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## The Matrix Online Archives

Version 0.90

Compiled by Julio Angel Ortiz  
<http://www.jaowriter.com>

**Compiler's Note:** This archive would not be possible without the following: Warner Brothers, Monolith, Sony, Rarebit, Cloudwolf, ThePigeonKing, Aquatium, Romav, mxostory.com, mxoresources.com, Sugaree, and Archival Science in a Post-War Simulation.

This document was created to help preserve the legacy of the game *The Matrix Online*, its lore, and the events that made it a memorable, if niche, experience. It draws from official game documents, official website event reports, fan summaries, and game designer notes.

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## Introduction

The Matrix is an illusion. It appears to be America at the turn of the 21st century; a vast megacity and an adjacent mountain range. In truth it is a virtual, digital world that humans experience through feeds running directly to their nervous systems. These humans experience an artificial life in the Matrix, unaware of their real state.

In reality, the actual date is unknown, but it is believed to be a couple of centuries later. The proprietors of the Matrix are Machines that have won a war with humankind. During the war the sky was "scorched," denying machines their source of energy, solar power. The machines now use sleeping humans, enclosed in liquid-filled pods on vast batteries, to generate heat that becomes electricity.

A few free humans, based in an underground city of Zion, resist the Machines and hope to defeat the Matrix system, which they see as a form of slavery. These free humans, too, can jack into the Matrix, by lurking close under the surface world in their hovercraft. But when they do, they are ruthlessly hunted down by Agents of the Machines. Humans can and do die in the Matrix.

A hovercraft Captain named Morpheus has heard a prophecy that there is One who can control the Matrix reality by will alone. Morpheus summons Neo and explains the true state of affairs he thinks Neo, a young man awakened from the illusion and brought from his pod into the real world is the One.

Neo's powers awaken and the battle escalates, but soon reveals complications. Along with humans and Agents of the Machines in the Matrix, there are free, sentient programs - Exiles - enjoying life as humans in the virtual world.

The Exiles are varied. The Oracle is benign, and guides Morpheus and the other humans in their quest.

The Merovingian, aka the Frenchman, is a sybaritic gangster commanding a host of humanformed programs with powers like that of ghosts, werewolves and other supernatural entities.

There's also a wild card, Agent Smith. Instead of being destroyed by Neo in an epic confrontation, he has become an independent virus-like program who can replicate himself and overwrite others.

Neo encounters the crowning complexity when he meets the Architect, the program who designed the Matrix. The Architect reveals there were previous iterations of the Matrix that failed, and even previous Ones like Neo. A bloody cycle of destruction and renewal of the Matrix, Zion and humanity is inescapable.

Neo won't accept this. But first he saves the woman he loves, Trinity, from death, by spectacularly reaching into her torso; removing a bullet and massaging her virtual heart back into pulsing life. Ironically, it is Neo's capacity for love that makes him the mightiest warrior, the One.

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The crisis is imminent. The Matrix is failing because of Agent Smith's viral takeover of every individual in it. It's cleansing, and the destruction of Zion by physical machines, is almost underway.

Neo does the impossible; he and Trinity break out of the underground and fly a hovercraft to the city of Machines on the surface world. He proposes a deal: he'll defeat Smith, whose viral growth threatens all the Machines, in exchange for peace between the machines and the free humans. The deal is made.

Neo does destroy Smith, with an assist from the Oracle (who had allowed Smith to overwrite her with curious equanimity - what did she have up her sleeve?), in a battle worthy of ancient gods of the sky. The Matrix is saved. Zion is Saved. The Machine civilization is saved.

A truce is made - free humans ("**Redpill**") can even awaken the sleepers ("**Bluepill**"), although too much of this would threaten the Matrix. Neo, the One, seems to have died in the battle with Smith, but the Machines do not return his corpse.

Some people find this disturbing and their actions set the story of *The Matrix Online* in motion.



- The Matrix



The city of *The Matrix Online* is divided into four districts: Richland, Westview, International, and Downtown. Each district, in turn, is divided into neighborhoods, which contain their own Exile gangs, Collectors, and landmarks. When first jacking in to *The Matrix Online*, you begin in Richland, the only “safe” location for new Redpills. Outside of Richland, Redpills face increasingly powerful Exile programs, as well as the possibility of Agents locking onto their signal and attacking. There are other areas called Constructs, usually accessible only through through programs called Archivists. Constructs exist outside of the core reality of the Matrix, often harboring powerful programs and locations from previous versions of the Matrix or back door locations through the simulation.

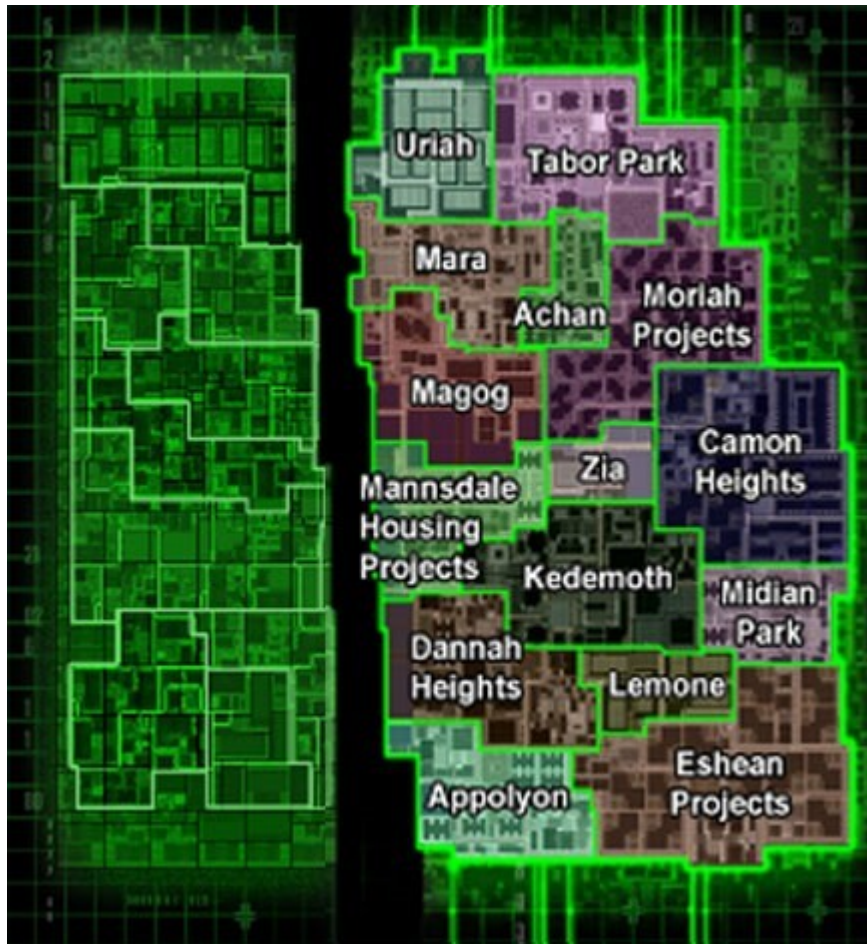
Here is a breakdown of the Neighborhoods and Districts.



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## Richland

Though Official maps label this area as Richland, most people usually refer to it simply as the Slums. Set against the south shore of the river which bisects the City, the Slums are rife with criminal activity, urban, decay, and random violence. However, this is a lesson in the deceptive nature of the Matrix. Through the area is among the poorest and least desirable to the populace of the City, it is a desirable holding for those who understand the nature of the Matrix. Indeed, many powerful Exiles compete for control of its resources. The Slums is comprised of fifteen neighborhoods.



## Achan

Primarily composed of older buildings that have seen better days, Achan has degenerated into a den of vice, crammed with strip clubs, adult books stores, bars, and seedy hotels. The few decent citizens left in the neighborhood know better than to walk the streets at night, when the local Exile roam in search of trouble. The predominant gang in the neighborhood is the Bells, an all female gang that guards their territory jealously, and

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doesn't hesitate to call on their allies in the more powerful Blackwood gang (in nearby Mara and Magog) when they need a hand.

### **Apollyon**

Situated in the southwest corner of the Slums, Apollyon boasts a waterfront lined with seedy wharfs and deserted warehouses. Along the shore, long shadows fall on weathered buildings and beaten shopfronts. A neon-lit diner may offer solace from the streets for a few minutes, but in the end Apollyon remains what it is, the last gasp of the Slums before you travel west into the hell of the Barrens. The hot nightspot in Apollyon is the Jacob's Ladder.

### **Camon Heights**

Located on the east side of the slums, Camon Heights may be the neighborhood that has persevered the best. Though there are taller complexes near to the Zia Industrial area, as you move east the neighborhood improves. Camon Heights includes nicer condos and apartments than the Moriah Projects to the north, and the housing density is lowered by the presence of grocery stores, churches, and storefront businesses.

### **Dannah Heights**

Just southwest of Kedemoth, and north of Apollyon, Dannah Heights is a neighborhood with a dual character. The dominant gang in the area is the Silver Bullets. While they seem like any other group of Exile thugs in the daylight hours, at night the Bullets make this neighborhood their personal hunting ground. Their preferred quarry is any Lupine they can catch, but they've got expenses to meet as well, and shaking stray Redpills is a great way to keep the coffers full. Most consider them fanatics, though dealing with them rationally is really not an option.

