

AZIMUTH

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The number on the wall



PLACES / PEOPLE / THE THINGS THAT LAST

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THE WEEKLY ISSUE · No. 02

The number on the wall

A chalked ration, two fares posted side by side and a board updated by hand every Wednesday: nine features on the habit of putting the terms up before anybody can be surprised by them.

EDITOR: **FARRAH DENHOLM** NINE FEATURES · 30 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 2066 KAVŞAK DESK ·
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The number on the wall · the patch rack that tells the walkway the room is busy.

The letter

FROM THE EDITOR

Rami Ouazzani chalks a figure by the door of his twenty-two seat room in the Shade Market and rubs it out every night to write the new one. It is last night's liters per cover: the water his kitchen spent per person fed. He holds a Tier One allocation and cooks on a Tier Three number, and he is careful to say that this is a technical position rather than a moral one. The chalk is not there to impress anyone. It is there so the claim and the arithmetic behind it arrive at the same time.

Our correspondents filed from seven Theaters this week and kept walking into the same object. On Kilwa Road, Furaha Ilunga has the dimensions of a Shore Nine generator tube cut into a brass template and screwed to her shop wall, free to anyone who wants to lay a blank on it and scribe, including the nineteen benches she trained that now undersell her. At the lock on the Slab, the Lantern Line chalks two fares side by side on the bulkhead, residents in Guild scrip and visitors at roughly four times the figure, with no pretence about which one you are. In New Buenos Aires a clerk named Facundo Pires updates the Basin Authority's board by hand every Wednesday afternoon, then copies the same numbers into a paper ledger nobody has asked him to keep for four years.

None of that is transparency in the sense the word usually gets used, which is a report published after the fact by people who would rather not have published it. What we found is narrower and more useful. It is the terms going up on a wall before anybody is in a position to be disappointed by them. Renata Ibarra, who has scheduled water for fourteen city states for six years, gave us the rule in one line: you can be unhappy with your share, you cannot say you did not know it was coming.

The counter-case is in this issue too, and it is the one worth arguing about. Liv Askeland's array posts a confidence band on every flagged call and refuses to post the sentence people actually want. Arcology Three offers the best written warranty we measured and cannot tell a resident who repaired their kettle. A number on a wall is not automatically a legible one. This week the desk went looking for the places where it is.

F.D., KAVŞAK

The brief

SHORT DISPATCHES FROM THE DESKS

Kavşak sells the blank. The Bazaar Circuit's mender's chit has always been a private habit of the trades that use it. This month a stationer on Uzun Çarşı began selling blank pads, forty to a book, with the date, the description and the stamp box already ruled. Eleven benches on the Circuit have bought one. The chit is still not a contract and still crosses both jurisdictions, which was always the whole of its value.

Hikari Bazaar posts the wait. Neo-Tokyo's food counters have started chalking the night's queue at the head of each aisle, revised hourly by whoever is standing nearest the board. It began as a truce between two counters arguing about whose line was blocking whose. The result nobody predicted is that the quiet counters fill first now, and three of them have extended their hours rather than their menus.

Makassar Crossing writes its guarantee in tides. The marine trades at the Crossing have begun printing the tide count on the customer's copy as well as the yard's: forty spring tides for a hull, twenty for anything worn on a body. A hull that has sat dry for a month has not been tested. Both parties would rather establish that at the counter than argue about it in a wet season.

A bathhouse reopens under the stanchions. The Southwark baths, shut since the water came up over the lower plant room, have reopened two pools heated off the stanchion yards' waste circuit. Entry is four credits, towels are your own problem, and the hours follow the tide table rather than the clock. The yards asked nothing for the heat except the eight o'clock hour on Sundays, which they take in silence and largely asleep.

The Current chalks the losing bid. Gorodskie Ekho's morning fish auction has begun writing the second bid beside the winning one on every lot. Buyers asked for it, sellers resisted it for a season, and it has settled because both sides now know what the market thought a crate was worth rather than only what one person paid for it. Volumes are unchanged. The arguments are shorter.

New Batavia's houses agree on a hem. Four independent makers on the Shelf have adopted a common mark for garments cut to cross the waterline: one line of contrast stitch at the hem, meaning the piece has been tested wet and will not hold water in the seam. No registration, no fee, no authority behind it. A fifth house was asked to stop using it and stopped.

Level Nine paints its own directory. In the Amazonian Metroplex the Open Surface Collective has finished a walkway-length panel naming every stall on Level Nine and the trade at it, worked at shoulder height on the inland wall where a person

walking will actually read it. It gets repaired the way the Collective's work always does, by whoever notices first. The district authority has said nothing, which on the Canopy is a form of permission.

A Nordic canteen publishes its inputs. The Ring Kitchen Co-operative's floor canteen in Arcology Three now chalks the day's issued quantities beside the menu, in the units the allocation actually arrives in rather than in grams. Diners have started cooking to the same board at home. The co-operative's reason is unromantic: a kitchen that hides what it was given gets asked to explain its prices.

Sand Gate holds the pot. The guide families at the Saharan Oasis caravanserai have agreed to hold the evening tea until the last southern route walks in, which in a bad month means an hour past dark. Nothing about it is written and nobody polices it. A guide who arrives late finds the pot still hot and the sitting still there, which is the entire content of the agreement.

Kalemie reads the landing count. The Dawn Water Quality Broadcast on Lake Tanganyika has added the night fleet's landing count to the end of the bulletin, read out before the shore market opens. Buyers walk down knowing roughly what is coming in. The cooperative that pushed for it says the practice has done nothing at all to prices and a great deal to the temper of the first hour.

