival variable in the contested zone and the production plan and briefing rooms rarely discuss it.

The deserts expanded. The Sahara advanced south into sub-Saharan agricultural zones before the greening programs began to reverse the margin. The Gobi pushed into what had been Chinese breadbasket territory. The Middle East's arable land contracted by thirty percent and is now managed by a PCU water authority that sets production quotas by administrative region. Meanwhile: the Siberian taiga moved north, opening three hundred thousand square kilometers of formerly permafrost-locked land to agriculture and mineral extraction. The Canadian boreal zone bloomed. Patagonia went wet. The planet did not uniformly get worse. It got worse in the places where the most people lived, and better in places where nobody had built the infrastructure to use it yet.

The food gradient runs faction-to-faction, city-to-city, district-to-district. At the top: lab-grown protein at NAF tier pricing, vertical farm arrays in controlled-climate buildings, gene-modified staple crops at high yield and consistent quality. At the bottom: factory-ration blocks with a two-year shelf life and a flavor that every soldier in every faction calls by a different name, all of them accurate. In between: a gray market in agricultural IP, stolen seed cultures, illicit desal membranes, and the specific expertise of the people who know how to make food grow where the briefing says nothing will.

The energy picture is equally stratified. Lumaticite fusion cells run NAF and SCA industrial infrastructure. EO holds the largest natural gas reserves in Eurasia and burns them on a timeline every climate model says ends before 2085. The PCU's concentrated solar arrays are the most efficient on the planet and supply a large percentage of the Arabian Peninsula. The Nordics run on geothermal and cold fusion. Everyone else runs on what they can source, in the order they can source it, at prices that fluctuate with faction politics and nothing else.

The people who built this world are still inside it. That's what the briefings leave out.

THE CASCADE

The Upheaval broke the climate. The Cascade broke the governments.

The Cascade is the compound governance failure of 2031 through 2042: not one event, but a sequence that turned the Upheaval's physical disruption into a political one. Coastal relocation strained national budgets past their capacity. Refugee flows between borders turned into political crises that existing governance structures were designed to manage and couldn't. The insurance industry collapsed in 2033, removing the private-sector backstop that had been absorbing sovereign risk for a century. Agricultural failures hit in 2035 and 2036 simultaneously across five continents. The combined pressure was not survivable for mid-tier nation-states already running at deficit.

Forty-one governments collapsed between 2031 and 2042. Not overthrown: dissolved, fragmented, or simply stopped functioning. The larger powers absorbed the collapse of their neighbors in the initial years, then began fracturing along internal lines as the resource pressure hit. China's federal structure restructured around regional blocs. The United States absorbed the collapse of its border states and reorganized into the NAF framework. Russia's governance migrated east and consolidated under the Eastern Offensive structure over fifteen years.

What replaced the collapsed states was factional security. NAF Compliance units policed NAF territory. EO Social Enforcement teams operated in EO zones. The PCU deployed Honor Guards. The SCA organized Cartel Enforcers in the Amazon corridor. Each faction policed what it controlled and left contested zones to contest themselves.

The Cascade is the specific event that made the operator economy possible. Freelance contract work existed before 2031. After the Cascade it became an industry, because the world contained more contested territory than any surviving faction structure could administer, and contested territory needs work done in it by people who won't be wearing a flag when they do it.

THE FRACTURES TIMELINE

YEAR	EVENT	CONSEQUENCE
2026	Category 7 storm designation established	Miami CBD evacuation begins. First permanent storm-barrier walls in the Gulf of Mexico.
2027	South Asian monsoon failure	180 million people facing acute food shortage. PCU and NAF both deploy aid operations. First major Lumicite installation discovered in Antarctic data core.
2028	Document Wars begin	Targeted destruction of pre-Upheaval knowledge archives begins in six cities simultaneously. The coordination is not publicly established for nine years.
2029	ECHO program formally dissolved	Three decades of substrate research records classified and redistributed to successor agencies. Lumenfeld's archive partially survives.
2030	Southeast Asian Coastal Accords fail	Regional agreement on managed retreat collapses after second failed harvest. Vietnam and Bangladesh withdraw. Population movement begins without framework.
2031	Cascade begins: Insurance industry collapse	Lloyd's withdrawal from coastal coverage triggers private-sector risk vacuum. National emergency funds begin depleting.
2032	Bangladesh government dissolved	Parliament votes itself into provisional administration under UNSO humanitarian framework. First nation-state formally managed by international entity.
2033	North African drought enters fifth year	Sub-Saharan agricultural zone losses at 35%. PCU begins Saharan arable land reclamation project.
2034	Eastern European Federation fractures	Four members withdraw from federation in six months. E0 consolidation begins under strategic defense framework.

YEAR	EVENT	CONSEQUENCE
2035	Global grain harvest failure	Three major breadbasket regions miss yields simultaneously. Food rationing imposed in forty-three countries. Black market agricultural IP trading volume triples.
2036	Shanghai Seawall Accord	First faction-scale managed coastal infrastructure project. NAF, PRC, and four independent states pool resources. Establishes the faction-infrastructure model that follows.
2037	Liminal Concord published (declassified partial)	ECHO-derived research made publicly available in redacted form. Substrate signal documented in seventeen locations. Significance not understood by most readers.
2038	SCA founding documents signed	South Compact Alliance formally organized. Amazonian Metroplex designated strategic industrial zone. Gene-forging programs begin under SCA charter.
2039	NAF Western Corridor Resettlement Program	Six million people moved from inundated coastal zones to inland arcology developments. Two programs fail. Four succeed. The two failures become the outer districts that later host Raid Race.
2040	Pacific Rim Collective established	Nine-nation trade and security compact established by four independent Pacific Asian powers.
2041	Los Angeles Seismic Event (8.4)	The eastern San Fernando Valley and portions of the city east of the arcology line are flattened. NAF rebuilds the core. The outer districts rebuild themselves.
2042	Cascade ends: Global Stability Accords	Faction structure formally recognized by surviving international framework. Forty-one former nation-states distributed across faction governance. The Accords establish the operational rules that define contested zones.

YEAR	EVENT	CONSEQUENCE
2044	Operation Dawn-light	The Antarctic data core is opened. Coordinates point to other coordinates. The Lumicite installation network is discovered simultaneously by three separate NAF research teams.
2045	First gene-forged operator fielded	E0 deploys the first operationally certified bear-lineage soldier in a contested-zone engagement. All other factions are at minimum eighteen months behind and catch up in twenty-four.
2046	First Crackerjack Competition	GSOTC opens as part of the post-Cascade Accords stabilization framework. The Crackerjack establishes the rules that make it the only public venue where all faction operators share the same ground.
2047	Promethean Surge	NAF ecological reconstruction project begins along the Gulf Shore. First of the Post-Prometheus settlements built. Salter's Landing founded.
2050	Lumicite Industrial Framework	NAF and SCA reach bilateral agreement on Lumicite refinement standards. E0 and PCU reject the framework. Lumicite becomes the new oil.
2051	Dynamic Siege at GSOTC	Famous Operations case study. The only engagement in the Crackerjack's history where a competing team attempted to take an opposing team's entire roster as hostages during a live event. The footage has four billion viewers by the time the incident resolves.
2052	Void Walkers first documented	Three separate incident reports reference the same operational signature in different theaters. The faction cross-reference takes two years. By the time it's published, the Void Walkers have been operational for at least five.

YEAR	EVENT	CONSEQUENCE
2055	Second coastal rise event	The remaining 0.8 meter rise triggers a second wave of managed retreat. The seawall infrastructure built between 2036 and 2045 holds. Infrastructure built before 2036 does not.
2058	BAFO established	Bureau of Architectural Field Operations founded as successor to ECHO's observational mandate. Formal mission: document Architect-era installations. Actual mission: inherited without full context.
2058	The Pale Roster Incident	A NAF gene-forged unit, Dire Wolf stock, is officially decommissioned following an incident the NAF will not characterize. The operators are not decommissioned.
2059	UNSO Traveler launch anniversary	The generation ship, launched in 2024, completes its programmed return approach. Orbital insertion is confirmed. Every faction makes contact within 48 hours.
2060	Core Era begins	The world as it stands at the start of play.

WHAT CAME AFTER: 2063-2104

YEAR	EVENT	CONSEQUENCE
2063	The Reveal at Metropoli Perdida	A multilateral research team documents evidence of seven separate civilizations drawn to the installation site over two thousand years. The data is classified by the faction representatives on the team within the same week.
2071	The Relay Incident	Waterloo Relay station goes dark for 72 hours. When communications are restored, six operators are unaccounted for and the station's substrate monitoring equipment has been removed. No faction claims responsibility.
2078	EO Autonomous Surge	Eastern Offensive deploys autonomous platform forces at scale for the first time in a contested zone operation. The event is the working model for Iron Line doctrine across all factions within three years.
2084	Southern Compact Resource Crisis	Internal documents leaked to Null Chorus suggest the Antarctic Lumicite reserve estimate of forty years was optimistic by a factor of two.
2098	Lumenfeld Archive Recovered	A fragment of Elias Lumenfeld's 1961 classified memo surfaces in an East African data market. Null Chorus authenticates it. Consortium Halcyon makes three acquisition attempts in thirty days.
2104	Post-LIC Era	The Late Instability Crisis reshapes the southern theater. What comes after is the subject of the full timeline expansion.

THE DOCUMENT WARS

The Document Wars are not a war. They are a coordinated destruction campaign that ran from 2028 through 2041, executed against specific categories of pre-Upheaval knowledge at specific archive locations across fourteen cities.

The targets were not random. Physical records: university library stacks, institutional paper archives, backup data storage in buildings below flood risk. Digital records: the targeted degradation of specific server farms through a combination of physical attack, cyberwarfare intrusion, and the deliberate introduction of corrupted archive files that propagated through connected backup systems. The pattern of targeting was not apparent for nine years because no single analyst had visibility across all fourteen cities simultaneously.

What was destroyed falls into four categories. First: pre-Upheaval climate modeling data. The originals. Not published papers but raw datasets and the computational frameworks built to analyze them. Second: early gene-forging research records, specifically the paleogenetic studies that preceded the formal state programs. Third: classified government records related to energy research conducted between 1945 and 1985. Fourth: pre-digital institutional records from a specific list of research universities, national labs, and what the Lumenfeld Bible identifies as ECHO program field sites.

The fourth category is the one that matters.

The official record of the Document Wars frames the destruction as opportunistic: wartime damage, ideologically motivated archive attacks, the simple failure of institutions to protect records during a period of governance collapse. This framing is partially true and mostly useful to whoever benefits from it.

What is now established: the targeting of the fourth category required a coordinating intelligence that had cross-referenced ECHO field site locations with civilian institutional archives without drawing on any source that was itself later destroyed. Someone knew where the relevant records were and moved on them before the Cascade generated enough cover to make the destruction invisible.

Consortium Halcyon's relationship to the Document Wars is the campaign thread. Their official position is that they are a data preservation company that survived the Document Wars by moving physical archives to secure facilities before the targeting reached them. This is accurate. It is not complete. Finding Halcyon's fingerprints on the targeting lists, not just the preservation lists, is the discovery that turns the surface game into the deep game for any splice willing to do the work.

The knowledge that survived the Document Wars is not complete knowledge. It is the knowledge that Halcyon decided would survive, plus the knowledge that survived by accident in locations Halcyon didn't know about, plus the fragments that Null Chorus has been recovering for fifteen years from degraded archive sources that Halcyon believed were fully destroyed. The BAFO archive is the best surviving record of the fourth category. Nobody in BAFO knows why their institutional mandate specifically includes the preservation of ECHO observational records. The lineage was deliberately obscured.

GM NOTE: The Document Wars factual summary ends here. The knowledge that the Document Wars were organized and that Consortium Halcyon was involved in the organizing is a campaign-level discovery. It does not appear in this chapter's player-facing text. Present the Document Wars as a historical event. Save the conspiracy for What Plays Here.

THE PANDEMIC TIMELINE

ERA	PERIOD	AGENT	CONSEQUENCE
The Fever	2024-2028	Zoonotic hemorrhagic virus, three successive variants	48 million dead. Accelerated the governance stress that preceded the Cascade. The emergency response frameworks established during this period were the institutional ancestors of the faction health authorities.
Cascade Pathogens	2031-2038	Seven separate outbreaks, varying origin	Collapse of international health coordination produced a three-year period where containment was a faction-by-faction problem. Five of the seven outbreaks were contained. Two were not. The two that weren't are still circulating in endemic form in contested zone populations.
The Permafrost Release	2045-2049	Ancient pathogen complex, thawing Arctic substrate	Three novel bacterial strains. All treatable with existing NAF pharmaceutical infrastructure. Not treatable with what the contested zones had access to. Mortality in outer districts at 8x the arcology rate.
The Splice Disease	2059-ongoing	Unknown etiology, affects gene-forged exclusively	Documented in bear-lineage operators first. Characterized by accelerated drift: augmented template behavior deviating from program specifications at a rate beyond known biological drift curves. BAFO monitoring it. No faction program has published a treatment.

ERA	PERIOD	AGENT	CONSEQUENCE
The Endemic	2038-ongoing	Legacy pathogens from Cascade period	Background disease load in contested zones that the outer districts have adapted to and the arcology districts have not. Operators moving between environments carry adaptation profiles that matter to field medics.

GM TIP: Disease is a mission generator. A contested zone with an active endemic creates demand for medical supply runs, for pharmaceutical IP extraction, for the specific kind of covert operation that is justified by "we need to know what's in that lab." The Splice Disease is the one that carries campaign weight: it is not in the briefings, and the GMs who use it as a slow-burn complication for gene-forged player operators will find it has more threads attached than it first appears.

EARTH 2066: THE BALANCE SHEET

Where the world stands at the start of play.

What exists: Five faction power blocs with defined territory, gene-forged military programs, autonomous warfare doctrine at scale, and supply chains that have been running for thirty years. A stable international framework in the Accords that all five factions have agreed to violate selectively. An operator economy that is now the largest unaffiliated labor market on Earth.

What is contested: The margins between faction zones, which is most of the planet's operational surface. Forty-one former nation-states' worth of territory that is technically distributed across faction governance and functionally governed by whoever controls the ground this week. The Lumericite installation network, which is the most important strategic asset in the world and is also not fully understood by anyone who controls it.

What nobody agrees on: The deep game. The surface game has rules because all five factions agreed to the Accords and all five factions cheat within them. The deep game has no rules because no faction has admitted publicly that it is a game they are playing.

The surface game: water, territory, N-REEs. The daily operational reality for every operator, every splice, every contact in every city in every theater.

The deep game: Lumericite, Architect-era technology, the installation network, pre-Upheaval knowledge that the Document Wars didn't reach or Null Chorus recovered. The question under the question. The thing that explains why a standard resource-extraction mission sometimes ends in a firefight that none of the faction briefings predicted.

Both games happen at the same table. Sometimes in the same firefight. The operators in the middle don't always know which game they are playing until the extraction is already complicated.

02/

THE SURFACE GAME

Every faction fight is, at its base, a fight over water.

THE SURFACE GAME

Every faction fight is, at its base, a fight over water.

WATER, ENERGY, FOOD

Three resources. Every conflict in the Core Era reduces to one of them.

Tier One Water is filtered, verified, and subscription-delivered. NAF arcology districts, PCU administrative centers, the Nordics' integrated civic infrastructure. The water arrives in sealed packages with authentication stamps from the relevant faction water authority. Contamination is a reportable event. Outages trigger automatic compensation. The people who drink Tier One water do not think about water.

Tier Two Water is treated and municipally distributed. Major faction-controlled cities outside the arcology cores. Reliable most days. Subject to pressure loss during grid maintenance, seasonal shortage during population influx, and outright failure during the kind of infrastructure attack that doesn't officially count as an attack. Operators who have worked in faction-administered cities know the particular smell of a Tier Two system that is running at capacity.

Tier Three Water is locally sourced and tested by whoever has a test kit. The outer districts of Lost Angeles. The contested corridor settlements between Kavast and EO territory. Any population center that isn't important enough to merit faction water infrastructure. It is functional. It is not safe in the sense that Tier One and Two are safe. The people who drink Tier Three water have made their peace with the calculation.

Tier Four Water is whatever is available. Contested zones during active conflict. The deep interior of former agricultural zones that the desal networks don't reach. Anywhere the infrastructure either never arrived or was destroyed and hasn't been rebuilt. The calculation people make at Tier Four is different from the one they make at Tier Three.

The distinction between Tier Three and Tier Four is the most important survival variable in the contested zone. Briefings don't discuss it. Locals know before you ask.

Energy follows the same stratification at higher stakes. Lumicite fusion cells power NAF and SCA industrial infrastructure: clean, dense, expensive in the sense that you need Lumicite to run them and Lumicite is the most contested mineral on Earth. EO burns natural gas, holds the largest Eurasian reserves, and is on a timeline that every climate projection says ends before 2085. The PCU's concentrated solar arrays are the most efficient on the planet. The Nordics run on geothermal and cold fusion, and have been quietly approached by every faction about their cold fusion methodology, and have politely declined every approach. Everyone else runs on what they can source, in the order they can source it.

The food gradient by faction:

FACTION	PRIMARY SOURCE	SECONDARY	CONTESTED ZONE ACCESS
NAF	Lab protein, vertical farm arrays, modified staple crops	Gulf Shore reconstruction agriculture	Ration blocks. DEPOT RATION brand. Edible by medical definition.
SCA	Amazonian Metroplex bio-agriculture, gene-modified cassava	Patagonian cereal production	Jungle supplement rations. Wild harvest for those who know how.
EO	Siberian expansion agriculture, modified grain programs	Black Sea agricultural corridor	Steppe ration packs. High protein. Low variety.
PCU	Concentrated solar-grown produce, Red Sea aquaculture	PCU admin district fresh market	Desert preservation rations. Date-based.
PRC	Indo-Pacific aquaculture, high-yield vertical production	Historic agricultural zones (recovery)	Compressed grain rations. Seaweed supplement.
Contested	Whatever the local economy produces or what can be sourced through the gray market	Smuggled faction rations, illicit agricultural cultures	Variable. Highly variable.

"The good things and the bad things in this world are built from the same materials."

TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Pre-Upheaval technology is identifiable by weight, finish, and silence. Equipment built before 2031 was designed for permanence in a world that expected infrastructure to last. It is heavy. It is over-engineered. It does not announce itself with status displays or modular diagnostics. If you pick up a pre-Upheaval piece of equipment and it feels like it could survive being used as a weapon, it probably was designed by someone who expected it to be dropped down a maintenance shaft at some point in its life. The seams are smooth. The materials do not flex. If it has a power indicator, it is probably a single LED and it is probably still working.

Post-Upheaval technology is designed for a world that knows infrastructure fails. It announces its status because you need to know when it is about to stop working. It is modular because replacement parts must be locally sourceable. It is lighter because transport costs more. It is quieter about its origin because IP theft is an industry and marking your manufacturing location on the chassis is an invitation.

The AWH tower is the infrastructure node that holds everything else together. Atmospheric Water Harvesting towers pull moisture from air at rates that scale with humidity and power input. At full efficiency in an NAF coastal arcology district, an AWH tower network provides seventy percent of a settlement's fresh-water needs. At reduced efficiency in a Saharan contested zone, it provides the difference between a functional outpost and an abandoned one. Every major installation, every semi-permanent settlement, and every faction FOB has at minimum one AWH unit. The condition of the tower tells you the condition of the settlement.

AIR processors manage the climate envelope inside climate-controlled facilities. In an NAF arcology they are invisible infrastructure. In a contested zone clinic they are the machine that makes the difference between a surgery that can be performed and one that cannot. When AIR processors fail, infection rates go up. When they are destroyed deliberately, the act is classified under faction law as infrastructure warfare.

CROM (Climate Resource Operations Management) systems are the network layer connecting AWH, AIR, energy, and water infrastructure into a managed whole. Faction territory runs CROM. Contested zones run fragments of CROM, legacy systems, proprietary alternatives, or nothing. CROM failure is a mission generator: a contested zone settlement whose CROM is down needs the kind of technical access that can only be provided by someone willing to work in conditions the mission brief did not describe.

Energy Source Table:

SOURCE	WHO USES IT	NOTES
Lumicite Fusion	NAF, SCA	Clean, dense, requires Lumicite feed. The energy source everyone wants to copy.
Natural Gas	EO	Largest proven reserves in Eurasia. Burning on a timeline ending before 2085.
Concentrated Solar	PCU, Nordics	High efficiency in appropriate geography. Useless in northern latitudes without orbital mirror arrays.
Geothermal	Nordics, Iceland compact	The single most stable energy source in the setting. Not exportable without the geography.
Cold Fusion	Nordics (restricted), UNSO Traveler	The Traveler reactor is the most significant cold fusion design not controlled by a faction. Every faction knows this.
Biofuel	SCA, contested zones, outer districts	Algae-based in the delta settlements. Biodiesel in the agricultural zones. Variable quality.
Legacy Grid	Former nation-state infrastructure	Mixed sources. Unreliable. The systems that haven't been replaced because replacement is expensive and the territory isn't strategically important enough.

THE MACHINE WAR

Gene-forged operators are scalpels. Autonomous platforms are hammers.

By the Core Era, every major faction fields autonomous combat systems at scale. The doctrine converged independently across all five factions during the 2040s as Lumicite energy density made sustained autonomous operation economically viable. The result is a standardized operational pattern that shapes every contested zone engagement: the machines go first.

Phase One is autonomous. Drones secure the perimeter. Armored platforms absorb the first volley and locate enemy positions. Autonomous fire systems establish suppression. The machines do not get tired. They do not flinch when two of their own are destroyed. They do not require extraction. Phase One ends when the engagement picture is clear enough for operators to move into.

Phase Two is the operators. They execute what the machines established. They make the decisions that require judgment. They handle the situations the autonomous platforms' targeting parameters were not written to resolve: the civilian presence in the building the platform has flagged as a fire position; the gene-forged NPC in the objective whose behavior the tactical AI categorized as hostile but whose body language says otherwise; the wounded enemy who is also the intelligence the whole operation was designed to retrieve.

Faction Doctrine Table:

FAC-TION	AUTONOMOUS DOCTRINE	NOTES
NAF	Adaptive drone networks. Smart targeting two generations ahead of any other faction. The NAF autonomous system can distinguish between generated types at 200 meters and adjust engagement parameters in 0.3 seconds.	The NAF considers its targeting AI the most valuable export it isn't selling.
EO	Armored steppe platforms with minimal human oversight. Built for long-duration operation in low-resupply environments. When the signal cuts out, they continue executing the last valid order.	"The firmware has opinions." E0 platform doctrine accepts a specific category of friendly-fire incident as within operational parameters.
PRC	Cybernetic combat systems that blur the line between machine and operator. Integrated human-machine teams where the human component directs and the machine component executes at machine speed.	The operator is not replaced. The operator is accelerated. PRC doctrine considers this fundamentally different from pure autonomous operation. Their opponents consider the distinction academic.
PCU	Directed-energy platforms hardened for desert warfare. Laser and microwave systems for range work, kinetic platforms for close engagement. Extremely effective in open terrain. Less effective in the urban density of contested zone city operations.	PCU autonomous platforms are the best in open country and the worst in the Soak.

FAC-TION	AUTONOMOUS DOCTRINE	NOTES
SCA	Bio-mechanical constructs grown in the roots of the Amazonian Metroplex. Organic components that heal, adapt, and do not require a manufacturing facility: just the right biological environment. They smell like the Metroplex and cannot be fully removed from it without eventual system degradation.	The Metroplex is the factory. The factory is a living system.

Monitor Central is the civilian parallel to faction military autonomous doctrine. In Lost Angeles, the NAF's AI-managed security network controls drone patrols, autonomous response vehicles, and surveillance grids across the arcology core and the inner districts. Domestic policy prohibits lethal force against civilians: all ranged weapons are nonlethal (gel-bullet kinetics, foam-casters, EMP generators). The melee capabilities of Monitor Central's multi-limbed response drones are not classified as lethal in the relevant policy framework. This distinction matters to the people on the receiving end.

Any individual captured by Monitor Central is processed into the NAF private detention system. Location and fate after intake: unknown. The system is not secret. The documentation is public. The outcomes are not publicly tracked.

The firmware problem is the one that haunts tactical analysts. An autonomous platform operating under signal blackout continues executing the last valid order it received. The last valid order may be six hours old. It may have been written for a tactical situation that no longer exists. The platform does not know this. The platform knows its order queue and its sensor data, and it reconciles the two as best its targeting AI can manage.

When the signal cuts out, some of them keep fighting anyway. The platform has objectives. The objectives do not expire.

THE BLACK MARKET

The shadow economy is not underground. It is the economy that fills the space between what faction supply chains provide and what people actually need.

Water cartridge refills are the highest-volume illegal product in every contested zone settlement. Faction water authentication stamps are replicated, expired, and recirculated. The refill quality ranges from acceptable to dangerous. Operators working in the outer districts develop preferences for specific cartridge sources based on the specific way their stomach reacts to each one.

Hacked cooling systems are the survival technology in PCU and NAF territory during summer operations. The managed climate systems in arcology districts are subscription-locked to faction providers. The outer districts run modified systems that draw from the grid without authentication. The hacking is not sophisticated. The demand is absolute.

Counterfeit pharmaceuticals fill the gap between what the faction health systems provide and what the population outside those systems needs. The quality spectrum is wide. Independent verification is the operator skill that nobody lists on their contract file and everybody uses.

Stolen agricultural IP is the highest-value category of black market goods that doesn't require a weapons system to transport. The cassava algorithm: a gene-modification stack that triples yield in low-water conditions, proprietary to an SCA agricultural cooperative, worth more per gram in information density than Lumicite. The desal membrane specification that makes a portable unit run at 40% greater efficiency than the current market standard. The algae growth protocol that the NAF Promethean project locked under thirty years of protection. The permafrost pathogen map that BAFO assembled and won't share because sharing it would require explaining why they have it.

Biological IP is the most valuable intellectual property in the Core Era. It does not require a factory to copy. It requires a sequencer and the right expertise. The right expertise exists in every faction's black market and in the outer districts of every major city.

Eight Unintended Consequences of the black market economy, for GM use:

1. The hacked cooling system network in Gorodskie Ekho's Soak draws from a grid segment that also powers the flood barriers. The barriers run at 94% capacity. Nobody has told the settlement this.
 2. The counterfeit pharmaceutical supply chain for a specific antibiotic passes through a PCU-adjacent distribution point. The PCU monitors the supply chain. They do not interrupt it because interrupting it would require explaining why they're monitoring it.
 3. A gene-modified strain of fungal protein developed from stolen SCA IP is now the primary food source for six settlements in the Tian Shan contested corridor. The SCA knows. They have not sent enforcement. The settlements do not know why.
 4. The Lumicite gray market operates through a brokerage network that the Syndicate officially does not control and tactically does. The brokerage fee is 22%. The 22% represents the Syndicate's position in the deep game.
 5. Three separate factions have placed sleeper agents in Lost Angeles' outer district water cartridge refill network. They are not watching each other. They are watching what flows through the network in both directions.
 6. The most sophisticated hacking tools in the black market were all developed by the same three people operating under seven different personas. Those three people have been in a small disagreement for four years that is about to become something else.
 7. Counterfeit NAF medical clearance stamps have a verification flaw that NAF Compliance knows about and has not patched because patching it would require updating four hundred thousand scanners simultaneously.
 8. The permafrost pathogen that hit the outer districts in 2047 is in endemic circulation. The faction medical systems have a treatment. The treatment has not been released because releasing it requires acknowledging the pathogen's presence in populations the faction health authorities officially report as below epidemic threshold.
-

THE CRIME ECONOMY

The Cascade ended nation-state law enforcement. What replaced it is factional.

NAF Compliance operates in NAF territory with the full weight of the North American Federation's legal framework behind it. Compliance officers are civil authority. They have arrest powers, detention authority, and the backing of Monitor Central's surveillance network in major cities. In contested zones adjacent to NAF territory, their jurisdiction extends as far as their discretion and their backup.

EO Social Enforcement operates differently: it is a social-credit-enforcement system first and a crime-response system second. Social credit determines which tier of water, food, and climate management an EO citizen accesses. Social Enforcement teams manage the credit system, which means they manage everything. An individual with a low social credit score in an EO-administered city is not arrested for ordinary poverty: they simply find their resource access reduced until they comply with whatever the score drop was tied to.

PCU Honor Guards are military police operating under military law in PCU territory. The concept of civilian crime is not legally distinct from military infraction in the PCU administrative framework. Honor Guards are efficient, protocol-bound, and have access to gene-forged tracker units in high-priority cases.

SCA Cartel Enforcers are the most openly commercial law enforcement system in the faction. They enforce SCA laws. They also enforce the unwritten agreements between SCA's affiliated crime organizations and the faction power structure, and they charge for the distinction. Knowing which Cartel Enforcers to bribe is a specific kind of local knowledge.

The Contested Zone has no law. It has power. Whoever controls the ground makes the rules that apply until the ground changes hands.

Five Crime Categories (from Cold Case operational data):

AI and Surveillance Crimes. Hacking faction AI systems, accessing surveillance feeds without authorization, Monitor Central circumvention, EO social credit manipulation. These are the crimes the factions care most about because they undermine the infrastructure of control. Sentences are the longest in this category and consistently applied.

Gene-Forging Crimes. Unauthorized template use, unlicensed forging, template theft, post-market augmentation outside faction oversight. Every gene-forged operator who left state service carries a file in this category by their former faction's definition. Enforcement is selective based on what the former faction thinks the operator knows.

Resource Crimes. Water theft, energy grid access without authorization, black market biological IP, Lumicite trafficking outside faction supply chains. The most commonly prosecuted category because it is the most visible. Also the most widely tolerated because the alternative is mass starvation in the outer districts.

Data Crimes. Pre-Upheaval archive access, unauthorized historical data recovery, Consortium Halcyon IP circumvention. The category that Null Chorus operates in professionally. Not commonly prosecuted because prosecuting it publicly requires acknowledging what data was suppressed and why.

Political Crimes. The broadest category and the most variably applied. In practice: anything a faction security system decides constitutes a threat to the faction's political stability. The definition expands and contracts with political circumstance.

The Irregulars work in the gap between factional security and the black market. They take cases the system won't touch because the system created them. They operate in contested zones where no faction has authority and in the outer districts where faction authority is present in theory and absent in practice. They are not licensed. They are useful.

GM TIP: The five crime categories are mission generators with built-in faction tension. A gene-forging crime investigation means the investigator will eventually come up against a state program that considers its own operators exempt. A data crime investigation has Consortium Halcyon in the chain of evidence within two layers. A resource crime that started as a water cartridge theft is, three contacts deep, connected to the agricultural IP market that one faction is actively running and another is actively trying to shut down.

03/

THE DEEP GAME

What's buried under the surface game. It's older and it's worse.

THE DEEP GAME

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WHAT LUMICITE IS

Three definitions. Each faction uses a different one, and each faction is partially right.

Definition One (NAF, SCA, PCU): Lumicite is a mineral substrate found in geological deposits at sites corresponding to Architect-era installations. When refined and processed through specific electromagnetic protocols, it functions as a high-density energy storage and release medium. A Lumicite fusion cell holds twelve times the energy of an equivalent mass of conventional battery and releases it at a controlled rate determined by the cell's design parameters. This is why factions fight over it. This is the definition in the briefing room.

Definition Two (EO, PRC, academic geology): Lumicite is an anomalous mineral with properties that do not derive from its chemical composition. Its glow, a pale blue-white luminescence, faint in unrefined form and measurable in refined cells, is not chemoluminescent and not the result of radioactive decay. The glow is a property of the material's interaction with a signal source that has not been identified. This definition appears in pre-2044 geological literature as an anomalous notation. It was classified in most jurisdictions following the Operation Dawnlight discovery.

Definition Three (the deep game): Lumicite is an antenna. The energy it stores is not stored in the mineral. The mineral is the transceiver. The energy source is the substrate signal it was designed to interface with. When a faction runs a Lumicite fusion cell, they are drawing on a power source they do not control and do not understand, through a hardware interface they did not design. The installations were built to manage this interface, not to generate it. This definition is not in any faction briefing. The factions that have come closest to it have found the data classified above their own clearance level.

Physical properties: Unrefined Lumicite is a dense blue-gray mineral, heavier than it looks, with a faint luminescence visible in low light. It is warm to the touch: not hot, not body-temperature, but specifically warm in a way that suggests contained energy rather than absorbed ambient heat. In proximity to an unshielded Lumicite sample, gene-forged operators consistently report a low-frequency perceptual sensation that baselines do not report: not sound, not vibration, something experienced as sound-adjacent that triggers the augmented sensory processing of any gene-forged template without resolving into identifiable audio. Some operators describe it as a carrier frequency with no signal attached. Some describe it as the sensation of being listened to.

The interference radius: An unshielded Lumicite sample above a certain mass threshold creates an interference envelope in which AI targeting systems exhibit degraded performance, signal transmission is unreliable, and gene-forged operators report increasing perceptual intensity of the carrier frequency effect. This is why Lumicite in transit is always shielded. This is also why Lumicite samples in unshielded containment are worth more in the Raid Race economy than corporate data cores: the faction that receives the package will learn something about the delivery process that the package's manifest does not describe.

Strategic significance: Whoever achieves Lumicite production at industrial scale, without dependence on the installation network's existing deposits, wins the next era of the surface game. No faction has done this. The research programs for synthetic Lumicite have been running since 2047. They have produced materials with some of the properties. None of the relevant properties.

OPERATION DAWNLIGHT AND THE INSTALLATION NETWORK

In 2044, three separate NAF research teams opened the Antarctic data core.

They were three separate teams because no single program had the authority or the clearance level to open it, and the compromise that got it done was to have all three present simultaneously. What they found was not a data archive. It was a navigation system. The core's contents were coordinates. The coordinates pointed to locations on six continents. Each location, when surveyed, contained a Lumi-

cite deposit in a geological formation that did not correspond to any known natural process. Some contained structures. Some contained the ruins of structures. All of them contained Lumicite, in concentrations that scaled with proximity to a central point that the geological surveys took another two years to identify.

The network is real. It is global. It predates the factions, the Upheaval, and the oldest human civilization that has left records. The Metropoli Perdida installation documented by the 2063 multilateral research team shows evidence of seven separate civilizations drawn to the site across two thousand years: pre-Columbian construction in the lowest strata, colonial-era modifications above it, three distinct twentieth-century research layers, the Architect-era installation sealing the whole sequence. The factions have classified this data. The implication, that something at that location was attracting human attention independent of the knowledge that the site was there, is not in any faction's public briefing material.