### **Eshean Projects**

Located to the south of more prosperous Midian Park area, and separated from Kedemoth by the Lemone warehouse area, the Eshean Projects are an enormous urban blight that looks much like the Moriah Projects, only bigger. Where the builder of the Mansdale Projects decided to make their constructions as possible into the available space. The only public open spaces is Eshean Park, which is little more than a trash-strewn empty lot. The few businesses that have stayed open are plagued with broken windows and graffiti.

### **Kedemoth**

Located south of the Zia Industrial area, and west of Midian Park, Kedemoth is packed with middle-income residents living the urban lifestyle. The streets and sidewalks are busy with worker traffic in the daytime, while the area's bars do a brisk business in the

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evenings, including the popular Club Duality. Many of the residential buildings are converted hotels or former textiles sweatshops turned into apartments years ago, but the area has also seen some new growth. Older smaller buildings are set alongside taller more modern hotels, condos, and office towers. Most notable among Kedemoth's recent construction projects is the Kalt Corporation's decision to create two new office towers on the east side of the neighborhood. Unfortunately, many of the employees who work in the towers have chosen to adopt nearby Midian Park as their home rather than live in the aging Kedemoth. The accompanying rise in property values and gentrification in Midian Park has created no small amount of resentment in Kedemoth residents, who had presumed they would reap those benefits. Instead they have only the glass and steel edifices to comfort them.

### **Lemone**

Located immediately to the south of the office towers in Kedemoth, this area encompasses several blocks of large, nearly-identical warehouses belonging to (and sublet by) a number of companies. It is said that Lemone is a place where even the highest executives of those companies will come to make deals or arrange transactions the people known for getting their hands dirty, or bloody.

### **Magog**

Located immediately to the south of the office towers in Kedemoth, this area encompasses several blocks of large, nearly-identical warehouses belonging to (and sublet by) a number of companies. It is said that Lemone is a place where even the highest executives of those companies will come to make deals or arrange transactions the people known for getting their hands dirty, or bloody.

### **Mannsdale Housing Projects**

Mannsdale was an experiment in public housing, creating smaller buildings, mostly 2-3 story structures which would lower the density of the residents from that of traditional high-rise apartment buildings like those found in the Moriah Projects. There's no commercial activity to speak of in Mannsdale, though, so the neighborhood has remained impoverished and has degenerated badly. In spite of this, there's a relatively low level of gang activity.

### **Mara**

Located immediately to the south of the office towers in Kedemoth, this area encompasses several blocks of large, nearly-identical warehouses belonging to (and sublet by) a number of companies. It is said that Lemone is a place where even the highest executives

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of those companies will come to make deals or arrange ransactions the people known for getting their hands dirty, or bloody.

### **Midian Park**

Midian Park has benefited greatly from the construction of the two office tower in nearby Kedemoth, as many of the workers have chosen to adopt this neighborhood as home, with accompanying rise in property values and gentrification. The area contains many businesses, including bookstores, bars, clothing stores, etc. which although not upscale, have improved drastically due to their new upscale customer base. The park from which the neighborhood gets its name is a large open space bordered by 4-10 story apartment buildings. The two office towers in nearby Kedemoth can be clearly seen from ehre. combined with the plazas of the nearby buildings (which are connected to the park by a walkway overpasses), this is one of the largest open spaces in the slums.

### **Moriah Projects**

East of Achan and south of the nicer Tabor Park area, the Moriah Projects are largely composed of tall, nearly identical apartment structures for the city's urban poor. The place is run down and gives little hope for better days ahead, but the neighborhood's residents have a deserved reputation for being stubbornly optimistic. They selected "Hope Conquers All" as the slogan for Moriah.

### **Tabor Park**

One of the nice areas of Richland district, Tabor Park is a refreshing change of pace from the nearby mara neighborhood. Moving north into Tabor Park the buildings grow taller and nicer with each block. Looking down on Tabor Park from above it is easy to see it as an enclave along the shouth shore of the river. Boraded by gang-infested Mara, the seedy district of Achan, and the squalor of the Moriah Projects, Tabor Park is an area struggling to keep its head up. The current war between the Crossboes and the Demon Army Exile gangs makes the area dangerous for Redpills. Tabor Park is primarily composed of older apartment buildings and office structures, but there has been some new growth and progress in the area, spawned by numerous Exiles moving to take control of the neighborhood's resouces.

### **Uriah Industrial Park**

Located in the north end of Richland district, Uriah is an area that has evolved into a dangerous "free fire zone" since the truce was signed. Many groups use the warehouse-filled zone as a place to settle their disputes with violence without fear of attracting too much attention. Bluepill workers in Uriah are almost blase about seeing police sence there each morning, cleaning up after gang-related violence.

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## **Zia**

In the dead center of the slums, Zia has little going for it, but it has managed to be far less crime ridden than the District's other Industrial areas. Unfortunately it seems that the reputation of the Uriah industrial park is starting to affect it, and some Exiles are beginning to choose Zia as a less crowded place to go carry on violent confrontations.

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## Westview

The area to the west of the Slums is officially called Westview, but more often referred to as the Barrens of the City. While the Slums are a dirty, dilapidated place where hope seems a rare commodity, these traits take on a nearly admirable quality when contrasted with the Barrens. The condition of the Barrens is reflective of a slow decay in the code comprising the area. The Machines have been placing some effort into repairing it, but the degradation serves the interests of several powerful Exiles. Many buildings in the Barrens have fallen into such disrepair that they have collapsed completely, but it is unlikely that anyone will be successful in stemming the tide anytime soon.



### Bathary Row

Located on the north end of the Barrens, along the waterfront, Bathary Row consists of the piers and warehouses of the Barrens wharfs. Among the docks there's normal commerce, but the underlying traffic in \$information is ruthlessly controlled by the Bathary Boys gang of Exiles, who are in turn answerable to Cerulean. The cranes of the shippings yards cast long shadows across piled containers awaiting ships, but shipping has been at



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a standstill for as long as anyone can remember, due to an investigation into unsafe chemical handling practices at the yard.

### **Gracy Heights**

Gracy Heights is a typical neighborhood in the Barrens, which is to say it's a pit. The Crushers gang exerts a stranglehold on the area in spite of dedicated Machine efforts to eradicate them. The reason has been in debate for some time, as to why the Machines place more emphasis on keeping the Crushers down than other seemingly more dangerous gangs in the Barrens. The most common rumor is that a strong current of \$information runs through the neighborhood. The Crushers have been tapping it to sell to influential exiles like the Merovingian.

### **Guinness Lake**

The Guinness Lake neighborhood is centered on a large reservoir which occupies the space where Guinness Lake supposedly once was. Of course this history is a fabrication, as with all history in the Matrix. The City was born fully formed as it stands today. The reservoir's water (and the code it represents) flows from here to the other parts of the Barrens, making it an ideal conduit for moving or dispersing code quickly throughout the District. The reservoir is an important area to hold, and as such it falls under the purview of one of the Barren's most powerful residents, an exile named Indigo.

### **Lucero Point**

Sometimes called "Little Mexico," Lucero Point has one of the largest concentrations of Hispanics in The City. It is fought over by a number of Exile interests, but the true power in the neighborhood is the Sparks gang of Exiles, run by the fiery Little Maria. They fight viciously to keep other Exiles and Redpills from gaining a foothold here. The only real nightlife in Lucero Point is the Lynchpin, a club that draws all sorts of exiles and Redpills, though everyone knows better than to stay too long, lest the Sparks take exception to their presence. The club's most "prestigious" customer is an Exile by the name of Mandarin, who maintains a residence in the Lucero Point neighborhood by virtue of his family's influence - he is the youngest son of Dame White and Mr. Black.

### **Manssen Park**

Manssen Park at night is a shadowy nightmare for the Bluepills unlucky enough to be caught in the open there. As the shadows grow longer and engulf the neighborhood, the Disciplines come out of hiding in greater numbers and start looking for humans to "play with." Fortunately the neighborhood has not been completely abandoned by the System. Reported "vampire" activity cannot be ignored, as it threatens the inhabitants of the Matrix as well as the belief of the populace in their reality. A new face has been seen in the

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neighborhood recently - an Exile Bounty Hunter name Greene, who specializes in taking down Blood Drinkers.

### **Rogers Way**

Rogers Way is supposedly names for a soldier from the neighborhood who died heroically in combat in World War One. Naturally this is a lie, but beneath it is a grain of truth. The real Rogers was a Zion operative who died holding the line against the Machines in this neighborhood, granting the previous Chosen One the time he needed to reach the core of the system in that iteration's final hour. Rogers Way also hosts one of the most intriguing of the monument sculptures that dot the cityscape. Rising up like stairs to the sky, the monument's apex features a door, which is the subject of many a tall tale. Every kid in the neighborhood has a friend who as a friend who saw a person emerge from the door, bathed in white light from beyond. Others say they have opened the normally unbudgeable door, to be confronted by the strangest things, but nobody really believes these sorts of local legends.