This week's features

IN THE EDITOR'S ORDER

008 THE INDEX

How far to the mender

The repair index opens the issue because it is the week's argument in miniature: eight Theaters, two numbers each, and the finding that the strongest guarantee on the list belongs to the one place where nobody can name the person who did the work.

KENJI ALDRIN

EIGHT THEATERS 009 THE EDIT

Made for the two hours

This desk went to the Outer Ring to check the index against itself and came back with a shelf of objects the Nordic model never gets credit for, all of them designed against a climate schedule the Authority has never explained.

FARRAH DENHOLM

NORDICS ARCOLOGY NETWORK 012 MAKERS

The shop that counts its rivals

Aldrin's second filing of the week answers a question the index could only ask, which is what a person actually does with a pattern once they have decided the fleet matters more than the order book.

KENJI ALDRIN

KALEMIE 007 THE PLAN

The forty minutes the Canopy planned for

Baptiste has filed the rare piece of infrastructure reporting whose decisive detail is a rack of hooks, and Rocha's condition that the stallholders settle their accounts in public across the long table is the part we expect other levels to copy last.

NOOR BAPTISTE

AMAZONIAN METROPLEX 010 ON THE GROUND

Why the Patagonian Basin works

Reyher has spent three years being told the Basin is about to break, and he filed instead on an uncurtained window, a fixed speaking order and a clerk who copies the week's numbers into a second ledger nobody asked him to keep.

TOMAS REYHER

PATAGONIAN BASIN 011 THE INTERVIEW

The station that will not translate

We ran Askeland directly after the Basin on purpose, because both pieces turn on somebody declining to say more than they can support, and only one of them had to turn down a doubled budget to keep doing it.

NOOR BAPTISTE

NORDICS ARCOLOGY NETWORK 006 THE INTERVIEW

The house that sells only the room

Reyher spent eleven years staying in hotels that described themselves as discreet, which is the only qualification that matters for this assignment, and Ayverdi's one published rate is the cheapest piece of civic engineering in the issue.

TOMAS REYHER

KAVŞAK 004 THE TABLE

Dinner on a water token

Duclos spent four days in the Oasis before she was willing to write down that the cooking is better for the ration, and the sentence is worth more for the wait.

INES DUCLOS

SAHARAN OASIS 005 DEPARTURES

Nine hours down the arc

Castellanos rode the arc for eleven days to establish that a service with five sovereigns and no government ran late twice, and the etiquette she brought back is worth more to a traveller than the timetable is.

WREN CASTELLANOS

THE LANTERN LINE

The edit

WORTH KNOWING ABOUT

Shore Nine pump leathers, Kilwa Road. A tin of six, cut on the shop's own pattern and sold across the bench at Mwangaza for about the price of a meal. They fit lamps the shop did not build, which is the point of them. Buy the tin rather than the single, and ask Ilunga to show you how the boss seats.

Marking chalk, Bankside. A box of the blue the stanchion yards use to date and initial a hull, sold over the counter at the Southwark chandlers for almost nothing. It is not a warranty and every stage on the flooded grid treats it as one. Worth carrying if you own anything that floats.

Simit at five, Ihlamur Yolu. The bakery two streets from the Perihan has supplied the hotel every morning since the week it opened, and it sells over its own counter from five. Buy two and eat them on the hill while the light comes up grey off the water. It is the cheapest way to understand why the first sitting is at twenty to six.

A scouring tray, Cistern Quarter. The tinsmiths at the distribution plaza sell the shallow sand tray Rafiq Ben Salah's stall has cleaned its glasses in for forty years, two credits, sand not included. It finishes glass better than most water does, and it will teach you in one evening how much of washing up is habit.

The Talud board, lower station. At the foot of the funicular in New Buenos Aires, a painted board carries the line's unbroken run of morning departures under Osvaldo Ferreira, amended the same morning it changes. It costs nothing to look at and it is the most persuasive argument in the city for building a district around a six minute ride.

The Kaldvik dashboard. Public, free, and duller than it sounds: every flagged call pattern with its confidence band attached, plus the two flags the Bykle Panel hung on findings it judged premature, left up rather than quietly corrected. Read the flagged pair first. They are the best case anyone has made for the station.

The quiet hour, Dash Two. Once a day the Lantern Line drops its load as far as it will go, lights down, twenty thousand people going deliberately still for sixty minutes. If you are aboard the shuttle you sit it out in the warm dark with strangers who will not explain it. Book the middle leg and let it happen to you.

The closing note

WHAT STUCK WITH THE DESK

What stayed with the desk this week was a rack of hooks.

Anti-spore patches are worn constantly on the Canopy, and because everybody has to carry one, everybody paints theirs, in the orange-yellow of the drift itself. Inside the north room on Passarela Onze the patches are not needed, so there is a rack of hooks in the vestibule and on a full afternoon it holds forty-odd of them, no two decorated the same way.

Nobody designed that. Idalina Rocha spent four years on a wall that would not hold pressure until month fourteen, and the vestibule was the easy part at the end of it. But the rack is the one part of the room that tells the walkway anything before you go in. You can stand outside, look through the outer door, count the patches, and know whether there is a seat for you before you cycle the vestibule and let the drift in behind you. It is a room telling the street the truth about itself, for free, without anybody having decided that it should, and it is a fair summary of everything else in this issue.