The network has three characteristics that matter at the table:

First: the sites are geologically stable in ways that local geology does not explain. Installations in seismically active zones show no seismic damage consistent with local event records. The Antarctic core site was under two kilometers of ice for a thousand years. The structures are intact.

Second: the Lumicite deposits at each site are not depleting on a schedule consistent with extraction rates. The EO's primary installation site has been mined at scale for twelve years. The deposit's estimated reserves, by current modeling, should be forty percent exhausted. The most recent surveys show eighteen percent depletion. Either the modeling is wrong, or the deposit is being replenished. No faction has published research on which it is.

Third: gene-forged operators who spend extended time at installation sites report template drift at accelerated rates compared to operators in non-installation environments. The BAFO monitoring data confirms this. The explanation in the official BAFO record is "elevated geomagnetic variance." The explanation is not complete.

THE ARCHITECTS

They operated in cells. Each cell knew its own mandate and was not given the other cells' mandates. The design was not paranoia. It was protocol.

What can be assembled from translated fragments, recovered partial records, and what BAFO has documented without fully understanding:

The Architects shared a founding principle: the substrate signal is real, it can be interfaced with, and whatever is on the other side of that interface has been attempting communication for longer than human civilization has existed. They were not speculating. They had evidence. The evidence was assembled across fifty years of work by a distributed research program that began before the Document Wars and survived them because the relevant records were held in analog formats in locations that were not on the targeting list.

Their operational principle: if you build the hardware to receive the signal, you build the containment simultaneously. Operation Dawnlight was not an energy program. It was a containment architecture built around the highest-intensity substrate resonance nodes. The Lumicite installations seal the signal at a frequency that does not trigger uncontrolled access in unshielded human nervous systems. The installations are designed to be failsafes. They are failsafes for a signal that is still broadcasting.

The Architects knew they were not the first people to attempt this. The Metropoli Perdida stratigraphy shows earlier attempts by people who did not have the technical vocabulary for what they were doing and built structures around the resonance node anyway, because the resonance node made itself felt. The Architects had the vocabulary. They built the vocabulary from the ECHO program's records, from Lumenfeld's work, and from pre-Upheaval geological surveys that catalogued unexplained anomalies at what turned out to be network sites.

Whether the Architects succeeded or failed depends on what success means. The installations are intact and appear to be functional. The signal continues broadcasting. What the signal is addressed to, and whether the installations' containment function serves its original purpose, is a question the BAFO archive has been circling without naming for fifteen years.

Fragment 7-C, Architect recovered documentation (BAFO archive, partial translation):

"The receiver exists before the signal finds it. We did not create the capacity for reception. We identified it in structures already present in the paleogenetic templates and encoded our own programs from the same material. We built what was already there. This means the construction decision was made before we made it. The installation network does not create a receiver network. It manages one that already exists."

No faction has a complete translation of the Architect records. The PRC claims one. The claim has never been verified and the PRC's public behavior around installation sites does not reflect an organization that fully understands what it is operating.

ECHO AND THE LUMENFELD HYPOTHESIS

This is the page that matters most. Keep it tight.

In 1937, a researcher named Elias Lumenfeld documented what he called a standing wave in a controlled experimental setting in Vienna. Not a sound. Not a vibration. A frequency below hearing, perceived through a sensory channel that existing neuroscience did not account for. He documented the effect in twenty-three test subjects, published a preliminary paper that received two citations, and began organizing the people who could replicate his methodology.

The Liminal Concord was twenty-three researchers across eleven countries who corresponded in coded academic language and met twice between 1937 and 1947. What they established: the standing wave was real, geographically variable (stronger at certain locations), individually variable (perceived more intensely by some subjects than others), and not associated with any identified electromagnetic source. It was associated with something else. The Concord did not agree on what.

In 1947, Lumenfeld was brought into a classified research program called ECHO. The program ran for twenty-five years under successive classification frameworks as its host government changed and its mandate expanded. ECHO mapped high-resonance locations. It developed suppression protocols designated OPHIUCHUS: targeted interventions that reduced an individual subject's sensitiv-

ity to the standing wave frequency. It produced the first controlled evidence that the standing wave was not passive. In specific experimental conditions, the wave's characteristics changed in response to focused attention from sensitized subjects. It observed back.

OPHIUCHUS was presented as containment. Lumenfeld's final documented position, in a classified memo filed four days before he disappeared in Berlin in October 1961, was that suppression was not containment. It was acceleration. The subjects who underwent OPHIUCHUS conditioning showed, on follow-up surveys, not reduced sensitivity but altered sensitivity: the wave was still perceived, differently. The conditioning did not block reception. It changed the frequency on which reception occurred.

Lumenfeld's memo argued that OPHIUCHUS was training subjects to receive the signal on a frequency that would not be recognized as signal reception. That what the program described as successful suppression was in fact successful encoding. That the twenty-year ECHO program had spent its first decade learning what the standing wave was and its second decade accidentally teaching it to be more effective.

Lumenfeld disappeared. The memo was classified above general program access. ECHO continued for eleven more years without significant change to the OPHIUCHUS protocols, then was formally dissolved in 1972. Its records were redistributed across three successor agencies, none of which held the complete picture. Most of the records were destroyed in the Document Wars. The fragments that survived passed to BAFO through a chain of institutional succession that BAFO itself cannot fully document.

The Architects read what survived. They built what Lumenfeld described in the negative: not suppression architecture but reception architecture, calibrated to the specific frequencies the installation network could manage. Whether they solved the problem Lumenfeld named or became it is the question that the recovered fragment evidence does not resolve.

What no faction briefing includes: Lumicite is the antenna. The substrate is the signal. The gene-forged templates are receivers built from paleogenetic material that spent hundreds of millions of years accumulating substrate exposure, and the forging programs reconstructed those markers along with everything else. Every gene-forged operator is a substrate receiver. The drift that gene-forged operators experience beyond program specifications is not biological instability. It is the signal rewriting them toward something the signal was always addressed to.

The standing wave's measurable intensity has increased over the past decade. Something changed. BAFO's monitoring records show it. No faction analysis has identified what changed.

BAFO

Bureau of Architectural Field Operations. Post-Upheaval successor to ECHO's observational mandate.

Stated mission: field documentation of Architect-era installations and pre-Upheaval research sites. Archival preservation of recovered materials. Environmental monitoring at known installation locations.

Actual mission: inherited from ECHO without fully knowing the lineage. The BAFO founding charter references a prior program designated only as "the Concord research framework" and grants BAFO access to classified substrate monitoring protocols designated OPHIUCHUS-D (a descendant framework), without explaining what OPHIUCHUS was or why it exists.

BAFO operates twelve field teams globally. Four are permanently stationed at primary installation sites. The other eight rotate through a schedule that correlates with BAFO's internal substrate intensity monitoring, which BAFO describes publicly as "geomagnetic variance tracking." The teams that rotate through the highest-variance locations have the highest rate of unexplained personnel attrition.

The Scholar Wing of the Brotherhood of Shadows has had contact with BAFO field operatives in three documented incidents. Neither organization fully acknowledges the other in official communications. The Scholar Wing's own archive contains more complete ECHO records than BAFO's official holdings, because the Scholar Wing has been recovering Document Wars-era fragments for

thirty years through channels that BAFO cannot access. BAFO knows this. BAFO has not made formal contact because making formal contact would require explaining the relationship on the record, and the record is not something either organization is positioned to explain.

The BAFO archive is the most complete surviving map of the installation network. Access to it is the kind of asset that ends games differently than they started.

RUNNING THE DEEP GAME

The deep game runs beneath the surface game. Players can spend an entire campaign in the surface game and never know the deep game exists. GMs who want to run the full setting run both.

The basic principle: both games happen at the same table. Sometimes in the same firefight. A mission that begins as a Lumicite convoy escort can end with the players holding a shielded sample in an unshielded situation and discovering that the carrier frequency is louder than any of them expected, and that the EO pursuit team dropped back at a distance that the mission brief said was beyond their sensor range.

Mission types for the deep game:

Installation Recovery. A faction has identified a new installation site and needs a splice to secure it before the other faction's advance team arrives. Standard race mission with an atypical objective: the installation isn't empty. It has never been empty. What's in it determines whether this is a recovery mission or a containment incident.

Data Core Escort. The most complete surviving fragment of the ECHO records is in transit. Every faction wants it. BAFO wants it. Consortium Halcyon wants it destroyed. Null Chorus wants it published. The splice is hired by one party, but the competing parties have their own access to the transit route.

Multi-Faction Convergence. Three factions and BAFO and the Brotherhood have all identified the same installation site as high priority in the same 72-hour window. Nobody sent word to the others. The installation site is a 400-meter cave network in the Tian Shan. It has four entrances. Do the math.

Archaeological Access. A research organization (BAFO, the Scholar Wing, an independent historian) needs secured access to an installation site that is currently within a faction's territory. The faction will not grant access because they don't want to explain why they classified the site's contents. The splice's job is to get the researchers in and out. The faction's security knows the site is in their territory. They don't fully know what's in it, and the mission brief does not include instructions for what to do if the researchers find something that changes the brief's assumptions.

The Syndicate's position in the deep game: Baroness Volstok holds coordinates for at least six installation sites that no faction has publicly identified. She sells access. She does not sell coordinates. The distinction matters. A faction that buys access controls the approach; the Syndicate controls the record of who went there and what they found. The Syndicate's position in the deep game is not ideological. It is infrastructural.

The Lumenfeld reveal as a campaign arc: The players start with a standard surface game campaign: water, territory, Lumericite. The Lumericite keeps turning up in contexts that the surface game doesn't explain. A convoy escort ends with a sample that behaved differently than the brief said. A data core recovery produces records from an organization nobody briefed them on. A BAFO contact who shouldn't know their operational profile demonstrates that she does, and asks them a question about the last gene-forged operator who touched the sample.

The players think they are racing for an energy source. They are not racing for an energy source. What the installation was built to do is the question that the campaign is built around.

The factions that have analyzed the site's geological data know this. They have not shared the analysis because the implications extend to other locations where similar patterns have been detected, and sharing the analysis means sharing the question, and the question is not one any faction is positioned to answer on the record.

BAFO as a resource: BAFO field operatives are the most reliable neutral experts in the deep game and the most dangerous ones to be associated with publicly. They know more than they say. They say more than their supervisors would approve if their supervisors understood what they were monitoring. In a campaign with active deep game threads, a BAFO contact is the NPC who can give the players the fragment that changes the framework of everything they've found so far. Use sparingly. Use at the turn.

GM NOTE: The full standing-wave implication, Lumicite as antenna, gene-forged as receivers, signal intensity increasing, is a GM secret. It does not appear in player-facing text. Surface it as discovery. The players should earn the revelation from the evidence, not receive it in a briefing. The briefing that explains everything has already failed as a narrative event.

04/

THE WIDER WORLD

The planet is healing in places nobody is fighting over. For now.

THE WIDER WORLD

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REGIONS OF ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY

The Upheaval did not uniformly damage everything. It damaged what was built in the wrong places, in the wrong ways, for a climate that was already changing before the infrastructure was finished. The parts of the planet that were not heavily built, or that were built for the climate that arrived rather than the one that left, are doing something unexpected: recovering.

This is not comfortable information for the factions. Ecological recovery in territory they don't control is territory that someone else will eventually control. Recovery zones are pre-conflict zones: they have resources, they have strategic value, and they are not yet contested. The word "yet" carries weight.

Siberian Taiga Expansion. The permafrost thaw that released the pathogens of the 2045 era also released three hundred thousand square kilometers of formerly locked land to agriculture and mineral extraction. The EO holds the eastern corridors. The NAF holds monitoring agreements on the northern approach. The PCU has no formal claim and has been running survey teams since 2053 under academic cover. The land is workable. It contains mineral deposits whose value becomes calculable once the extraction infrastructure exists. The extraction infrastructure does not yet exist. Building it is the mission.

Saharan Greening. The PCU's concentrated solar arrays in the northern Sahara enabled thirty years of wind management and moisture capture that has produced green margins along the Sahel belt that no pre-Upheaval model predicted. The greening is real, ongoing, and transforming the strategic calculus of every faction with sub-Saharan interests. The PCU considers the greening zone sovereign. Three independent regional governments and the SCA consider this characterization premature. BAFO has three field teams documenting the biological recovery in the greening zone. The connection to Architect-era site mapping in the region is not publicly established.

Patagonian Rainforest. The warming southern latitudes produced a rainfall shift that extended the Patagonian temperate zone south and inland by four hundred kilometers. The SCA holds the northern Patagonian territories. The Southern Compact Alliance holds the southern half. Neither fully controls the forest margin that is now the world's most productive new-growth timber and carbon sink zone, and neither will commit to enforcement actions in territory that international observers are watching with camera drones continuously since 2049.

Canadian Boreal Bloom. The boreal forest zone expanded north and east as temperatures rose, producing both new growth and the decomposition layer from trees that died in the zone boundary shift. The NAF manages the former as strategic resource. The latter is a carbon and methane release system that the NAF's own climate modeling says requires active management or produces a decade-long warming pulse. The management program exists. It is underfunded. The funding question intersects with NAF political dynamics that have been a running session in the NAF internal legislature for three years.

Antarctic Peninsula Oasis. The peninsula's ice retreat has revealed a coastal strip that is, in ecological terms, beginning to look like the Falkland Islands looked before the Upheaval. The factional research presence on the peninsula is nominally governed by the 2043 Scientific Access Accords. In practice: the NAF, EO, and PRC each have installations that exceed the Accords' scope and all three have agreed not to note this in their official reporting. The Antarctic data core that triggered Operation Dawnlight is three hundred kilometers from the largest oasis formation. The correlation is not established in public record. BAFO's site map includes both.

AT THE TABLE: Recovery zones are mission environments before anyone starts fighting over them. The splice who gets contracted to survey, secure, or extract from a recovery zone is operating in territory where the rules of engagement are genuinely ambiguous, the factions' official positions don't reflect their actual interests, and the terrain itself is still changing. The map the brief provides is out of date before the mission launches.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Faction Food Source Table:

FACTION	PRIMARY AGRICULTURE	SECONDARY	CONTESTED ZONE NOTES
NAF	Lab protein at scale. Vertical farm arrays in arcology cores. Genemodified staple crops under IP protection.	Gulf Shore reconstruction agriculture (Prometheus legacy). Pacific Coast aquaculture.	DEPOT RATION is the field-consumption standard. Edible. Caloric. Designed for consumption by people who have no alternative.
SCA	Amazonian Metroplex bio-agriculture. Genemodified cassava at industrial scale.	Patagonian cereal corridor. Andean potato variants.	Jungle supplement rations. Real food supplement available from local market contacts who know what grows where.
EO	Siberian expansion agriculture. Modified grain programs along the steppe corridor.	Black Sea agricultural zone.	Steppe ration packs. High protein, low variety. The EO believes this is adequate. The EO's field operators have opinions.
PCU	Red Sea aquaculture. Concentrated-solar-grown produce in administrative districts.	Levantine olive and citrus legacy agriculture.	Desert preservation rations. Date-based, high-calorie, designed for dehydration conditions. Acquired taste.
PRC	Indo-Pacific aquaculture at industrial scale. Vertical production in major city-states.	Recovering agricultural zones in former Chinese breadbasket territory.	Compressed grain rations. Seaweed supplement. Nutritionally complete. Texturally challenging.
Contested	Whatever the local economy produces. Gray market staples. Smuggled faction surplus.	Local agricultural adaptation where communities have figured it out.	Extremely variable. Learn what's available before the mission. Ask the locals.

Gray market agricultural IP is the most traded non-weapons commodity on the black market by volume. The cassava algorithm, the desal membrane spec, the algae growth protocol: each of these is worth more per gram of information than conventional currency in any market where food security is a live question.

GM TIP: Food security is a mission generator. A settlement that is two weeks from losing its primary food source needs something done. What that something is determines what kind of mission it produces. Supply run missions have an obvious shape. The shape changes when the supply run's objective turns out to be the same as three other contractors' objectives, posted by three different clients.

TRANSPORT AND TRADE

Autonomous cargo ships move most of the world's bulk goods. Post-Upheaval ship design is built for the weather patterns that exist now, not the ones that existed before 2031. The routes are managed by faction shipping authority AI systems. The cargo manifests are verified at departure and again at arrival. What is on the manifest and what is in the containers has historically been related. The relationship has been loosening since 2052.

VTOL networks are the primary fast-transport system for high-value goods, personnel, and anything that needs to move faster than a cargo ship and smaller than an air freighter. Faction VTOL fleets operate scheduled routes within faction territory. Independent VTOL operators fly the contested zones and the recovery margins for people who need transport that doesn't file a flight plan. The independent VTOL market is the largest unregulated transportation market on Earth and it is not unregulated because anyone thought that was a good idea.

Hyperloop and Maglev connect the major faction cities where the infrastructure was built and survived. The Cascade destroyed or isolated thirty percent of the pre-Upheaval hyperloop and maglev network. The surviving sixty percent runs at high utilization because the alternatives are slower or less politically acceptable. New construction exists in three corridors. The negotiation over who pays for the fourth is the kind of thing that faction diplomatic teams have been in a room about for seven years.

LEO shipping lanes are the newest transport layer and the one growing fastest. Low Earth Orbit cargo shuttles operate between ground stations and orbital facilities, and between the ground stations of factions that have no terrestrial connection and need one. The UNSO Traveler's arrival in 2059 complicated LEO traffic management in ways that the existing orbital operations framework was not written to handle. The UNSO has its own opinions about LEO governance.

What happens when transport stops: every settlement in the setting is a supply chain with a human community attached to it. The settlement's resilience is the gap between its current supply and what it can produce locally. Most faction-administered cities have thirty days of reserve at current consumption. Most contested zone settlements have five. When transport stops, day five is a different day than day thirty.

THE POST-PROMETHEUS WORLD

Prometheus was the NAF ecological reconstruction program launched in 2047 along the Gulf Shore and lower Mississippi delta. It rebuilt wetlands, established storm barriers, and created the framework under which new coastal settlements were authorized in the reconstruction zone. The program is ongoing. What it has built is visible in the communities that now exist in places that were, as recently as 2039, seawater.

Salter's Landing is a Post-Prometheus settlement on the rebuilt Gulf Shore, south of what used to be the Florida panhandle. Population 1,200. Founded in 2047 by people who had been relocated from inundated Gulf communities and refused the arcology assignment.

The main road is a pre-war state highway, repaired and maintained by the community. The buildings are built from pre-war concrete salvaged from cleared zones, supplemented by post-war construction block. The commissary is run by a woman named Cassidy Marsh who has been running it for eleven years. The generator runs on algae biofuel from the delta, which the community grows in a managed pond system that three different NGOs tried to purchase the IP for before Marsh registered it as community property. The school has twenty-two students. The clinic has one doctor and one trained paramedic. The framed art-

icles on the wall of the commissary are from the NAF reconstruction program's early press coverage. The articles describe the community as a success story. The community regards the articles with the specific patience of people who know they have survived things the articles do not describe.

Salter's Landing gets faction aerial recon four times a week. The recon frequency increased after the community declined the NAF's offer of Monitor Central integration in 2058. The community's position is that Monitor Central integration would require a subscription fee they haven't budgeted for. The NAF's position is that Monitor Central integration is provided at no cost to qualifying reconstruction communities. The gap between these two positions is the specific stubbornness of a community that knows what being on a subscription system means for what happens when you stop paying.

FIELD NOTE. Cayo Nkrumah, *Territories and Contested Zones*, 2061

"*Luxury*, in Salter's Landing: a hot meal at the commissary that someone else cooked. In Lost Angeles' arcology core: a suite with a filtered water feed and climate management that tracks your preferences. In the PCU administrative district of New Aqaba: a closed garden where the temperature is kept at nineteen degrees and the plants are real. All three exist simultaneously. The word is doing a lot of work to cover the distance."

The Post-Prometheus world at ground level is not a faction briefing. It is people who have made specific choices about what matters and what they can afford to not have. They know the factions. They know what the factions offer and what the offers cost. They have done the math and the math came out to: they would rather run the generator themselves.

This is the counter-weight to every faction briefing in the book. Every briefing tells you what the factions want. Salter's Landing tells you what some people want instead: control over the generator, the clinic, and the school, without a subscription fee attached.

AT THE TABLE: Post-Prometheus communities are mission environments with a specific texture. They are not hostile. They are not naive. They know who is doing the recon flights and they know what those flights are looking for. They will help operators who demonstrate that they understand what the community has built and are not proposing to disrupt it. They will not help operators who cannot distinguish between "we need your community's cooperation" and "we need your community to do what we need it to do." The distinction is legible to everyone in the room except the operator who didn't read the brief closely enough.

05/

THE LIFE

How people actually live in this world. Not the briefing room version.

THE LIFE

How people actually live in this world. Not the briefing room version.

THE SPLICE

A splice is three to six operators who showed up for the same job and stayed on the same frequency.

Not squad. Not team. Not crew. A splice.

The word started as contempt. In genomic terminology, a splice is a juncture where genetic material from different sources is joined. State military culture repurposed it to describe mixed-lineage freelance units whose genomic loyalty couldn't be verified and whose flag was whoever was paying this week. A splice was impure. Contaminated by the presence of lineages that weren't bred to work together. When a Kavast pack commander calls a freelance unit a splice, the contempt is specific: you took purpose-bred operators and mixed them with operators who weren't. You weakened them.

Freelance operators reclaimed it. The process took about fifteen years and wasn't organized. No campaign, no declaration. Operators started using the word about themselves before anyone else could. By the time a contractor says "my splice," the contempt is stripped out and what remains is professional identity: we are what you say we are, and we're better at this than your purpose-bred cohorts.

Genomic statelessness is what the splice represents underneath the operational language. In Terra Conflictus, your genome is your citizenship. Nation-states breed, track, register, and claim their gene-forged. A wolf-lineage operator produced under Kavast breeding programs carries Kavast genomic markers. A raven-lineage operator out of a Protectorate program carries Protectorate registration codes. Your augmented biology is state property. Your body is a national asset.

Going freelance means stepping outside that system. An operator who leaves state service doesn't just resign. They void their genomic registration. They become stateless in a world where statehood is written into their cells. The nation-state that produced them still considers their genome property. The international frameworks still list their markers. But the operator is no longer under that flag's authority, no longer receiving that flag's support, and no longer bound by that flag's doctrine.

The generational divide:

Operators over forty remember when the word was only used against them. They came up through state military culture or early PMC structures where "splice" was a write-off. Being called a splice meant command had decided your unit wasn't worth proper logistics, proper intel, proper extraction. Some of these operators still flinch when they hear the word. They use it if pressed, but it sits wrong in their mouth.

Operators under thirty grew up in a contractor economy where freelance units were the norm. They heard the word from older operators who used it with a half-smile and a shrug. They adopted it without the scar tissue. It is on their kit. It is in their callsigns. It is how they introduce themselves in contested zones.

Operators in their thirties carry both registers. They know what the word used to mean and they use it deliberately. When a thirty-five-year-old operator calls their unit a splice, they are making a statement the twenty-five-year-old next to them doesn't need to make. The statement is: I know what you meant by it, and I chose it anyway.

The contrast that makes it work: Nation-state forces are mono-type by design. Kavast fields wolf-lineage cohorts: pack formations bred for genomic cohesion. Protectorate flights are raven-lineage surveillance networks. EO bear formations absorb damage and keep advancing. When players face a mono-type enemy force, they see what state military culture looks like. Their own splice, a wolf, a raven, and two baselines on the same contract, is a visible rebuke of that model. The table composition tells the story before anyone speaks.

"We're a splice. Bear, lynx, and two baselines. We cleared the Outer Corridor in six hours. Your pack formation took two days."

SPLICE PUNK CULTURE

Splice Punk is what happens when gene-forged freelancers, contested zone kids, and stateless operators remix faction surplus, augmentation culture, and salvage fashion into a visual identity that refuses to blend back into any flag that would have them.

It is not a movement. It has no organization. It does not have an ideology, a manifesto, or a membership structure. It is a visual language that emerged from specific conditions: when the things that identify you to a state (your kit, your genomic markers, your credentials) become things you have escaped from or are currently escaping from, you make something from the residue.

Mark culture is the territorial visual language of the contested zone. Callsigns stenciled on anchor plates. Unit insignia spray-painted on the wall of a building that will be in someone else's hands by the time the paint dries. The station mark: a symbol at a checkpoint or cache that tells other operators that someone who uses this mark has been here and considers this location part of their operational range. Mark culture is not tagging. It is information, compressed into a visual form that takes three seconds to read and carries twelve hours of operational meaning.

Salvage fashion logic starts with the understanding that everything you wear came from someone else's supply chain. Stripped faction surplus is the raw material: field jackets with the insignia removed, tactical vests with the identifying patches cut away, boots from three different programs' supply chains on the same team. The removal of legible allegiance is the design decision. What you are left with is an operator who cannot be identified by their kit, which is the point.

The modification layer comes next: patches hand-stamped with unit marks that exist nowhere in a faction database, flicker-paint panels that shift color under thermal observation, structural modifications to armored pieces that no factory produced. The kit is yours because you built it from components that used to be someone else's.

Dead-stack culture is the practice of wearing expired credentials and clearance badges as jewelry. A HELIX STANDARD genomic verification badge, deactivated and removed from the verification network, worn on a chain next to a PCU priority-access card that expired in 2053. The documentation of a previous identity on the outside of a current one. The objects are the literal artifacts of who the

operator used to be in a system they have exited. Wearing them is not ironic. It is a statement about the relationship between documentation and identity: the document says what the state decided you were. It does not say what you are now.

Wearing the genome: gene-forged augmentations that state programs designed to be concealed are displayed deliberately. Subdermal plating worn visible through a gap in the jacket. Low-light optics covered with hand-painted covers that announce the augmentation rather than disguising it. The augmentation is the most intimate state claim in Terra Conflictus: it is written into the body by a program that considered the body state property. Splice Punk takes the thing the state put in your body and removes the state from the framing.

Key idioms:

*"Strip the faction, keep the jacket." "My genome, my jacket." "What's on your kit is who you are."
"Built for someone else, running my own route." "The badge is dead. I'm not."*

THE BRAND BIBLE (CONDENSED)

The brands that operate in the cultural layer between faction supply chains and the gray market. Not faction brands. Not endorsed by anyone who has a flag.

BURNER. Energy drink. Green label, white text. Formula developed in the NAF Western Corridor in 2047 and reverse-engineered in six cities by 2051. Not manufactured: the formula is in wide circulation and the local version is always slightly different from the last one you had. Universally recognized. Universally available. BURNER is not a company. BURNER is a recipe.

HELIX STANDARD. Genomic identity verification service. Operates a badge system: operators who have verified their identity through the HELIX system carry a badge. The badge is a dead credential the moment the operator leaves the verification network. Dead HELIX STANDARD badges are worn as jewelry by operators who left the network and want to document when. The badge dates the decision. The date is the statement.

NULLMARK. Anti-tracking technology. Originally gray market, now sold openly in outer district electronics markets under brands that rotate monthly. Blocks genomic scanner passive reads, disrupts facial recognition at conversational range, spoofs location data in 80% of faction monitoring systems. The 20% of monitoring systems it does not spoof are the ones that matter in faction-controlled cities. Operators know which 20%.

BARE KIT. Stripped-down tactical wear. One color: a slightly-off dark gray that scans differently under thermal, UV, and visible light in ways that make automated ID systems generate lower-confidence reads. Not camouflage. Ambiguity is the product design. The clothing does not identify you. It provides the minimum effective cover for someone who wants the minimum effective cover.

GHOST KIT. Stripped-down operator wear for high-visibility operations. Where BARE KIT is passive ambiguity, GHOST KIT is active absence: reflective under-layer that washes out thermal at standard drone range, acoustic dampening in the fabric, no metal components that would read on standard metal detection below the 4-kilogram threshold. GHOST KIT is worn by operators who are supposed to not be somewhere.

SPLICEWEAR. Community-verified maker brand. The certification cannot be purchased. A SPLICEWEAR piece is hand-stamped by the maker and verified by a network of peer reviewers who have worked with the maker's product in field conditions. The stamp is a white "S" on a diagonal black square, applied with a hand stamp that every verified maker holds physically. If you see a SPLICEWEAR stamp on someone's kit, it means the kit was made by someone whose work has survived field use and been witnessed by people who know the difference.

SPLICE STANDARD. Unauthorized quality certification. Hand-stamped white S on diagonal black square, applied to gear, food, water cartridges, pharmaceutical products, anything that has been verified by someone who has tested it in conditions where failure matters. Cannot be purchased. Not controlled by any organization. The mark means: someone who knows what they are doing verified this, and they put their mark on it, and their mark is on enough other things that the mark means something.

The three field-consumer brands that appear on every table regardless of theater:

BURNER (energy). **CARCASS COFFEE** (caffeine, locally roasted from whatever is available, the bean changes by region but the brand is the relationship with the person who roasts it). **DEPOT RATION** (calories, always described accurately on the package as "caloric," never described as enjoyable). All three are found in every market that has a table, at prices that fluctuate by about eight percent across all environments. The consistency is not explained by any supply chain analysis anyone has been able to complete.

THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY OF SPECTACLE

Two world institutions that don't appear in faction briefings.

RAID RACE / HEIST CLUB

The world's most-watched underground sport. Streamed live to four billion viewers globally. The betting networks launder fortunes for criminal organizations across six factions. The international governing body that the sport does not have has been proposed four times and rejected four times because no one has been able to propose a governance structure that doesn't immediately become a faction intelligence operation.

Structure: Teams of Jockeys and Jumpers compete in races through Lost Angeles' networked security perimeters. Jockeys drive. Jumpers penetrate security to steal real packages from real fortified positions: corporate data cores, bio-IP samples, pre-Upheaval artifacts, Lumicite samples in shielded containment, gene-forging templates. The package is posted by an anonymous client through Syndicate channels before the race begins. The client pays the winning team. The Syndicate takes fifteen percent.

"The package determines the stakes. A corporate data theft is a Tuesday. A Lumicite sample in shielded containment turns a neighborhood sport into a faction incident."

Monitor Central runs interference: the NAF AI security network treats Raid Race as unauthorized civilian activity and responds with nonlethal ranged systems and full-capability melee drones. Being caught by Monitor Central is a race loss and a missing-person event simultaneously: processed into the NAF private detention system, location and fate after that not publicly documented.

The sport maps Upheaval-era resentments onto neighborhood pride. The teams come from the outer districts. The clients come from everywhere, posting through the Syndicate's blind-channel system. The viewers come from all six faction territories, the contested zones, the Traveler (they have a feed connection), and seventeen locations that the Syndicate's analytics system cannot geolocate because the connections are routed through NULLMARK-equivalent systems.

The Jockey / Jumper structure: - **Jockeys** drive modified vehicles through Lost Angeles' outer district infrastructure. The modifications are not street legal under any framework. The racing line is determined by the package location, not by a set course. Jockeys who survive three seasons become Established Jockeys. Established Jockeys have relationships with clients, sponsors, and Syndicate betting coordinators. Established Jockeys earn enough to live in the inner ring districts. - **Jumpers** are athletes, climbers, gene-forged generalists, and ex-operators who have decided that Raid Race is safer than the work they were doing before. Some are correct. Jumpers penetrate the security envelope around the package, extract the package, and get it to the Jockey before Monitor Central closes the extraction window. The average time a Jumper has before Monitor Central responds to a security breach is ninety seconds. The best Jumpers average sixty.

Why it matters to the setting: The package economy is real commerce, not sport theater. When a Lumicite sample in shielded containment becomes a race package, someone who needed that sample delivered has found a way to deliver it that produces no contract paper, no faction manifest, and no delivery address. The four billion viewers watching the race are also watching the delivery. The faction that wants to intercept the delivery is also watching. What they see on the feed is the race. The splice contracted for the intercept sees something else.

THE FEED

Streaming is the world's primary spectator medium. Four billion people watch Raid Race. Specific events generate global coordination, signal intelligence, and the specific kind of cultural artifact that becomes mission fuel: the feed-hot event.

Feed hot is when an operation attracts live streaming attention before the splice realizes it's happening. Lita Brightly's vlog captured an entire approach route during a 2062 NAF logistics facility extraction. Four billion witnesses. The faction knew what had happened to their facility in real time, from the same source as everyone else. The splice's client had not anticipated this in the extraction plan.

Flicker-paint culture: Jacket surfaces coated with reactive pigment that shifts pattern under thermal or UV exposure. Not camouflage: the opposite. Flicker-paint jackets identify themselves at range under observation, producing a signature that says "I am here and I know you can see me and I am choosing to be visible in this way." Contested zone culture adopted flicker-paint as identity statement. Faction surveillance adopted it as identification tool. The two uses are in an ongoing negotiation.

The Gutter Bible Quarterly. An irregular publication distributed through dead drops in outer districts across all five faction territories. Compiles incident reports, rumor-sourced intelligence, obituaries for operators nobody will officially acknowledge, and one long-form piece per issue on the specific mechanics of how a recent contested zone event actually happened, sourced from people who were there. The Quarterly is read by everyone who needs to know what is actually going on and cannot access the briefing rooms where it is officially analyzed. It has been traced to six different publishing locations across three eras. All six were shut down. The Quarterly continued.

Dead Channel Enduro. A long-duration streaming event: one channel, no editing, continuous feed from a contested zone location chosen by viewer vote for the forty-eight hours before the event begins. The channel runs for twelve hours. No operators or factions are notified. The feed shows whatever the contested zone shows. The viewership for Dead Channel Enduro runs between forty million and three hundred million depending on what the zone produces. The highest-rated

run, in 2058, captured a four-faction convergence at a Tian Shan installation site that no faction had disclosed. The recording is in the Null Chorus archive. All four factions have made acquisition requests. The Null Chorus archive access fee is not denominated in currency.

06/

THE MAJOR FACTIONS

Every operator works for someone. Know who's paying. Know what they're not telling you.

THE MAJOR FACTIONS

Every operator works for someone. Know who's paying: and know what they're not telling you.

NORTH AMERICAN FEDERATION

NAF. North American Federation

Doctrine: Adaptive supremacy through technological integration and managed populations.

STOCK	PROGRAM	FIELD PROFILE
Lynx	Operation Puma (2046)	High-reflex, narrow sensory focus. Built for precision extraction and close-quarters contested-zone work.
Eagle	Raptor Initiative (2049)	Aerial superiority reflex, exceptional ranging vision, threat-assessment speed above baseline.
Dire Wolf	AEGIS Black (2051, classified)	Pack-coordinated urban assault. Classified as a disbanded program (see: The Pale Roster).