### **Sobra Shores**

In better days, Sobra Shores was a tourist attraction, with restaurants and shops along the water doing a brisk business and drawing families and lovers to the waterway's edge. But since the Legion moved into the neighborhood, nothing has been the same. On the surface the Legion may look like a regular gang, but even the Bluepills can fell the powers and darkness that the Legion's demonic leadership brings to the area. With that pallor cast across it, Sobra Shores quickly became a place best avoided by anyone who didn't have a reason to be there. The Legion has granted other exiles and Redpills only a single place of safety in the neighborhood, at the Club Daemon. That's not to say that other exiles and Redpills do not operate in Sobra Shores, but the Legion had made it clear that they consider such interlopers to be fair game. The one exile who has given them difficulty is Violet, who dojo the Legion has tried to interfere with on a number of occasions, only to be shown the error of their ways quite painfully.

### **Southard**

Nestled between Sobra Shores and Gracy Heights. the Southard area is dominated by the expansive Southard Industrial Park that provides jobs for many residents of Gracy Heights and Guinness Lake. The facilities are often shut down short periods due to the mishandling of chemical byproducts. Nestled between Sobra Shores and Gracy Heights. the Southard area is dominated by the expansive Southard Industrial Park that provides jobs for many residents of Gracy Heights and Guinness Lake. The facilities are often shut down short periods due to the mishandling of chemical byproducts. The namesake for the neighborhood, the Southard Industrial Park, contains major production and processing facilities for Kalt Corporation, Pendhurst-Amaranth, and a number of smaller companies.

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The Kalt Corporation plants churn out Trepanex(TM) headache medicine and Pendhurst-Amaranth will soon add another production facility for their Tastee Wheat(TM) breakfast food product.

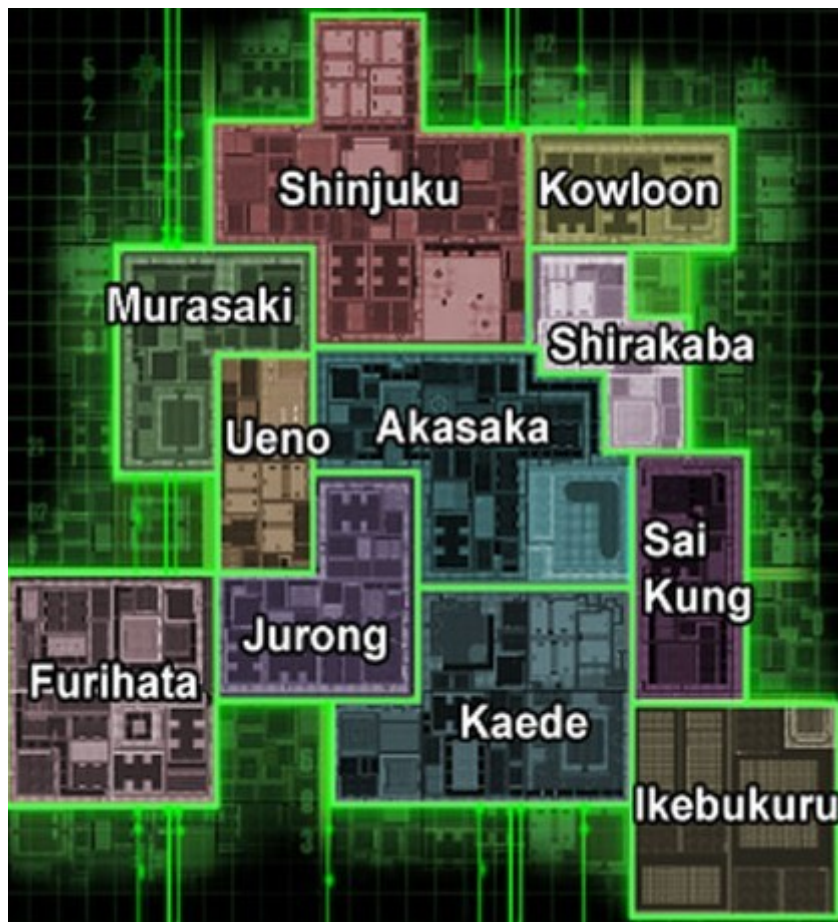
## **Stamos**

You can't go to Stamos and not stop by Club Succubus, one of the most popular clubs in the Barrens, owned by the preternaturally beautiful Aine. Though Bluepills are impressed by the way she plays her part for her customers in full costume, those in the know are impressed by the way that this Succubus manages to hide her nature in plain sight. Rumor has it that she used to be involved with the Legion, even the leader of the Legion, but she refuses to talk about her past. The other notable feature of Stamos is the Hypersphere sculpture, which is said to cause a perplexing feeling in a great many people who view it. After staring at the "ball inside a wire cube" statue for some time, local legend claims that you begin to see that the ball cannot possibly fit inside the cube that contains it.

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## International

The City's International District is a conglomeration of Asian Cultures. Signs in many languages tout the merits of small shops and entreat visitors to explore the neighborhood's narrow streets and beautiful plazas. Even the newer modern buildings incorporate traditionally Asian design. The International District is some distance northeast of Downtown, but can be reached by taking the subway. The District also has a number of hardlines for direct access by redpill operatives. Several gangs of powerful and savvy Exiles compete for control of the area, but no single interest really dominates it.



### Akaska

Dominated by the glass and steel McClean Tower, Akasaka is one of the centers of business and commerce in the International District. In the plaza outside the building, office workers can be seen enjoying their lunches on sunny days. The rest of the neighborhood is prime real estate for those same office workers, most of whom can afford to live right here, as nothing in the International District is really considered high-rent.

### Furihata

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At the very edge of the International District lies the Furihata neighborhood, an odd mix of Chinese and Western influences. The neighborhood is a hodgepodge of tight alleyways and wide main streets filled with Chinese signs and banners and several small street vendors. The Furihata neighborhood is mostly residential accommodations for Bluepills that work in the International District. There are multitudes of small crowded apartment buildings throughout the neighborhood ranging from expensive and well-kept buildings to run-down rat-traps that should be condemned. The few businesses here are mostly small shops and restarutants – mostly family owned – that do a brisk trade with those that five in the neighborhood. However, those Bluepills willing to do a little searching are often rewarded with finding some of the best food and eclectic shopping in the City.

### **Ikebukuru**

Bordering the waterfront, Ikebukuro is a major influx point for new money and individuals arriving in the International District. The neighborhood used to be called “The Gateway to the International District” but local business leaders lobbied for a change to something more likely to attract outside tourists, ending up with the uninspired new slogan “Come to the Boardwalk.” Though the boardwalk is quite nice, it certainly has not proven to be the huge draw locals might have liked, and Ikebukuro continues to look for a way to make itself more important in the scheme of things.

### **Jurong**

Jurong is a neighborhood in transition. Located east of Furihata, this is the “older” financial center of the City – a place that once held importance to those desirous of controlling key resources of the Matrix, but which no longer commands such interest. The neighborhood is crowded with squat buildings and other edifices that have been upstaged by the “newer” skyscrapers in the Akasaka neighborhood. Sine funancial institutions still make their headquarters in Jurong, but many of the buildings remain empty since the migration of business to Akasaka. Such buildings have become home to the disenfranchised, including many exiles.

### **Kaede**

Kaede is an odd place, as it's best known for a very western fixture: Brown Field, the only baseball diamond in the International District. Local residents are known to be quite obsessed with their local landmark, turning out in droves for games, even those of neighborhood company teams. When the weather doesn't permit outside activities, through, the Orchid Public Bath is a main destination, known throughout the City as one of the best such establishments.

### **Kowloon**

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Kowloon is a neighborhood of narrow streets, tightly-packed residential high-rise buildings, and markets selling all manner of wares - from food to consumer electronics. The stores range from people with carts drawn by draft animals and open-air street storefronts to multistory malls housing exclusive boutiques. The buildings are tall and close together, many sporting colorful neon signs. The height of the buildings can create urban canyons, the walls of which wave banners of colorful lights. Kowloon is a neighborhood that never rests, never sleeps, and never shuts down. Business is always booming, trade is always happening - whether in the stores for goods or in the back alleys for services.

### **Murasaki**

Dominated by the glass and steel McClean Tower, Akasaka is one of the centers of business and commerce in the International District. In the plaza outside the building, office workers can be seen enjoying their lunches on sunny days. The rest of the neighborhood is prime real estate for those same office workers, most of whom can afford to live right here, as nothing in the International District is really considered high-rent.

### **Sai Kung**

Widely known for the huge textile businesses located here, "Sai Kung" appears in the label of most locally produced clothing. But the area just as often mentioned in rumours and news stories about sweatshops and exploitive business practices. The open air Sai Kun Canton is also well known as a place where a redpill can sometimes find hard-to-obtain items, for a steep price.

### **Shinjuku**

On the north side of the International District, Shinjuku is a major residential area, featuring such new developments as Tokyo Row, one of the poshest condominium complexes in the District. Shinjuku is also home to one of the best hotels in the City. The White Lotus Hotel is owned by Dame White, and is well known as a place that can cater to even the most exotic or eccentric of needs.