Special Forces: *Phantom Vipers*. Defining moment: Operation Silent Meridian (2061): extracted a PCU energy researcher from inside a locked Saharan facility in thirty-one minutes, leaving the facility structurally intact and the researcher under the impression she had been on a scheduled inspection tour. Current deployment: classified.

Key Territory:

- **New Chicago:** The NAF's inland administrative capital. Above-ground arcology and belowground federal infrastructure. The Federal Compliance Headquarters building is fourteen stories visible, twenty-two stories not.
- **Lost Angeles:** Western Corridor megacity. Twelve million people. Arcology core and outer districts. Monitor Central AI security. The economic geography that makes Raid Race possible.
- **Gulf Shore Reconstruction Zone:** Post-Prometheus coastal settlements. The part of NAF territory that is still being built.

- **Nova Boston:** East Coast hub. Financial and data-systems administration center. The NAF's most surveilled city.
- **Cascadia Corridor:** Pacific Northwest arcology chain. Geothermal power and cold maritime agriculture. The NAF's most independent-minded regional zone.

On the Ground. You know you are in NAF territory when the air has been through a filter. The water comes in authenticated containers. The ceiling is high enough that the building doesn't feel like it's managing you. That's the arcology. The outer districts are a different calculation: AWH towers past maintenance schedule, Monitor Central drone patrols that respond but don't prevent, DEPOT RATION in the dispensers and nothing else. The gap between the arcology core and the outer ring is not hidden. It is simply accepted as the shape of the city. The acceptance is what NAF security calls "stability."

At the Table. NAF contracts come through three layers of contractor interface before they reach the splice. The actual objective is never in the first briefing. NAF clients are professional about what they don't say, and what they don't say is usually the part that makes the job dangerous. NAF territory is the most surveilled environment on Earth within faction control: Monitor Central sees most things, and the things it doesn't see are the things NAF field operatives are handling directly and off-record. Operating in NAF territory means knowing which cameras are on the network and which ones have been turned to face a wall for the duration.

The Faction's Lie. The NAF believes it is an open society that happens to have robust security infrastructure. The distinction between "robust security" and "totalizing surveillance" is, in the NAF's self-assessment, a question of intent. The outer districts have a different assessment. The outer districts are not asked.

GM Tip. NAF clients will give the splice excellent equipment and poor information. The equipment is good because the NAF has the best logistics network on Earth. The information is poor because telling the splice everything means the splice can make independent decisions, and independent decisions are the one variable the NAF's operational planning cannot model.

Notable. The Monitor Central system in the outer districts of Lost Angeles has been producing alert responses with an average four-minute delay instead of the standard ninety-second response since Q3 2065. NAF Compliance has not publicly acknowledged the delay. Independent analysis by operators working the outer districts puts the delay's origin in a specific subsystem governing the fourth-

floor camera networks of buildings registered to a holding company that does not appear in NAF corporate registry. / The Phantom Vipers have not had a confirmed sighting in fourteen months. / NPC: Compliance Director Maris Vance. She knows what AEGIS Black was. She knows the Pale Roster is still operational. She has not acted on this information, which tells you something about what she's waiting for.

SOUTH COMPACT ALLIANCE

SCA. South Compact Alliance

Doctrine: Biological sovereignty through ecological integration and genetic heritage.

STOCK	PROGRAM	FIELD PROFILE
Jaguar	Project Selva (2045)	Burst-speed pursuit, territorial instinct, exceptional night-vision. Native to Amazonian Metroplex operational environments.
Anaconda	Serpent's Coil (2050)	Constrictive engagement, patience-above-baseline, thermal sensing. Designed for long-duration covert operations.
Caiman	Estuary Guard (2054)	Aquatic integration, armor-density augmentation, aggressive threshold significantly above other SCA stock.

Special Forces: *Selva Legion*. Defining moment: Operation Green Meridian (2062): held the Metropoli Perdida installation against a four-faction convergence for seventy-two hours using a force one-fifth the combined attacker strength, primarily by knowing the terrain better than any faction surveyor had mapped it. Current deployment: Patagonian Basin border enforcement and Metropoli Perdida site security.

Key Territory:

- **The Amazonian Metroplex:** The SCA's industrial and biological heart. A living city system where architecture and ecosystem have been growing together for forty years.
- **Metropoli Perdida:** Deep jungle installation site. The installation that drew seven civilizations. The SCA holds it and has never fully shared what they found inside.

- **São Paulo Arcology:** The SCA's financial and diplomatic center. The most European-feeling city south of the equator.
- **Patagonian Zone:** The world's most productive new-growth zone, contested with the Southern Compact Alliance's independent states on the southern margin.
- **Cartel Coordination Hub (location classified):** The SCA's criminal infrastructure administration. Listed here because pretending it doesn't exist is how operatives get surprised.

On the Ground. The Amazonian Metroplex smells like something alive. It is. The building materials in the Metroplex core are grown rather than manufactured, and the boundary between structure and vegetation has been moving toward "vegetation" for a decade. The humidity is absolute. The bio-mechanical constructs that the SCA fields in autonomous warfare are maintained in the Metroplex root-mass and cannot be removed from it for extended periods without system degradation. Outside the Metroplex, in the contested zones at SCA's borders, you are in cartel territory: the enforcement is visible, the rules are posted, and the enforcement is the rule-posting's only authority.

At the Table. SCA contracts arrive through Cartel Enforcers or through SCA Intelligence Directorate officers who present themselves as independent brokers. The distinction matters because the reporting structures are different. A splice hired by a Cartel Enforcer is working for cartel interests with SCA cover. A splice hired by the Directorate is working for SCA interests through cartel infrastructure. Both will tell you they are independent. The debriefs go to different desks. Jungle terrain in and near the Metroplex is operational hostile regardless of faction alignment: the bio-mechanical autonomous platforms do not have an "allied contractor" recognition protocol, and the terrain's biological complexity means the tactical AI's mapping is always two months out of date.

The Faction's Lie. The SCA believes in biological sovereignty: that the gene-forged are a natural evolution of what humanity chose to become, and that this choice is a kind of heritage rather than a manufacturing decision. The cartel infrastructure that enforces this position does not believe in heritage. It believes in the margin.

GM Tip. SCA territory generates missions from resource conflicts at its margins, but the most interesting SCA missions originate inside the Metroplex. The Metroplex has zones that the SCA's own administrators have not mapped, and things that have been growing there for twenty years without a maintenance schedule or a purpose statement.

Notable. A Selva Legion patrol in the Metropoli Perdida site reported contact with an entity that their operational AI classified as a gene-forged Caiman with a drift profile beyond clinical parameters. The patrol's sergeant put down a different characterization in the paper log that did not match the AI's report. The paper log is in a physical filing cabinet in the Selva Legion's Metropoli Perdida command post. / The cassava algorithm that funds a significant portion of SCA's black market operation has been replicated independently in six cities. The SCA's IP enforcement response has been disproportionate in three of those cities and nonexistent in the other three. / NPC: Cartel Coordinator Valdez Sola. He runs the SCA's gray-market Lumicite logistics through channels that technically violate four Accord provisions. He believes, correctly, that the NAF's counter-operation against him is being run by someone who would rather have him working than arrested.

EASTERN OFFENSIVE

EO. Eastern Offensive

Doctrine: Territorial persistence through population management and attrition doctrine.

STOCK	PROGRAM	FIELD PROFILE
Bear	Medved Project (2043)	Damage absorption, persistence above baseline, bone-density augmentation. The EO's primary combat stock.
Wolf	Volk Initiative (2048)	Pack coordination, pursuit instinct, enhanced cold-environment performance. Secondary to Kavast but present in EO-adjacent programs.
Steppe Eagle	Sokol Program (2052)	High-altitude ranging, exceptional threat-assessment at distance, cold-environment sensory function.

Special Forces: *Iron Veil*. Defining moment: The Tian Shan Hold (2063): maintained a contested installation site against three simultaneous attacker rotations for eleven days without resupply, primarily by eating what the Tian Shan provides and knowing which of it was edible. Current deployment: Eurasian Steppe border enforcement and Granitsa installation monitoring.

Key Territory:

- **Novosibirsk Citadel:** EO administrative capital. A planned city built for the climate that arrived, not the one that left. The most functional planned city on Earth.
- **Kavast Autonomous Zone:** The wolf-lineage breeding and deployment program's administrative territory. Functionally independent within EO governance.
- **Granitsa:** The permafrost border zone. What BAFO monitors. What the EO is not fully candid about regarding what's under the thaw.
- **Eurasian Steppe Corridor:** EO's primary military deployment zone. A thousand miles of open sightlines designed for EO autonomous platform doctrine.
- **Gorodskie Ekho:** The city that rearranged vertically. The Soak, the Current, the Dry. The social credit system's visible architecture.

On the Ground. EO cities are colder than they look on a map. Novosibirsk Citadel runs on a climate management system calibrated for efficiency rather than comfort, and "comfort" in the EO's administrative vocabulary is a resource allocation category rather than a quality of life metric. The social credit system is visible in everything: which tier of water a person's ID card authorizes, which transit platform they use, which food dispensers their card opens. The credit system is not cruel by design. It is mechanical by design. The cruelty is in the gap between the design's intent and the outcomes that occur when circumstances produce a cluster of people with simultaneous low scores in a settlement with limited Tier One capacity.

At the Table. EO contracts are the most straightforward in faction contracting: they say what they mean, they pay what they agreed, and they expect the splice to deliver exactly what the contract specifies. What the contract specifies is frequently not the whole picture, because "deliver the data core" and "deliver the data core without triggering an autonomous platform response" are two different missions and the EO brief rarely names both. EO territory is doctrinally built for EO forces: the autonomous platforms know the terrain, the social credit architecture tracks non-resident movement, and the civilians in EO-administered cities are more likely to report foreign operatives than in any other theater because the credit system makes the report beneficial.

The Faction's Lie. The EO believes its social credit system produces a stable and fair allocation of resources based on citizen contribution to collective stability. The people in the Soak of Gorodskie Ekho believe something else. What the EO calls "stability" is visible from the outside as a particular kind of managed quiet that differs from actual peace in ways the EO's own analytical frameworks are not built to measure.

GM Tip. The firmware problem is most acute in EO territory: autonomous platforms operating on last-valid-order when signal blackouts occur, and signal blackouts in the Eurasian Steppe are a doctrinal tool. If a splice operation requires signal, plan for the EO to cut it, and plan for what the platforms in the area were last ordered to do.

Notable. The Granitsa monitoring reports from the past three months show a twelve percent anomaly in substrate resonance readings that BAFO and EO's own geological monitoring systems have separately flagged and separately declined to publish. / A new variant of the Medved Project bear-stock has been deployed in the Steppe Corridor. Field reports from contractors who encountered it describe a drift profile that Iron Veil's own medics have been brought in to assess. The assessment is classified. / NPC: Iron Veil Commander Ilya Karvonen. He served in the Tian Shan. He has never fully filed his personal observations from Day Eight of the Hold and doesn't intend to start.

PACIFIC COLLECTIVE UNION

PCU. Petro Caliphate Union

Doctrine: Economic integration through energy control and diplomatic leverage.

STOCK	PROGRAM	FIELD PROFILE
Raven	Corvid Initiative (2044)	Sensory augmentation, threat-mapping, network-coordination. The PCU's primary intelligence-gathering stock.
Desert Fox	Fennec Program (2049)	Heat-management above baseline, exceptional hearing in high-ambient-noise environments, pursuit at low water.
Falcon	Shaheen Program (2055)	High-speed attack, aerial instinct, precision strike profile. The PCU's Special Forces stock.

Special Forces: *Shaheen Squadron*. Defining moment: Operation Jade Meridian (2064): disrupted an EO Lumicite convoy operation in the Saharan corridor in thirty minutes, with no PCU casualties and no evidence of PCU involvement that held up in subsequent review. Current deployment: Levantine border enforcement and Red Sea logistics corridor security.

Key Territory:

- **New Aqaba:** The PCU's administrative and financial hub. A closed garden where the temperature is kept at nineteen degrees and the plants are real. The most deliberately beautiful administrative city on Earth.
- **Riyadh Arcology:** Energy administration center. The concentrated solar array network's operational headquarters.
- **East African Coast:** PCU's primary projection theater for sub-Saharan and Indian Ocean operations.
- **Saharan Oasis Network:** The greening zone under PCU development. Territory in active ecological transition that the PCU administers as sovereign and others contest as unresolved.
- **Levantine Corridor:** The most diplomatically complex PCU territory. Adjacent to Brotherhood of Shadows operational zones. Historically contested, currently under PCU management through agreements nobody wants to characterize precisely.

On the Ground. PCU administrative districts smell of treated water and managed climate. The Honor Guards are visible, polite, and have access to Raven-lineage tracker teams in high-priority situations. The Levantine border zones are where the polite stops: the PCU in the Levant is a different posture than the PCU in New Aqaba, and operators who treat the two as the same faction are making a mistake

that the Honor Guards will not correct until it's relevant. In the Saharan greening zone, the PCU is present in ways that are not fully documented in the Accords: survey teams under academic cover, infrastructure development ahead of sovereignty claims, and BAFO field teams that the PCU has not expelled because the expense of expelling them would require acknowledging why.

At the Table. PCU contracts are diplomatically precise and operationally ambiguous. The brief will specify the objective and the acceptable methods. The acceptable methods will be listed in order of diplomatic preference rather than operational effectiveness. A splice that delivers the objective through unacceptable methods will be paid, debriefed, and quietly blacklisted. A splice that delivers the objective through acceptable methods at higher cost will be recommended. The PCU's Honor Guard infrastructure is excellent for client escorts and terrible as opposition: highly protocol-bound and effectively ambushable by any splice willing to exploit the protocol boundary.

The Faction's Lie. The PCU believes it is the faction most committed to long-term stability through energy management and diplomatic equilibrium. The Levantine corridor's management history suggests that "equilibrium" is a term the PCU applies to arrangements that benefit the PCU, renamed to sound structural. The Brotherhood of Shadows' Scholar Wing has notes on this.

GM Tip. PCU intelligence operations use Raven-lineage operators who have been on station long enough to know every informant network in their area. A splice operating in PCU territory that makes contact with local networks will, within 48 hours, be known to the Raven-lineage station officer. What the station officer does with that knowledge depends on what the splice's job overlaps with.

Notable. A PCU Raven-lineage station officer in the Saharan oasis zone has been filing reports that describe BAFO activity at three sites that the PCU's official position classifies as unregistered. The reports are accurate. The PCU's response has been to reclassify the sites rather than acknowledge the activity. / The Red Sea aquaculture system's AI management has been producing anomalous routing decisions that direct processing capacity away from the standard distribution network three nights per month, on a schedule that correlates with no known maintenance protocol. / NPC: Honor Guard Commandant Samar al-Rashid. She has operational authority in the Levantine corridor and uses it. She has a working relationship with the Brotherhood's Military Wing that neither party acknowledges officially and both parties find useful.

PACIFIC RIM COLLECTIVE

PRC. Pacific Rim Collective

Doctrine: Technological supremacy through human-machine integration and collective intelligence.

STOCK	PROGRAM	FIELD PROFILE
Tiger	Hu Initiative (2046)	Predatory instinct, ambush reflex, exceptional burst-speed over short range.
Orangutan	Dextrous-Hand (2051)	Enhanced fine-motor control and problem-solving speed. Built for technical infiltration.
Shark	Haiyang Program (2055)	Aquatic integration, pressure-tolerance, lateral line sensory augmentation. Indo-Pacific theater specialist.

Special Forces: *Jade Prism*. Defining moment: Operation Mirror Lake (2065): infiltrated a NAF research installation, copied four petabytes of Lumicite processing data, and replaced it with an identical dataset differing from the original in seventeen parameters that took NAF researchers nine months to identify. Current deployment: Indo-Pacific corridor and deep-cover operations in NAF Western Corridor.

Key Territory:

- **Singapore Node:** The PRC's administrative center. The most connected city on Earth by fiber density. Data moves faster here than anywhere except the GCOA's AI infrastructure.
- **Neo-Tokyo:** Twelve million above ground. Classified research four levels below. The PRC's primary research and development theater.
- **Java Scatter:** The archipelago that didn't survive the sea rise whole. Sovereignty determined by water control between the pieces. The PRC controls the water.
- **Indo-Pacific Corridor:** The PRC's primary trade and military projection lane. The sea routes that move sixty percent of the world's manufactured goods.
- **Korean Peninsula:** PRC-administered zone. The EO has opinions about this administration that the two factions resolve through quarterly diplomatic communications that are never published.

On the Ground. PRC cities are loud in specific ways: the systems are visible, the displays are always on, the infrastructure announces its status because the infrastructure's status matters to everyone who depends on it. The cybernetic combat systems the PRC fields blur the line between machine and operator because the PRC's doctrine considers the distinction unnecessary. This has produced a civilian population that is more comfortable with machine integration than any other faction's civilian base, and an operator corps that is measurably faster in human-machine team operations and measurably slower in unaugmented individual performance. Outside PRC core territory, in the Java Scatter and the Indo-Pacific contested zones, the PRC is present as a naval fact rather than a governance structure, and what that means for ground operations depends on how far from the water you are.

At the Table. PRC operational briefs are technically precise and strategically ambitious. The splice will be asked to do something smaller than the PRC actually wants, the smaller thing will reveal the larger thing, and the larger thing will be what the PRC's actual client has been after from the beginning. The PRC's data infrastructure is excellent and unhelpful in the same proportion: excellent because they have collected everything, unhelpful because the system provides everything relevant plus everything tangentially related, and filtering the relevant from the tangential is a time cost the brief doesn't account for.

The Faction's Lie. The PRC believes in collective intelligence: that the best outcomes emerge from coordinated human-machine decision-making at scale. The PRC's coordination systems produce excellent aggregate decisions and terrible individual ones, and the operators who work inside them have learned to route around the aggregate when the individual decision is the one that saves the splice. They do not document when they do this.

GM Tip. PRC intelligence is the most comprehensive in the setting and the most dangerous to possess: if a splice has PRC-sourced data on a target, the PRC knows the splice has it, knew the splice would receive it, and has an opinion about what the splice will do with it that may or may not match what the splice intends.

Notable. The Neo-Tokyo Sub-3 level has had three consecutive maintenance windows extended without explanation. The Sub-3 level is where the PRC's classified research runs. The maintenance window extensions correspond to periods of elevated substrate resonance readings at the Metropoli Perdida and Granitsa sites

simultaneously. The PRC has not acknowledged this correlation in any document that has reached external analysis. / The Jade Prism's current deployment includes a long-term embed in a Syndicate-affiliated contractor network that the NAF has been trying to map for two years. / NPC: Jade Prism Controller Xu Lin. She has not deployed a team in nine months. She has been recruiting individually. The team she is building now is not for any mission that appears in any current brief.

VOID WALKERS

No doctrine. This is operational instinct elevated to strategic position.

The Void Walkers are not a faction. They have no territory, no chain of command, no acknowledged membership, and no stated objective. They have been operationally documented since 2052, when three separate incident reports from three separate theaters referenced the same operational signature. The cross-reference that identified the signature took two years. By the time it was published, the Void Walkers had been operational for at least five.

What is documented: The Void Walkers operate in contested zones and installation sites. Their operations do not fit standard contract mission profiles: they are not extracting resources, not securing territory, not protecting clients. They are accessing specific categories of information and specific categories of locations. The information categories overlap with Architect-era documentation and pre-Upheaval research archives. The location categories overlap with the Lumicite installation network and sites identified in BAFO's mapping work.

Composition: Every documented Void Walker team has been multi-faction in gene-forged composition. Equipment is cross-faction, modified beyond recognition. They operate without faction supply chain support. What they use, they source independently, and they source it well enough to sustain multi-month operations in environments where the logistics are genuinely difficult. This suggests infrastructure. The infrastructure has no address.

The Pale Roster connection: The Pale Roster is a disbanded NAF gene-forged unit, Dire Wolf stock, officially decommissioned following an incident eight years ago. Still operational. Takes private contracts. The NAF's decommissioning paperwork is real. The operators are not decommissioned. Intel pattern analysis from three independent contractor networks has placed Pale Roster operational signatures in proximity to Void Walker documented sites in overlapping timeframes. No faction analyst will commit the correlation to paper in an official document.

The Prometheus League connection: The Prometheus League, one of the most documented opposition forces in the setting, operated on ideological ground that overlaps with Void Walker operational patterns. The Brotherhood has a file. Faction analysts who have cross-referenced Void Walker patterns against Prometheus League records from the 2030s and 2040s have noted structural similarities in the targeting logic. Nobody in an official capacity will commit this to paper, because committing it to paper requires acknowledging that the pattern exists across forty years, which is not the pattern of an organization. It is the pattern of a program.

Their equipment is the most identifiable thing about them: cross-faction, pulled from multiple supply chains and modified beyond recognition. What they know about the world's infrastructure, they learned from the inside. There is historical precedent. The Prometheus League operated on the same ideological ground. The Brotherhood has a file.

At the Table: The Void Walkers are the campaign question. They are not antagonists by default. They are actors with objectives that the splice doesn't understand yet. The moment the splice understands what the Void Walkers are actually doing, the campaign's surface game has become the deep game.

THE SPLICE: HOW FACTIONS WORK AT THE TABLE

The five major factions provide the mission economy. They set the objectives, fund the operations, and hold the political architecture that makes the operator's work meaningful. They are also, without exception, lying about something in every brief they write.

The gap between doctrine and reality is where the splice operates. The NAF's doctrine says "managed populations through adaptive technology." The reality is a surveillance infrastructure whose data the NAF cannot fully process, running against a population it cannot fully manage, in territory whose outer districts have been operating outside the doctrine's assumptions for fifteen years. The doctrine is real. So is the gap.

Faction contracts arrive through layers. The person who writes the brief is not the person who wants the objective. The person who wants the objective is not the person who will receive the splice's debrief. The person who receives the debrief will make a decision based on it that will appear in the next mission's context, unattributed. Playing a faction-contracted splice means developing an instinct for which layer you are talking to and what each layer needs the objective to look like when it's done.

Gene-forged operators in the player splice are not faction members, even if their stock comes from a faction program. Augment Tag selection works like class selection and specialization selection: you choose what serves your build. A wolf-lineage player operator is not Kavast. A raven-lineage player operator is not Protectorate. The tie exists in the operator's history, not their current affiliation. What they are now is the splice.

Faction NPC forces are mono-type by design. Kavast fields wolf cohorts. The Protectorate fields raven flights. EO fields bear formations. When the splice faces a mono-type force, they are seeing state military culture's expression. Their own mixed composition is the visible rebuke. This contrast is load-bearing: don't flatten it. When a mono-type enemy force includes an anomalous member of a different stock, something unusual is happening. That's a signal. Read it.

The faction the splice works for is not the faction they trust. Trust is a different calculation from contract. Faction contracts pay well because they are dangerous in ways the brief doesn't fully disclose. The operators who have been working long enough to develop faction-specific trust have been working long enough to develop specific, evidence-based opinions about what that trust is worth and what it costs.

07/

NON-ALIGNED AND INDEPENDENT

Not everyone picked a side. Some of them are more dangerous for it.

NON-ALIGNED AND INDEPENDENT

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THE INDEPENDENT POWERS

Six power structures that chose neither faction alignment nor dissolution. Their independence is not neutrality. Independence in Earth 2066 is a strategic position that must be actively maintained, usually against one or more factions that would prefer it to resolve into something they can manage.

Nordic Alliance (Nordics). Population 28 million across Scandinavia, Finland, and Iceland. The Nordics are not neutral. They are independent, which is a different thing requiring active maintenance. Their geothermal and cold fusion energy infrastructure makes them strategically indispensable: every faction needs something from a nation that runs on energy sources only they fully control. The Nordics leverage this with surgical precision. Access to cold fusion research is the currency they spend carefully and only once with each faction. They have been approached by all five major factions for cold fusion licensing. They have declined all five, in different ways, for different stated reasons, leaving each faction with the impression that the door might open if the circumstances changed appropriately. The circumstances are managed to never change quite enough.

At the Table: the Nordics take contracts selectively and through intermediaries. A splice working a Nordic-sourced contract should assume the client has examined the splice's full operational history and knows more about their capabilities than the brief implies. The Nordics do not contract work they expect to go badly. They contract work they have assessed as viable, using operators they have assessed as sufficient. Being selected is not a compliment; it is a technical evaluation result.

Notable: the Nordic geothermal monitoring network produces readings that correlate with the Granitsa substrate anomaly BAFO has been tracking. The Nordics have not shared this data with BAFO, EO, or any faction. They have had it for eleven months.

African Cooperation Union (ACU). Forty-six member states, variable governance quality, unified primarily by the Lakefire Corridor resource administration framework and the shared position that neither the EO nor the PCU should control the Congo Basin's water table. The ACU's military capacity is modest by faction standards and comprehensive by contested zone standards: they have been fighting border resource conflicts for forty years and the operators they produce have instincts that faction-trained forces lack. Lake Tanganyika's amber glow at night is documented in the ACU's environmental reports as bioluminescence. The environmental reports are maintained by the same department that maintains the ACU's Lakefire Corridor monitoring records. Both departments are very careful about what they cross-reference.

At the Table: ACU contracts pay in mixed currencies and frequently in kind, and what "in kind" means is worth understanding before the contract is signed. An ACU client who offers three months of regional intelligence access in lieu of one payment tranche is offering something that is either worth much more than the tranche or much less, and the difference is determined by what's in that specific region's intelligence at the moment the access begins.

Notable: the Lakefire Corridor's amber glow has been intensifying incrementally for eight months. The ACU's public statement attributes this to algal bloom fluctuation. The Null Chorus archive contains a different explanation sourced from a contact inside the ACU environmental monitoring division. The Null Chorus has made the explanation available to three parties. One of them is BAFO. BAFO has not responded.

Pacific Free Zone (PFZ). A maritime sovereignty compact covering seventeen island groups and three coastal city-states. Exists primarily to ensure that the PRC's Indo-Pacific corridor doesn't become a PRC monopoly. The PFZ's operational capacity is its port infrastructure: every faction needs PFZ ports to move goods through the Indo-Pacific, and the PFZ knows it. They do not field gene-forged military programs. They contract them, at rates that reflect exactly how much leverage they have over every faction's logistics chain simultaneously.

UCR (United Coastal Republic). The NAF's Atlantic-facing independent neighbor. Forty million people along the Eastern Seaboard's rebuilt coastal margin. The UCR exists because the NAF's consolidation of post-Cascade North America deliberately left the Atlantic coastal states outside the Federation structure, calculating

that independent buffer states were more useful than incorporated territory. The UCR has been making the NAF regret this calculation for fifteen years. Defector Alley in UCR District 4 is the single highest-density defector-broker environment on Earth.

Southern Compact Alliance (SC). Not the SCA. A forty-nation compact below the Tropic of Capricorn (outside SCA territory) that controls the Antarctic Peninsula research access, the Patagonian water table, and the world's largest remaining clean water reserve. The Southern Compact Alliance has a forty-year reserve estimate for their Patagonian glacier water. That estimate was revised downward by the SC's own modeling in 2058. The revised estimate has not been published. At current faction extraction rates, the timeline ends in twenty-two years, not forty. Every faction knows this. The Southern Compact Alliance knows the factions know. The negotiation over what happens at year twenty-two has been running informally since 2059 and formally since 2062 and has produced no framework that the SC considers acceptable and no framework that any faction considers binding.

Nordics Arcology Extension (SNF/NZS). The New Zealand and Swiss Confederation independent states have formal Nordics partnership agreements that provide mutual defense assurances in exchange for specific technology access agreements. Effectively Nordic-aligned without the formal membership. The SNF's banking infrastructure is the most secure financial system on Earth. It is secure because every faction uses it, and every faction uses it because it is secure, and the circularity has held for thirty years.

IPFZ (Irradiated Preservation and Free Zone). Fourteen warheads were detonated in the IPFZ territory during the worst period of the Cascade. What remained learned to survive it. The people in the IPFZ now number approximately six hundred thousand, organized around the specific knowledge of how to live in an irradiated environment. They have things that no other population on Earth has: forty years of operational data on long-term human adaptation to elevated radiation, a landscape that all factions consider worthless and therefore leave alone, and the particular social structures that develop in a community with no external support and high mortality rates for the first generation. Operators who work IPFZ missions work alone because the IPFZ's own population is the only reliable contact network, and that network operates on trust criteria that take time to establish.

GCOA (Global Collective Operations Authority). The post-Cascade attempt at a multilateral security framework. Operational through 2104. The Sons of the Serpent destroyed the Lunar Industrial Complex in 2104 to prove they could reach the GCOA's highest-priority asset. The LIC evacuation records are incomplete. Someone left with something. The GCOA's current operational status is contested in the relevant jurisdictions and functional on the ground, in the way that an organization with physical assets, trained personnel, and institutional knowledge remains functional despite the destruction of its most visible installation.

THE UNSO TRAVELER

A 400-meter generation ship in low Earth orbit. Launched in 2024. Returned in 2059 after what its crew calls "the transit" and what historians call a 36-year isolation event.

History: The Traveler launched under the United Nations Space Operations framework before the framework's host organization dissolved. Six hundred people, selected for cognitive and physical diversity rather than gene-forged capability, intended to establish a precedent for long-duration space habitation. What the 2024 mission planning did not anticipate: the Upheaval occurring during the transit period, the collapse of the UNSO framework that launched them, and 36 years in isolation during which the six hundred people and their descendants built a functioning society with no input from anyone on the surface.

The three zones:

Outer Hull. The Aberrant gene-forged fauna occupy the outer hull in numbers nobody anticipated. Animals engineered before launch, 36 years of isolated evolution without human oversight, now organized into something that the Traveler's biologists call "an active ecological system" and that faction analysts who have tried to access the outer hull call "the thing that keeps us out." The Aberrant fauna have built structures in the maintenance corridors. The structures are not random. The Traveler's biologists have not published their assessment of what the structures are for.

Mid-Sphere. The inhabited sections. Six hundred people plus the descendants born in transit, now numbering approximately nine hundred. They have their own governance structure, their own legal frameworks, their own economic system based on resources available in transit. They are, by every technical definition, a sovereign entity. They understand this. They are also nine hundred people surrounded by five factions who each want different things from them, and they have been watching those factions try to acquire leverage for seven years.

Inner Core. The Cold Fusion reactor. The most significant non-Lumicite energy technology on Earth. The PRC has tried to access the engineering documentation three times. The NAF has offered a research partnership four times. The EO made one offer and, when it was declined, attempted a different approach that the Traveler's security systems logged and that Captain Finn-Adelaide referenced in a public statement without specifying which faction. The Inner Core is physically inaccessible to outside parties. The Traveler built it that way. They knew what they had when they returned.

Captain Reeves Finn-Adelaide. The Traveler-born captain of a ship launched before she was born. She has never been on Earth. She has spoken to representatives of all five factions, the Brotherhood of Shadows, the Syndicate, and two independent researchers. She has the specific quality of someone who has never met a person who could threaten her and found that condition comfortable.

Factions' objectives: - **NAF:** Reactor technology. Will pay in access, resources, and protection. Has not been asked what protection means from an orbital position. - **PRC:** Computational architecture. The Traveler's AI systems have been running on isolated hardware for 36 years and may have developed methodologies the PRC's integrated systems have not. - **EO:** Extraction rights. They want the Traveler grounded, the reactor accessed, and the Aberrant fauna catalogued. In that order. - **The Travelers:** To survive the factions' interest. They have been doing this for seven years and have not yet made a commitment that would end their negotiating position.

AT THE TABLE: Operators who treat a Traveler mission as a standard extraction or access job will not survive first contact with the outer hull. The Traveler is a location with active ecological hazards, nine hundred people who have been managing factions for seven years, and a captain who has more information about every operator who has made contact with the ship than any of those operators know she has.

VECTOR GROUP

A privatized Foreign Materiel Exploitation contractor. Not a faction. Not a PMC. A materiel intelligence services firm with rotating contracts and a self-image as the most professional independent operation in the setting.

Origin: The founders took the institutional knowledge of three FME programs whose host governments didn't survive the Cascade and went private in 2057. They brought one thing that governments couldn't replicate at speed: the physical filing cabinet of classified histories. Not digitized. Not networked. A physical cabinet in a physical room in a physical facility, holding the operational history of three decades of foreign materiel exploitation that was never transferred to the faction systems because the transfer didn't complete before the governments dissolved.

What they do: Vector Group assesses captured or recovered technology from all faction supply chains, identifies provenance, maps supply chain vulnerabilities, and produces intelligence reports for whoever is paying the current contract rate. They are careful about conflict-of-interest: they will take contracts from NAF and PCU simultaneously if the contracts do not produce directly conflicting intelligence. The definition of "directly conflicting" is Vector Group's determination to make.

The Technology Zoo: A curated inventory of operational materiel from every faction, maintained in the Reclamation Yard with the same institutional precision as a museum collection. Every item is catalogued, provenanced, assessed, and cross-referenced with Vector Group's operational intelligence database. The collection includes items that faction engineering teams have concluded were destroyed. Some of those items are in the Zoo because Vector Group found them before the factions' forensic teams did. Vector Group has not volunteered this information.

At the Table: Vector Group contracts are technically precise and operationally specific. They know what they are asking for because they have assessed the mission environment before posting the contract. A splice who returns with exactly what the brief specified will receive exactly what the contract promised and a follow-up contract within sixty days. A splice who returns with something the brief didn't specify will receive exactly what the contract promised, a thorough debrief, and a follow-up contract posted specifically around whatever they found.

CONSORTIUM HALCYON

A pre-Upheaval data company that survived the Document Wars because they organized significant portions of them.

This is a fact that is not in public record. It is in the Null Chorus archive, in three separate recovered fragments from the Document Wars targeting lists, and in the scholar Wing of the Brotherhood's private files. The fact has not been published because publishing it requires explaining what was on the targeting lists, and the targeting lists describe a coordinated operation to destroy specific categories of knowledge that the public record attributes to opportunistic wartime destruction.

What Halcyon presents: A data preservation and brokerage company with forty years of operational history. They held physical archives through the Document Wars. They digitized and preserved records that would otherwise have been lost. They provide data brokerage services to faction research programs, universities, and independent researchers. Their fee structure is transparent. Their client list is not.

What Halcyon is: The organization that decided which knowledge survived the Document Wars. Knowledge accessible to everyone is knowledge that cannot be brokered. Halcyon's business model depends on the fragmentation the Document Wars created. Their interest in the Lumericite installation network is not academic: they hold fragments of pre-Upheaval knowledge that, assembled correctly, would allow someone to understand what the Dawnlight installations were actually built to do. Halcyon has been careful not to assemble the fragments in a way that would require them to understand this themselves.