### **Shirakaba**

Shirakaba is located on the eastern edge of the International District, not far from the Ikebukuro waterfront. It is one of the smallest of the neighborhoods in the International District, surrounded by Kowloon, Shinjuku, Akasaka and Sai Kung. Nevertheless, it holds a wealth of interest for many Exiles, and offers more than enough reason for Zion operatives to brave its dangers. For Bluepills, the area is representative of small business concentrations throughout the International District. While the thoroughfares are well-trafficked, it is the narrower streets and alleys in between that are more intriguing. Export clothing shops, curio stores, and restaurants dot the narrow streets, offering some of the



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best values in the city, but sticking to the main streets is much safer. The alleys are patrolled by Great Wall Security, and no bargain is worth your life.

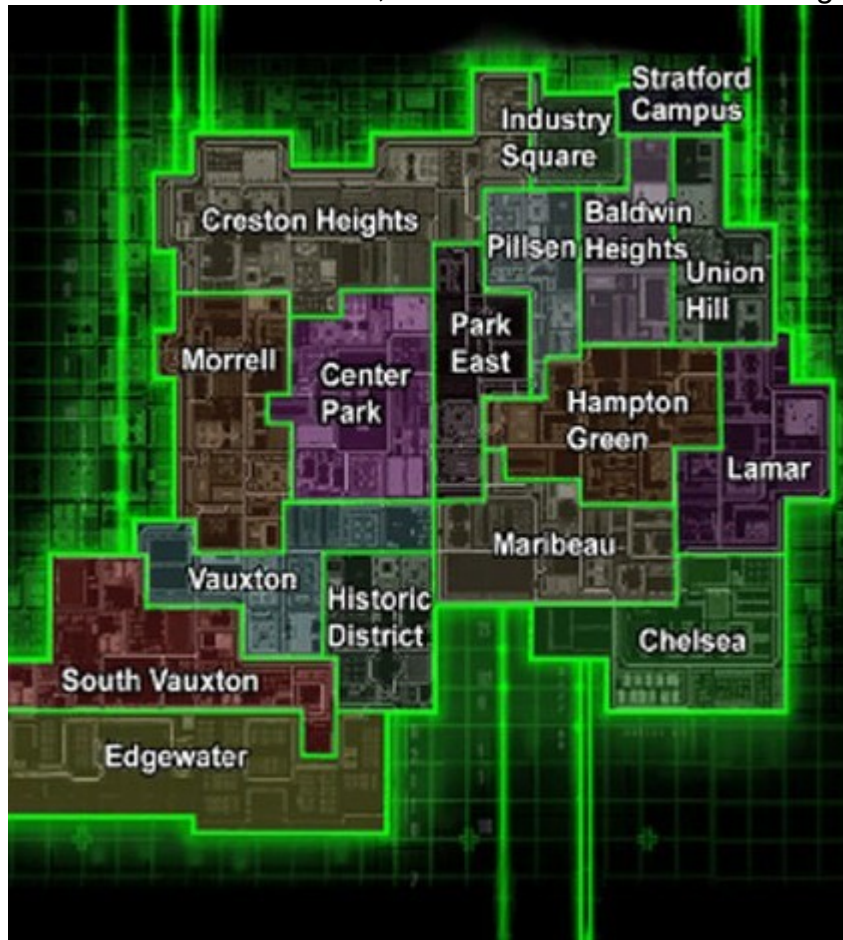
## **Ueno**

If you're seeking things that aren't native to the City, Ueno is a good bet to find it. Some of the largest importing companies make their homes in Ueno, including Chotte Brothers Imports. The Chotte Brothers corporation is one of the largest and most powerful business interests in the International District and had its headquarters in the tops floors of the largest skyscraper in Ueno. For Redpills and Exiles seeking the truly obscure, certain Exiles in Ueno are said to be able to obtain almost anything, for the right price.

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## Downtown

The Influence of the Machines over the Matrix emanates from Downtown, flowing through the freeways, electrical networks, and even sewers. Bluepills who choose to spend a great deal of time Downtown are mostly bureaucrats, accountants, lawyers, and those who derive their livelihoods from the smooth functioning of the system. Exiles who dwell Downtown are sometimes more powerful than Agents, wielding tremendous control over the system they have made their home. Some are permitted great latitude by the Machines, as their assistance in controlling the Bluepills is sometime a boon. Downtown is located north of the Barrens and the Slums, and consists of seventeen neighborhoods.



## Baldwin Heights

Located north of the thriving business center Hampton Green, Baldwin Heights is home to many of the ambitious middle managers and young up-and-comers who comprise the bluepill workers of Downtown. While the truly successful can afford to live in Park East or Center Park, the still-hungry majority of the workforce wants to be as close as possible to their offices. Baldwin Heights is famous for its stereotypical resident being a hyper-motivated white collar worker who comes home to his apartment so rarely that he may not

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even own furniture, because he expects to get a that big promotion and move to better quarters "any time now." **Center Park**

The Center Park neighborhood is so names because it surrounds the largest public park in the City. Center Park is located nearly in the center of Downtown; south of Creston Heights, north of Vauxton. Office buildings and government structures line the edges of the park, making this a crossroads of stimulated life. Several times per year the city holds a massive arts festival and invites all artists to come and display their works. During the festival the park is filled with artists and artisans and their work and musicians of all sorts. The city also has plans to host several concerts and other activities in hopes of revitalizing the park.

### **Chelsea**

Chelsea is the place for water front living in the downtown area. The waterline is studded with upscale condos and apartments that house the urbanites who work for the many successful corporations headquartered downtown. There are a few bricks buildings along the waterfront, meticulously maintained, including the beautiful Chelsea Commons. Along the streets, pedestrians stroll the clean sidewalks and stop to sample treats at the many vendors. Located along the water, Chelsea Commons is a series of beautiful brick plazas lined with expensive apartments and condominiums. The Parks include low walls and benches for sitting, several sculptures, and a lovely view out over the water. Food vendors can usually be found here, selling pretzels, hot dogs and other such things, Chelsea Commons is also notable to Redpills for the hardline located there.

### **Creston Heights**

For the folks with influences who want to live Downtown but don't enjoy the bustle of Center Park and Park East, Creston Heights sits above all that, rimming the north side of downtown like a gentle wreath. The entire area is protected by an Exile force known as the Neighborhood Watchers whose true alliance is unknown. They seem to be dedicated to protecting Bluepills as much as anything else, which has led some to conjecture that they may have an alliance with the Machines, and others to say that they are obviously aligned with Zion. Creston Heights is the largest neighborhood in downtown.

### **Edgewater**

Edgewater was once nicknamed "the Steel Shore" after the old smelting plants and shipping facilities that dotted its length. Once Upon a time these places answered the siren's call of wartime to produce munitions, tanks and other essentials, but peacetime production never quite lived up to expectations and the neighborhood languished for decades before being gentrified in a major project by the City over the last decade. Now restaurants and storefronts are once again drawing bluepill activity to the area, leading

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\$Information to flow there and getting the attention of Exiles like the Bartender, who can be found at the trendy Club Noir.

## **Hampton Green**

Hampton Green is the center of commerce downtown, a bustling and cacophonous place that lies close to the very heart of the Machines' control of the Matrix. Reaching to the sky are architectural marvels of steel, stone, and glass; broad boulevards flow with limousines and taxicabs, like great arteries pumping 24/7 with ideas, money and deals. People Move with Purpose along the sidewalks in seemingly chaotic mobs, but each individual has focus and intent. There is raw power on the streets of Hampton Green, and it surges up the towers of commerce and industry. Still these events pale in comparison to the exchanges of \$Information and control that occur beyond the notice of the unawakened. Their world, the very Matrix itself, has been swayed by exchanges in Hampton Green.

## **Historic District**

The Historic District is probably the most ironically named area in the City, as it implies an actual history instead of one fabricated by the machines' design routines. The Historic District sits to the south of Downtown, surrounded by Vauxton, South Vauxton and Edgewater. The Neighborhood is in transformation from a decaying downtown to a vibrant neighborhood with specialty shops and restaurants. The buildings appear to have originally been built between the turn of the century and the 1940s, with art deco touches on many buildings. The neighborhood is a favorite of the Bluepills that work in Chelsea and Maribeau as a place to lunch that isn't a fast food chain. Both upscale shops and older businesses can be found here, as well as the City Courthouse, a popular historic landmark.

## **Industrial Square**

Aptly named, Industrial Square is a major nexus corporate culture and influence, second only to Hampton Green. While Hampton Green may host the corporate headquarters for some of the largest and most influential companies in the Matrix, The accounting centers of those corporations are located in Industry Square. The Matrix is an illusion, but it is not wholly illusion; in many ways it is simply a veil or disguise which obscures details but leaves the rue nature unchanged. For the reason it quickly becomes apparent that every dollar, every resource, every facility of worth in the Matrix carries with it a value in \$Information. Those dollars and deeds are tracked and consolidated in the towers of Industry Square.