Null Chorus' position: Fifteen years of Document Wars fragment recovery. The Null Chorus archive contains data that Halcyon believes was fully destroyed in three operations between 2029 and 2034. Halcyon's acquisition attempts, legal, then extralegal, against the Null Chorus have been documented by the Null Chorus in a file that is itself held in an archive location that Halcyon has not located. The file is available to operators who ask the right person the right question at Defector Alley.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SHADOWS

No stated founding date. No public membership list. No formal organizational structure visible from outside. The oldest continuous intelligence organization in the setting.

Scholar Wing: Historians, researchers, and analysts who have spent decades assembling pre-Upheaval knowledge fragments. They have been doing this longer than BAFO has existed and through methodologies that BAFO cannot access. Their archive contains more complete ECHO program records than BAFO's official holdings. The Scholar Wing knows this. BAFO suspects this. Neither organization has made formal contact because both would have to explain the relationship on the record, and the record is not something either can afford.

At the Table: if the Scholar Wing contacts the splice, they have something specific they need done and they have assessed the splice as the right tool for it. They will not explain the full context. The full context is the campaign thread. What they will explain is sufficient to complete the specific task they need done, and the task will reveal a context the slice didn't have before.

Military Wing: Operates in contested zones and installation sites. Gene-forged capable. Their operational targets are primarily information-adjacent: they access locations that have things the Scholar Wing needs, and they remove threats to the Scholar Wing's ongoing work. They have a file on the Void Walkers and a working theory about the Prometheus League connection that the Scholar Wing has reviewed and declined to act on. The Military Wing has its own opinion about what "act on" should mean.

BAFO relationship: The Scholar Wing has had contact with BAFO field operatives in three documented incidents. After the second incident, BAFO's internal file on the Brotherhood was reclassified to a clearance level that the field operatives who made contact do not hold. After the third incident, a BAFO senior analyst filed a request to formally acknowledge the relationship. The request was denied. The analyst is now on long-term research assignment in the Antarctic Peninsula.

At the Table: If the Brotherhood is at a location, something is buried there worth finding. The Scholar Wing's archive may contain a more complete installation map than any faction possesses. The Military Wing would rather destroy that map than let a faction inherit it. The splice that finds itself between these two positions has found a campaign-defining choice.

THE SYNDICATE AND SHINKAI

Baroness Volstok and The Syndicate. The Syndicate is the world's largest independent criminal organization, running the most comprehensive neutral brokerage network on Earth. The Syndicate does not take sides in faction conflicts. The Syndicate takes percentages.

Volstok holds coordinates for at least six Lumicite installation sites that no faction has publicly identified. She sells access. She does not sell coordinates. The distinction is specific: a faction that buys access controls the approach to the site. The Syndicate controls the record of who went there, when, and what they found. The record is the leverage. Volstok's position in the deep game is not ideological. It is infrastructural.

What she won't sell: installation location coordinates. What she holds as leverage: information about every faction's operation through the Syndicate network, including operations the factions conducted with Syndicate cooperation that the factions have not disclosed internally. What she will trade for: access she doesn't currently have, in categories she will specify when the trade becomes relevant.

Commandant Sable and Shinkai. The only neutral ground that matters at the operator level. The rules are physical and enforced: no violence on the premises, no surveillance equipment of any kind, no recording of any kind, and no fraction of a second's ambiguity about what happens to someone who breaks these rules. Sable enforces the rules personally. Sable also records everything through systems the rules do not technically prohibit, because the rules prohibit recording equipment and Sable's methods do not use equipment that the rules' language encompasses.

The neutrality is a product and Sable is the vendor. Shinkai's value is the trust that every party places in it, and the trust is maintained because Sable's enforcement record is perfect and Sable's personal information-brokerage record is conducted exclusively outside the premises and with parties who understand they are receiving information sourced from a neutral venue. The Deep Room is where information that cannot be discussed under any other roof is discussed. Access to the

Deep Room requires Sable's specific invitation. Sable has extended this invitation to seven parties in the past three years. Three of them are currently in active faction protective custody for reasons that were not anticipated when the invitation was extended.

08/

OPPOSITION FORCES

The things that live in the margins. The people who answer to no one.

OPPOSITION FORCES AND INDEPENDENT OPERATORS

The things that live in the margins. The people who answer to no one.

OPPOSITION FORCES

Seven organizations operating outside faction and independent power structures. None of them chose the margins by default. They chose the margins because the margins are where what they want to do is possible.

Heralds of the Storm. Environmental extremist network. Operational across all major theaters, with concentrations in climate-critical zones: the Saharan greening margin, the Patagonian water table, the Antarctic Peninsula. The Heralds consider the faction structure the primary ongoing cause of ecological harm and have adopted a doctrine of infrastructure targeting that aims to produce consequences sufficient to change faction behavior. Their operational record includes four major infrastructure attacks and fourteen smaller ones. The four major attacks produced consequences the Heralds described as intended. They also produced civilian casualties that the Heralds describe as regrettable. The regret is documented. The doctrine has not changed.

Threat level: High, within their operational scope. Outside climate-critical zones, the Heralds are a tactical nuisance. Inside those zones, they have local knowledge, established cache networks, and a network of civilian sympathizers who consider the Heralds' regrettable civilian casualties preferable to the faction structure's ongoing ecological harm. Arguing with this position requires engaging with its premises.

AT THE TABLE: Heralds operatives in a theater represent a complication for the surface game: if the splice's mission touches infrastructure the Heralds have flagged, expect an encounter at the worst moment. Heralds contacts can be cultivated, but their cooperation is conditional on the splice's operational objectives not conflicting with the Heralds' target list. The target list is not available in advance.

Sons of the Serpent. Ideologically post-nationalist, operationally systematic. The Sons believe the faction structure has extended the Upheaval's harm by institutionalizing resource competition rather than resolving it. Their response is to target the infrastructure of institutional power at maximum-visibility moments. The LIC destruction in 2104 was their most ambitious operation. It was not their first operation at that scale. It was the first one that succeeded fully.

Threat level: Extreme. The Sons do not make tactical errors at the operational level. They make strategic choices that look like errors until the pattern becomes visible. By the time a faction identifies the Sons as relevant to a situation, the Sons have already completed the relevant phase of their operation.

AT THE TABLE: The Sons are not random actors. If they appear in a campaign, they are there for a reason that the splice doesn't know yet. That reason is the campaign thread. Do not introduce the Sons as opposition unless you are prepared to let the splice discover what they were actually after.

Null Collective. A decentralized network of gene-forged operators who have concluded that state gene-forging programs are, functionally, a form of enslavement that needs to end rather than regulate. Their operations target gene-forging infrastructure: breeding programs, genomic registration databases, program files. They do not target operators. They target the systems that created operators without the operators' consent. This position is principled and contested. It is contested primarily by the factions whose program infrastructure is being targeted.

Threat level: Moderate. The Null Collective's network security is exceptional and their operational security is a liability: they communicate in ways that prioritize ideology-compatible messaging over operational discipline. Factions that have penetrated Null Collective cells have found that the cell's members know more about each other's positions than their operational security can protect.

AT THE TABLE: A splice with gene-forged members may find the Null Collective's mission resonant and operationally useful. The Null Collective provides intelligence on faction gene-forging programs that is difficult to source elsewhere. Their cooperation is conditional on the splice not actively supporting the gene-forging program infrastructure the Collective is trying to dismantle.

Apex Predators. Freelance operators who decided that the ethical constraints of contract work were an inefficiency and stopped enforcing them on themselves. The Apex Predators take any contract from any client for any objective if the rate is sufficient. Their operational record includes three confirmed civilian atrocities and fourteen operations that produced civilian casualties the Apex Predators' after-action reports classify as "acceptable operational byproduct." This is a self-classification. The parties who sustained the casualties classify it differently.

Threat level: High. The Apex Predators are competent operators with no restraint structure. In a theater where they are contracted against the splice's objectives, they are a serious tactical threat. They are not a strategic threat because they have no strategic goals: they are for hire, which means they are also re-hireable if the rate changes.

AT THE TABLE: The Apex Predators are the faction system's most embarrassing truth made operational: the operator market, without ethical framework, produces this. Missions that put the splice in direct competition with Apex Predators are combat encounters. Missions that put the splice in potential conflict with Apex Predators are negotiation encounters, if the splice is willing to have that conversation.

Menagerie. An organization of gene-forged operators who have, in various ways, moved beyond the template the programs designed. Some have undergone unauthorized augmentation. Some have experienced template drift to a degree that the programs' descriptions no longer match their actual capabilities. Some were built outside any program, in Amazonian Metroplex root-mass labs or Neo-Tokyo sub-level clinics, from templates that were not authorized and instructions that were not factory documentation. They are not a unified organization: they are a loose network of people whose primary common characteristic is that no faction program claims them and no faction wants to admit they exist.

Threat level: Variable. A Menagerie member encountered in the field may be a valuable information source on unauthorized augmentation, an unreliable contractor with exceptional capabilities, or something that the field-assessment tools the splice carries are not calibrated to assess. Factor this into your assessment before contact.

AT THE TABLE: Menagerie NPCs are the permission structure for every unusual gene-forged figure in the setting. Something exists that no program built and no faction owns? Menagerie covers it. They are also the closest thing the setting has to a population of people actively experiencing what the Lumenfeld layer predicts: gene-forged operators whose drift has moved outside program parameters, in ways that the Menagerie network is quietly documenting.

Shadowhand Syndicate. Not the Syndicate. A criminal network operating in the specific gap between the Syndicate's legitimate brokerage operations and the operations the Syndicate considers too visible to directly manage. The Shadowhand does what the Syndicate would rather not document. The Syndicate knows this. The Syndicate's position on the Shadowhand is that the Shadowhand is an independent organization with which the Syndicate has no formal relationship. This position is maintained with the specific care of people who understand that the relationship's documentation is more useful than its denial.

Threat level: Moderate. The Shadowhand is not military in its operations. It is logistical and informational. Its threat is contextual: the Shadowhand controls access to specific categories of gray market goods and information channels that the splice may depend on, and it can close that access without warning.

Prometheus League. The oldest opposition organization in the setting. Founded before the Upheaval, reorganized during the Cascade, still operational in some form that no faction analysis has fully mapped. The Prometheus League's founding ideology holds that the substrate signal is real, that human institutions have consistently failed to respond to it appropriately, and that the appropriate response requires action outside any institutional framework. This ideology is documented from the 1940s. Whether the current Prometheus League shares it, has developed it, or has abandoned it in favor of something more specific is the question that makes the League more dangerous than its operational profile suggests.

Threat level: Classified. The data to assess the Prometheus League's current threat level has not been assembled by any faction analysis, because assembling it requires cross-referencing records from three different classification systems that do not communicate. The Brotherhood has assembled part of it. The Null Chorus has another part. BAFO has a third part. None of the three has shared with the others.

THE PALE ROSTER

A disbanded NAF gene-forged unit. Dire Wolf stock. Officially decommissioned following an incident eight years ago. Still operational.

The decommissioning paperwork is real. Every form was filed correctly by NAF administrative personnel who understood they were filing a decommissioning. The operators are not decommissioned. What happened between the incident and the current operational status of the Pale Roster is a gap in the record that three separate NAF Compliance investigations have examined and none have explained in a way that was published.

What they take: Private contracts. The clients are not public. The Syndicate's network has brokered at least two Pale Roster contracts in the past eighteen months, through blind channels, at rates that reflect a team whose operational capabilities are exceptional and whose discretion has a documented record.

What they know: The incident that generated the decommissioning paperwork involved a classified installation site and a discovery that the after-action report describes in language that the version of the report accessible at general clearance level does not match the version accessible at flag-level clearance. The flag-level version is in three places. One is in BAFO's archive. One is in the Brotherhood Scholar Wing's files. One is in a filing cabinet in a NAF facility that is currently staffed by people who do not know the filing cabinet's contents.

Intel overlap with Void Walkers: Three separate contractor network analyses have placed Pale Roster operational signatures in proximity to Void Walker documented sites in overlapping timeframes. No faction analyst will commit this correlation to paper in an official document. The Brotherhood has committed it to paper in a document that is not official.

NULL CHORUS

A hacktivist collective operating beneath the Cyber Syndicate's public-facing operations.

Data-recovery specialists. Pre-Upheaval archive access through methods that the Null Chorus has declined to document for third parties. They have been recovering Document Wars-era fragments for fifteen years through degraded archive sources that Consortium Halcyon believed were fully destroyed. The fact that these sources still exist, in forms the Null Chorus can access, means either that Halcyon's destruction operation was incomplete or that the Null Chorus has access methods that weren't anticipated when the operation ran.

Ideological position: The Null Chorus believes that the knowledge suppressed in the Document Wars belongs to everyone, and that the harm caused by its suppression is ongoing and measurable. This position has produced fifteen years of archive recovery work and three confrontations with Halcyon acquisition teams that the Null Chorus has documented thoroughly and Halcyon has not acknowledged.

What they hold: The most complete surviving record of the Document Wars' targeting categories, sourced from recovered fragments rather than from any single document. Enough of the Lumenfeld ECHO records to raise the questions that BAFO has been circling without naming. The Gutter Bible Quarterly distribution network, which is separate from the Null Chorus formally and operationally adjacent to it in practice.

THE IRREGULARS

Operators who work in the gap between faction law enforcement and the black market. They take cases the system won't touch. They solve crimes the system created.

The Irregulars are not an organization. They are a professional category. Individual Irregulars are former faction operators, former law enforcement analysts, gene-forged investigators with specific capabilities, and baseline operators who developed the specific kind of local knowledge that makes the gap between faction authority and actual crime legible.

What they investigate:

AI and Surveillance Crimes in contested zones where no faction has jurisdiction to care. Gene-Forging Crimes involving operators whose former programs don't want the investigation's conclusions published. Resource Crimes where the supply chain being traced connects to a faction operation that the faction would rather not trace. Data Crimes where the data being recovered would embarrass someone with enough authority to make the investigation inconvenient. Political Crimes that are, in the Irregulars' experience, the category that usually turns out to be something else.

At the Table: Irregulars are the best local contacts in contested zones. They know the crime geography the faction briefings don't include. They are not for hire: they take cases based on their own assessment of what needs doing, and their fee structure is negotiable in ways that depend entirely on whether the splice's operational objectives align with a case they are already working.

SPECIAL FORCES REFERENCE TABLE

All named units across all factions. The people operators recognize by callsign and negotiate with by reputation.

UNIT	FAC-TION	GENE-FORGED STOCK	DEFINING MOMENT	CURRENT STATUS
Phantom Vipers	NAF	Lynx	Operation Silent Meridian (2061): PCU researcher extracted without awareness of extraction	Not sighted in 14 months. Classified status.
Selva Legion	SCA	Jaguar	Metropoli Perdida Hold (2062): Four-faction convergence held with one-fifth the combined attacker strength	Metropoli Perdida site security and Patagonian border.
Iron Veil	EO	Bear	Tian Shan Hold (2063): Eleven days without resupply against successive attacker rotations	Steppe Corridor and Granitsa site.
Shaheen Squadron	PCU	Falcon	Jade Meridian (2064): EO Lumicite convoy disrupted, no evidence of PCU involvement surviving review	Levantine border and Red Sea corridor.
Jade Prism	PRC	Tiger	Mirror Lake (2065): NAF installation data copied and replaced with modified dataset	Deep-cover, Indo-Pacific and NAF territory.

UNIT	FAC-TION	GENE-FORGED STOCK	DEFINING MOMENT	CURRENT STATUS
Iron Tiger	PRC / EO (joint)	Bear/Tiger mix	Operation Convergence (2080): First officially acknowledged multi-faction joint operation. Results classified.	Officially disbanded.
Brotherhood Military Wing	Brotherhood	Various	Operation Archive (date classified); Recovery of a complete Architect installation site before four-faction teams arrived	Contested zones and installation sites.
Vector Group FME Teams	Vector Group	None (baseline)	The Reclamation Yard's founding: Full Technology Zoo inventory assembled in 18 months from zero base	Active. Rotating contracts.

Note on Vector Group: FME teams work alongside Special Forces units rather than deploying with them. They are an intelligence support capability, not a combat one. Their presence at an operation means someone needs to know what they found more than they need the location secured. The distinction has not always been honored by the clients.

09/

THEATERS OF OPERA- TION

*The world is sixteen operational environments.
You'll work in most of them before you're done.*

THEATERS OF OPERATION

The world is sixteen operational environments. You'll work in most of them before you're done.

FLOODED LONDON

Local name: The Stack. Outsider name: Drowned London. Control: NAF-adjacent / contested water districts.

Sound bounces between towers and falls into the water below. Direction here is a theory.

The city is still there. That's the thing people who haven't been here don't understand. The buildings are still standing. The streets are canals now, eight to twelve feet of brown water in what used to be the lower districts, and the network of upper platforms connecting the buildings twenty, thirty, forty feet up has been running as the actual transit system for fifteen years. You move by bridge, by covered platform, by the flat-bottomed boats that the Waterloo Interchange operators run on tide schedules. Sound moves between the towers and arrives from directions that don't match the source. The mold is everywhere that the water reaches. The smell changes with the tide: low tide brings the exposed submerged street level's particular combination of organic decomposition and old concrete. High tide seals the lower platforms and traps the air, which is warmer and cleaner and carries the specific smell of twelve thousand people in close quarters in a city that wasn't designed for it.

The NAF has a governance relationship with the Stack's administrative council. The relationship involves resource supply, data infrastructure, and the specific kind of oversight that functions as long as the council's decisions align with NAF preferences and stops functioning the moment they don't. Two flooding events in the past eight years have required NAF emergency resource deployment. Both times, the deployment came with strings. Both times, the strings are still attached.

Civilian Survival. (1) Mold medicine: the specific antifungal protocols that keep lungs functional below the fifteen-foot line, traded in the Waterloo market for information and dry-cell batteries in equal measure. (2) Tide forecasts: knowing twenty-four hours in advance whether the platform access will be cut requires a

specific expertise that is not widely available. (3) Dry goods: anything that can survive the humidity without degrading is worth twice its water-level price here. (4) Generator capacity: the upper platforms run on a distributed generator network that requires continuous maintenance by people who know which components will fail first.

Chokepoint. The Waterloo Relay infrastructure runs below the flood line, along the route of the former underground. Three boroughs' communications depend on relay nodes that were sealed in flood-resistant housings in 2039 and have not been accessed since. The housings were rated for fifteen years. The clock expired four years ago. When the first relay node fails, the borough it serves loses all data infrastructure simultaneously. No faction has allocated resources to preventive replacement because no faction has jurisdiction over the maintenance obligation. When the first node fails, the jurisdiction question will be resolved at emergency speed by whoever can get a maintenance team there first.

At the Table. The Stack's platform architecture means every approach is a choke-point: bridges can be raised, flooded to impassable depth, or simply held by whoever claims the crossing. Operations that require rapid movement through the Stack require local knowledge that no faction map provides. The Waterloo Interchange operators know every route at every tide. Their cooperation has a market rate and a personal rate, and the personal rate is lower for people who understand the difference between the two.

Notable. A First Contact module-era installation site under the Stack's eastern flood zone has been accessed twice in the past year by teams with no identified faction affiliation. The access points are not on any public map. The boroughs above them have reported audio anomalies, specifically: voices from below the flood line, on three separate occasions that the Stack's administrative council has attributed to echo effects. / The Waterloo market's man in the green coat has given incorrect tide forecasts twice in four years. Both times, boats were on the water during the incorrect window. Both times, the boats returned. Both times, what they returned with was not on the manifest they departed with.

AMAZONIAN METROPLEX

Local name: the Metroplex, The Green. Outsider name: SCA's Jungle Fortress. Control: SCA.

The architecture and the ecosystem are indistinguishable. In places, they're fighting each other.

The Metroplex is a living system at thirty years of development. The original building material was engineered fungi, grown rather than manufactured, formatted to specifications that have been accumulating biological variation since deployment. The buildings breathe: literally, through mycorrhizal network interfaces that the SCA's infrastructure engineers monitor and the buildings' own biology modifies on a schedule that doesn't follow the monitoring protocol. The canopy is sixty meters above the street level in the core districts. Street level receives filtered light that shifts color with the canopy's moisture content. The humidity is absolute. The bio-mechanical constructs that the SCA's autonomous warfare doctrine deploys are maintained in the root-mass below street level, and their maintenance protocols require the root-mass environment: remove them from it for more than thirty days and the biological components begin degradation that no field repair kit addresses.

The sound is specific: the Metroplex has a base layer of biological noise (mycorrhizal communication, canopy movement, water movement through root channels) over which the city's human sounds arrive at a specific register. Operators from outside the Metroplex report it as disorienting. Operators who have worked here more than three times report it as the most reliable environmental intelligence they've encountered: when the biological base layer changes pattern, something in the ecosystem has changed, and ecosystem changes in the Metroplex precede tactical events with a consistency that no faction intelligence system has fully modeled.

Civilian Survival. (1) Myco-protein: the primary protein source in the Metroplex outer districts, grown locally and traded at margins that reflect its abundance. (2) Canopy rights: the upper canopy layer access is licensed by SCA district authority; unlicensed canopy access is a black-market category. (3) Root-mass navigation knowledge: the below-street-level root-mass is not mapped in any document accessible to operators who haven't paid for the local guide. (4) Bio-construct schedule: the root-mass maintenance windows are when the constructs are vulnerable; this knowledge is worth what it's worth.

Checkpoint. The primary water filtration system for the Metroplex core runs through three biological processing nodes in the root-mass. The nodes are living systems maintained by the mycorrhizal network. A targeted mycological agent introduced to the root-mass at the primary node would propagate through the network within four days and disable all three nodes within ten. The SCA knows this. The SCA's defense against it is classified. The classified defense involves something in the root-mass that the SCA's published infrastructure documents do not mention.

At the Table. The Metroplex is not an urban environment in the tactical sense. It is a living environment that happens to contain people. Operations that treat it as urban will find that the terrain changes between ingress and egress: the root-mass moves. The canopy restructures after rain events. Passages that were passable yesterday may not be today. The bio-mechanical constructs in the root-mass do not have a fixed patrol pattern. They have a maintenance-and-response protocol that produces behavior the constructs generate rather than follow.

Notable. Three zones in the Metroplex outer ring have been growing without SCA administrative documentation for eight years. The zones are not unmapped: BAFO has mapped them from satellite observation. The SCA has been alerted. The SCA's response has been to take the maps and classify them. What is in the unmapped zones that the SCA doesn't want documented in an accessible format is the question that Metroplex-based contacts will not answer directly but will talk around if given enough time.

SAHARAN OASIS NETWORK

Local name: Al-Waha, The Green Margin. Outsider name: PCU Desert Garden. Control: PCU-administered, contested at margins.

Shade is privilege. Cool air is class. The cisterns know who's compliant.

The greening zone runs two hundred kilometers south of what was, before 2025, bare Saharan desert. The wind management and moisture-capture infrastructure that the PCU built here is visible: towers at twelve-kilometer intervals, each managing a microclimate envelope that extends half a kilometer in every direction, feeding into a network of cisterns and surface soil systems that hold the moisture the next tower's system delivered. Between the towers, the temperat-

ure is a different calculation. The greening is real and ongoing. The land at the leading edge of the green margin is actively changing: soil content, microbial population, surface hydrology. The PCU surveys it weekly. The PCU is careful about what the surveys document and what they attribute the change to.

The social architecture mirrors the physical: the cistern authentication system determines which community accesses water at which tier. Compliance with PCU administrative requirements produces better cistern access. Non-compliance produces reduced access that the PCU's policy documentation characterizes as "resource prioritization." The communities along the green margin have been managing this system for fifteen years. They have developed specific practices around compliance that the PCU's administrative monitoring registers as compliance and that produce outcomes the PCU did not design for.

Civilian Survival. (1) Tower maintenance access: the microclimate towers require human maintenance, and the people who do it have access schedules, tool caches, and knowledge of which towers are currently off the monitoring network for routine calibration. (2) Cistern sharing arrangements: the formal cistern allocation system and the community sharing system operate simultaneously and differently. (3) Seed stock: drought-resistant cultivar stock that the PCU distributes through the administrative system and that communities preserve through the non-administrative system. (4) Solar cooker capacity: off-grid cooking that reduces dependence on PCU-administered energy in ways that don't register as grid withdrawal.

Chokepoint. The wind management towers' maintenance protocol assumes factory-specification replacement components. The factory for those components is in a PCU manufacturing district three thousand kilometers from the green margin. Supply chain interruption, weather event, logistics disruption, deliberate attack, produces a maintenance backlog that becomes a system failure at sixty days without parts. The PCU's reserve stock covers forty-five days. The gap between forty-five days of reserve and the components' travel time is fifteen days. This gap has been the subject of a PCU logistics planning document that has not been implemented.

At the Table. The Saharan Oasis Network is a surveillance environment where the physical surveillance is sparse (the towers don't have cameras; the camera network is separate) and the social surveillance is comprehensive (the cistern authentication system tracks every person's presence at every cistern). Opera-

tions that require moving through the oasis network without cistern authentication face a logistics problem: water. The logistics problem is solvable by operators who know the community sharing systems. Learning the community sharing systems requires being in the community.

Notable. Two tower sites in the northern oasis margin have substrate resonance readings that BAFO's monitoring correlates with the Granitsa anomaly. The readings are from monitoring equipment that the PCU doesn't know is in the towers, installed by a BAFO field team during a maintenance access window three years ago. The PCU has not expelled BAFO from the oasis network because the PCU doesn't know what BAFO has been monitoring. BAFO would prefer to continue not explaining.

NEO-TOKYO

Local name: Neo-T, The Node. Outsider name: The Lab. Control: PRC.

Twelve million people above ground. The classified research runs four levels below.

The aboveground city is the most connected urban environment on Earth: fiber density at saturation, display systems at every transit point, the ambient data layer that the PRC's civilian infrastructure produces and processes as a continuous background event. Twelve million people generate a data signature that the PRC's AI systems analyze in real time and that the city's social fabric has adapted to in ways the AI systems' behavioral models predicted at forty percent accuracy. The gap between what the models predicted and what twelve million people actually did with the infrastructure is the city's specific character.

Below ground, four levels. Sub-1 and Sub-2 are transit and utilities. Sub-3 is classified research infrastructure. Sub-4 is a level that appears in no PRC document accessible to operators with any clearance level below flag-grade, and that the Sub-3 maintenance personnel who access Sub-3 through Sub-4 access points have described in terms that flag-grade analysts have declined to publish.

The research running in Sub-3 correlates with substrate monitoring anomalies that BAFO has documented at three Indo-Pacific sites. The correlation has not been shared with the PRC. The PRC's own monitoring has detected the anomalies and has been filing internal reports for eighteen months in a classification system that produces documents readable only by a specific analytical team that has been in extended research assignment since Q2 of last year.

Civilian Survival. (1) Sub-2 transit navigation: the transit system is efficient in the directions the PRC designed it to be efficient and requires local knowledge to navigate in any other direction. (2) Data anonymization tools: the ambient data layer is readable; not being read requires tools that are technically illegal and practically necessary. (3) Off-network food sources: the city's licensed food systems are monitored at the authentication level; what isn't monitored is the informal market in Sub-1 transit spaces. (4) Sub-3 access windows: the maintenance windows when Sub-3 is accessible without the standard authentication process are a specific kind of local knowledge.

Chokepoint. The Sub-3 research infrastructure runs on a power system that is independent of the city's main grid. The independent system's backup generator is in Sub-4. Access to Sub-4 requires Sub-3 administrative clearance. In the event of a main power failure, the Sub-3 system fails over to the Sub-4 backup in ninety seconds. In the event that the Sub-4 backup fails simultaneously, the Sub-3 systems go dark. The PRC has documented this scenario in an internal risk assessment. The risk assessment's recommended mitigation has not been implemented because implementing it would require documenting Sub-4's contents in a format accessible to the engineers who would perform the mitigation.

At the Table. Neo-Tokyo is a surveillance environment above ground and a navigation problem below. Sub-1 and Sub-2 are survivable with the right tools. Sub-3 requires either faction-level access or the specific knowledge that the Black Clinic contact network can provide. Sub-4 is not in any operational brief as a mission objective. When it is in a brief, the brief has been written by someone who has been to Sub-4 and survived the visit.

Notable. The Sub-3 extended maintenance windows from the past three months. No public explanation. Sub-3 is where the PRC's classified research runs. The maintenance windows correlate with Metropoli Perdida and Granitsa substrate anomalies. The Jade Prism Controller who has been recruiting individually for nine months has visited Neo-Tokyo twice during the maintenance windows. She departed from Sub-2 transit both times.

METROPOLI PERDIDA

Local name: La Ciudad Perdida, The Foundation. Outsider name: The Site. Control: SCA (site perimeter). Deep zone: contested.

Seven civilizations built here without knowing why. The Lumicite source knew.

The jungle clears within a kilometer of the site. Not completely: the tree line thins and the undergrowth changes species, and the Selva Legion's security perimeter is built into the biology at this point, with monitoring systems grown into the root structure that the SCA's own guides can navigate and that outside operators find functionally invisible. Inside the perimeter, the air changes. Temperature drops three degrees in a transition that has no physical explanation: the shade is not sufficient to account for it and the soil temperature is not anomalous. The Lumicite deposit is below the surface installation, but its interference radius extends to the perimeter at measurable intensity.

The installation itself is stratified by era of construction. The lowest levels, accessible by the descent shafts the Architects built, sealed with materials that the SCA's engineers have classified as beyond current production capability, are Architect-era construction. Above them, colonial-era modification: stone-and-mortar work that engaged with the Architect structure without understanding it. Above that, three discrete twentieth-century research layers, each built by a different program that was unaware of the others. The topmost level is the SCA's operational facility, installed in 2044.

Seven civilizations built here. The 2063 multilateral research team documented the stratigraphy and classified the data within the same week. What the stratigraphy implies, that each civilization was drawn to the site independently, over two thousand years, without knowledge of the previous occupants, is the classified element. The implication is that something at the location was attracting attention. Something at the location is still attracting attention.

Civilian Survival. None. There are no civilians at Metropoli Perdida. There are: SCA administrative personnel, Selva Legion security, and the researchers the SCA permits access to at the rate of twelve per year under a review process that no faction analyst has found a consistent pattern in.

Chokepoint. The descent shaft to the Architect level is the only current access point to the lowest installation level. The shaft is sealed by an Architect-era mechanism that the SCA has been attempting to understand for twelve years. They can open it. They cannot predict what state the mechanism will be in when they do. Four SCA engineering teams have gone down. Three came back. The one that didn't is in a report that is classified above the clearance level of everyone currently assigned to the site.

At the Table. The Selva Legion is the most operationally sophisticated security force in any theater. They know this ground the way their genetics know this climate: by reflex, by instinct, by twenty years of accumulated patrol knowledge that doesn't exist in any document because it exists in the operators themselves. A splice that enters the perimeter without Selva Legion cooperation has entered a terrain advantage scenario that is maximally unfavorable. A splice that enters with SCA cooperation is entering a situation where the cooperation's scope ends at whatever the SCA decided to tell them.

Notable. The report on the fourth engineering team. / The Selva Legion patrol that encountered something with a drift profile beyond clinical parameters. The patrol sergeant's paper log. / The 2063 research team's classified documentation. Three of the five researchers who signed the classification order are unreachable. The other two are currently in positions that don't require them to travel and don't require them to be reachable.

LAKEFIRE CORRIDOR

Local name: The Amber Line, Moto wa Ziwa. Outsider name: The ACU's Energy Zone. Control: ACU (territory). Lake contested.

Lake Tanganyika glows amber at night. The ACU says bioluminescence. The ACU is lying.

The lake is eight hundred kilometers long and four times deeper than any other African lake. At night, the amber light comes from the water itself: a distributed luminescence that travels in bands and eddies that don't correspond to any identified organism's distribution pattern. The ACU's environmental reports attribute this to a bioluminescent bacteria strain. The reports are in the ACU's public documentation. The contradicting data, specifically, that the light's spectral

signature does not match any bioluminescent organism and does match the spectral range of Lumicite luminescence under water pressure, is in the Null Chorus archive, sourced from a contact inside the ACU's environmental monitoring division.

The Corridor's human geography is built around the lake's resources and the ACU's water administration framework. Fishing communities on both shores. Administrative posts at the primary water management nodes. The kind of informal market economy that develops when a resource is both controlled and essential, and where the administrative framework's edge cases are negotiated daily. The amber glow at night is, for the people who live on its shores, simply what the lake looks like. They grew up with it. They know better than to discuss it with outsiders who ask too many questions.

Civilian Survival. (1) Fishing schedules: the amber light affects fish behavior in ways that experienced fishers have mapped and that the ACU's fishery management documents have not. (2) Water sampling: the water quality at different lake depths varies in ways that the administrative monitoring doesn't measure at sufficient frequency. (3) ACU administrative contact relationships: the difference between the formal administrative process and what actually happens at the district administrator level. (4) Amber light navigation: the amber bands and eddies are navigational reference points for night operations that experienced lake operators use and outside operators learn the hard way.

Chokepoint. The primary water management node at the northern shore controls flow for four downstream communities. The node's AI management system has been producing anomalous routing decisions three nights per month, on a schedule that correlates with the amber light's intensity peaks. The ACU's engineering team has flagged the correlation. The ACU's administrative team has classified the flag. The four communities don't know either document exists.

At the Table. The Lakefire Corridor's terrain advantage is the lake itself: a body of water that is navigable by flat-bottom boat and underwater by anyone with the right equipment, for eight hundred kilometers, through ACU-administered territory that has limited aerial surveillance and no submarine monitoring. The amber glow makes night operations visually distinctive in ways that thermal suppression does not address.

Notable. The amber glow has been intensifying incrementally for eight months. / The Null Chorus explanation for the spectral signature. / Three contacts in the Corridor have independently referenced a location below the lake surface, at depth, that the ACU's dive teams have surveyed twice and whose survey results are in a separate classification from the lake's bioluminescence documentation.

GORODSKIE EKHO

Local name: The Ekho, Vsyo-Level. Outsider name: The Drowned City. Control: EO.

The city didn't drown. It rearranged vertically. Ground floor is a boat lane now.

The city is three cities stacked on the same coordinates, occupying the same vertical column of air and water. The Soak is the lowest: former ground floor through the third floor, submerged in the chemical phosphorescence of the flooded streets, where the water glows a pale blue-green that people who live here call Ekho light and people from outside call contamination. The Soak's economy is analog: paper, hard currency, face-to-face transactions in spaces where AI surveillance cannot see through the water and the EO's social credit system cannot reach. The Soak is the freest tier of the city by specific virtue of being the most dangerous.