## **Lamar**

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Lamar is on the east side of Downtown, an older neighborhood of stately high-rises and apartment blocks mixed with glass and steel skyscrapers and gentrified condominiums. The business district is often characterized in the local news as “rolling up its sidewalks” at the close of business every evening. While there are some clubs and hangouts, there isn't much nightlife to speak of in Lamar. The residential areas are appealing to those who like a little more room in their living accommodations, and the older office buildings display grand architectural style of a bygone era. There is a close-knit, “old boy network” atmosphere to this neighborhood, reflected in the interlaced associations the local social organizations have with the businesses. Those who move into the neighborhood may feel welcome, but may not be truly accepted until considerable time has passed and significant contributions have been made to the benefit of local organizations.

### **Maribeau**

Maribeau is that transitory zone that lies between the seething economy of Hampton Green and the more relaxed areas of Chelsea and the Historic District. Older local businesses, as well as those who are newcomers to Downtown without the means to yet move into facilities in the ultra-high rent towers of Hampton Green are the commercial lifeblood of Maribeau.

### **Morrell**

Some residents of Morrell say that their neighborhood is too often overlooked in favor of Park East, but others say it's great to enjoy all of the same benefits without the intrusive limelight. While Morrell enjoys the same relationship to Center Park, lining the west side of Center Park area, when most people think of living near Center Park, they think of Park East. This probably has a lot to do with relative positions of other neighborhoods. While Park East segues into moneyed Hampton Green and historic Maribeau, Morrell flows south into the economically challenged area of Vauxton.

### **Park East**

If you want to live where the rich and powerful urbanites call home, you have a posh apartment in Park East. The most desirable places face the west and have a view of Center Park, but there's no such thing as a bad address in Park East. The Neighborhood is patrolled by White Security, a force of Exiles controlled by Dame White, who owns one of the most Desirable buildings in the neighborhood, with the upper floors laid out as her personal domain and fortress.

### **Pillsen**

As Baldwin Heights is the place for young go-getters who work in Hampton Green, Pillsen has become the Mecca for the office workers who drive the accounts of Industry Square.

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It's not unusual to see a cafe packed with people but dead silent as the patrons click away on the keys of portable computers, manipulating spreadsheets, tracing errors in accounts, and looking to make all of the numbers come out just right. The residents of Pillsen are disproportionately dedicated to making the Matrix a more orderly place. They are the blues of Bluepills.

### **South Vauxton**

Physically it's a larger neighborhood than Vauxton, but South Vauxton suffers from the perennial problem of not being able to get recognition as a neighborhood of its own, in spite of being officially recognized and having its own neighborhood committee.

Unfortunately there's a reason for this: South Vauxton is little more than the crappy south end of the nicer Vauxton neighborhood. Unbeknownst to the South Vauxton residents struggling to get the acknowledgement they crave, the most to separate South Vauxton from Vauxton is secretly financed and backed by the business leaders of Vauxton who'd rather be rid of the undesirable south end.

### **Stratford Campus**

While Hampton Green houses the headquarters of corporations and the accountants of Industry Square count their profits, Stratford Campus is the quiet seat of power in Downtown. The normally ignored business complex of Stratford Campus is controlled by Mr. Black, and is home to several major, but low-profile, organizations that act as umbrella corporations which hold controlling interests in all of the biggest corporations in the Matrix on behalf of Exiles who cannot directly involve themselves.

### **Union Hill**

One of the oldest neighborhoods Downtown, Union Hill was arguably the spot on which the City was founded. The original fort built on the hill is long since gone, but a plaque marks the site and commemorates those who died defending the place from all dangers (a reference to the native population that did their best to drive away the invading settlers). Union Hill today is a decent place to live and surprisingly affordable for being so close to Hampton Green, but it has a reputation for being a second rate address and no ambitious young worker would be caught dead here. Their secretaries, however, are happy to live so close to work for a relative pittance in rent.

### **Vauxton**

In spite of its proximity to Center Park, Vauxton has always had an image problem that keeps it from being as desirable as Park East, Creston Heights, or Morrell. In an attempt to solve this problem, civic leaders quietly encouraged the poorer south end of the neighborhood to break away and seek recognition as a separate entity, but this backfired



- when the area settled on the insufficiently-different title of South Vauxton as the new name of the area. Vauxton is usually called "The Vox" by local residents, and anyone who calls it Vauxton is immediately tagged as an outsider.

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## Constructs

### Yuki



The Yuki (the name means "snow" in Japanese) construct is an idyllic recreation of ancient Japan in winter. It is a preserved piece of an earlier Matrix construct created by the Machine Civilization in their research program to find a more stable simulation for the human population. Created in the same era as the "fairy tale" Matrix, this project also followed the philosophy that humans would be happier living in simpler times, and attempted to replicate a medieval Asian setting. Once the fairy tale Matrix began to unravel, this project was abandoned, but an Archivist managed to preserve two pieces: Yuki and Sakura.

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## Ashencourte



Ashencourte is a dark, gothic, urban landscape populated with predatory Blood Drinkers. The construct is a preserved piece of a past "fairy tale" Matrix established by the Machines, in which they hoped humanity would be forever content and uninterested in escaping.

Unfortunately, the human psyche could not deal with perfection, and natural human anxieties soon caused a number of problems, including the subconscious warping of the simulation to allow for "monsters" and other deep-rooted fears. Exiles soon learned to take advantage of the changes to the simulation, and over the course of time their RSIs became optimized to fit the nich humans had unknowingly created for them: vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and other boogeymen. Many of these creatures survived the resets of the Matrix between then and the present, some by riding out the reintegration process in a safe haven construct such as Ashencourte.

Though the original simulation was long ago destroyed by the Machines, this backup version of a portion of that world has been maintained by the Archivists.

- **One Zero**



In the distant past, before war had destroyed the surface of the Earth, the Machines fled the civilization of humanity to found their own city: Zero One. No one is certain why the Machines would want to recreate Zero One in a simulation -- historical preservation, a sense of loss, or just because they like it? -- but several pieces of the construct (including this One Zero Archive) have been copied by the Archivists for their own purposes, complete with Exiles who have tailored themselves to fit into the simulation by taking on robot-like RSIs.

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## Sakura



The Sakura (the name means "cherry blossom" in Japanese) construct is an idyllic recreation of ancient Japan in springtime. It is a preserved piece of an earlier Matrix construct created by the Machine Civilization in their research program to find a more stable simulation for the human population. Created in the same era as the "fairy tale" Matrix, this project also followed the philosophy that humans would be happier living in simpler times, and attempted to replicate a medieval Asian setting. Once the fairy tale matrix began to unravel, this project was abandoned, but an Archivist managed to preserve two pieces: Yuki and Sakura.



- **Widow's Moor**



Widow's Moor is a dark, gothic, urban landscape populated with predatory Blood Drinkers. The construct is a preserved piece of a past "fairy tale" Matrix established by the Machines, in which they hoped humanity would be forever content and uninterested in escaping.

Unfortunately, the human psyche could not deal with perfection, and natural human anxieties soon caused a number of problems, including the subconscious warping of the simulation to allow for "monsters" and other deep-rooted fears. Exiles soon learned to take advantage of the changes to the simulation, and over the course of time their RSIs became optimized to fit the nich humans had unknowingly created for them: vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and other boogeymen. Many of these creatures survived the resets of the Matrix between then and the present, some by riding out the reintegration process in a safe haven construct such as Widow's Moor.

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**Zero One**



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## The White Hallways



The White Hallways are back doors in the Matrix, allowing one to travel to far areas within moments, or access hidden constructs. There are rumors that some Exile programs lurk in certain, distant parts of these labrynthian halls.

## Zion Organizational Hideout



Zionist researchers made a breakthrough in decoding certain access codes to the White Halls. The result was the creation of a secret hideout within the Matrix, that would offer (in theory) safe refuge from the Machines and a place for Zionists to meet and plan. But you will need a lot of \$info and high reputation in Zion to gain access.

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### **Machines Organizational Hideout**



The Machines have granted access to high-level Machinist operatives to a secret organizational hideout, accessible only through the White Halls and after forking out a lot of \$info.