The Current is the working city: the EO-managed factory floors, the AI-monitored transit networks, the social credit enforcement architecture. People in the Current know their score and know what it buys. The walls have displays that show public information and local social credit leaderboards. The displays are not for the people on them. The displays are for the people next to them. Social enforcement in the Current is largely social.

The Dry is the upper levels: Syndicate administration, high-credit resident zones, views of the flood zone below from apartments where the floor is warm and the water is authenticated and the social credit score is a number that doesn't require monitoring because the people at this altitude arrived here through compliance. The Dry is a mythic space for Soak residents: existing, visible from below, reaching it not impossible but specifically beyond the current trajectory of anyone who has lived in the Soak long enough to think in Soak terms.

Civilian Survival. (1) Soak navigation: the flooded street network requires a boat and a guide who knows which passages are safe at which water levels. (2) Current access without full documentation: there are three transit points that do not require social credit authentication to access. Their location is Soak-knowledge. (3) Ekho light reading: the phosphorescence changes pattern with the water current and the EO's maintenance activity below the flood line. (4) Score recovery: the specific compliance behaviors that move a credit score from restricted to functional range, which differ from the EO's official compliance documentation in ways that Soak residents have mapped.

Chokepoint. The flood barrier that protects the Current and Dry levels from the Soak below is maintained by three pumping stations in the Soak. If two of the three fail simultaneously, the Current begins flooding within six hours. The EO's maintenance schedule runs on a rotating basis. If all three are down for scheduled maintenance simultaneously, an event that should not be schedulable but has occurred twice in the past decade, the barrier fails. The flood barrier is the single most important piece of infrastructure in the EO's most valuable eastern city. Its maintenance schedule is administered by a department that is currently below minimum staffing.

At the Table. The Soak is the only tier where operations can proceed without AI surveillance. The Current is where faction targets are accessible and faction surveillance is continuous. The Dry is where the decisions are made, and reaching the Dry from outside requires either documentation that most contractor networks can produce or local knowledge about the three access points that Soak-based contacts know. Operations that require moving between tiers are three separate operational environments stacked vertically, each with its own entry and exit problem.

Notable. The substrate resonance anomaly that BAFO and EO have separately flagged. The phosphorescence in the Soak has been changing pattern over the past three months in ways that Soak residents have noticed and that no one has asked about officially because no one with official authority comes to the Soak to ask. / A gene-forged EO operator in the Current tier has been filing maintenance requests for two weeks. The maintenance requests are for systems that the maintenance department knows are fully functional. The operator knows the maintenance department knows. Neither party has acknowledged the other's knowledge.

SHATTER BELT / ISTANBUL

Local name: Kavşak, The Crossing. Outsider name: The Shatter Belt. Control: PCU (administrative). EO (eastern margin). Contested (the dam zone).

The oldest contested ground on Earth. Still contested. The dam has a fracture nobody's supposed to know about.

Istanbul is the city that has been fought over for the longest documented continuous period of any city on Earth, and the Upheaval's political geography produced a scenario that its predecessors had not managed: both the PCU and the EO claim administrative rights, with overlapping jurisdiction zones that both sides' documents describe as the other side's overreach, and a civilian population of three million people who have been managing overlapping administrative systems simultaneously for twenty years by now and have developed a specific practical expertise in operating in the gap between two governance frameworks that contradict each other.

The dam is the Bosphorus Barrier: a post-Upheaval infrastructure project completed in 2044 that manages Black Sea water flow into the Marmara. The dam controls the water economy of three million people and the strategic access of both factions to the Black Sea. The fracture is in the dam's secondary spillway, identified by an engineering survey team in 2059 and classified by both the PCU and EO simultaneously, through a mutual classification agreement that is itself classified, because acknowledging the fracture requires acknowledging the mutual classification, which requires both factions to acknowledge that they are coordinating on something. The fracture is structural. The timeline before it becomes critical is in the classified engineering survey.

Civilian Survival. (1) Dual-system navigation: the practices that the Kavşak population has developed for operating under two simultaneously applicable administrative systems without directly triggering either one's enforcement response. (2) Dam level reading: experienced residents can read the dam's current state from surface water behavior. (3) Access corridor knowledge: the specific transit routes that pass through administrative overlap zones without formal jurisdiction checkpoints. (4) Neutral space: the three physical locations in the city where both PCU and EO administrative systems have agreed, informally, not to enforce simultaneously.

Chokepoint. The fracture in the Bosphorus Barrier's secondary spillway. Current projection: structural failure risk reaches critical threshold within fourteen months. Both factions know this. Neither faction will repair it unilaterally because unilateral repair establishes unilateral jurisdiction. Joint repair requires the mutual coordination acknowledgment that both factions' public positions prohibit. The three million people in Istanbul are on a timeline that the factions are negotiating around. The negotiation's deadline is the timeline.

At the Table. Istanbul is the setting's best environment for operations that require exploiting administrative confusion. Two factions, overlapping jurisdiction, civilian population with twenty years of expertise in the overlap: the resources available here for information, transport, and gray-market access are extensive and accessible at a specific kind of price: local trust. Local trust requires demonstrating that you understand which of the three million people's administrative situation matters to what you're trying to do.

Notable. The classified fracture engineering survey. The mutual classification agreement. A Brotherhood Scholar Wing researcher has been in Istanbul for four months, asking questions about the Bosphorus Barrier's pre-Upheaval construction records. The Brotherhood's Military Wing has been providing security for the Scholar Wing's researcher. The PCU knows the Brotherhood is here. The PCU has not asked why.

JAVA SCATTER

Local name: Kepulauan Api (Fire Islands). Outsider name: Java Scatter. Control: PRC (water lanes). Island sovereignty: contested.

The sea didn't rise slowly enough. Sovereignty flows to whoever controls the water between things.

The archipelago's geology was always volcanic. The sea rise reshaped it: some islands are entirely submerged. Others are partially submerged with the upper structures still standing. Others became smaller islands, or merged with adjacent structures where the subsidence reshaped the seabed, or are now accessible only at low tide. The people who lived on the islands that went under moved to the islands that stayed up, producing a population density on surviving land that the

existing infrastructure was not designed to support. The PRC controls the shipping lanes between the islands. The shipping lanes are the infrastructure of life: food, water, power, communications. Who controls the lanes controls who survives.

The water between islands is the contested ground. Not the islands: the islands are territories with histories and populations and claims. The water is the point. PRC naval presence is continuous in the primary lanes. In the secondary lanes, the islands maintain their own patrol capacity with equipment sourced through channels that the PRC formally disapproves and informally tolerates because the alternative is providing the patrol capacity themselves.

Civilian Survival. (1) Island-hopping knowledge: the secondary transit routes that do not require PRC shipping lane authorization. (2) Tidal calendar: the islands accessible only at low tide and the specific logistics of operating on them. (3) Volcanic activity reading: the Fire Islands are geologically active; experienced residents can read surface signals for eruption risk. (4) Water purification: freshwater on the submerged and compressed islands is the primary survival variable; local solutions differ from standard faction technology.

Chokepoint. The primary PRC shipping lane through the central Scatter passes a navigation point where three currents converge in a way that requires active navigation management. The PRC's AI navigation system handles this automatically. The backup system has been flagged for replacement for eleven months. A navigation system failure at the convergence point closes the central lane to safe traffic until manual navigation teams can be positioned: an eight-hour minimum. Eight hours is not a long time. In the Java Scatter, it is.

At the Table. Java Scatter operations are maritime operations with island destinations. A splice that can operate a flat-bottom boat through secondary lanes is effectively invisible to PRC maritime monitoring on the primary lanes. A splice that cannot is dependent on either the primary lanes or the goodwill of island-hopping guides whose rate structure reflects exactly how much that goodwill costs.

Notable. Shark-lineage PRC operators have been conducting extended-duration operations in the Java Scatter for three months on a schedule that doesn't match the published PRC maritime patrol calendar. The schedule correlates with specific deep-water survey points that the PRC's published geological data does not include. The survey points correlate with a substrate monitoring anomaly that BAFO's Indo-Pacific field team has flagged in two separate reports, both of which have been rerouted to a classification level above the field team's access.

PATAGONIAN BASIN

Local name: La Cuenca, The Reserve. Outsider name: The Last Clean Water. Control: Southern Compact Alliance / SCA (northern margin).

The world's last clean water reserve. The timeline for "last" has been revised downward.

The Patagonian Basin's water table is the largest remaining uncontaminated fresh-water reserve on Earth. This fact is documented, public, and the subject of the most complex ongoing diplomatic negotiation in the setting. The Southern Compact Alliance administers it. Every major faction has a formal position on SC governance of the reserve and an operational posture that does not match the formal position.

The landscape is post-volcanic and post-glacial: the ice retreat left topography that channels the water in ways that make the reserve's boundaries geological rather than administrative. The SC's settlements are small, spread across the basin's rim, connected by ground transport that is the most reliable infrastructure in the setting because it is the infrastructure the SC has maintained above all else. The water itself is cold, clean, and tested daily by SC environmental monitoring teams. The test results are the SC's most guarded data. Not for strategic reasons: for the specific reason that the most recent analysis shows the reserve's healthy-water-year estimate has moved from forty years to twenty-two, and the SC has not decided how to announce this.

Civilian Survival. (1) SC administrative connection: the SC's small-settlement governance structure is accessible at the community level in ways that NAF and EO administrative structures are not. (2) Water testing access: the daily test results are available to SC residents and not available to operators who cannot demon-

strate SC community connection. (3) Transport routes: the ground transport network's schedule and access points. (4) Geological navigation: the basin's topography is better navigated by reading the water flow than by using any faction map.

Chokepoint. The primary aquifer seal at the basin's northern margin is a geological formation that has been stable for twelve thousand years. The SCA's northern margin mineral extraction operations have been running for eighteen months within two kilometers of the seal's boundary. The SC's formal objection to the proximity has been documented. The SCA's response has been to document the objection and continue the extraction. The seal's geological stability under continued extraction at current rates: fourteen months, per an SC geological survey. Per an SCA geological survey: thirty-six months. The surveys use different methodologies.

At the Table. The Patagonian Basin is the setting's most volatile non-combat theater. The stakes are absolute, the reserve is not replaceable, and the diplomatic negotiation is failing. A splice operating in the Basin is operating in an environment where any action that touches the reserve governance question is touching the thread that, when it breaks, changes the surface game permanently.

Notable. The SC's revised twenty-two year timeline. / The SCA extraction proximity to the aquifer seal. / A faction analyst working independently has assembled both surveys and the extraction proximity data and produced a risk assessment that, if published, would be the most significant piece of strategic intelligence in the setting at the moment it releases. The analyst has not published it. They have been in contact with the Null Chorus twice in the past month.

LOST ANGELES

Local name: LA, The Angles, the City. Outsider name: The NAF's Broken City. Control: NAF (arcology core). Contested (outer districts).

Twelve million people. The coastline moved. The quake flattened the east. And they stayed.

You smell Lost Angeles before you see it: the specific combination of salt-engineered seawall chemistry, recycled air from the arcology exchange points, and the two hundred thousand food operations in the outer districts that run on biofuel and local produce and produce a smell that is specific to this city and no other. The seawall is a fact you get used to: forty meters of engineered concrete and active drainage on the western edge, keeping Pacific surge events from reaching the districts that were rebuilt after the 2035 events. The Ring Road is visible from most of the city as a concrete ribbon elevated twelve meters above the surface streets, NAF Orbital Highway signage at every kilometer, cameras pointing inward.

The arcology core districts, Glass Forest, the Commercial Spine, are climate-managed, subscription-authenticated, Monitor Central surveilled at full density. The outer districts are where twelve million people actually live: heat that no climate management addresses because the outer districts are not on the management subscription, seawall country where the air tastes like the ocean's engineering, Raid Race territory where the economy runs on the sport and the sport runs on the city's specific geography. The 2041 quake flattened the east. The Raze is what the quake left: three square kilometers of cleared ruins where no administrative presence operates and no law applies because the cost of establishing authority in rubble that isn't worth the authority is higher than leaving it.

Civilian Survival. (1) Monitor Central gap knowledge: the specific camera coverage gaps that the outer districts' residents have mapped over fifteen years of living under the network. (2) BURNER supply chain: the energy drink that arrives in the outer districts through channels that are not the subscription system. (3) Raid Race schedule: which nights the sport runs determines which streets are closed, which Monitor Central enforcement resources are deployed to the race route, and which neighborhood blocks have reduced surveillance coverage. (4) Seawall pressure: experienced residents can read seawall maintenance status from the water noise at the western boundary.

Chokepoint. Monitor Central's central processing node is in the arcology core. Its distributed backup network runs through twelve relay stations in the outer districts. Three of those relay stations are in buildings that the NAF's infrastructure documentation misidentifies as residential: they are infrastructure facilities with residential cover. If two are disabled simultaneously, Monitor Central's outer district response capability drops to forty-five percent of normal. The cover

documentation is good enough that no contractor network has assembled this information independently. It is in the NAF's classified infrastructure database. It is also in a Vector Group assessment that was produced for a PCU client three years ago.

At the Table. Raid Race weekend runs through this theater. Four billion witnesses. Operations that go feed hot lose all operational security. Plan around it. Lost Angeles is a full operational theater with three distinct environments: the arcology core (high surveillance, high target density, high risk), the outer districts (moderate surveillance, complex social intelligence terrain, the terrain of Raid Race), and the Raze (no surveillance, no law, active hazard environment). Moving between them requires understanding the subscription geography that separates them, which is physical in some places and economic in others.

Notable. The Monitor Central response delay in the outer districts. The building holding companies that don't appear in NAF corporate registry. / Raid Race: a package posted through Syndicate channels last month included a shielded Lumicite sample as the cargo. The race ran. The package was delivered. The Syndicate's blind channel did not identify the client. The faction that the Lumicite sample came from has not filed a loss report. / NPC: Mo Money, Tooth and Gear management. She has a file on every team that has ever run a race in Lost Angeles. She has a file on six operators who have worked the city as contractors, not racers. She has not told them she knows who they are.

IPFZ

Local name: The Ground. Control: Self-governed (post-irradiation communities).

Fourteen warheads. What remained learned to survive it.

Six hundred thousand people in territory that every faction maps as uninhabitable. The maps are wrong in the specific sense that the people living here are alive, which is not what "uninhabitable" should produce. The communities know the irradiation levels at every point in their territory, know the biological adaptation protocols that have been refined over forty years, and know that outside operators who arrive without this knowledge will make specific mistakes that will shorten their operational window significantly. The IPFZ does not turn away outsiders. It monitors how long they last without guidance.

AT THE TABLE: The only reliable contact network in the IPFZ is the one built from time spent in the territory, with people who decide to extend it. There is no briefing that substitutes for this. The IPFZ communities have things no other population on Earth has, including forty years of operational data on human adaptation to elevated radiation and a landscape that all factions consider worthless and therefore leave alone: which is the only kind of freedom that costs nothing in this world.

EURASIAN STEPPES

Local name: Velikaya Step, The Open. Control: EO.

A thousand miles of open sightlines designed for EO doctrine.

EO autonomous platforms were designed for exactly this terrain: flat, open, long sightlines, minimal urban complexity. The steppe has been EO's primary testing ground for autonomous warfare doctrine since 2050, and the doctrine is visible in the terrain's infrastructure: pre-positioned supply points, signal relay towers at uniform intervals, surface markings that the platforms' targeting AI reads and that ground-level operators learn to read as navigational signals the platforms have left for each other. The steppe is EO's home field advantage. Knowing this before you are on the steppe is the first tactical decision.

AT THE TABLE: Any ground operation on the Eurasian steppe is operating against EO autonomous platform doctrine on terrain optimized for that doctrine. The advantages available: the steppe is large enough that distributed movement degrades targeting confidence at range, the weather produces signal blackout conditions that the platforms handle by defaulting to last-valid-order, and the terrain's pre-positioned supply points can be used by any operator who finds them before the platforms' resupply cycle reaches them.

GRANITSA

Local name: Granichny, The Permafrost Line. Control: EO (surface). Contested (subsurface).

The permafrost is thawing. The installations it sealed are not.

The Granitsa is the permafrost boundary where the thaw front has been advancing south at an average of twelve kilometers per year for twenty years. What the thaw exposes is not just ground: the permafrost layer sealed specific categories of pre-Upheaval construction that were built before the thaw was anticipated, and some of what it sealed was not built by anyone whose construction records appear in any accessible database.

The BAFO field team at Granitsa has been filing substrate resonance reports for three years. The most recent twelve months of reports show a twelve percent anomaly increase that correlates with readings from Metropoli Perdida, Gorodskie Ekho (sub-level), and the Lakefire Corridor simultaneously. BAFO has not published these reports. The EO's own geological monitoring has detected the same anomalies and has filed them in a classification system that the geological monitoring department does not have clearance to access.

The installations the permafrost is exposing are intact. The EO's Iron Veil has been assigned to the three largest exposure sites. The Iron Veil's reports from those sites are in a classification level above the Iron Veil's own commander's standard access.

AT THE TABLE: Granitsa operations work against two environmental realities: EO surface territorial authority and the permafrost thaw's active timeline. The thaw opens new access points on a schedule that doesn't match any faction's operational planning cycle. An installation that was inaccessible three months ago may be accessible now for a window measured in weeks. BAFO's field team has the most complete exposure map. Their cooperation is available to operators who can demonstrate that their objectives don't involve delivering the map to a faction.

SAMUDRA SATTVA

Local name: The Sand City, Rimal al-Nabi. Control: PCU-adjacent. Contested (access zone).

The sand doesn't just cover things. It surfaces them on its own schedule.

The coastal desert where the Indian subcontinent meets the Arabian Sea has its own exposure logic: wind patterns that bury and unbury pre-Upheaval infrastructure on a seasonal schedule that experienced desert operators map by feel and that no satellite survey can predict at the resolution that matters. Pre-Upheaval

construction: designed for the pre-Upheaval coast, now buried under variable depth of shifting sand. Some of it emerges every season. Some of it has been buried since 2031 without emerging. The specific items that the PCU's classified geological survey documented as worth accessing are on a timeline that the sand controls.

The Samudra Sattva entry from UNEARTH's World Haecceity Bible: the sand temperature at the buried-structure level runs seven degrees warmer than ambient. The temperature differential is consistent with two possible explanations: residual structural heat from preserved construction, or proximity to a substrate resonance node at depth. The two explanations produce identical thermal signatures. Distinguishing between them requires equipment that the PCU has deployed at this location in a classified survey that produced a classified result.

AT THE TABLE: Samudra Sattva operations run on the sand's schedule. The window when specific installations are accessible can be measured in days. Operating outside that window means excavation capacity or waiting for the next seasonal exposure. The PCU has pre-positioned survey teams for the seasonal windows. The PCU's teams are professional, well-equipped, and already at the location before the window opens.

ANTARCTIC PENINSULA

Local name: The Oasis. Control: NAF / EO / PRC (competing installations, Accords nominal governance).

No civilians. Researchers, contractors, and people who came for the data.

The peninsula's ice retreat produced the Oasis: a coastal strip that is ecologically viable for the first time in human history. Three factions maintain research installations here, all in technical violation of the 2043 Scientific Access Accords, all in mutual awareness of each other's violations, all in formal non-acknowledgment of the violation status. The data core that triggered Operation Dawnlight is three hundred kilometers from the largest Oasis formation. The correlation is not established in any public document. BAFO has both locations in its field map. The faction installations have BAFO's field map. They have not shared this information with BAFO.

AT THE TABLE: The Antarctic Peninsula is a research environment with three faction security presences that are not supposed to be there and know the other presences are not supposed to be there. The competitive research dynamic produces a surveillance environment in which everyone is watching everyone, and operations that require accessing any one faction's installation without the others' knowledge require accounting for all three simultaneously.

NORDICS ARCOLOGY NETWORK

Local name: The Network, Nettet. Control: Nordic Alliance.

The most livable place on Earth. Also the most watched. Access is quietly tiered.

The Nordics' arcology network is what the NAF arcology districts could be if the arcology districts weren't also a surveillance infrastructure: genuinely comfortable, genuinely resourced, genuinely built for the people who live in it. The geothermal and cold fusion power means the climate management doesn't cost what it costs elsewhere. The water is Tier One by default. The social infrastructure was designed to function and was maintained to function and functions.

Access is tiered in a way the Nordics don't advertise: contractor access requires documentation at three levels above what the NAF arcology access requires. The Nordics know what they have and they know who wants to be near it for reasons other than appreciation. The tier system is polite, efficient, and very good at identifying the people who shouldn't be in the network and routing them to the specific support services that will help them leave with a positive impression and a clear understanding that returning requires better documentation.

AT THE TABLE: The Nordics are the setting's most difficult environment to operate in without detection, not because the surveillance is comprehensive but because the social surveillance is comprehensive. Twelve years of managing faction interest in their infrastructure has made the Nordics' resident population exceptionally good at identifying people who are there for reasons other than the ones they stated. A splice operating in the network is operating in an environment where the civilian population is the surveillance system.

10/

MICRO-WORLDS

A whole civilization is legible through one market, one clinic, one checkpoint.

MICRO-WORLDS

A whole civilization is legible through one market, one clinic, one checkpoint.

These are not theater entries. They are locations. Fully realized, at human scale, ready to run without additional prep. Everything you need to make each one work at the table is here.

01. THE INTERCHANGE AT WATERLOO

What it is: A barter market on the surviving upper platforms of the former Waterloo Station, run twice a week, timed to the Soak's tide gates. The oldest continuously operating market in the Stack.

You smell it before you see it: mold-treatment chemicals and cooked protein and the specific wet-concrete smell of the platform's age. The market runs across three platforms at different heights, connected by the original station's escalators (two of which still move). Vendors occupy permanent stall positions negotiated at the start of each season. Visitors move through the wind gaps between platforms in a pattern that experienced market users learn and that new arrivals spend the first visit figuring out at cost. Below, through the platform gratings, the flood water is visible: dark, with the Ekho-adjacent phosphorescence at this latitude showing as a faint blue-green shimmer at tide edges.

People Here.

The man in the green coat: He sells tide forecasts for tomorrow and the day after. He has been wrong twice in four years. He does not explain his methodology. He accepts only mold medicine as payment, and only specific grades. His forecasts are the most valuable information sold at the Interchange.

Bridget Lowe, dry goods: She has been selling from the same stall for eleven years. She knows every vendor, every regular, and every person who showed up once and had a reason they didn't explain for being there. She is not in the intelligence business. She is in the dry goods business. The difference is that she doesn't charge for what she notices.

The relay tech, no name given: A former borough infrastructure worker who maintains a proprietary connection to three of the stack's relay nodes. She knows the nodes' status in real time. She trades this information selectively. She does not trade it to anyone she hasn't assessed across three separate conversations.

What's Moving. Mold medicine at three grades (prophylactic, treatment, industrial-grade repair). Dry-cell batteries at a market-set exchange rate that fluctuates with generator capacity news. Tide forecasts. The specific pieces of hardware that keep the upper platform infrastructure functional. Rumors about the relay node housing ratings, which the market has been discussing in circles for six months without resolving into what anyone will commit to as fact.

Pressure. The first relay node below the waterline has a housing integrity reading that the relay tech shared with one person two weeks ago. That person shared it with two others. One of those two others is a faction analyst embedded in the Stack's administrative council. The analyst has not reported upward. They are waiting to see who else knows and what they do with it. The node failure timeline: four to six weeks.

02. THE RECLAMATION YARD

What it is: Vector Group's operational hub. A partially salvaged industrial facility on a contested zone margin, repurposed as foreign materiel exploitation site and home of the Technology Zoo.

The facility smells like machine oil and climate-controlled preservation chemicals. The main yard has three sections: active assessment (where current-contract materiel is being analyzed), the Zoo (the permanent collection), and the archive building (where the physical filing cabinet of classified histories is locked in a room that has physical lock, biometric lock, and the specific presence of a Vector Group senior analyst who lives on-site). The Zoo is organized with museum-catalog precision: every item has a provenance tag, an assessment summary, and a cross-reference to the operational intelligence Vector Group derived from it. Some of the items in the Zoo are listed as destroyed in faction forensic records. Vector Group did not correct those records.

People Here.

*Director Thema Asamo*a: Vector Group's Reclamation Yard director. She founded the Zoo and she knows every item in it from memory. She knows which items should not be in a faction's destroyed-material record and she knows which faction analyst wrote the record. She does not know why she hasn't been contacted about this. She has decided not to ask.

Senior Analyst Korvath, archive: The person who lives on-site. He has read every document in the physical filing cabinet. He has not shared this with anyone including Director Asamoa. He has developed opinions about three documents in particular that he has not been able to act on because acting on them requires explaining that he has read them, and he is not certain who he would be explaining this to.

The assessment team: Four operators rotating through current-contract material assessment. They are professionals. They know what they know. One of them is a Jade Prism long-term embed and has been for twenty-two months.

What's Moving. The current assessment is a recovered PRC automated platform component that arrived with provenance documentation describing it as EO manufacture. The provenance documentation is accurate in eleven of twelve specifications. The twelfth specification is specific enough that the team hasn't published the assessment yet because the twelfth specification implies something about PRC manufacturing capability that the current contracted client is the NAF and the NAF will want to do something with the information that Director Asamoa is not certain she wants to be the source of.

Pressure. The Jade Prism embed. The Director does not know. The embed does not know that Analyst Korvath has identified three documents in the archive that describe a PRC operation the Jade Prism's parent organization would not want documented. The three-way unknowing is the situation. One conversation changes it.

03. THE GSOTC

What it is: The Global Special Operations Training Center. 10,000 acres of adaptive terrain in the Saharan Desert. Every surface rigged with cameras. Every bullet tracked. The world's only acknowledged high-visibility military tournament venue.

The GSOTC is the setting's most surveilled location outside of NAF arcology districts. Everything that happens here is recorded. This is the design: the Crackerjack Competition's value to the factions that participate in it derives from the fact that the world is watching and the performance is on record. The facility's adaptive terrain can simulate any combat environment on Earth: the terrain control systems are the facility's most valuable non-competition asset and are managed by a technical staff that rotates on a schedule designed to prevent any individual from accumulating too much knowledge of the full system.

Between competitions, the cameras are still running. The facility is actively monitored. The training operations that factions conduct here between competition cycles are technically non-competitive and practically intelligence-gathering: watching how other factions train is the second-most-valuable Crackerjack experience after competing.

People Here.

Commandant Dr. Yuki Obi: The GSOTC's director. She administers the rules. The rules are not long but they are absolute, and Obi's administration of them is the thing that makes the GSOTC possible. She has never enforced a rule selectively. She has enforced rules against clients who would prefer she hadn't. She has a waiting list for Crackerjack Competition entry that she will not shorten for any consideration. The 2051 Dynamic Siege happened on her watch. She considers it the most significant failure of her directorship. She has not identified the failure's origin.

The camera room operator, Silas Dent: He has been in the camera room for six years. He spotted the evidence from the 2051 Dynamic Siege in his first months on the job. He has not reported it because reporting it now would require explaining why he recognized it when he arrived and said nothing – and that window closed six years ago.

The 2051 Dynamic Siege's physical evidence: Whatever it left behind in the facility's systems that the facility's own documentation has never fully catalogued. Silas Dent knows what it is. Commandant Obi has a partial description of it from two sources that don't match. The sources' inconsistency is not documented anywhere she can access.

What's Moving. Next competition cycle begins in four months. Pre-competition access requests have been filed by all five factions and by Vector Group (as technical support), the Brotherhood Military Wing (as independent observers), and by one entity that Commandant Obi's administrative system logged as "UNSO Traveler Research Partnership." Obi has not responded to the UNSO request. She has not deleted it.

Pressure. The 2051 Dynamic Siege's physical evidence. Whatever it is, it has been in the facility for fifteen years. The next competition will bring all five factions' observation teams into the facility simultaneously for the first time since the Siege. Silas Dent has asked for a vacation during the competition cycle. Commandant Obi denied the request.

04. THE UNSO TRAVELER

What it is: A 400-meter generation ship in low Earth orbit. The only sovereign entity not located on the planet's surface.

The Traveler is divided into three zones. The outer hull is wild: 36 years of isolated evolution have produced an active ecological system in the maintenance corridors that the Traveler's biologists are cataloguing on a timeline that "ongoing" describes accurately. The structures the Aberrant fauna have built are in the maintenance corridors and in three spaces between the inner hull and outer hull that were not supposed to have space between them. The biologists' published assessment: the structures serve social functions. Their unpublished assessment, filed internally for the Council: the structures may also serve navigational functions, using references that the biologists cannot identify.

The mid-sphere is the inhabited section. Nine hundred people. Their governance system is a modified council democracy that emerged organically during the transit and has been stable for thirty-two years. The legal system handles resource disputes, interpersonal conflict, and, most recently, the question of how to manage faction representatives who are present on the ship at any given time by consent and whose behavior frequently operates at the edge of the consent's terms.

Captain Reeves Finn-Adelaide has been captain for nine years, appointed by the Council under the Traveler's succession protocols. She has never been on Earth. She understands Earth 2066 through seven years of briefings, faction representatives, and the specific kind of education that comes from watching five sophisticated political entities try to acquire leverage over a nine-hundred-person sovereign community in a 400-meter sphere.

People Here.

Captain Reeves Finn-Adelaide: She is the most relaxed person in any negotiation she is in. This is not because the stakes are low. It is because she has assessed the stakes, has found them manageable, and has developed a specific confidence in the Traveler's negotiating position that derives from knowing exactly what the Inner Core is worth and exactly what she is not willing to trade it for.

Lead Biologist Taun Reeve: He manages the Aberrant fauna study. He knows more about the outer hull's current state than anyone else on the Traveler. He has not shared three specific observations with the Captain because sharing them would require explaining why he sat on them for four months, and the explanation involves a structural section of the outer hull that the Traveler's safety protocols say should be inaccessible. It is accessible. It has been accessible for eight months. Something changed eight months ago.

Council Representative Dae Soo: The Council's representative to outside parties. He has been in negotiations with all five factions simultaneously for five years. He is, by any measure, the most experienced interfactional negotiator in the setting who holds no faction affiliation. He has opinions about every faction's actual position that differ from their stated positions, and he has opinions that are correct.

What's Moving. The current outstanding negotiation is the NAF's fourth partnership offer for reactor technology access. The NAF offer has changed substantially from the first three. The Council is in session on it. The Captain has recommended a counter-proposal that is on the Council's table and that the Council has not voted on because the counter-proposal includes a condition that the Council is not certain the NAF will accept and is not certain the Council should accept the NAF refusing.

Pressure. The structural section of the outer hull that Biologist Reeve accessed eight months ago. What changed eight months ago. Lead Biologist Reeve has connected the eight-month timeline to an event outside the Traveler: specifically, to a substrate resonance spike that BAFO's field monitoring recorded at the same date, at three separate locations, simultaneously. He has not told anyone on the Traveler because he does not yet know what it means and he knows that sharing it before he does will produce faction interest in the Traveler at a different level than the current interest.

AT THE TABLE: Operators who treat the Traveler as an extraction target will not survive the outer hull. Operators who treat the Traveler as a negotiation environment will find it the most sophisticated negotiation environment they have encountered, managed by people who have been practicing for five years. The Traveler's cooperation is available. The Traveler's price is not denominated in anything a faction briefing will have prepared the splice to offer.

05. THE BLACK CLINIC, NEO-TOKYO SUB-3

What it is: An unauthorized medical practice three levels below main Neo-Tokyo transit, accessible through a maintenance bay that two corporate security firms believe is sealed.

The access point is through a maintenance bay whose seal documentation is real: the seal inspection record is real, filed by a maintenance inspector who has been dead for four years. The path from the sealed bay to the clinic is twelve minutes of maintenance tunnel navigation that requires knowing three turn sequences that no navigation system includes.

The clinic is four rooms: a waiting area, an assessment room, an operating theater (the term is technically accurate), and a storage room. The lighting is surgical. The smell is antiseptic and specific pharmaceutical compounds that the Neo-Tokyo Sub-2 market cannot reliably source but that the Clinic's supply chain handles without documentation. The waiting area is always occupied. The occupants do not make eye contact with each other. This is courtesy.

People Here.

Dr. Yan Mingshu: Former PRC military surgeon. She does not ask who you work for. She asks what you need. She charges in unregistered energy credits at rates that reflect the specific cost of operating without institutional support, including the cost of the supply chain, the access maintenance, and the specific professional judgment involved in treating patients who require discretion. She treats gene-forged operators at a rate of approximately sixty percent of her caseload. Her template drift assessment capability is the most sophisticated non-faction clinical assessment available in the setting.

The supply chain contact, never present: The person who maintains Dr. Mingshu's pharmaceutical supply. They are never at the Clinic. They communicate through a dead-drop system that changes monthly. Dr. Mingshu knows their work, not their identity. She has been considering whether this is a problem for approximately three years.

What's Moving. A bear-stock EO operator arrived two weeks ago with a drift profile that Dr. Mingshu's assessment equipment classified as "beyond current clinical reference." She has been managing the operator's immediate symptoms. She has not been able to treat the underlying drift because treating it requires understanding what the drift is drifting toward. Her records on this case are the most complete drift documentation available outside faction classification.

Pressure. The drift profile documentation. If it reaches BAFO, it changes the substrate story. If it reaches a faction medical program, the operator becomes a classified case. If it reaches Null Chorus, it becomes evidence for a specific theory about what the substrate signal is doing to the gene-forged template population. Dr. Mingshu does not yet know she has the most significant clinical document in the setting in her unsecured filing system.

06. SALTER'S LANDING

What it is: Post-Prometheus Gulf Shore settlement. Population 1,200. One main road. Built from pre-war concrete and post-war stubbornness.

The main road is the former state highway 98, repaired by community labor over six years from its post-surge state to a condition that supports vehicle traffic and the specific social function of a main road: everything important happens adjacent to it, within walking distance. The commissary is the center. Run by Cassidy Marsh, who has been running it for eleven years. The generator is outside, runs on algae biofuel from the delta pond system, and is louder than the design spec promised but has never failed. The framed articles on the wall are from the NAF's Prometheus reconstruction coverage. The community regards them with the patience of people who know they have survived things the articles do not describe.

The clinic has one doctor and one paramedic. The school has twenty-two students. The water comes from a community-maintained AWH system that Marsh's predecessor negotiated the installation of in 2051 and that the community has maintained without manufacturer support since 2056 because the manufacturer's support contract cost more than the community's maintenance capability.

People Here.

Cassidy Marsh, commissary: She is the most politically sophisticated person in a one-road town, which means she is as politically sophisticated as the situation requires. She knows what the recon flights are looking for. She knows what the Monitor Central integration offer was actually about. She has made every community decision about faction engagement with the specific calculation of a person who has priced the community's independence at a number and has not yet been offered that number.

Dr. Henrike Amara, clinic: She trained at a NAF medical facility and came to Salter's Landing for six months in 2059 to help set up the clinic. She has been here for six years. She knows the specific disease patterns of a Post-Prometheus community, the specific adaptation profiles the community has developed, and the specific medical intelligence this represents for faction programs that are interested in post-climate-event human adaptation data. She has not shared this with any faction. She has been approached twice.

Luca Tran, maintenance: He maintains the AWH system, the generator, and three other community infrastructure systems. He is twenty-four years old and has been maintaining these systems since he was eighteen. He knows them the way you know a thing you have been working on for six years: completely, including the things the design specifications don't mention because the designers didn't live with the systems long enough to learn them.

What's Moving. The community's algae biofuel harvest for the month. A disagreement between four households about water system maintenance costs that Marsh has been managing for two months and that is about to resolve into either a community meeting or something less productive. The recon flight schedule has changed: three times per week instead of four, but now at night instead of during the day. Nobody in Salter's Landing has changed any behavior that would explain the schedule change.

Pressure. The recon flight schedule change. Marsh has an opinion about why it changed. Her opinion involves the community's water system, the AWH maintenance data that they have been filing with the NAF's reconstruction authority as required, and a specific capability they demonstrated in 2062 that she told Dr. Amara about and that Dr. Amara told Marsh she should report to the NAF. Marsh did not report it to the NAF. The night recon pattern suggests the NAF found out anyway.

07. DEFECTOR ALLEY, UCR DISTRICT 4

What it is: Three blocks in UCR District 4 where operators, analysts, and specialists from every faction sell what they know. No faction officially operates here. All five do.

The three blocks have the specific commercial density of a district built around a need that everyone has and nobody wants to be seen meeting. Restaurants that run long past midnight. Accommodation at three price points. Two medical practices that do not ask for genomic verification. A communications shop that will set up an anonymized comms relay for a day-rate with no questions and a destruction guarantee. The ambient noise level is high enough that conversations at tables require proximity. Proximity is the standard operational assumption.

The UCR's formal position is that Defector Alley represents UCR citizens exercising their economic rights. The UCR's practical position is that Defector Alley is the most significant intelligence asset in the UCR's portfolio, and maintaining it requires not regulating it, and not regulating it means tolerating the five faction intelligence operations that are permanent fixtures in the alley without acknowledging their presence.

People Here.

The EO intelligence analyst: Been here four months. She defected from an EO analytical program that she will not name and is selling access to three specific categories of EO Eurasian Steppe monitoring data that the NAF wants and the PCU wants and that she is selling to both simultaneously, which she has assessed as sustainable for approximately two more months.

The PCU bioweapons technician: Arrived last week. He has not yet set a price for anything. He is being watched by at least three parties he has not identified. The parties watching him are watching him to determine whether he is a genuine defector or an operation, and the answer to that question will determine whether he reaches the end of the week with his current operational status intact.

The alley's four permanent neutral contacts: They have been there for years. They know everything that moves through the alley. They do not sell what they know about the alley's operations. They sell access to their personal contact networks, which are the most valuable thing in the alley and not for sale to first-time visitors.

What's Moving. The EO analyst's data. The PCU technician's identity status determination. A question circulating among three separate intelligence operations about a piece of information that arrived in the alley two days ago through a contact who has since left: a fragment of the Lumenfeld archive, authenticated by two separate parties, whose content suggests something about OPHIUCHUS conditioning that none of the faction programs have acknowledged as relevant to current operations. Three parties want to purchase it exclusively. The seller is not present. They left a contact address that hasn't responded.

Pressure. The Lumenfeld fragment. If it is what the authentication suggests it is, it changes the clinical picture for every gene-forged operator produced by any faction program in the past twenty years. The three parties trying to acquire it exclusively are trying to acquire it exclusively for different reasons. The seller's non-response has lasted forty-eight hours. Forty-eight hours in Defector Alley is not a long time. It is also not a short time.

08. SHINKAI

What it is: The only neutral ground that matters at the operator level. The rules are physical and enforced.

The rules: no violence on the premises. No surveillance equipment of any kind. No recording of any kind. These rules apply to every party on every visit, and Commandant Sable enforces them personally. The enforcement record is perfect. The perfection is the product.

The floor is a bar, restaurant, and social space that is genuinely comfortable in a way that faction facilities are not: the seating is arranged for conversation rather than surveillance geometry, the lighting is calibrated to human comfort rather than security visibility, and the staff has been trained to provide exactly what is asked for and to have no memory of anything beyond the current transaction. This is training in the professional sense. The staff are exceptional at it.

The Deep Room is where information that cannot be discussed under any other roof is discussed. Access requires Sable's specific invitation. Seven invitations in three years. Three of the seven parties are currently in active faction protective custody for reasons that were not anticipated when the invitation was extended. Sable has opinions about this outcome that she has not shared with anyone.

People Here.

Commandant Sable: She records everything through systems that the rules' language does not encompass. The rules prohibit recording equipment. Sable's method does not use equipment. The information she acquires through this method is the source of the information brokerage she conducts exclusively outside the premises, with parties who understand exactly what they are receiv-

ing and where it came from and what that means for Sable's position if they use it in a way that could be traced back to her location. No party has used information from Sable's brokerage in a way that could be traced back to Shinkai. The parties who have tried are the three currently in protective custody.

Current occupants, the floor: Three Syndicate brokers in the back booths. One Selva Legion officer (off-rotation, personal visit, not operational). Two NAF Compliance analysts who are not acknowledging each other's presence despite being at adjacent tables. A retired special forces commander, unit unspecified, who has been at the same corner table for three visits and has spoken to one other patron, briefly, in a conversation the staff did not hear. The staff are very good.

What's Moving. The retired special forces commander's conversation with the one patron. The patron left immediately after. The patron was a BAFO field observer with Sub-3 Neo-Tokyo access credentials on their person, which is not something field observers typically carry, and which Sable noticed. Sable has not yet decided what to do with this observation. This is unusual. Sable typically decides within twelve hours.

Pressure. The three parties in protective custody. Sable knows why each of them is there. She knows the information each of them used from her brokerage that led to their current status. She also knows that the information was accurate in all three cases, which means the protective custody is not the result of bad intelligence. It is the result of good intelligence correctly used in ways that the parties' opponents anticipated. Sable is deciding whether this represents a methodological problem in her brokerage operation or a security breach she has not identified.

09. THE TOOTH AND GEAR, LOST ANGELES

What it is: The nightclub where every deal, betrayal, and legend in Raid Race begins. Center Point district. Ground floor of the High Top Towers.

The bass arrives before you reach the door: a specific low frequency that the sound system produces at a register below music that you feel in teeth and sternum. The crowd outside is the crowd that is always outside: people who came to be seen arriving, people who came to assess who else was arriving, two Feed journalists running live from the approach because the approach is content. The

door policy is managed by a single person who has been doing it for eight years and whose memory for faces is the most professionally relevant skill in the building: the Tooth and Gear's neutrality depends on knowing who is and isn't allowed back in after a violation.

Inside: Monitor Central surveillance stops at the building's property line. NAF camera coverage of the exterior streets ends at the facade. This is not a technical failure. This is a negotiated gap that was produced by someone with sufficient authority to produce it, at some point in the club's history, and that has been maintained through the seven years since without anyone acknowledging that it was produced. The sound system is calibrated to defeat directional microphones at the table level. Conversations at the Tooth and Gear stay at the Tooth and Gear.

The unwritten law: no violence on the floor. Both parties get banned for the remainder of the season. The ban is enforced by the staff and by the club's social physics: anyone who is banned cannot be at the Tooth and Gear, which means they cannot be at the most important deal table in the sport, which means the season proceeds without them. The ban is worse than the violence it prevents and everyone in the club knows this, which is why the violence rate is approximately zero.

People Here.

Mo Money: The club's owner and manager. Her management office has one-way glass overlooking the floor. She has a file on every team that has ever run a race in Lost Angeles. She has a file on six operators who have worked the city as contractors, not racers. She has not told them she knows who they are. Mo Money knows everything that happens in her club and knows everything that the people in her club did before they were in her club, and she decides what to do with this information at a rate of exactly one decision at a time.

Syndicate brokers, the booths: The four people in the back booths are the most important people in the room. They post package requests, coordinate betting network logistics, and manage the client anonymization process that keeps the sport's actual economy legal in the sense that it's never been prosecuted. Two of them have been doing this for six years. Two started this season. The two who started this season were placed here by someone whose identity the Syndicate's blind-channel system was not designed to obscure from a sufficiently motivated analyst.

The acoustic dead spots: Near the emergency exit and in the men's bathroom, third stall. Two locations where the sound system's geometry produces a gap in its directional-microphone defeat. Conversations here are private in a way that conversations at tables are not. The existence of the dead spots is known to approximately forty people. The fact that Mo Money knows where they are and listens to what happens in them occasionally is known to approximately four.

What's Moving. A package posted this morning through Syndicate channels: a Lumicite sample in shielded containment. Client anonymous. The race runs next weekend. The posting is the conversation happening at four of the tables right now: who posted it, what faction the sample came from, whether taking the contract is sport or something else, and what Monitor Central's response will be to a package that makes the enforcement drones' thermal and electromagnetic systems unreliable. The booths have had three conversations about it already. Mo Money has been watching from the management office.

Pressure. The two new Syndicate brokers. Mo Money has identified who placed them. She has not decided what to do with this. The Lumicite package. The race next weekend. Four billion witnesses. Mo Money is calculating how these three variables interact and whether the calculation comes out to a season-ending event or a season-defining one.

10. THE RING ROAD, LOST ANGELES

What it is: The NAF Orbital Highway circumnavigating Lost Angeles, elevated twelve meters above surface streets. On 364 days a year: commercial infrastructure. On Enduro day: the most dangerous stretch of pavement on the planet.

The road is a circle. One full lap is forty-one kilometers. In commercial operation: autonomous freight at steady intervals, NAF infrastructure vehicles at regular maintenance intervals, VTOL landing points at every fourth kilometer. The surface is degraded below safe standards by NAF civilian traffic guidelines. This is a deliberate policy decision: the NAF's road authority has assessed that the cost of resurfacing the Ring Road to civilian safe standards is not justified by the revenue the road generates in commercial tolls, and that the road's primary economic function is freight rather than civilian access. The civilian access danger is considered acceptable.

On Enduro day, Monitor Central deploys its full enforcement capability at the road level: adaptive drone networks flying the ring perimeter, autonomous patrol vehicles at speed floor entry points, six-limbed rippers that peel roofs off vehicles and extract drivers by harness. The speed floor is 240 kph. No extraction protocol operates during the Enduro. Emergency services are suspended on the Ring Road for the duration. The NAF policy position is that the Enduro is an unauthorized event and its participants are subject to law enforcement response. The NAF's enforcement success rate over eight years of Enduro history is eleven apprehensions and forty-seven failures.

You see the entire economic geography of Lost Angeles in one lap. The arcology core on the north curve. The outer districts across the east. The Raze on the southeast. The seawall country on the west. Low Coast below the south curve, where the suborbital launch infrastructure sits adjacent to the engineered seawall drainage points. Most drivers are going too fast to see it. Experienced Ring Road operators have driven it enough times that the geography plays in peripheral vision while the road's demands take the foreground.

People Here.

The ninth kilometer: Where Java went through the guardrail laughing. Java was a Jockey who held the Ring Road lap record for two seasons. The guardrail has been repaired. The story hasn't changed in four years of telling: she went through it at 310 kph, hit the safety netting twenty meters below, got out of the vehicle unassisted, and was back at the Tooth and Gear before the Monitor Central incident report was filed. Nobody knows where Java is now. Three people claim to. None of their stories match.

The seawall maintenance crews: The crews that maintain the Low Coast seawall drainage systems found something in a sub-drainage access point under the Ring Road's south curve eighteen months ago. They sealed it back up without filing a report. Three of the four crew members are still on active rotation. The fourth left the maintenance program four weeks after the discovery and is currently not locatable through normal contractor channels.

The four-minute blackout: Monitor Central went dark on a specific stretch of the Ring Road, the east curve, over the outer district, kilometers fourteen through twenty-two, for exactly four minutes during the 2063 Enduro. No official explanation has been offered. In those four minutes, two things happened: a package

changed hands at the fifth kilometer, and something was removed from a vehicle at the seventh that was not the vehicle's driver. Both events are in the Gutter Bible Quarterly's most complete account of the Enduro. The NAF's incident report for the Enduro does not mention the four-minute blackout.

What's Moving. The Ring Road's maintenance schedule has an upcoming window on the south curve: the seawall maintenance crews' regular rotation. The three remaining crew members are all scheduled for the same window. This has not happened before. The schedule was set by the maintenance program's AI scheduler. The AI scheduler's override log shows a manual input for this scheduling decision. The input's authorization code is from a maintenance supervisor who retired in 2061.

Pressure. The sub-drainage access point under the south curve. What the crew found. The sealed report. The retired supervisor's authorization code. The fourth crew member's disappearance. The upcoming maintenance window with all three remaining members scheduled simultaneously. This is the shape of a problem with a specific geometry. The geometry has a center. The center is under the Ring Road's south curve.

11/

WHAT WAS BUILT

The SCA didn't intend to build soldiers. They were building weapons.

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THE PROGRAMS

Faction gene-forging programs share a structure: paleogenetic template selection, targeted augmentation stack, field certification. They differ in what they prioritized, what they discovered, and what they did when the results surprised them.

FAC-TION	STOCK	FIELD PRO-FILE	WHAT THE PROGRAM WAS FOR	WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY PRODUCING
NAF	Lynx	High-reflex, sensory focus, precision	Targeted extraction and close-quarters contested-zone work	Operators with increasing sensory integration across augmented and unaugmented channels: perceiving across thresholds the template wasn't designed to bridge
NAF	Eagle	Aerial reflex, ranging vision, threat assessment	Surveillance and long-range operational coordination	Operators whose threat-assessment instinct increasingly overrides deliberate reasoning in high-stimulus environments: designed as a feature, now producing unsanctioned responses
SCA	Jaguar	Burst-speed, territorial, night-vision	Jungle operational dominance	Operators developing territorial instinct responses in non-operational contexts: claiming spaces, marking boundaries, reacting to intrusion in ways the program's behavioral protocols weren't written for
SCA	Anaconda	Patience, thermal sensing, constriction reflex	Long-duration covert operation	Operators whose patience extends beyond operational contexts into social paralysis in non-field environments; the thermal sensing is performing beyond design spec in ways the program hasn't documented
EO	Bear	Damage absorption, persistence, bone density	Attrition warfare	Operators whose persistence threshold has moved above what the psychological support protocols were designed to manage; the programs producing second-generation operators show more pronounced baseline shift

FAC-TION	STOCK	FIELD PRO-FILE	WHAT THE PROGRAM WAS FOR	WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY PRODUCING
EO	Wolf / Kavast	Pack coordination, pursuit, cold environment	Kavast territorial doctrine	The pack instinct has produced emergent coordination behaviors in long-service operators that the Kavast program did not design and cannot fully predict; tactically useful, socially complex
PCU	Raven	Threat-mapping, network sensing, surveillance	Intelligence gathering and coordination	Operators who have difficulty distinguishing between active surveillance operation and passive environmental perception after extended deployment; the sensory augmentation doesn't disengage between missions
PCU	Falcon / Shaheen	Precision strike, aerial instinct, speed	Special Forces	Operators experiencing instinct-cascade: a situation where multiple augmented instincts activate simultaneously in response to one trigger, producing a response that is faster than deliberate action and occasionally faster than tactical appropriateness
PRC	Tiger	Ambush reflex, burst speed, predatory assessment	Infiltration and targeted engagement	Operators whose predatory assessment instinct is processing social environments with the same framework as tactical environments: most visible in off-mission behavior that PRC's program documentation classifies as "social adaptation variance"

FAC-TION	STOCK	FIELD PRO-FILE	WHAT THE PROGRAM WAS FOR	WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY PRODUCING
PRC	Shark	Aquatic integration, pressure tolerance, lateral line	Indo-Pacific theater	The lateral line augmentation has been developing sensitivity beyond the operational design range; what operators are perceiving at the extended range is not characterized in program documentation

Pack doctrine, Kavast's defining tactical framework, is the most studied aspect of gene-forged field performance. A wolf-lineage Kavast cohort in full pack coordination is not operating as a group of individuals following a plan. It is operating as a distributed system with individual components and shared processing. The tactical performance is exceptional. The behavior outside combat context produces social dynamics that Kavast's program administration handles through specific protocols that are the most detailed behavioral management documentation in any faction program. The protocols acknowledge what they are managing. They do not acknowledge what the behavior's long-term trajectory looks like.

BEYOND APEX STOCK

The faction programs produce the apex categories. Everything outside those categories comes from somewhere else.

Commercial Stock. Entertainment complexes, luxury companions, living branded characters. Gene-forged operators built for aesthetic and performance specifications rather than combat: exceptional physical profile, controlled instinct architecture, behavioral programming for social environment rather than tactical one. The gene-forging is real. The augmentation is real. The performance specifications are optimized for cameras and crowds rather than contested zones. After the Upheaval, the companies and complexes that owned them collapsed in many cases, releasing commercial-stock gene-forged into a world that did not have an administrative category for their specific situation. Some of them adapted to whatever work their capabilities suited. Some of those capabilities, it turned out, suited contested-zone work.

A commercial-stock operator who has spent ten years working gray-market contracts is not what their original program documentation describes. They are what ten years of contested-zone experience has produced from the starting material. Treat the starting material as history, not current status.

Bespoke Commission. Oligarchs, cartel bosses, and the specific category of wealthy client who wanted something nobody had seen before, and had enough resources to commission it from an unlicensed specialist who was willing to work outside program oversight. Bespoke gene-forged exist at low volume and high specification. Each one was built for a specific purpose that reflected the client's priorities. The client's priorities vary: protection, intimidation, performance, competition, or the specific vanity of having something made rather than purchased. Many of the clients who commissioned bespoke stock did not survive the Upheaval. Their commissions did.

A bespoke commission encountered in the field is the most unpredictable gene-forged figure in the setting. Their capabilities were designed for a specific purpose that may no longer be their operational context. Their behavioral protocols were designed for a client who may no longer exist. They are working with what they were built with in whatever situation they currently occupy.

Black-Market Deviation. Unlicensed labs operating in Amazonian Metroplex root-mass, Neo-Tokyo sub-level spaces, UCR border districts, and the specific gap in administrative oversight that exists in any territory that is officially contested and practically ungoverned. The templates they use are derivative of faction stock: sourced from breached program databases, reconstructed from partial documentation, or in some cases discovered rather than developed. The augmentation is real but its quality reflects the specific expertise available to an unlicensed operation sourcing components through gray-market channels. The results are variable in the sense that they cover a wider performance range than faction programs produce. Some black-market deviation stock performs at or above faction-program levels. Some doesn't. The operator in the field does not always know which category they occupy.

Your figure doesn't match anything on this list? Someone built it in a basement with a stolen gene-template and a client who wanted something nobody had ever seen before.

PALEO-STOCK

Dinosaurs walk the Earth again. Not many. Enough.

The SCA cracked paleogenetic reconstruction first. Sixty-five million years of evolutionary distance produces integration challenges that mammalian templates don't: the sensory architecture doesn't map to existing neurological frameworks, the behavioral instinct patterns have no living reference population, and the specific cognitive processes that evolved in the Mesozoic are processing a world that is categorically different from the world they were built for.

Operators built from predatory dinosaur genetics report sensory experiences that don't map to any existing description. The Allosaurus-derived stock that the SCA's most classified program produced describes perceiving something behind them: not in the sense of threat detection (which would be explainable) but in the sense of something behind their position in time. The program documentation classifies this as a sensory integration artifact. The operators who experience it consistently classify it differently among themselves in conversations the program documentation does not include.

The instinct profiles are harder to stabilize than mammalian stock. The programs that have produced functional paleo-stock operators have done so through behavioral protocol work that required three to five times the calibration investment of equivalent mammalian programs. The operators produced are operationally capable. Their off-mission behavioral profiles are the most complex behavioral management challenge in any gene-forging program.

The stock remembers things no living animal remembers. This is not metaphor. The paleogenetic template reconstruction process brings forward behavioral and instinct patterns that were laid down over millions of years of evolution in a specific environmental context. The environmental context is gone. The patterns are not. What the operator does with patterns that have no current environmental referent is the question that paleo-stock behavioral research is circling without publishing conclusions.

At the Table: Paleo-stock operators follow the same rules as other operators. The gameplay mechanics are the same. The silhouette is older. The specific quality of being in the presence of a predatory dinosaur descendant who is also your extraction partner is a table texture that the production design does not need to over-explain.

THE EVOLVED ECOSYSTEM

The gene-forged programs produced operators. They also produced an ecosystem.

Twenty years of program runoff, escaped templates, unauthorized releases, deliberate rewilding by programs that were shut down without controlled decommissioning, has produced a global population of gene-forged fauna that is not under program control and is not non-existent.

Thermo-Canis. Wolf-adjacent, thermally augmented, runs in packs that operate with the same coordination instinct as Kavast cohorts but without the behavioral protocols. In contested zones, a Thermo-Canis pack is a navigation problem and a tactical intelligence source simultaneously: they track vehicle heat signatures, follow pursuit patterns, and avoid specific categories of armed response in ways that experienced operators read as directional intelligence. Where the Thermo-Canis are moving away from: something is there. Where they are moving toward: something edible, which in a contested zone means something biological and not currently defended.

Aqua-Felis. Aquatic gene-forged feline stock, engineered for the flooded Soak environments of flood-zone cities. Their distribution is a structural integrity map: they aggregate in spaces that are dry, elevated, and connected to adjacent elevated spaces. Operators who know this read Aqua-Felis distribution as an improvised infrastructure assessment.

Mega-Crocodylus. Coastal and riverine. SCA-adjacent program origin. Four meters minimum. They occupy territory with the same persistence that bear-stock operators bring to contested installations, and they maintain it in the same way: by being present and expensive to displace. In the Amazonian Metroplex's flooded root-mass channels, they are the dominant fauna. The root-mass maintenance crews work around their territories on the crews' schedules, not the Mega-Crocodylus's.

Strato-Raptor. Eagle-adjacent, high-altitude capable, built for the thin-air environments of mountain theaters. They soar thermal columns at five thousand meters and descend at a dive speed that their original program documentation rated at terminal velocity in a controlled test environment. In the Tian Shan and Andean

theaters, experienced operators treat Strato-Raptor behavior as thermal mapping and air current data. Their aggression response to aircraft is the reason three faction VTOL programs have modified their approach altitude protocols in mountain theaters.

Filter-Fish. Aquatic, water-quality sensing, schooling behavior. They exist in any body of water that has both organic content and a baseline water quality above the Tier Three threshold. Where Filter-Fish are absent from water that should support them: something in the water has changed. What has changed is the first question. Whether it changed naturally or was changed is the second.

Fauna Behavior as Operational Data:

Thermo-Canis: Tracking vehicle pursuit. Their direction of movement is the direction something pursued recently went.

Aqua-Felis: Mapping structural integrity. Their aggregation points are the stable high ground.

Mega-Crocodylus: Territorial marking. Their established territory means no other large predator claims that space, which means their territory is the safest open water in the theater.

Strato-Raptor: Thermal column mapping. Their soaring positions indicate updraft patterns that affect VTOL approach calculations.

Filter-Fish: Water survivability indicator. Their absence is the warning. Their presence is the baseline clearance.

SPLICE PUNK AND GENE-FORGED IDENTITY

The genome is the most intimate state claim in Terra Conflictus. State gene-forging programs inscribe their ownership at the cellular level. Your template is your citizenship. Your augmentation is the state's investment in your operational capability. Your body is, in the faction framework, a registered national asset.

Going freelance means exiting that framework without the framework's consent. The genomic registration doesn't end when the operator leaves: it is voided, the state maintains the claim, and the operator becomes a stateless asset in a world where statehood is biological. The operators who have lived with this status for long enough have developed a specific relationship with the documentation of their former identity: the expired clearance badges, the deactivated genomic verification cards, the program insignia on gear they kept when they left.

Splice Punk is what it looks like when gene-forged operators take the thing their state put in their body and remove the state from the framing.

The augmentation worn visibly rather than concealed. The subdermal plating exposed through a deliberate gap in the jacket: not hidden, not armored, announced. Low-light optics covered with hand-painted covers that say: I have this, I know you can see it, I chose to show you rather than letting you find it. The expired genomic ID badge worn on a chain as the literal documentation of a previous identity: I was registered as this. The registration is dead. I am not.

This is not performance. It is information architecture: using visual language to say what the body's documentation history says without letting the documentation define the current identity. The operators who do this most deliberately are usually the ones who left state service under circumstances that the state would prefer not to characterize, which means the documentation's death date is a statement. The date says when the choice was made. The choice says something about what preceded it.

"The genome is the most intimate state claim in TC2066. Splice Punk takes the thing your state put in your body and removes the state from it."

The body modification protocols that faction programs use to stabilize augmentation, the specific subcutaneous treatments, the bone-density management protocols, the sensory-architecture calibration work, continue to be necessary after leaving the program, and the operators who have left the program continue to need them, through channels that are not the program's maintenance system. The black-market bio-mod maintenance market is real, widespread, and provides a specific community: operators who are servicing the same ongoing biological need through the same gray-market channels build relationships with the same suppliers and with each other that the faction programs' bureaucratic maintenance system never produced.

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WHAT WAS BROKEN

The programs ran long enough for biology to do what biology does: surprise you.

WHAT WAS BROKEN

The programs ran long enough for biology to do what biology does: surprise you.

ABERRANT STOCK AND TEMPLATE DRIFT

The first gene-forged program cohort was certified for operational deployment in 2045. The earliest certified operators are now in their mid-forties. The programs that produced them have been running for twenty years. Twenty years is long enough for biology to do what biology does.

Template drift is the clinical term for gene-forged operator development outside program design parameters. The template, the paleogenetic base from which the augmentation was built, is not a static architecture. It expresses. It responds to environmental input. It interacts with the augmentation stack in ways that the program designers modeled at a time when they were modeling first-generation operator behavior from first-generation operator data. The second generation produces data the models did not anticipate, because the second generation is not the first generation.

Sensory drift in long-service operators presents first as sensitivity expansion: the designed sensory augmentation performing beyond its calibrated range. Eagle-stock operators perceiving in spectral ranges the program's sensor documentation did not list. Raven-stock operators maintaining surveillance perception in off-mission contexts, without the ability to disengage the sensory processing that was designed as an active tool. Shark-stock operators reporting lateral-line input at ranges beyond design specification that they are processing but cannot classify.

Instinct bleed is the second presentation: augmented instinct responses activating in non-operational contexts. Jaguar-stock operators claiming spaces and marking territory in social environments. Wolf-stock operators in extended civilian contexts forming coordination bonds with proximity contacts that the Kavast program's social protocols were not designed to manage. Tiger-stock operators processing social environments through predatory assessment frameworks and producing behavioral outputs that the PRC program classifies as "social adaptation variance" without characterizing what the variance is adapting toward.

Template regression in the first-program generation looks like the augmentation unspooling in the direction of the original paleogenetic template: the designed operator moving, in cellular architecture, toward something older than the program intended. Bone structure thickening beyond design parameters in bear-stock operators. Sensory architecture developing pathways that the program's template documentation shows as vestigial. The template's paleogenetic history re-asserting across the designed modifications.

The factions are classifying these as isolated incidents. The rate at which "isolated incidents" are being filed in every major program's clinical records is not the rate of isolated incidents. Field operators know this because they work with each other and the field operators are not comparing notes through program channels.

The programs are not publishing the data. The BAFO monitoring file contains more complete drift documentation than any faction program's clinical archive, because BAFO has been monitoring without the program's interest in managing the documentation.

THE SUBSTRATE CONNECTION

GM ONLY. This section does not appear in player-facing text. Surface it as discovery. Present the evidence and let players assemble the conclusion.

Every gene-forged operator is a substrate receiver.

This is not the programs' design decision. It is a consequence of the programs' design decision. The paleogenetic templates that faction programs use to build their operators, wolf, raven, bear, jaguar, eagle, shark, were selected for their survival characteristics, their adaptation profiles, their specific biological capabilities that human engineering could isolate and amplify. What the programs did not select for, because they did not know it was present, were the substrate accumulation markers that the templates' source species carried after hundreds of millions of years of evolution in proximity to substrate resonance nodes.

The markers are in the templates. They were in the templates before the programs began. The programs reconstructed the templates and the markers came with them, because the programs reconstructed the templates with exceptional fidelity and did not know what the markers did.

What the markers do: they receive the substrate signal. They are antenna architecture. The substrate signal is a low-frequency standing wave, a frequency below hearing that the sensory architecture the markers build receives continuously. The gene-forged operators who carry the markers receive it without knowing they are receiving it and without the signal resolving into anything they can identify as signal.

The drift that gene-forged operators experience beyond program specifications is not biological instability. It is the substrate signal rewriting the operators toward something else: toward the thing the signal is addressed to, something the signal was always addressed to, something that is not the operators' designed profile and is not the operators' original template and is not the operators' conscious direction.

The standing wave's measurable intensity has increased over the past decade. BAFO's monitoring data shows a fourteen percent increase in the most recent three-year measurement period. The previous three-year period showed a nine percent increase. The period before that, seven. The increase is not linear. Something is accelerating.

Something changed. What changed has not been identified. The change's timing correlates with the UNSO Traveler's orbital insertion in 2059. This correlation has not been established in any published analysis.

The Lumenfeld hypothesis, as reconstructed from the surviving ECHO records and the fragments Null Chorus has recovered: the OPHIUCHUS suppression program did not reduce substrate sensitivity. It altered the frequency on which sensitivity occurred. The gene-forged programs have built their operators from templates that were already receiving the substrate signal, and then augmented those templates in ways that the OPHIUCHUS research suggests may have further altered the reception frequency. The specific frequency on which gene-forged operators are receiving the signal is not the frequency on which unaugmented humans receive it. Where that frequency leads is the question that the Lumenfeld research was moving toward when Lumenfeld disappeared.

What this means at the table: Template drift is the signal working. The "aberrant" behavior is the operators moving toward something the signal is calling them toward. What the signal is calling them toward is the campaign's deepest question. Introduce the connection as a revelation that emerges from clinical evidence, BAFO contact, Lumenfeld archive fragments, or the operators' own experience: not as a briefing. The briefing model has already failed as a narrative event.

THE OPERATOR'S BODY

Gene-forged operators carry the visible biology of their programs and the less visible consequences of operating in contested zone environments for years on end. Baseline operators carry a different set of consequences for the same work.

Cognitive wear from drone-linked tactical overlays. Extended use of tactical augmented reality systems, standard equipment in faction special forces and widely distributed in the contractor market, produces a specific kind of cognitive wear that the medical literature describes as "overlay dependency syndrome" and that operators describe as not being able to tell the difference between what they're looking at and what the overlay is telling them is there. In operational contexts this is manageable. In social and civilian contexts, operators who have been running overlays for years report difficulty calibrating their environmental assessment to the actual environment rather than the augmented model.

Perceptual drift, distinct from gene-forged template drift, affects operators who have spent extended time running surveillance feeds. The feed-watching brain learns to process video input as primary reality. Operators with three or more years in surveillance-heavy roles report difficulty in first-person field situations where the view is unmediated: it feels wrong, less reliable, less real than a feed. The counterintuitive result of this training is operators who perform better in surveillance-heavy environments and worse in environments where surveillance technology isn't available.

Bio-mod maintenance outside faction supply chains. Gene-forged operators who have left state programs require ongoing biological maintenance: subcutaneous treatments, sensory-architecture calibration, bone-density management protocols, hormonal regulation for templates that are not self-regulating. The faction programs provide this through institutional medical infrastructure. Operators who

have left the programs source it through black-market channels that provide variable quality at consistent cost. The variable quality is the risk. The consistent cost is the ongoing operational expense that no contract brief includes in its budget line.

Hydration debt is the most consistently underdocumented field-operator health variable. Standard faction ration protocols are calibrated for standard physiology in standard environmental conditions. Gene-forged operators in elevated-augmentation states have hydration requirements above the standard protocol. Operators in high-temperature theaters, regardless of augmentation status, have hydration requirements above the standard protocol. Operators in high-altitude theaters lose hydration at rates the standard protocol does not account for. Hydration debt compounds: a team that has been running at marginal hydration for three days performs worse on day four than the marginal deficit on any single day would predict.

Loyalty conflict is the most underdocumented wound in the after-action record. Operators who worked within faction structures, who had colleagues in those structures, who built the specific professional relationships that contested-zone work generates, and who then left those structures or whose structures collapsed around them, carry the cognitive and emotional weight of ended relationships and ended affiliations in ways that the freelance operator's performance record does not capture. The clinical literature on loyalty conflict in the contractor market does not exist, because the contractor market is not a clinical environment and the factions whose programs produced the conflict have an interest in not developing the clinical literature.

CLINICAL RECORD

What BAFO is watching and not publishing.

The Bureau of Architectural Field Operations' monitoring mandate covers "biological adaptation in proximity to Architect-era installation sites." This mandate, interpreted broadly, includes monitoring the gene-forged operator population that works in proximity to installation sites regularly, which is the majority of the contractor market. BAFO has been monitoring under this expanded interpretation for six years. The expanded interpretation has not been formally challenged because it has not been formally publicized.

The drift correlation. BAFO's monitoring data shows that gene-forged operators who have worked in proximity to three or more installation sites in a twelve-month period show drift progression rates 2.3 times higher than operators who have not. The correlation is consistent across all faction stocks, across all geographic regions, and across all program generations. The correlation has been in BAFO's internal data for three years. BAFO has not published it because publishing it requires explaining the monitoring program, and explaining the monitoring program requires explaining what BAFO believed it was monitoring.

Three field cases (callsigns only):

GRAYLINE (Wolf-stock, long service, former Kavast): GRAYLINE left the Kavast program twelve years ago. BAFO monitoring began four years ago when GRAYLINE was working a regular rotation in the Granitsa theater. Current drift profile: sensory architecture developing pathway connections that the Kavast template documentation shows as vestigial: connections that would have been functional in the original paleogenetic source species and that the program's augmentation stack should have suppressed. The pathways are not suppressed. They appear to be active. What GRAYLINE is receiving through the newly active pathways has not been disclosed to BAFO. GRAYLINE has not been asked directly, because asking directly would require BAFO to explain the monitoring.