### **The Chateau (Merovingian Organizational Hideout)**



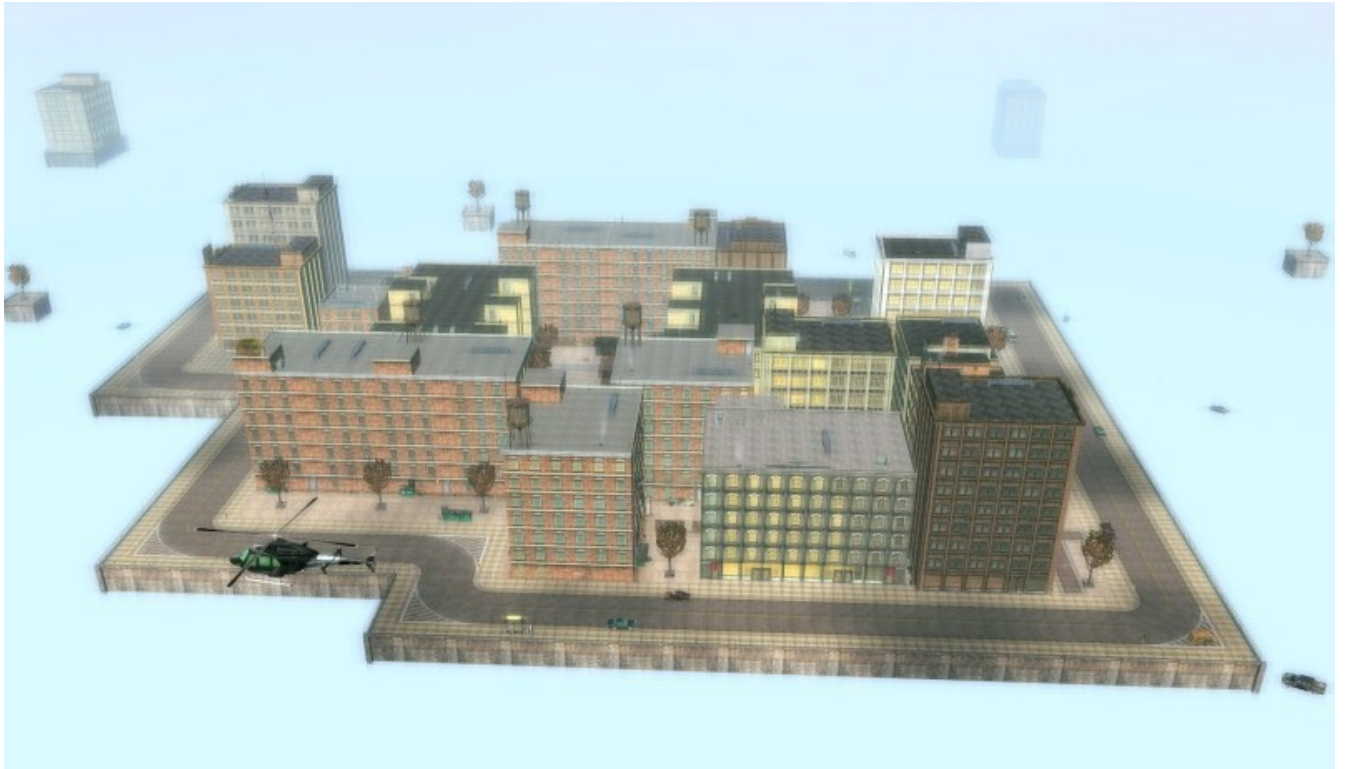
The Chateau, the closest thing to being the Merovingian's home in the Matrix, is as mysterious as it is difficult to find. Only those who have proven themselves extremely loyal to the Merovingian- or who lived long enough- have access to the Chateau... for the right price.

- **Datamine**



Datamine is a construct that Redpills have recently gained access to. Devoid of Bluepill activity, it nevertheless appears like a disused portion of the main City, perhaps a remnant of the previous Matrix. Due to the anomalies in this construct, rich deposits of raw code can be tapped in to for large amounts of \$information, code fragments, or even programs thought to have long been disposed. Also, powerful security programs lurk in a few of the buildings.

- **Sati's Playground**



This construct was recently been uncovered, a haven for Sati and her creativity. Within it, the laws of the Matrix are further muted, and powerful programs can be defeated for special items.

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## 2. The Storyline

### Chapter 1.1: The Race to Find the One



- Mysterious red-eyed Agents suddenly appear throughout the Matrix, demanding those with “illegal contraband” give it up or they will cancel the auto jack-out and tamper with hardline operation.
- The red-eyed agents begin attacking all Redpills, regardless of organization. All-out war soon breaks out on the streets but the most unsettling thing is the fact their motives are completely unknown.
- Zion, the Machines and the Merovingian all officially deny involvement with the red-eyed Agents.
- The fake agents are given the slang name LED agents because of the small red LED lights found on the PDAs that they carry. They also drop strange code fragments that seem to contain Neo’s final thoughts within the Matrix (**see Appendix C, Neo’s RSI Fragments**).
- The organizations soon realize that these code fragments must be of great importance and thus begins a race to collect as many as possible. The popular belief is that Neo can actually be reborn by using them in some way.





- Morpheus gives a speech to the Redpills of Megacity where he proclaims all should unite under the flag of Zion and collect the RSI fragments for the greater good of humanity. He shows the crowd a shattered Neo RSI that Zion is trying to rebuild from the fragments power.
- The race soon becomes violent with organizational fighting on an all-time high; Zion and the Merovingian are at the forefront of the conflict. Speeches are many and competition is close, constantly shifting between the two.
- Morpheus, the Architect and Persephone each give out messages describing themselves seeing Neo himself floating above a large triangular room with members of each organization in a different corner, they all rush into the centre but surprisingly rather than fight they begin to shake hands. This obviously symbolizes working together but no one seems to realize it. It seems the bitterness between the organizations makes such peace impossible.
- After vicious and close competition, it is revealed that Zion is victorious in collecting the most RSI fragments.

- - It is learned that the earlier speeches regarding Neo contained a hidden message that once deciphered actually opened a contact line with the Oracle. When the line is finally made she speaks of how all must unite for the future of the Matrix is in great peril. She reveals that a group of exile programs called the Shapers are the only ones that can successfully re-forged Neo's RSI and how they must be protected from the LED agents at all costs.
  - The Oracle's message falls on deaf ears as the organizations rush and fight over the power of the Shapers. Unfortunately, due to the Redpills own foolishness, the LED agents gain control of a Shaper for themselves. The very thing the Oracle feared would happen.
  - "N30 Agents" begin to appear throughout the Matrix. Apparently the LED agents used the power of the Shaper to imbed some part of Neo onto themselves.

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- Super LED agents storm the Matrix, all sides sustain heavy casualties and the Redpills fight a losing battle until they finally put aside their differences and work together. With the help of Morpheus they fight back the LED horde and stand victorious, but still tension run high.





- The Oracle congratulates the Redpills on working together for once and warns of a force that will soon threaten the very future of the Matrix. All must prepare for the worst.

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## Chapter 1.2: Nightfall



- Two exile races, the Lupines and the Blood Drinkers unexpectedly go on a rampage through Megacity. No one knows why but Redpills across all organizations are threatened. These exiles are clearly looking to start trouble.
- The leaders of the Lupine / Blood Drinker alliance are known as Ookami and Malphas. Shortly after the widespread attacks they disappear, and this angers the exiles as they claim that the two were captured and are being held prisoner. The two races quickly go on a killing spree with the intent of revenge.
- All three organizations officially deny the capture of Ookami or Malphas.
- In the wake of the alliance leaders' disappearance, a vampire by the name of Invalesco quickly raises to power. He calls for any willing Redpills to bring him select items from throughout the Matrix, giving them the promise of transforming them from an awakened human into an immortal exile vampire.
- While Invalesco's loyal subjects await his word Ookami and Malphas return revealing that they had not been captured after all but needed to go into hiding from the Merovingian. He had issued an attempt on their lives and they had had no choice. The alliance is given new direction: a full on war against the Frenchman. Emissaries from the Lupine / Blood Drinker forces are sent to try and convert Redpills to their cause.
- Invalesco returns at a difficult time, as the return of Ookami and Malphas has created a rift in the alliance. To reinstate his position Invalesco begins the transformation ritual on one of his remaining subjects. The ritual fails as Invalesco's brother, Feronus, turns up to stop the vampire's traitorous ways. However, he falters in combat and is blown away by Invalesco's immense power. The exile flees and a chase ensues. Fighting breaks out amongst the Redpills present, as many against him as there are for him. From the top of the ascension monument Invalesco escapes to the archives but not before receiving a stake to the heart. He goes into hiding to try and regain his strength.
- Ookami and Malphas begin a mass hunt for the traitor. After having Redpills follow an intricate string of clues he is eventually found and a massive final battle breaks out. In the end Invalesco is greeted by a second stake to the heart and dies his final death.
- Taking advantage of the alliance's little civil war, the Merovingian gathers his forces and strikes back hard against the Lupines and Blood Drinkers. When the

- smoke clears it is the Frenchman who stands victorious. Ookami and Malphas are captured and forced to become “loyal” subjects once again.

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### Chapter 1.3a: The Hunt for Morpheus



- Morpheus gives a speech demanding Neo's body be returned. He threatens immediate action if his request is not met.
- The Machines make an official statement that Morpheus' demands will not be met and that he will soon be apprehended.
- Numerous code bombs are set off around the city. These bombs peel back the Matrix's workings and reveal the code beneath. Morpheus' plan is to show all the Bluepills the illusion they live in and ultimately force the Machines to give up. The bombs also release a non-lethal virus, a green sprite that follows those Redpills infected. This too is clearly visible to the Bluepills and serves as another way to 'awaken them on masse'.
- All organizations make official statements showing they are not in any way in support of Morpheus and he is to be considered an outcast.
- Several helicopters that have recently been flying around the city drop propaganda leaflets saying "Do not trust the Frenchman". Other such messages are found, in code, within the billboards of the city.
- Morpheus addresses crowds of both Redpills and blue. He admits the bombs were his doing and how they show the true form of the Matrix. He urges the Bluepills to wake up from their dream and says how all must fight for the body of Neo to be returned. Agents soon arrive and send security forces after Morpheus; however, those Redpills loyal to him hold them off long enough for him to escape.