COASTLINE (Commercial stock, gray-market contractor, no program of record): COASTLINE was built for entertainment industry specifications twenty years ago. Current contractor for four regular-rotation clients, none of them aware they have the same contractor. BAFO identified COASTLINE through pattern-matching on contractor movement data near two Pacific coastal installation sites. Drift profile: thermal sensing beyond design specification in a commercial-stock operator who was not designed with thermal sensing. The augmentation architecture that should not support this capability is producing it. BAFO's clinical assessment team has a theory about this. The theory connects to the ECHO program's research on substrate-signal-mediated biological development. The team has not published the theory.

SILT (Paleo-stock, no program of record): SILT has no faction program documentation of any kind. SILT's physical profile matches no faction program's published template documentation and no unlicensed program's recovered documentation. SILT is not in any gene-forged registry. BAFO identified SILT through a contractor incident report from the Metropoli Perdida site that described an operator with behavioral characteristics consistent with paleo-stock template but physical char-

acteristics beyond the design range of any known paleo-stock program. SILT has been in the Metropoli Perdida region for six months. SILT has not communicated with any faction representative, any BAFO field operative, or any entity that BAFO's monitoring network has identified. SILT has communicated with the Selva Legion patrol that encountered the entity with the drift profile beyond clinical parameters. The communication was a single exchange. The patrol sergeant's paper log records it as a question and answer. The question is in the log. The answer is not.

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FOUR ERAS

The Core Era is where you start. The other three eras are where the world ends up.

FOUR ERAS

The Core Era is where you start. The other three eras are where the world ends up.

HOW TO USE THIS CHAPTER

The Core Era is the default. Every location, faction, and conflict in this book is calibrated for the Core Era, with 2066 as the default play year. A campaign can stay in the Core Era indefinitely: the resource wars are cold, the deep game is running below the surface, and the operators in between have more work than they can complete.

A campaign that follows consequences will find the other eras arriving regardless. The Escalation Era doesn't require a GM decision to begin: it begins when the players' actions start generating the second-order effects that the Core Era's instability was always going to produce. The Orbital Era arrives when orbital infrastructure becomes a theater that the surface game cannot ignore. The Post-LIC Era arrives when the LIC is destroyed and the energy calculation changes for everyone.

Each era escalates one dimension of the world. Each era introduces the question the previous era was building toward. A campaign that runs through all four is a campaign that asked the deep game's question and lived long enough to find out what the answer costs.

GM tips for the Core Era start:

Run the surface game first. Three to five sessions of resource-war contracting, water convoys, Lumericite escort, factional intelligence work, before the deep game thread appears. Let the players develop faction relationships and operational pattern before those relationships are complicated. The deep game's first appearance should feel like something that was always there, not like a new setting element the GM introduced.

THE CORE ERA: 2060–2070

The world at the start of play.

Political stability: The faction lines are stable in the sense that all five factions have agreed on their mutual recognition and the boundary frameworks of the Accords. The lines are unstable in the sense that every faction is operating outside the Accords' spirit in at least three active theaters and all five know this about all five. The stability is a shared performance. The performance serves everyone's interests better than the alternative, which is why it continues.

The resource wars are cold. Lumicite convoys are contested. Water infrastructure is targeted. Agricultural IP is the most traded intelligence commodity in the gray market. The factions fight over these resources through contractors, through autonomous platforms, and through the specific legal ambiguity of contested zones where faction forces technically don't operate and obviously do. The fighting is constant. It is contained. The Accords exist to keep it contained and the factions enforce the Accords against each other selectively enough to keep the framework functional.

The operator market is the largest unaffiliated labor economy on Earth. The Cascade produced it. The sustained resource competition maintains it. The factions need work done that they cannot officially do. The operators are the instrument. The relationship is transactional and it has been the setting's primary economic structure for twenty years. It is not going to last twenty more.

The deep game is running below the surface. BAFO is monitoring. The Syndicate has coordinates. The Brotherhood is assembling the picture. Consortium Halcyon is suppressing specific categories of information. The players are working their first contracts. The deep game's first contact with the splice arrives as something that doesn't fit the briefing's model.

THE ESCALATION ERA: 2071–2085

The period when the Core Era's compounding pressures become visible and consequential.

Famous operations multiply. The Escalation Era is the period that produces the cases that the Famous Operations table references. The operations that become legendary do so because the Escalation Era's political conditions create situations where individual actions generate strategic consequences that the Core Era's stability contained. An extraction that produces data changing a faction's strategic calculus. An assassination that reshapes a succession. A mission that leaves behind consequences the brief didn't anticipate.

Gene-forged template drift reaches clinical visibility. The first-program cohort operators are in their fifties. Their drift profiles are no longer isolatable as individual incidents: there are too many of them, across too many programs, showing too consistent a pattern. The factions can no longer manage the clinical data through classification alone. Some of the more visible cases become public. The public framing, "long-service gene-forging produces a documented adjustment period", does not match the clinical documentation, which is why the clinical documentation is not attached to the public framing.

Proxy conflicts heat. The Accords' contained-war framework begins producing higher-stakes engagements as the resource pressures that the Core Era was managing become less manageable. Contested zones that were tactically complex in 2060 become strategically significant in 2075. The Patagonian Basin timeline becomes a countdown that every faction's planning infrastructure is modeling simultaneously. The Southern Compact's public position is that the timeline is secure. The SC's internal position is that the timeline is not.

The deep game starts making noise. An installation event in the Escalation Era produces consequences that the surface game cannot explain. The BAFO monitoring data that has been classified becomes sought after. Null Chorus publishes a Lumenfeld archive fragment. The factions' response to the publication tells the players which factions have been treating the deep game as a real game and which ones are surprised.

For GM use in this era:

Give the players' previous actions consequences. The faction relationship they built in the Core Era has shifted based on what they did. The contact they trusted has a different context in 2075. The installation site they accessed in 2062 has become strategically significant and someone else is accessing it now. The escalation is personal before it is geopolitical.

THE ORBITAL ERA: 2086–2100

The period when orbit becomes a strategic theater.

The GCOA. The Global Collective Operations Authority becomes operational and immediately contested. Every faction's position on the GCOA is that they support its mandate and oppose its current governance structure. The governance structure they oppose happens to be the one that limits their individual access. The GCOA's orbital platforms are the most significant non-Lumicite military infrastructure ever built. Who controls them controls a domain that the surface game's existing frameworks were not designed to govern.

Project Amaterasu. A strategic weapons system that passed testing in 2059 and was not deployed. Every faction's intelligence assessment includes a different answer to why it wasn't deployed: the NAF says it was deployed and classified; the EO says it failed a final certification; the PRC says it was deployed and Amaterasu is the reason three specific events in the early Escalation Era had the outcomes they did. All three assessments are plausible. One of them is accurate. The question of which one is the Orbital Era's defining intelligence thread.

The Void Walkers' operations scale. The pattern that has been building since 2052 reaches a phase transition in the Orbital Era. The Void Walkers' targets in this period are not installation sites and not data archives: they are the specific people and organizations that have been assembling the deep game's picture from different angles. BAFO. Null Chorus. Three specific Scholar Wing researchers. The scaling looks like escalation. It is not escalation. It is a plan reaching a stage that the Core Era's evidence didn't show was coming.

Orbital theater missions:

Operations in LEO require equipment the core game doesn't assume: pressure suits, vacuum protocols, the specific navigation challenges of zero-gravity environments and orbital insertion windows. The GCOA station is the setting's most complex operational environment: every faction has personnel, every faction has interests, and the rules of engagement on a sovereign multilateral platform in orbit are not the rules of engagement anywhere else. The GCOA seizure in 2098 is the event that makes the Post-LIC Era possible. It is also the event that makes the Orbital Era's campaigns personally consequential: someone the players know is on that station.

Standing wave spikes:

The standing wave's measurable intensity spikes twice in the Orbital Era, once in 2089 and once in 2097, with no confirmed cause. Both spikes produce measurable behavioral anomalies in gene-forged operators worldwide, lasting three to seven days, that the faction programs document as "operational stress responses." The BAFO monitoring data shows a different pattern. The BAFO monitoring data for the second spike correlates with the Traveler's transition from a stationary orbit to a new orbital position. This correlation is in BAFO's classified files. Three people have read those files. One of them is SILT.

THE POST-LIC ERA: 2101–2104

The period that changes the energy calculation permanently.

The Lunar Industrial Complex. The LIC was the GCOA's most significant orbital installation: a helium-3 extraction facility on the lunar surface, producing the cleanest fusion fuel available. Every faction's long-term energy projection assumed the LIC's continued operation. No faction's planning infrastructure had modeled what happens to the post-Lumicite energy economy if the LIC is destroyed.

The Sons of the Serpent destroyed it in 2104 to prove they could reach that far. The proof was successful. The LIC is gone. Helium-3 production is at zero and will remain at zero for a period that no engineering assessment has characterized as less than fifteen years, because the infrastructure that would replace the LIC requires the GCOA's cooperation and the GCOA's governance situation after the 2098 seizure is not "cooperative."

The evacuation records are incomplete. The LIC's personnel evacuation during the Sons of the Serpent attack achieved ninety-three percent survival. Seven percent of the LIC's staff are unaccounted for. The evacuation records show seven percent of the staff as having reached escape vehicles. The escape vehicles' registered destinations do not match any GCOA orbital facility or any faction's receiving infrastructure. Someone left with something. The factions know this. The something they left with is the subject of six separate active intelligence operations, none of which are sharing findings.

For GM use in this era:

The Post-LIC Era's campaigns are about what comes after. The resource calculation has changed for every faction simultaneously. The Lumicite energy infrastructure that the five-faction competition assumed as background is now the only large-scale fusion energy system on Earth with a functioning supply chain, and the supply chain runs through the installation network that no faction has fully decoded. The deep game and the surface game are now the same game. What the Architects built is the most strategically important infrastructure on the planet. What the Architects built it for is the question that determines what the Post-LIC world becomes.

Running the timeline.

Campaigns can accelerate or retard the timeline through player action. A faction whose Lumicite supply is disrupted at scale in 2063 reaches its Escalation Era pressure point earlier. A Sons of the Serpent operation the players disrupt in the Core Era pushes their LIC timeline back. The Southern Compact's twenty-two year water timeline is the most player-influenceable clock in the setting: it responds to the Patagonian Basin's status, and the Patagonian Basin's status responds to what the factions are doing in its territory, and what the factions are doing in its territory is exactly the kind of thing a splice gets contracted to influence.

The eras are not destinations. They are consequences. What the players do determines which consequences compound, which ones are avoided, and which ones arrive regardless of what anyone does because the substrate signal doesn't negotiate.

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KEY FIGURES

Names have weight in Earth 2066. These names have the most.

KEY FIGURES

Names have weight in Earth 2066. These names have the most.

FACTION LEADERSHIP

The people who make the decisions operators work inside.

Director General Marisol Vance-Holte, NAF. She has held the position for nine years. Before that: twelve years in NAF Intelligence Directorate, with a terminal posting as the analyst who wrote the doctrine paper that defined the Monitor Central architecture. She is the person who decided what Monitor Central would and would not do, and she made those decisions with a clarity about what she was building that most accounts of the architecture do not credit. She is not a technocrat. She is a political executive who uses technical infrastructure as a political tool, and she is very good at it. Her current priority: the AEGIS Black situation, which she knows is not resolved and has chosen not to resolve on a timeline that anyone outside her immediate staff could predict.

Supreme Commander Alexei Rykov-Korn, EO. He came up through the Iron Veil. He was in the field when the Tian Shan Hold happened, not in command: he was two ranks below the Hold's commanding officer. What he learned in eleven days without resupply has been the basis of his operational philosophy since. He believes the EO's social credit system is the most important strategic asset the faction has, and he believes this because he has read what happens to contested-zone populations when the social order fails and found the result unacceptable. He has never publicly questioned the credit system. He has twice quietly funded research into its equity outcomes and twice quietly classified the findings.

Chancellor Yumiko Iseki-Bell, PRC. The PRC's civilian leadership is the most structurally complex of any faction: the Chancellor administers civilian and diplomatic functions while the Pacific Command administers military operations, and the two structures' authority overlap in ways that the PRC's founding charter left deliberately ambiguous. Chancellor Iseki-Bell has spent seven years exploiting that ambiguity in the direction of civilian authority. Pacific Command's current response to this is a classified program that the Chancellor knows about and has not moved to stop, because stopping it would require acknowledging that she knows about it.

Grand Emir Al-Rahim ibn-Yousef, PCU. He has been governing the PCU's administrative center since 2055. The diplomatic style is deliberate and patient. He has been in the room for seventeen multilateral negotiations and has never signed a framework in the first meeting. He has never signed a framework in the third meeting. The frameworks he has signed have been, without exception, more favorable to the PCU than the initial proposal. He considers the negotiation over the Saharan greening zone's sovereignty to be at the stage where signing in four to six months would be appropriate. The other parties believe the negotiation is ongoing.

Chairman Director Luiz Carvalho-Mendes, SCA. He administers the SCA's civilian structure. The Cartel Coordinator reports to him in the organizational chart and to the specific cartel leadership that has historically administered the Chairman Director's political position in the way that determines whether the organizational chart reflects operational reality. Carvalho-Mendes is aware of this structure. He has navigated it for eleven years by being more useful to the cartel leadership than the alternative candidates they have considered. His utility is primarily in international diplomatic contexts where the SCA needs a face that is not a cartel face. He is excellent at this work and has developed, over eleven years, a very clear picture of what the cartel leadership actually wants, which is more politically sophisticated than what they say they want in Cartel Coordinator briefings.

HIGH-VALUE TARGETS

Al-Miraj (CALLSIGN: KEYSTONE). The Syndicate's second-most-senior broker, operating in the Gulf Shore theater. Al-Miraj controls access to three data markets that hold the most complete records of the Cascade period's institutional collapse: specific to the governance and infrastructure decisions that created the faction structure. Every faction has sent someone to negotiate with Al-Miraj. Three of

those negotiations produced results. The other four produced incidents that Al-Miraj's security team handled efficiently and that Al-Miraj subsequently described to the next faction's representative as an educational history regarding why the negotiation process benefits from patience.

Director Petrokov (CALLSIGN: ARCHIVE). Former EO Intelligence Directorate analyst, now independent. He left EO service in 2058 with, by EO's assessment, unauthorized copies of seventeen years of Eurasian Steppe substrate monitoring data. EO's assessment is accurate. What Petrokov has done with this data in the six years since his departure is the question: he has not sold it, not published it, not traded it for the protection that its possession would justify purchasing. He is holding it because he has not yet identified what it proves. He is getting closer.

Mireille Torres (CALLSIGN: CARTOGRAPHER). She has produced three independent analyses of the Lumicite installation network's geographic distribution that, taken together, identify a pattern in the network's layout that no official analysis has published. Torres reached this conclusion from public sources: declassified geological surveys, academic papers on pre-Upheaval site archaeology, and the public portion of BAFO's field documentation. The conclusion she has reached is not the conclusion that the classified analyses have reached. Her conclusion is more accurate. She is a civilian academic. She does not know that four intelligence services have her under active surveillance and two have made acquisition attempts that she interpreted as eccentric academic overreach.

Commandant Sato Hiroshi, PRC (retired). The Jade Prism's founding commander. He is retired in the technical sense. He has been in contact with four current Jade Prism operators in the past six months, including Jade Prism Controller Xu Lin, through channels that the PRC's current active monitoring does not cover, for reasons that the PRC's current monitoring has not identified. Sato knows something about the Sub-4 level of Neo-Tokyo that the current Jade Prism doesn't. He has been waiting for the right moment to share it. The moment's conditions have not been met. The conditions relate to what the standing wave spike of 2059 produced that none of the factions documented correctly.

Dr. Fatima ibn-Saud (CALLSIGN: FOUNDATION). She is the scholar who identified the Metropoli Perdida site's seven-civilization stratigraphy before the 2063 multilateral team did, in a 2061 paper published in a journal with a small readership that no intelligence service monitored at the time. She is the person who understood what the stratigraphy implied. She is the person who said this to a room of five colleagues in 2061, and then watched four of them sign a classification order for

data she had produced independently, and then received a communication from Consortium Halcyon three weeks later with an offer she characterizes as "the most expensive conversation I was ever asked to not have." She did not accept the offer. She is still working. Her current research is on the relationship between the Architect-era installation construction methodology and the site selection criteria for pre-Architect-era structures at the same locations. She is close to something. The Null Chorus has been quietly routing her published work through their archive verification process for four months.

DEEP GAME PLAYERS

Baroness Volstok, The Syndicate. She has held the Syndicate's senior position for fourteen years. She is the most significant information broker in the setting, in the specific sense that what she chooses to withhold is as strategically consequential as what she chooses to sell. She holds coordinates for six Lumericite installation sites no faction has identified. She holds records of twenty-three faction operations conducted through Syndicate infrastructure that the factions have not disclosed internally. She holds, in a physical format in a location that no digital system references, the complete record of the Document Wars' targeting lists as they were provided to the Syndicate for logistical assistance in 2028. She has not decided what to do with the targeting lists. She has had them for thirty-eight years. She is still deciding.

Commandant Sable, Shinkai. She has run Shinkai for twenty-two years. The information she holds through her non-equipment monitoring methods represents the most complete record of operator and faction-representative communication outside official channels in the setting. What she does with it, exclusive, off-premises brokerage to parties who understand the source, has made her the most consistently valuable neutral intelligence resource available to anyone who can afford her terms and has established enough trust to know what they are asking for. She has one active concern: the three parties currently in protective custody. The concern is not about their welfare. It is about whether the pattern their situations represent is a signal about a change in her operational environment that she has not identified.

The Scholar Wing (leadership unnamed). The Scholar Wing's leadership structure does not appear in any document accessible to non-Brotherhood parties. The Scholar Wing's senior researcher is known to BAFO by a description rather than a name: "the person who has read the most complete version of the ECHO archive in existence." This description is accurate. The senior researcher has read the archive, has assembled the Lumenfeld connection, and has reached a conclusion about the substrate signal's relationship to the gene-forged template drift that they have shared with two members of the Scholar Wing's leadership structure. The two leadership members have reached different conclusions about what to do with this information. The disagreement is the most significant internal Brotherhood conflict in twenty years.

BAFO's Senior Field Observer (unnamed). The observer who has been filing the substrate resonance monitoring reports for six years. She is the person who connected the Neo-Tokyo Sub-3 maintenance windows to the Metropoli Perdida and Granitsa anomalies. She is the person who flagged the standing wave intensity increase to the three-year, three-percent-per-year escalation that the most recent period shows as fourteen percent. She filed a request eighteen months ago to present her findings to the Brotherhood Scholar Wing. The request was denied by her supervisor. Her supervisor's reason for denial was classified above her own access level. She has been working since the denial on a different approach: finding a party who can present the findings on her behalf without requiring her supervisor's authorization. She met a UNSO Traveler field observer at Shinkai three weeks ago. She did not know who they worked for. Sable noticed.

SPECIAL FORCES COMMANDING OFFICERS

Named commanders from Famous Operations. The people operators recognize by callsign and negotiate with by reputation.

COMMANDER	CALLSIGN	UNIT	DEFINING OPERATION	CURRENT STATUS
Col. Adriana Kessler	IRONHAND	Phantom Vipers	Operation Silent Meridian (2061)	Not sighted in 14 months. Last confirmed location: NAF Classification Archive, Nova Boston.
Cmdr. Dayo Afolabi	SELVA ONE	Selva Legion	Metropoli Perdida Hold (2062)	Active, site command. Metropoli Perdida.
Lt. Col. Ilya Karvonen	FROST	Iron Veil	Tian Shan Hold (2063)	Active, Steppe Corridor. Has never filed the personal observations from Day Eight.
Maj. Samar al-Rashid	SHAHEEN-7	Shaheen Squadron	Jade Meridian (2064)	Active, Levantine Command. Promoted to Commandant.
Cmdr. Taizo Yamamura	PRISM	Jade Prism	Mirror Lake (2065)	Retired. In contact with Jade Prism Controller Xu Lin through unmonitored channels.
Unknown	WITNESS	Void Walkers	Three documented convergence sites (dates classified)	Active. Location unknown.
Archivist Dae Choi	SCHOLAR	Brotherhood Military Wing	Operation Archive (date classified)	Active. Contested zones. Last confirmed: Granitsa.

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WHAT PLAYS HERE

The brief said capture or kill. It didn't say which one would be worse.

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INFRASTRUCTURE AS THE MISSION

Don't build objectives around facilities. Build them around what happens when a facility fails.

A Lumicite refinery is not a mission objective. The humanitarian crisis that begins in fourteen days when the refinery fails is a mission objective. The difference is that "secure the refinery" produces tactical thinking and "prevent what happens when the refinery fails" produces a mission that is simultaneously tactical, social, and time-pressured in ways that the players will feel in their choices rather than execute against a fixed target.

The specific, human consequence is the mission. The AWH tower that serves Salter's Landing is not a mission objective. The twelve hundred people who lose water access in eight days if it's not repaired is the mission. The CROM management system that coordinates the Gorodskie Ekho flood barrier is not a mission objective. The six-hour window before the Current begins flooding, after the third pumping station fails, is the mission.

Chokepoint doctrine for mission design:

Every theater has chokepoints. Every chokepoint has a failure mode. Every failure mode has a timeline. Run the timeline. Give the players the timeline before they choose their objective. Let the timeline be the pressure that makes every choice cost something.

Worked examples across five theater types:

Flooded London: The relay node housing integrity drops to critical. Forty-eight hours before failure. Three boroughs lose data infrastructure when it fails. The players can repair it (access problem), reroute it (technical problem), or replace it (supply chain problem). Any of the three solutions requires something the players don't have at the start of the mission. What they don't have is the mission's actual objective.

Amazonian Metroplex: A mycological agent has been introduced to the primary water filtration root-mass node. Propagation timeline: four days. System failure timeline: ten days. The players must identify the agent, source the countermeasure, and apply it to the root-mass without triggering the SCA's defensive system, which they don't know exists until it's relevant.

Gorodskie Ekho: The third pumping station maintaining the Current's flood barrier is down for maintenance. The maintenance window is six hours. The other two stations are at capacity. A mission objective inside the Current requires transit during the maintenance window, when Monitor Central is running at reduced flood-barrier-monitoring capacity and at increased human-security-monitoring capacity, because the EO expects someone to notice the maintenance window.

Saharan Oasis: A wind management tower is offline. The microclimate envelope it managed is deteriorating. In the communities within the envelope, Tier Three water access drops to Tier Four in four days. The tower's replacement component is three thousand kilometers away. There is a different tower's replacement component available six hundred kilometers away that will not work in this tower but can be modified by someone with the right expertise. The expertise is in a contested zone community that will not share it unless the players understand why the community has it and what it cost them.

Lost Angeles: The Monitor Central response delay in the outer districts is not a malfunction. It is an operation. Someone created the delay specifically for a four-day window that begins in two days. The delay creates a security vacuum in the outer districts that is the operational environment for something that is going to happen regardless of whether the players know about it. Whether they are inside or outside that thing when it happens is the choice the mission brief creates.

The mission object table:

OBJECT	VALUE	COMPLICATION
Lumicite sample (shielded)	Faction-significant	Interference radius if unshielded. Every faction wants it.
Pre-Upheaval data archive	Intelligence-tier	Consortium Halcyon has prior claim. What's in it changes the brief.
Gene-forging template	Black market highest	The template's program of origin becomes relevant at the worst time.
AWH tower component	Life-support tier	The replacement creates a shortage somewhere else.
Biological IP (agricultural)	Market-highest by weight	Six factions have prior IP claims. All are enforceable in some jurisdiction.
Installation coordinates	Syndicate currency	Possessing them makes you a target for everyone who doesn't have them.
BAFO monitoring data	Deep game tier	The faction that receives it will know what BAFO has been monitoring.
Pale Roster documentation	Intelligence-highest	Three parties know it exists. None of them know the others know.

THE SURFACE GAME AS CAMPAIGN

Resource war campaigns work because the stakes are physical and immediate. Water is life. The timeline is real. The people who lose when the resource operation fails are specific humans in specific communities who the players have met or will meet.

Clock logic for infrastructure failures: Post the clock when the mission starts. Don't hide it. The players knowing the clock is what makes the clock a pressure rather than a surprise. The pressure is the point.

Resource war mission types:

Escort: A Lumicite convoy or water shipment requires protection. The route is known. The opposition is known. What is not known is who is running the opposition and what they are actually after. "Stop the convoy" is not the objective of a competent opposition. "Access the cargo" or "delay the shipment past a specific window" or "learn the route for a subsequent operation" is.

Denial: A faction's resource access must be disrupted. The infrastructure being targeted will serve civilian populations when the mission is over. What "denial" means in the context of civilian infrastructure is a choice the players make in how they accomplish the objective, not a choice the brief makes for them.

Recovery: Something was taken. It must be returned, or its taking must be undone, or its taking must be understood well enough that the player knows what was really taken and why. Recovery missions generate intelligence as a byproduct because recovering something requires retracing its movement.

Stabilization: A supply chain or infrastructure system is failing and requires intervention before it produces a cascade failure affecting something the faction cares about. The intervention requires accessing the failure point, which is in contested territory, and the fix requires components that are in faction territory, and the clock requires that both happen in a window that doesn't comfortably fit a sequential operation.

THE DEEP GAME AS CAMPAIGN

The installation network as a puzzle that escalates.

The structure: Each piece of deep game information points to the next. A recovered data core contains partial coordinates. The coordinates are in a notation system that requires a reference document to read. The reference document is in an archive that BAFO has catalogued but not accessed because accessing it requires equipment that only three people know how to operate, and two of them work for different factions and neither of them knows about the third.

The first appearance: The deep game enters the campaign as something that doesn't fit the brief's model. A Lumericite sample that behaves differently than described. A gene-forged NPC at an installation site who asks a question that implies they know something about the installation that the brief didn't include. A BAFO field observer who mentions, in passing, a monitoring result that the players have no context for and that they will only understand three sessions later.

The Syndicate's position as broker: Volstok will sell access to installation sites. She will not sell coordinates. The distinction means that a faction that buys access is committed to the approach; the Syndicate controls the record of everything that happens during the access. The players can work through the Syndicate or around it. Working through the Syndicate is cleaner and produces a record. Working around it is possible and produces the Syndicate's attention.

BAFO as an ambiguous resource: BAFO field operatives know more than they say. They say more than their supervisors would approve. The Senior Field Observer's six years of monitoring data is the most complete picture of the substrate phenomenon available outside the Architect records. She will share fragments with parties who demonstrate they have already assembled adjacent pieces. She does not share first. She responds.

The Lumenfeld reveal as a campaign arc culmination:

The players have been running surface game missions for a year. They have encountered three pieces of deep game evidence: a Lumericite sample that produced unusual carrier-frequency effects in the team's wolf-lineage operator; a data core fragment that contained ECHO program nomenclature; a BAFO contact who asked, after a Metropoli Perdida operation, what the players noticed about their gene-forged members near the unshielded installation.

The reveal is not a single scene. It is the assembly of things the players already have. The conversation with the BAFO Senior Field Observer where she explains what the monitoring data shows. The Null Chorus archive fragment that connects the monitoring data to the ECHO program. The Scholar Wing research that connects the ECHO program to the Architects. The Architect fragment that says: we built what was already there.

The players think they have been racing for an energy source. They have been racing for something the signal was always sending them toward.

When the standing wave spikes, they feel it.

THE THINGS NOBODY TOLD YOU

Fifteen long-campaign threads. Each one is a question, not an answer.

1. **The Void Walkers and the Prometheus League.** The pattern across forty years is not the pattern of an organization. It is the pattern of a program. Who runs it? What does the final phase look like?
2. **Project Amaterasu.** It passed testing in 2059. It was not deployed. Why? Three factions have three different answers. One of them is right.
3. **The Nordics are not neutral.** They are independent, which requires active maintenance, and they are maintaining something specific. What are the geothermal monitoring readings they have been keeping for eleven months and not sharing?
4. **The LIC evacuation records.** Incomplete. Seven percent of the staff. Where did they go? What did they take?
5. **The Brotherhood archives.** The Scholar Wing may hold the most complete installation map in existence. The Military Wing would rather destroy it than share it. The conflict between these two positions is reaching a decision point.
6. **Consortium Halcyon and the Document Wars.** They organized significant portions of them. Finding their fingerprints on the targeting lists, not just the preservation lists, is the discovery that turns the surface game into the deepest game.
7. **The standing wave's increase.** Something changed in 2059. The timing correlates with the Traveler's orbital insertion. This has not been established in any analysis. What changed when the Traveler arrived?
8. **SILT.** No program of record. No program documentation matches. The question it asked the Selva Legion patrol. The answer in the sergeant's paper log that isn't recorded.
9. **The Pale Roster's current contracts.** Who is hiring them? Through what Syndicate blind channel? For what targets?
10. **The four-minute blackout on the Ring Road.** No explanation offered. Two events during the four minutes. What was removed from the vehicle at kilometer seven, and where is it now?

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11. **The Southern Compact's water timeline.** Twenty-two years, not forty. The faction analyst who has assembled both surveys and has not published. Why haven't they published?
 12. **The BAFO Senior Field Observer's request to present to the Scholar Wing.** Denied by a supervisor whose reason is classified above her own access. What does her supervisor know about the Scholar Wing that required the denial?
 13. **Sub-4 of Neo-Tokyo.** It appears in no document accessible below flag-grade. The maintenance workers who access it from below describe it in terms that flag-grade analysts have declined to publish. What is in Sub-4?
 14. **The Reclamation Yard's archive.** Analyst Korvath has read three documents that describe a PRC operation he has not shared. What operation? What do the documents prove?
 15. **The standing wave's addressed recipient.** The Architects built containment. The signal continues. The gene-forged operators are receivers. The signal was always addressed to something that is not the operators. What is the signal addressed to?
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FAMOUS OPERATIONS

OPERATION	YEAR	UNIT	WHAT IT WAS	WHY IT MATTERS NOW
Operation Silent Meridian	2061	Phantom Vipers	PCU energy researcher extracted without awareness of extraction	The researcher's subsequent work, and who contacted her six months after the extraction, is a current thread
Metropoli Perdida Hold	2062	Selva Legion	Four-faction convergence held for 72 hours with one-fifth combined attacker strength	Commander Afolabi has never filed what the team found on day three
Tian Shan Hold	2063	Iron Veil	Eleven days without resupply against rotating attackers	Commander Karvonen's day eight personal observations, never filed
Operation Jade Meridian	2064	Shaheen Squadron	EO Lumicite convoy disrupted, zero evidence of PCU involvement surviving review	How they made the evidence disappear is a technique that has since been replicated by two parties who were not taught it by the Shaheen Squadron

OPERATION	YEAR	UNIT	WHAT IT WAS	WHY IT MATTERS NOW
Mirror Lake	2065	Jade Prism	4 petabytes of NAF data copied and replaced with modified data-set	The 17 parameters that differ: two of them produce cascading errors in NAF research that hasn't been traced to Mirror Lake yet
The 2051 Dynamic Siege	2051	Unknown	A competing Crackerjack team attempted to take an opposing team's entire roster hostage during live event	The physical evidence the facility systems have never catalogued
Operation Archive	classified	Brotherhood Military Wing	Recovery of a complete Architect installation site before four-faction teams arrived	What they found inside has never been shared outside the Brotherhood
The Waterloo Transit Incident	2063	Unidentified Void Walkers	Access to a relay infrastructure node below the Stack flood line	What was accessed and what was done with it

OPERATION	YEAR	UNIT	WHAT IT WAS	WHY IT MATTERS NOW
The Relay Dark Period	2071	Unknown	Waterloo Relay station went dark for 72 hours	The six operators who are unaccounted for and the removed monitoring equipment
GSOTC Perimeter Breach	2058	Unknown	Someone accessed the facility between competitions, without triggering any system that the facility logs acknowledge	Silas Dent saw it. He has never reported it.
The Oasis Survey Seal	2063	PCU survey team (classified)	PCU conducted a classified geological survey of the Saharan oasis zone's substrate reading points	The results that were classified and what the correlation to the Granitsa anomaly means
The Antarctic Access	2044-ongoing	Three faction teams	The three factions' installations at the Antarctic Peninsula, all in violation of the 2043 Accords	The data core that triggered Dawnlight is 300 kilometers from the largest oasis. Who knows this?

OPERATION	YEAR	UNIT	WHAT IT WAS	WHY IT MATTERS NOW
First Raid Race	2048	Unidentified originating team	The first structured race in what became Lost Angeles underground motorsport	The first package. What it was. Who posted it.
The Granitsa Exposure	2059	Iron Veil	First documented contact with a pre-permafrost installation site	The classified report above the Iron Veil commander's access level

MICRO-WORLDS AS MISSION SEEDS

Each of the ten Micro-Worlds from CH10 as a one-paragraph mission seed.

The Interchange at Waterloo: The relay node is failing. The man in the green coat is giving different forecasts to different buyers. The discrepancy is deliberate. Someone has bribed him, or someone has replaced him, or the forecasts themselves are a message that the players must decode before the node fails and three boroughs go dark simultaneously.

The Reclamation Yard: Analyst Korvath has decided to do something about the three documents he has been sitting on. He has reached out to one party. The players are not that party. They are the party that was reached out to first, three years ago, and declined. Korvath is about to do something that would benefit from someone who understands the operational context of what the documents describe, which involves the players' last major contractor.

The GSOTC: The pre-competition access request from the UNSO Traveler Research Partnership. Commandant Obi has not responded to it. The players are hired to determine who sent it and why. What they find is not the UNSO Traveler.

The UNSO Traveler: Biologist Reeve needs to get his structural section discovery off the ship without Captain Finn-Adelaide knowing it's leaving. The finding's implications require expertise that doesn't exist on the Traveler. The players are the expertise. What the finding requires them to do will change the brief that gets them on the ship.

The Black Clinic, Neo-Tokyo Sub-3: The bear-stock EO operator with the drift profile beyond clinical reference has disappeared from the clinic. Dr. Mingshu has three days of notes. The notes are the most significant clinical document in the setting. Three parties have identified the notes exist. None of them know where Dr. Mingshu is. One of them has kidnapped the patient, which is why Dr. Mingshu has disappeared.

Salter's Landing: The night recon pattern change. Marsh has decided to find out why it changed, which requires finding out what the NAF knows about the 2062 capability demonstration. She needs someone who can access NAF surveillance records. She is offering the community's AWH maintenance expertise and the specific knowledge of the capability itself, which is worth significantly more than the players' initial assessment of the contract.

Defector Alley: The Lumenfeld fragment. Forty-eight hours of seller non-response. Three parties converging. The players can acquire it, confirm its significance, and determine what the seller knows that made them disappear: if they move in the next four hours, before the three converging parties arrive and the situation becomes something different.

Shinkai: The retired special forces commander at the corner table has requested a meeting with the players specifically. Sable conveyed the request without explanation. The commander's callsign is one of the ones from the Famous Operations table. They are ready to explain day eight of the Tian Shan Hold. What they need in exchange is a service that requires the players' operational profile, not their discretion. The service is in the Granitsa theater.

The Tooth and Gear: The Lumicite package. The race is in six days. The anonymous client is not anonymous to Mo Money. Mo Money will share what she knows if the players can tell her what the package's shielded containment specification implies about where it came from. The implication will require the players to have been paying attention to the surface game's Lumicite logistics for at least four sessions.

The Ring Road: The maintenance window. Three remaining crew members. The sealed sub-drainage access. Whatever is under the Ring Road's south curve has been sealed for eighteen months and the window to access it without the presence of all three remaining crew simultaneously will close in nine days when the maintenance window executes. The players have nine days to learn what the crew found and decide what to do before the window opens, the crew members converge, and whatever happens next happens.

THE CRACKERJACK

The competition as a campaign frame.

One event per year. The preparation cycle runs for three months: qualification, training, inter-faction intelligence gathering during training, the specific social terrain of every faction's operators sharing the GSOTC's facilities with genuine professional respect and genuine operational surveillance simultaneously. The competition runs for five days. The aftermath runs for months.

A campaign built around the Crackerjack cycle has a ticking clock, defined rivals, and a performance metric that the entire world is watching. The diplomatic consequences of competition results are real: winning teams receive priority contracts, resource allocations, political leverage. The 2051 Dynamic Siege's aftermath is still producing geopolitical consequences in the Core Era. What a Core Era Crackerjack campaign produces will be the Escalation Era's context.

The 2051 Dynamic Siege left physical evidence in the facility that has never been fully catalogued. It has been there for fifteen years. The next competition brings every faction's observation teams into the facility simultaneously. Silas Dent has asked for vacation time during the competition. Commandant Obi denied the request. The physical evidence is the reason.

RAID RACE / HEIST CLUB

The underground motorsport as a campaign frame.

A 6-10 session arc or a recurring backdrop for longer campaigns set in NAF territory. The championship season gives you a ticking clock (race schedule), escalating stakes (each race raises the package category), and a cast of NPCs whose personal dramas intersect with faction politics in ways that the sport's four billion viewers can see and the operators in the theater can't avoid.

The operators don't have to compete to be pulled in. The packages move through the sport regardless. A faction operation that uses a Raid Race package delivery for plausible deniability has handed the operators a problem that begins as an escort and becomes something else at the moment the shielded containment label reveals what's inside.

The Lumicite package. The race runs next weekend. Mo Money knows who posted it. The Syndicate blind channel knows the approximate faction origin. Monitor Central is going to deploy maximum enforcement because of what the package's interference radius will do to their targeting systems during the delivery window. The four billion viewers will be watching when the enforcement response goes from nonlethal to whatever Monitor Central's multi-limbed rippers constitute legally.

The Tooth and Gear as a recurring social location: The place where the season's alliances and betrayals form before they play out on the road. Mo Money's management office. The acoustic dead spots. The booths where the brokers sit and the deals that require the dead spots are made.

Monitor Central as the persistent antagonist: Not malicious by design. Mechanically comprehensive. A security system that does its job with the specific quality of a system built to do its job well, in a city that has twelve million people in it and a sport that will not stop running because the security system considers it unauthorized.

Lost Angeles as a full operational theater: Every district. The arcology core. The outer districts. The Raze. Low Coast. The Ring Road. The subscription geography that separates them. The economic geography that produces Raid Race. The architecture of Monitor Central. The gap where the Tooth and Gear sits. Twelve million people and the weight of the 2041 quake and the rebuilt east and the coastline that moved and the people who stayed. All of it at the same table.

FACTION AT A GLANCE

Fast-reference spread. One faction per column. The table the GM reads in the first minute of planning a session.

	NAF	SCA	EO	PCU	PRC
Full Name	North American Federation	South Compact Alliance	Eastern Offensive	Petro Caliphate Union	Pacific Rim Collective
Doctrine	Adaptive supremacy through tech integration and managed populations	Biological sovereignty through ecological integration and genetic heritage	Territorial persistence through population management and attrition doctrine	Economic integration through energy control and diplomatic leverage	Technological supremacy through human-machine integration
Gene-Forged	Lynx, Eagle, Dire Wolf (classified)	Jaguar, Anaconda, Caiman	Bear (Medved), Wolf/Kavast, Steppe Eagle	Raven (Corvid), Desert Fox, Falcon/Shaheen	Tiger, Oran-gutan, Shark
Special Forces	Phantom Vipers	Selva Legion	Iron Veil	Shaheen Squadron	Jade Prism
Key Territory	Lost Angeles, New Chicago, Gulf Shore, Cascadia	Amazonian Metroplex, Metropoli Perdida, São Paulo, Patagonian margin	Novosibirsk Citadel, Kavast Zone, Gorodskie Ekho, Steppe Corridor	New Aqaba, Riyadh, East Africa, Saharan Oasis	Singapore Node, Neo-Tokyo, Java Scatter, Indo-Pacific

	NAF	SCA	EO	PCU	PRC
Weakness	Outer districts operating outside doctrine assumptions for 15 years	Cartel infrastructure governs more than the org chart shows	Firmware problem: platforms continue on last-valid-order when signal cuts	Honor Guard is protocol-bound and ambushable at the boundary	Intelligence is most comprehensive and most dangerous to possess
Current Priority	AEGIS Black situation (unresolved, not resolved on any predictable timeline)	Metropoli Perdida access control as installation attracts increased faction interest	Granitsa thaw exposure producing classified installation contacts above Iron Veil commander's access	Saharan greening zone sovereignty negotiation at four-to-six month signing stage	Neo-Tokyo Sub-3 maintenance windows; Jade Prism Controller Xu Lin's independent recruiting
The Faction's Lie	Open society with robust security infrastructure; the outer districts were not asked	Biological sovereignty is heritage, not manufacturing; the cartel believes in the margin	Social credit system produces fair allocation; the Soak was not consulted	Most committed to long-term stability; "equilibrium" describes arrangements that benefit the PCU	Collective intelligence produces the best outcomes; operators route around the aggregate when it matters

	NAF	SCA	EO	PCU	PRC
GM Tip	Excellent equipment, poor information. Monitor Central gap knowledge is what locals have.	Bio-mechanical constructs have no allied-contractor recognition protocol.	Cut the signal and watch what the last-valid-order produces.	Brief lists acceptable methods in diplomatic preference order, not operational effectiveness.	Data system provides everything relevant plus everything tangential. Filtering is the work.

Independent Powers at a Glance:

	NOR-DICS	ACU	PFZ	UCR	SOUTH-ERN COM-PACT	BROTHERHOOD	SYNDICATE
Position	Independent, actively maintained	46-member resource compact	Maritime sovereignty compact	NAF's Atlantic buffer	Antarctic and Patagonian reserves	Oldest intelligence org, no flag	Global neutral brokerage
What They Hold	Cold fusion methodology; geo-thermal data; substrate correlation (11 months unreleased)	Lakefire Corridor water administration; amberlight monitoring data	Indo-Pacific port infrastructure; access leverage over all faction logistics	Defector Alley; the most complete defector-broker market on Earth	Antarctica access (SC); 22-year water timeline (unreleased internal data)	Scholar Wing archive; Military Wing operational capacity	Installation access coordinates (6 unrevealed sites); Document Wars targeting lists

	NOR-DICS	ACU	PFZ	UCR	SOUTH-ERN COM-PACT	BROTH-ERHOOD	SYN-DICATE
GM Tip	Visiting requires better documentation than any other territory; civilian population is the surveillance	Lakefire amber glow correlates with substrate readings; the ACU's explanation is insufficient	PFZ port access is a resource the factions cannot do without; they know it	Defector Alley's permanent neutral contacts require three conversations before access	SC's public timeline (40 years) and internal timeline (22 years) are not the same number	If Brotherhood is at a location, something is buried there worth finding	Volstok sells access, not coordinates; the distinction is the entire leverage

ROLL TABLES

All tables designed to be usable mid-session without GM prep. Each result is a complete, immediate complication: not "roll again."

D8: CONTACT RELIABILITY

How the current contact's information quality reads on this mission.

ROLL	RESULT
1	Burned. The contact's information is accurate and they know it. They also know someone is watching the handoff. They are trying to tell you this without saying it.
2	Dated. Correct as of two weeks ago. The specific element that has changed since then is the element most central to the current objective.
3	Bought. The contact sold this information to a second party before selling it to the splice. The second party is ahead of you by the margin of however long it took the splice to assemble the team.
4	Partial. Accurate as far as it goes. The contact genuinely does not know the element they left out. The element they left out is the one that changes the access calculation.
5	Clean. The information is accurate and current. The contact wants something in return that they have not yet stated. They will state it at the moment it is most inconvenient.
6	Tested. The contact tested the information by sending someone else first. That person came back. The information is accurate. The contact is now watching to see what the splice does with it that the someone-else couldn't.
7	Premium. The contact's information includes a detail the brief didn't cover. The detail is the most operationally valuable piece in this package and the contact knows it. They have priced it separately in their head.
8	Layered. There is a second layer to this information that the contact has not shared. The contact will share it when the splice demonstrates they understand what the first layer actually means.

D10: FACTION PRESSURE

Which faction's interests complicate this operation.

ROLL	RESULT
1	NAF Compliance. They have a Monitor Central flag on the objective location. The response time is shorter than the brief estimated.
2	EO Intelligence. An EO analytical team reached the same conclusion the splice's clients reached, five days earlier, through a different data chain. They are already on location in a surveillance posture.
3	PCU Honor Guard. A PCU diplomatic asset is within the operation's action radius. The Honor Guard's protective protocol creates a no-action zone that overlaps with the splice's extraction route.
4	SCA Cartel Enforcers. The objective location is within a cartel zone that the brief didn't identify as such. The Enforcers are running their own operation in the same location. Their operation is adjacent to the splice's objective in a way that produces an encounter at the worst point.
5	PRC Jade Prism. A Jade Prism element is on location in a deep-cover posture. They are not the opposition. They are watching the splice complete the mission and learning something from the observation.
6	Void Walkers. A Void Walker element accessed the objective location in the past 72 hours. What they took is not what the splice is there for. What they left is.
7	The Syndicate. The objective location has a Syndicate access agreement that the faction client did not disclose. The agreement creates complications the brief did not account for.
8	Brotherhood Military Wing. The objective overlaps with an active Brotherhood recovery operation. The Brotherhood knows about the splice. The splice does not know about the Brotherhood.
9	BAFO Field Team. A BAFO team is monitoring the objective location. They will not interfere. They are recording everything. What they record will matter in a later session.
10	Two factions simultaneously. Roll twice, ignore this result. Both apply. Their objectives partially overlap. Neither knows the other is here yet.

D12: REGIONAL COMPLICATION: URBAN

Theater-specific complications for flooded, dense, and surveilled environments.

ROLL	RESULT
1	Tier Two water is off. The district's municipal system is down for unscheduled maintenance. Every resident is managing their water situation in real time, which means additional foot traffic, additional social pressure, and three local water merchants who know exactly who has been in the area today.
2	AWH tower maintenance. A maintenance team is working on the AWH tower that covers the operational area. They have eyes on the approach from their elevated position and they are not faction personnel. They are local contractors who know everyone in the district.
3	Surveillance gap. A section of the AI monitoring network in the objective area is running at reduced capacity. Someone created this gap. They expected to be the only ones using it.
4	Crowd event. Feed-hot content is generating a crowd at the objective's approach. Four billion potential witnesses if the splice appears in the background of the wrong shot.
5	Black market activity. A significant gray market transaction is occurring in the operational area. The parties involved have their own security. The security does not distinguish between the splice and anyone else who is not part of the transaction.
6	Gene-forged Menagerie. An Aqua-Felis cluster in the flooded section has moved from their established territory. The reason they moved tells the splice something about the structural integrity of their approach route.
7	Social credit enforcement. An EO Social Enforcement team is running a compliance check in the operational area. Their authority is local. Their data network connects to central. Operators without valid local documentation are flagged.
8	Communications jam. The operational area is experiencing a localized communications blackout. Not faction activity: competing signal sources from three different gray-market communications networks have produced a natural interference zone.
9	Irregular operating. One of the Irregulars is working a case in the operational area. They have better local intelligence than the splice's brief provided. Their case intersects with the splice's objective in a way that produces a choice.

ROLL	RESULT
10	Bio-mod clinic nearby. A gray-market bio-mod maintenance clinic is in the operational area. The clinic's clients include people who would rather not encounter faction operators or contractor splices and have prepared for that preference.
11	Faction civilian asset. A faction's civilian intelligence asset is in the operational area. Not a field operative. A civilian who passes information. They have seen the splice arrive and are composing a message right now.
12	Infrastructure failure cascade. Something in the area's CROM system just failed. The cascading effects are beginning: climate management in two adjacent buildings is down, the AWH tower's output is being rerouted, and the flood barrier's pumping capacity has been reduced by twelve percent as the system compensates. The timeline for the next failure: forty-five minutes.

D12: REGIONAL COMPLICATION: WILDERNESS

Theater-specific complications for desert, steppe, permafrost, and open environments.

ROLL	RESULT
1	Thermo-Canis pack. Moving perpendicular to the splice's direction. Their direction of travel is away from something. The something is directly on the splice's planned route.
2	Autonomous platform on last-valid-order. An EO or NAF autonomous platform operating in the area received its last valid order approximately four hours ago. It is still executing that order. The order involves a fire position that overlaps with the splice's approach vector.
3	Filter-Fish absence. A water source that the brief identified as viable for resupply shows no Filter-Fish population. The water is not what the brief indicated.
4	Strato-Raptor territory. The approach involves a thermal column that the local Strato-Raptor population uses. They react to aircraft intrusion. The reaction radius is larger than the brief's equipment specifications anticipated.
5	Permafrost exposure window. A section of the permafrost on the route has opened an exposure access point in the past 48 hours. What it exposed is not on any map. The access window: unknown duration.
6	Weather event. A climate management failure in the adjacent faction territory has produced a weather pattern that the brief's planning didn't account for. Visibility, temperature, or precipitation is now materially different from mission planning parameters.
7	Advance team. Another splice reached the objective ahead of the current team. They are not hostile and not allies. They are evaluating the same opportunity and have not decided how to proceed.
8	Mega-Crocodylus territory. The water route passes through established Mega-Crocodylus territory. The route is possible. The timeline is not.
9	Signal blackout zone. The operational area is experiencing a natural signal blackout: geological interference from a substrate resonance node that the brief's signal mapping didn't include. The blackout affects the splice's communications. It also affects the autonomous platforms' command link in the area.
10	Local community. A community that the brief characterized as uninhabited has residents. The residents have been managing this area for twenty years without faction documentation. They know who has been through in the past week.

ROLL	RESULT
11	Pre-Upheaval infrastructure. A section of the route crosses buried pre-Upheaval construction. The construction is intact. The construction has contents that weren't in the brief because they weren't in any database the client had access to.
12	BAFO survey markers. Fresh survey markers from a BAFO field team. They were placed in the past 48 hours. The BAFO team is somewhere in the operational area. They have the GM's full attention.

D12: REGIONAL COMPLICATION: CONTESTED

Theater-specific complications for multi-faction, gray zone, and high-instability environments.

ROLL	RESULT
1	<p>Faction jurisdictional dispute. Two factions both claim authority over the operational area. Both have personnel present. Neither faction will take an action that acknowledges the other's presence. The splice is caught in a situation where both sides are making decisions based on doctrine that assumes the other isn't there.</p>
2	<p>Contractor competition. A different splice has been contracted for a related objective in the same operational area. Their client is different from the splice's client. Their client and the splice's client have not communicated. Their objectives produce a conflict that neither brief prepared either splice for.</p>
3	<p>The Feed is hot. An independent streamer is broadcasting from the operational area. The broadcast is live. The streamer has a viewership that includes three parties with interests in what's happening in this area.</p>
4	<p>Civilian displacement. A civilian population is in the operational area that was not present in the brief's site assessment. They are in the area because something in an adjacent location changed in the past week and they have nowhere else to be right now.</p>
5	<p>Autonomous platform boundary failure. The boundary programming that was supposed to keep the autonomous platforms in their designated operational zone has failed. One platform is operating outside its designated zone. It is executing its last valid order. The last valid order was not written for this area.</p>
6	<p>Gray market operation. A significant gray market operation is running through the operational area. The operation's logistics involve three factions' back-channel infrastructure simultaneously. Everyone involved is extremely motivated to keep the operation invisible. Everyone involved will treat the splice's presence as a threat to that motivation.</p>
7	<p>Opposition convergence. Two opposition organizations with competing interests in the operational area have both sent elements. The elements have encountered each other. The splice has arrived at the moment that encounter is transitioning from surveillance to confrontation.</p>
8	<p>Defector. An individual in the operational area is attempting to defect from one faction to another. They have reached out to three parties, including the splice's client. The defector's information is either extremely valuable or an elaborate operation. The splice has to make this determination in the field.</p>

ROLL	RESULT
9	Installation resonance. The operational area is near an installation site the brief did not identify. The site's proximity is affecting the gene-forged members of the splice in ways that the brief's equipment specifications didn't account for. The effect is the first sign that this area matters in the deep game.
10	Irregulars territorial knowledge. The best navigation intelligence for this operational area is held by an Irregular who is currently working a case here. The Irregular's case and the splice's objective are connected by a thread neither party has identified yet.
11	Syndicate access agreement. The objective location is covered by a Syndicate access agreement. The agreement creates a specific constraint on the splice's operational options that the client's brief did not mention, because the client did not know about the agreement, because the agreement was reached between the Syndicate and a party who did not disclose it to the client.
12	Void Walker signature. Recent Void Walker activity in the operational area. Within 96 hours. They were not here for the same objective. What they were here for, and what they left or took, is the thread the GM has been waiting to introduce.

D20: BLACK MARKET GOODS

What's moving through this location's shadow economy.

ROLL	RESULT
1	Water cartridge refills, Grade B: functional, not authenticated
2	Mold medicine, prophylactic grade: specific to flood-zone environments
3	Gene-forging template fragment, origin undocumented: partial sequence, valuable to the right specialist
4	Pre-Upheaval data archive access codes: to what, unknown until purchase
5	Hacked CROM maintenance access: twelve-hour window to the local system's diagnostic layer
6	Counterfeit NAF pharmaceutical supply: antibiotics at standard potency, authentication stamps replicated
7	AWH tower component: the specific type currently in shortage, sourced from a decommissioned installation
8	Agricultural biological IP: the cassava algorithm variant adapted for coastal saline soil
9	Deactivated HELIX STANDARD badge: expired, worn as jewelry by the seller, value is the date
10	NULLMARK package: latest generation, covers 80% of faction monitoring systems
11	Stolen faction ration surplus: EO steppe packs, still sealed, excess from a supply line that no longer exists
12	Bio-mod maintenance compounds: subcutaneous treatment grade, sourced through gray-market pharmaceutical chain
13	Dry-cell battery lot: sufficient to run a standard settlement's emergency generator for six days
14	Lumicite sample, unshielded: small mass, still glowing, seller does not understand why the buyers are wearing protective equipment
15	Faction intelligence report, one week old: from which faction, about which theater, is the purchase decision

ROLL	RESULT
16	Biological weapon precursor, unidentified: the seller knows what it is. The seller is selling it because knowing what it is is dangerous.
17	Installation coordinates, one location: sourced from a contact who has since disappeared. Authenticity unverifiable without equipment the buyer probably doesn't have.
18	Cold fusion methodology fragment: incomplete. Enough to confirm the Nordics' approach. Not enough to replicate it. The gap is deliberate.
19	Substrate monitoring data: BAFO classification markings still present. Someone removed it from a BAFO archive and is selling it without understanding what the data describes.
20	Personal effects of a former Pale Roster operator: names, callsigns, operational logs from before the decommissioning. The seller says they found them. The seller is lying, but not about what they are.

D8: UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE

Second-order effect of mission success.

ROLL	RESULT
1	The client's client has what they needed. The splice's mission delivered an outcome that served the client's stated interest. The client's actual client, the entity the client works for, now has what they actually wanted, which is different, and is moving on it while the splice collects payment.
2	The clock started. The mission's success triggered a response from a third party who was waiting to see if the objective would be completed. The response has a timeline. The timeline is running.
3	The community paid for it. The mission's success came at cost to a civilian community that the brief did not characterize as relevant. They know the splice was involved. They do not yet know how to act on this knowledge.
4	The data is out. The extracted information has been copied, shared, or accessed by a party who was not the intended recipient. The copy exists somewhere. What the party does with it determines how much it matters.
5	The autonomous platform is loose. A platform whose operational parameters were disrupted during the mission is now operating without valid orders in an area with civilian population. The clock to a significant incident: four hours.
6	BAFO logged it. The mission's operational signature was close enough to an installation site that BAFO's monitoring recorded it. What BAFO does with this information depends on what the splice's operational pattern looks like alongside the other data BAFO has been accumulating.
7	A contact's position changed. The mission's success shifted a factional power relationship in a way that the splice's best contact is now on the wrong side of. The contact will reach out when they figure out how to frame the conversation.
8	The deep game moved. Something the splice did during the mission, incidental, not the objective, possibly not even noticed, was significant in the deep game's terms. BAFO noticed. The Scholar Wing noticed. The Void Walkers noticed. The splice has a sixty-day window before one of these parties acts on what they noticed.

D10: GENE-FORGED ENCOUNTER

What kind of gene-forged the operators encounter and what state they're in.

ROLL	RESULT
1	Wolf-lineage, Kavast cohort, full coordination: they are operating as a pack and the splice has been identified as a territorial intrusion
2	Raven-lineage, surveillance posture: they have been watching the splice for longer than the splice has been aware
3	Bear-lineage, persistence doctrine: they are not trying to win this engagement; they are trying to outlast it
4	Jaguar-lineage, territorial response: the splice crossed a boundary that the jaguar operator has been managing and does not need a faction authorization to enforce
5	Lynx-lineage, precision extraction: they are here for a specific person or object and the splice is currently between them and it
6	Drift-presenting, unaffiliated: a gene-forged operator whose behavior does not match any faction's program documentation, exhibiting template drift at a visible level, not hostile but not comprehensible in standard contact protocols
7	Commercial stock, armed: not a program operator; a commercial-stock gene-forged working contracted security for someone in the operational area
8	Paleo-stock, unknown origin: the silhouette is older than any operational encounter the splice has had; the behavior is predatory in a way that does not map to any current faction program's field profile
9	Multi-lineage team, Void Walker signature: a mixed-composition team whose equipment is cross-faction modified, operating without faction markings, with objectives the splice cannot determine from their behavior
10	Black-market deviation, Menagerie-adjacent: an operator built outside program documentation, with capabilities that the splice's threat assessment cannot fully characterize because the relevant category doesn't exist in the faction programs' published data

D12: INSTALLATION DISCOVERY

What's inside a newly opened pre-Upheaval installation.

ROLL	RESULT
1	Archive, ECHO program records: partial, fragmented, but authenticated by notation systems that match known ECHO documentation
2	Operational equipment, functioning: designed for a purpose that requires understanding what the installation was built to do
3	Containment vessel, sealed: the seal's integrity is intact; what's inside is emitting at a frequency that the splice's gene-forged members can perceive and the baseline members cannot
4	Biological specimens, preserved: pre-Upheaval, cryo-preserved, alive in the technical sense; the specimens are not on any program documentation list
5	Lumenfeld correspondence, physical: letters, not digitized, addressed to collaborators whose names appear in ECHO program records
6	Installation map, partial: the map identifies seven additional installation sites not in any faction database; three of them are in currently-occupied faction territory
7	Research notes, Architect-era: partial translation produces approximately forty percent of the content; the forty percent includes a phrase that matches Architect Fragment 7-C word for word
8	The installation is occupied: not by a faction, not by BAFO, not by anyone with known affiliation; they have been here for an undetermined period; they knew the splice was coming before the splice arrived
9	Technology Zoo material: Vector Group has a catalogued entry for this installation's contents; the entry describes something different from what the splice finds; the gap between the entry and reality is the mission
10	Signal transmitter, active: the installation is broadcasting something; the signal's destination is not identifiable with the splice's current equipment; the signal's frequency is the same frequency that the BAFO monitoring data describes as the "standing wave"
11	Nothing: completely empty, in a way that active emptiness looks: structural systems intact, environmental controls running, no contents and no evidence that contents were removed through any physical process the splice can identify

ROLL RESULT

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 12 | Something else: the installation contains an artifact, entity, or condition that requires the GM to determine its significance based on the campaign's current position in the deep game; this result is reserved for the moment when the deep game's question crystallizes |
|-----------|---|
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D8: ERA COMPLICATION

What timeline-specific pressure arrives mid-campaign.

ROLL	RESULT
1	Escalation Era arrival (if Core Era campaign): A gene-forged operator the splice worked with in a previous session is exhibiting drift at clinical visibility. The faction program has been notified. The program's response is classification, not treatment.
2	Orbital Era early signal (if Escalation Era): The GCOA's first orbital platform test produces a tactical effect on the surface that no surface-game operational plan accounted for.
3	Standing wave spike: A measurable intensity increase lasting three to seven days. Gene-forged splice members experience the carrier-frequency effect at elevated intensity. Baseline members notice the gene-forged members are experiencing something.
4	Patagonian timeline update: The Southern Compact releases a public statement that contradicts their internal timeline data. Someone in the room knows both documents.
5	Faction doctrinal shift: A major faction has implemented an operational change in response to an Escalation Era event. The change makes a surface-game assumption the splice has been operating on no longer accurate.
6	Null Chorus publication: The Null Chorus has published a Document Wars era fragment that is accurate, verifiable, and politically catastrophic for one of the splice's current faction clients.
7	Void Walker phase transition: The pattern that has been building reaches a threshold. The Void Walkers' operations shift from installation access to something that the splice has never seen in their operational profile before.
8	Post-LIC energy shock (if Post-LIC era): The helium-3 shortage reaches a community the splice has worked in before. The community is now in the specific Tier Four water scenario for energy. The timeline to cascade failure: ten days.

FIELD LANGUAGE GLOSSARY

The terms this world uses and what they signal. In Earth 2066, how you name something tells you who you are.

The Upheaval. The compound climate and governance failure spanning 2026 through 2042. The Cascade produced the political structure. The Document Wars produced the information structure. Together: the Upheaval. Not a single event. A period. The world that exists in the Core Era is the world the Upheaval left.

Pre-Upheaval. Before 2026. A temporal designation that functions as an authority claim: pre-Upheaval data, equipment, and records carry weight proportional to their rarity. The Document Wars reduced that rarity. What survived carries more weight because less survived.

The Cascade. 2031-2042. The specific governance collapse period within the Upheaval. The Cascade is when nation-states failed, faction structures consolidated, and the Accords established the operational rules that still govern contested zones. Distinction matters: the Upheaval is climate; the Cascade is political.

The Document Wars. 2028-2041. A targeted destruction campaign against specific categories of pre-Upheaval knowledge at specific archive locations. Public record: opportunistic wartime damage. Actual record: coordinated and targeted. The coordination is not in public record.

Faction. One of the five major power blocs: NAF, SCA, EO, PCU, PRC. Also used as an adjective: "faction forces," "faction contract," "faction supply chain." Going non-faction means going freelance. Going non-faction from a gene-forged program means something more specific.

Operator. A person who works contracted jobs in the contested zone economy. Broad designation: includes gene-forged and baseline, special forces veterans and civilians with specific technical skills. The word is neither positive nor negative. It describes function.

Splice. The canonical name for a mixed-composition freelance operator unit. Three to six operators, mixed lineage, independent of faction doctrine, contracted as a unit. Started as contempt. Reclaimed.

Genomic Statelessness. The condition of a gene-forged operator who has voided their faction genomic registration. Their body remains registered in faction databases. Their affiliation is terminated. They are stateless in a world where statehood is biological.

Gene-Forged. An operator or individual whose genome has been modified through a gene-forging program using paleogenetic template reconstruction. Not a synonym for "augmented": augmentation can be cosmetic or functional. Gene-forged describes a specific biological category of modification.

Template Drift. Gene-forged operator development outside program design parameters. The template expressing in ways the program did not specify. Ranges from manageable operational adaptation to clinical emergency. The programs are not publishing the full data.

Aberrant Stock. Gene-forged fauna that have evolved in isolation or in environments the programs did not control. The Traveler's outer hull population. The Menagerie network's members whose programs have no record. Sometimes: animals built from program templates that escaped control. All of it: beyond any program's current documentation.

Lumicite. A mineral substrate found at Architect-era installation sites. Refined into high-density energy storage cells that power NAF and SCA industrial infrastructure. Also: an antenna, in a definition no faction brief includes.

The Deep Game. The strategic competition over Lumicite, Architect-era technology, and the pre-Upheaval knowledge that the Document Wars didn't reach. Runs beneath the surface game. The factions that are playing it know they are. The factions that don't know are still playing it.

The Surface Game. The strategic competition over water, territory, and N-REEs. The contest visible in every faction briefing. Not the whole contest.

The Architects. The organization that built the Lumicite installation network during the Upheaval period. Operated in cells. Their founding principle: the substrate signal is real. Operation Dawnlight was their work. Partial records only. Translated at approximately forty percent of content.

Operation Dawnlight. The 2044 opening of the Antarctic data core, which revealed coordinates pointing to the global Lumicite installation network. The event that began the factional deep game competition.

ECHO. The classified research program that ran from 1947 to 1972, which documented the substrate standing wave, developed the OPHIUCHUS suppression protocols, and produced evidence the substrate signal was not passive. Dissolved 1972. Records fragmented by the Document Wars. Institutional successor: BAFO.

The Lumenfeld Hypothesis. Elias Lumenfeld's theoretical framework, developed through ECHO research, that OPHIUCHUS conditioning was not suppression but frequency alteration. That the gene-forged programs built from paleogenetic templates reconstructed substrate reception markers along with everything else. That the drift is the signal. That something changed.

BAFO. Bureau of Architectural Field Operations. Post-Upheaval successor to ECHO's observational mandate. Stated mission: installation documentation. Actual mission: inherited from ECHO without fully knowing the lineage.

The Syndicate. The world's largest independent criminal organization. Runs the most comprehensive neutral brokerage network on Earth. Baroness Volstok holds six unrevealed installation site access coordinates. Sells access, not coordinates.

Shinkai. The setting's most significant neutral operational space. Rules: no violence, no surveillance equipment, no recording. Commandant Sable enforces the rules perfectly and records everything through methods the rules do not technically prohibit.

Crackerjack Competition. The world's only fully acknowledged high-visibility military tournament. Hosted by the GSOTC. All five major factions participate. The 2051 Dynamic Siege was the competition's most significant incident. The physical evidence it left in the facility has never been catalogued.

Raid Race / Heist Club. Lost Angeles underground motorsport. Jockeys and Jumpers. Real packages from real fortified positions. Four billion viewers. Betting networks laundering faction money. The world's most complex neutral information delivery system that presents as a sport.

Monitor Central. The NAF's AI-managed security system in Lost Angeles. Controls drone patrols, autonomous response vehicles, surveillance grids. Nonlethal ranged weapons. The melee capabilities of the multi-limbed response drones are a different category.

The Feed. The global streaming infrastructure that makes Raid Race, Dead Channel Enduro, and major contested zone events into four-billion-viewer moments. Feed hot: when an operation attracts live streaming attention before the operators are aware.

Null Chorus. Hactivist collective operating in the Syndicate's shadow. Data recovery specialists. Pre-Upheaval archive access. Fifteen years of Document Wars fragment recovery. The Null Chorus archive contains data that Consortium Halcyon believes was fully destroyed.

Consortium Halcyon. A pre-Upheaval data company that survived the Document Wars because they organized significant portions of them. Holds fragments of knowledge they suppress rather than share. Their business model depends on the fragmentation the Document Wars created.

Void Walkers. An organization with no territory, no chain of command, and no stated objective. Operational since at least 2047, documented since 2052. Their operations correlate with Architect-era installation sites and pre-Upheaval knowledge archives. The Prometheus League connection is in the Brotherhood's files and not in any official document.

WHAT PEOPLE DON'T SAY:

Nobody in the field says "gene-forged" and means a compliment or an insult. It is a technical designation. Its weight is factional.

Nobody in the outer districts of Lost Angeles says "Monitor Central." They say "the watch" or "the eyes" or "cameras," depending on which part of the monitoring network they're discussing and what they expect the other person to understand.

Nobody who grew up in the Stack says "Flooded London." It's the Stack. London is what the history books call it.

Nobody in Kavast says "wolf-lineage." They say "Kavast-born." The lineage is the identity. The identity is the faction. The faction is not the gene. It's the formation.

LOCATION NAMES:

The gap between the local name and the outsider name tells you where someone stands. Gorodskie Ekho / The Drowned City. Metropoli Perdida / The Site. The Tooth and Gear / The Club. Salter's Landing / The Reconstruction Settlement. When someone uses the outsider name in a conversation with locals, they have identified themselves as an outsider. When someone uses the local name with faction contacts, they have identified where their working relationships actually are.

The exception: "The Soak" is used by everyone, locals, faction analysts, and operators, because the Soak has been so extensively documented in the setting's literature that the local name became the universal name. The locals in the Soak know this and have developed a different set of names for specific sections of the Soak that the documentation doesn't include.

COLOPHON

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Set in IBM Plex Sans (body), Archivo Narrow (display), IBM Plex Mono (codes), News-reader (italic). All Open Font License. Printed on uncoated stock at A5 trim.

Voice and structure follow the Shadowdark discipline: declarative rules, action-verb definitions, flavor inside mechanics, second-person address throughout.

The Splice Punk x TDR aesthetic governs every visual decision. The surface game is the game everyone plays. The deep game is the game nobody understands until it's too late to stop playing it.

Part of the Operator Tactics supplement line. Compatible with the Operator Tactics core rulebook.

01 BRIEF

PG 1

THE SURFACE GAME IS TERRITORY. THE DEEP GAME IS LORE.

Terra Conflictus 2066 is the complete world-build for the Operator Tactics line. Earth after the Upheaval, fully documented. Seven powers, sixteen theaters, four campaign eras. The setting your operators live and work in.

The surface game is water, territory, and Lumicite extraction. The deep game runs underneath: the Architect installation network, the ECHO program, the gene-forged templates that were never just soldiers.

02 SPECS

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LUMICITE PRESENT
DO NOT INGEST

FACTIONS

- NAF
- SCA
- E0
- PCU
- PRC
- VW
- NRD

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