- During another speech Ookami and her Lupine followers strike, attacking all present to get to the outcast Zionist. He and Ookami duel but Morpheus simply says “I don’t have time for this,” and hyper jumps away.
- The next speech Morpheus gives details how he believes he is winning and how it is just a matter of time before the Machines give in to his demands. Niobe arrives and tries to convince Morpheus to stop his madness, if only for his own safety. He dismisses her saying he knows what he’s doing. At that very moment masked bandits turn up and attack all present. Niobe shouts for Morpheus to run. He hyper jumps away.
- The masked bandits are a rebel organization, normally small in number and never before this boisterous but it seems those that Morpheus forcefully awoke with his bombs have greatly bolstered their ranks as well as their activity. They are human beings, Redpills whose only wish is to be reinserted into the Matrix. Some even have a near worshipping relationship for the traitor, Cypher. Also, their redpill status gives them the asset of the auto jack-out, making them extremely hard to kill.

- - While planting a code bomb in a water treatment plant, Morpheus is shot dead by a masked assassin that can somehow bypass the auto jack out with special “kill code” bullets.



- Investigations into Morpheus' assassination begin on all fronts.

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### Chapter 1.3b: The Hunt for Morpheus' Killer



- It is discovered that the assassin that killed Morpheus is always seen with flies around him. The story behind these flies is unknown but video evidence proves he can transform into a swarm of them at will.
- The masked men begin turning up all around the city dropping vital clues, all of which seem to suggest the Merovingian is responsible for the Assassin.
- Agent Skinner leads a group of machine operatives in a hunt for the Assassin, and they do eventually corner the mysterious man of flies. Fighting breaks out as he lets loose his corrupted followers to attack the operatives. In a duel to the death, a virus imprinted in the Assassin's bullets infects Agent Skinner. The agent is forced to destroy himself in an effort to stop the virus spreading.
- A replacement for Agent Skinner is created: the first female agent, Agent Pace. She is designed to be the first redpill friendly agent developed for truce conditions. She can "feel" and understand human emotion. The Machines believe her to be the first step towards better redpill relations.
- Niobe creates her own splinter group, much as Morpheus had done. This Niobe group is devoted to avenging Morpheus and carrying on his legacy. Many of Morpheus' former followers join. Zion is essentially split in two.
- The masked men suddenly disappear off the streets of the city and are replaced by another even more powerful threat, the Corrupted.
- The Corrupted drop many clues as to the identity and purpose of the Assassin. It appears he was the program in charge of recycling information, including the bodies of those who die while still plugged in. He was also responsible for Trinity's body, but was ordered not to recycle it for some reason. When threatened with deletion he fled to the Matrix with the help of Merovingian. His goal it seems is to destroy the entire Matrix program, just to see his former masters fall. Of course in the process he will destroy himself, but he states this is of no concern to him. To achieve his goal he has begun to overwrite the minds of Bluepills and is using them as his soldiers, the Corrupted. Also his plan is apparently already underway. He is beginning to corrupt the Matrix from the inside out, as it will begin slowly then quicken in pace as time goes on. The first signs are already showing as monuments around the city begin to destabilize.



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- Giant monsters called “Complete Corrupted” begin to appear around all the monuments affected by the Assassin’s power. These level 255 creatures begin to destroy everything in their path. Around them spawn normal Corrupted that drop “insecticide code” this is discovered to be the only thing that can defeat the complete corrupted. Despite being armed with the insecticide code, the creatures don’t appear to be weakening. It seems all hope is lost until each of the organizations once again throw away their differences and unite to defeat the deadly beasts. After a long tiring battle, it is the united Redpills that stand victorious.



- The Assassin’s activities very unexpectedly stop. He is thought to be keeping low and is currently in hiding.



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## Chapter 2.1: Double Cross



- Niobe decides to break into a hotel room where the Merovingian and Persephone are staying in the hopes of learning more about Morpheus' assassin. When held at swordpoint the Merovingian gives the Zion captain the information she needs: that the Assassin's appearance is a coder's joke, a disposal program made out of thousands of flies. Most vital however was the information that the Assassin is most likely to be found around his old haunts, sewage and garbage. With back up from Ghost, Niobe is able to get them both a free pass out of the hotel and so begins her hunt for revenge.
- Level 50 red-eyed agents begin to spawn at Kalt Chemicals in Kedemoth. Redpills fight them off as best they can but ultimately it is a losing battle. Neurophyte herself arrives just in time to support the operatives. She uses her special abilities several times to strike the agents with a strange bolt of yellow energy. Those struck are completely destroyed in a flash of green code. The battle is won but the over use of her powers severely weakens Neurophyte and she collapses. After being revived by her allies she suffers temporary memory loss and proceeds to jack out.
- Zion operatives begin to search for a way to recreate the insecticide code in the hope it can be used in future battles against the Assassin. Ingredients are gathered from all over the Megacity. However, competition is tough as the Machines send agent interference and Merovingian forces prove troublesome. After rigorous research and tests Zion scientists successfully recreate the insecticide code, with mass production to start soon thereafter.
- Code bombs start reappearing in the city's major gathering places, planted by a man going by the name "Maerd". This man is eerily similar to Morpheus not only in appearance but also ideals and way of speech but is simply thought to be a former follower carrying on his deceased master's work.
- The recent code bombings bring the Assassin out of hiding; many Redpills bravely try to take the powerful exile down but to no avail. After having his fun with those that opposed him the Assassin disappears again.
- A possible clue as to the return of the One is found during a raid on an exile base, with the discovery of a newspaper clipping which tells of someone named "Sarah Edmontons" unexpectedly waking from a coma and simply walking out of the

- hospital without saying a word. Sarah Edmontons is an anagram of Thomas Anderson...
- The red-eyed agents make their return and start sending several messages to all jacked-in Redpills. They tell of how “potential carriers” are being tracked and targeted. The popular theory is they are searching for Neurophyte, carrier of the kill code.
- The Morpheus look-a-like reappears, once again setting off code bombs throughout the city. Many inquire as to his identity but he simply answers, “You know who I am.” Soon after the bombings the Assassin shows up and silently asks those nearby where Maerd had run to. After receiving the information from the terrified Redpills the Assassin disappears as quickly as he’d come.
- During a routine mission Vashuo of the *Novalis II* is instantly killed by a signal disrupting device that was planted onto the back of his jack-in chair. Zion security forces are sent to board the ship and the entire crew is detained for questioning. There is undoubtedly a traitor amongst the crew, someone in league with the masked men. Even worse it is believed to be a high-ranking leader of the masked as intercepted transmissions show Gemaskeered himself requesting orders from the unknown traitor aboard the ship.
- After the murder took place, the ship’s operator emergency-jacked the crew out of the Matrix. This resulted in code fragments being dropped around their last jacked-in locations. These fragments hold clues that could point towards the identity of the traitor. Coupled with the knowledge on the signal paths of the last transmissions had between the crew, a conclusion can be reached. Solutions are to be sent to Tyndall/Agent Gray/Flood’s email.
- The murderer of Vashuo, traitor to the *Novalis II* crew and one of the great leaders of the Cypherite organization is revealed to be none other than Toorima. It appears Vashuo was getting too close as to her real identity and so she finished him off. Vashuo had been researching her masked alias, Veil. Until now Veil was known only in rumors and stories as an assassin of unparalleled skill and efficiency, and has been linked to a great deal of unsolved Redpill murders. She is currently in custody in Zion, awaiting further questioning.
- Enmascarado resurfaces in Megacity and he demands to have Niobe come out and fight him. As a code bomb goes off in the background the warrior of Zion arrives to face the Cypherite leader but the nearby bombing brings the Assassin back out from the shadows as well. In the name of vengeance Niobe begins a duel with the Assassin but it ends abruptly as the masked man also decides to get involved. As the deadly rogue program brings Enmascarado close to death he warns that his RSI is rigged with a deadly surprise that will be released if it is destroyed. The Assassin takes no heed to his warning and easily wins the duel. However, the reality of Enmascarado’s threat becomes apparent when the flame

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virus is released from his RSI. It soon infects everyone in the surrounding area and mass fighting breaks out. In the ensuing chaos the Assassin disappears into the crowd and Niobe is left to try and rally the Redpills out of their confusion and violence. After spreading through most the hardlines in the city, the virus eventually calms down and things return to normal, though the chaos won't be easily forgotten.

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## Chapter 2.2: Rise of the Cypherites

- Cypherite activity quickly decreases, probably due to the defeat of one of their main leaders but no doubt they are simply regaining their strength. Nevertheless, organizational priority soon shifts back to the threat of the Assassin.
- Both the Machines and the Merovingian send forces to try and obtain the insecticide code from Zion but are ultimately unsuccessful.
- Zion soon realizes that without an efficient way to disperse the insecticide code it would be practically useless in a live battle situation. Operatives are sent to infiltrate machine facilities and acquire the schematics for a device called a “flit gun.” These weapons have been deemed the best way to use the insecticide against the Assassin.
- After careful analysis of the schematics for the flit gun Zion discovers that it is impossible to code it completely from scratch, so they have no choice but to make a deal with the Machines: insecticide ingredients for flit gun parts. The deal itself spans several trade offs throughout the city, with Zion sending its top operatives and the Machines sending agent programs to ensure the transitions go ahead smoothly. Unfortunately, Merovingian forces are still able to stop some of the trades from being completed. Despite their interference the deal is deemed a success and both sides leave happy.
- During the trade offs, Ghost is ordered to request additional Machine assistance in deciphering a data disk found by operatives during a raid on a Merovingian base. It turns out the disk contains a list of names under the heading “Operation Omega.” The names are those of top ranking Machine and Zion Redpills. “Morpheus” is the name first on the list...
- Machine operatives discover some more information regarding Operation Omega while on a standard recon mission. It seems an exile program by the name of Fillament was the one that created the kill code hack used in the Assassin’s bullets and, more interestingly, was under the employ of the Merovingian at the time. The hack works by using a sample of the victim's RSI to track their location in the real and remotely cancel the auto-jackout. Each bullet must be specifically designed for a single target and the only one that can use the code is a specific exile- the Assassin.
- It’s apparent that the Merovingian was researching a way to permanently kill Redpills and the end result was the kill code hack and the Assassin program. It’s also apparent that Operation Omega is some sort of hit list that aims to take care of the Merovingian’s enemies. As a side note, Niobe and Ghost are the next names on the list.

- - Zion coders are successful in decompiling the flit gun parts acquired in the machine trades and mass production begins immediately.
  - Exile forces strike the various flit gun production centers around the city in an attempt to destroy Zion's only hope of defeating the Assassin. It seems the Merovingian doesn't wish to help destroy the rogue program after all but rather protect him. Could they be working together once again?
  - Zion begins searching for the Assassin's lair but to no avail.
  - A message is sent to Tyndall requesting a Redpill come to meet the anonymous sender, as apparently they know the whereabouts of the elusive Assassin. Reluctantly Tyndall sends an operative to meet this unknown informant even though it simply cries "trap." The informant actually turns out to be none other than the Merovingian's wife, Persephone. She tells the Redpill of how she truly hates the Assassin program and simply wishes him to be destroyed. Unfortunately for her, her husband is determined to protect him for some reason so she decided to approach Zion for help. She reveals the Assassin has set up a base of operations on a garbage barge located in the Megacity river. However, it is impossible to access this barge by normal means. The meeting ends with Persephone giving the Redpill coordinates of a Merovingian base where further information as to the location of the barge can be found.
  - The operative infiltrates the base and accesses a computer containing information on a hidden network of hardlines that runs throughout the entire Megacity. This secret network leads to several places of interest including "The Morgue" and "The Coroner's Office," but most importantly, the Assassin's barge.
  - A Redpill is sent to the barge to test the actual effectiveness of the insecticide code against the Assassin. He does indeed find the deadly exile and armed with a prototype flit gun is able to severely weaken him. However, the Assassin is able to escape through the hardline network before the final blow can be struck and returns into deep hiding.

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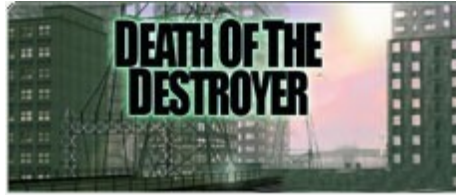
### Chapter 2.3a: Arrival of the Commandos

- A new group suddenly appears throughout Megacity: mysterious camouflaged commandos. Their motives are unknown as they have yet to show any aggression towards any of the other powers, but extreme caution is being taken considering the recent events in the Matrix.
- A Zion scout team witnesses one of the helicopters that have been distributing leaflets around Megacity land on a building rooftop. It appears that the commando group are behind the choppers as a general disembarks, meets with a squad of other soldiers then takes off again, leaflets in hand.
- Zion decides to use this opportunity to make first official contact. Scouts track the soldiers to a nearby vacant building and an operative is sent in to meet with them.
- The commandos say they wish to make friendly connections with all the major powers in the city and agree to follow the operative. Tyndall orders that the operative let the commandos be “accidentally” killed by exile gang members so that documents they received from their general earlier can be acquired. She believes the documents may shed light on the group’s motives.
- The soldiers were carrying a list of coordinates referring to several helipads around the city. It seems that these areas are meeting places for the commando group. Surveillance is increased.
- Through the increased surveillance on the landing zones, Zion is able to learn of a meeting between the commandos and Merovingian forces. Anome is put in charge of the mission to spy on this meeting, and he sends in an operative to bug the room where the meeting is to take place. Despite Anome’s confidence, security measures pick up on the operative and the meeting moves to another location. The Redpill arrives at the second location just as the meeting is beginning. After hearing the Commandos and Exiles speak of peace Anome orders the elimination of all exile forces. Fighting ensues but direct orders from Commander Lock requests the operative stand down and pull out immediately. Tyndall is put back in charge of commandorelated missions.
- Commander Lock orders that any further dealings with the commandos are to be peaceful; Zion cannot risk getting off on the wrong foot with this possible new threat. However, this sentiment doesn’t extend to the exile forces that have meeting with the commandos. A Zion operative is sent to hunt down the leader of the local exile gang that has been having meetings with the commandos. After several dead ends the operative finally comes face to face with their leader and with a little gentle persuasion manages to learn that the commandos are actually ex-military programs from the machine world and that in their meetings they had offered the Merovingian forces a “non-interference agreement.”

- - The commandos re-approach Zion with the prospect of a peaceful meeting. Unfortunately, Merovingian forces somehow get wind of the meeting and proceed to occupy the surrounding areas around the meeting place. The operative representing Zion is sent to dispose of the exiles. After the area is cleared the meeting goes ahead but before any real progress can be made the building is compromised. Luckily the operative is able to take the attackers down and the meeting is postponed until a more secure area can be found.
  - Zion and the commandos do eventually meet securely and the commandos propose an alliance. They reveal they are indeed exile programs but that they too wish to break free of the machine's oppression. They say their single wish is to make the Matrix a safe haven for any and all life forms that have a living consciousness. Tyndall agrees; an alliance with such a well-organized group would indeed benefit the cause of Zion. She forwards the request to the council for careful deliberation.
  - To better relations between Zion and the commandos, Commander Lock orders that an operative be sent on a mission teamed up with a squad of commando soldiers. The mission selected is a clean up of the Camon Heights area. Slasher gang activity has been on the increase and with the Bluepill police being unable to solve the problem it falls upon Zion to make the area safe again. The mission is a success.



- Chapter 2.3b: Death of the Destroyer



- Redpills are horrified to see that thousands of fly swarms have infected the sky over Megacity. The clouds are no more and all that is left is the Assassin's foul pets.



- Corrupted once again begin to spawn around the city; they again attack anyone regardless of organization. Even worse, they once again begin the spread of the fly virus. Code fragments dropped by the Corrupted are found to be part of the Assassin's ongoing memoir but unfortunately they are unstable with only a couple of words per fragment and with no clear order.



- - Zion and the Machines decide it is mutually beneficial to work together in a temporarily alliance against the Assassin's foul Corrupted in an attempt to solve the code fragment puzzle. Less cooperative, however, are those under the employ of the Merovingian; after all, the Assassin was once considered their ally and most are confused to his intentions. Despite this, the hard-headed Lupine leader Ookami takes up arms without her master's consent and joins the fight against the Corrupted.
  - Perhaps angered by the fact that one of his supposed "allies" is now working against him, the Assassin leads an attack against the proud Ookami. Unfortunately she is defeated in her fight against the man of flies himself, and barely escapes with her life. But the fact that she wasn't destroyed raises the question: could the Assassin be weakening?
  - It seems the Assassin's actions against Ookami didn't go without consequence as Flood makes an announcement on behalf of the Merovingian: all Merovingian Redpills are to assist the forces of Zion and the Machines for a common goal- the complete destruction of the rogue exile.
  - In a surprise appearance, Seraph himself approaches Redpills at Mara Central. He spreads the word that the Oracle wishes to address them all concerning the current situation. All those present follow him to the nearby "Debir Court;" ironically, this is the same place the Oracle met with Neo during the Smith incident. She speaks of how the fly swarms spread a disease into the system and unless something is done soon, the Matrix will be stressed beyond its ability to self-repair. She again speaks of unity to the Redpills, and of how all must work together, like they had done to defeat the complete Corrupted, to defeat the Assassin once and for all.
  - Realizing the threat to his existence, the Assassin comes out of hiding and actually joins the front lines of battle alongside his Corrupted. He moves swiftly through the city, killing any who stand against him. Unfortunately, there is nothing the Redpills can do to defend themselves as the flit guns and insecticide have yet to be distributed.
  - It seems the Assassin's direct involvement with the ongoing conflict has begun the spread of an even stronger strain of the fly virus. This new threat actually corrupts the RSIs of the Redpills themselves, turning them into a mass of flies only kept stable by a mask much like the assassin's.
  - Niobe, Agent Pace, and Flood each hold meetings to their respective organization's operatives. In these meetings they encourage the Redpills to continue working towards unlocking the secrets within the Corrupted fragments, but more importantly tell of how the flit guns and insecticide codes are almost ready to be distributed. It is almost time...

- - The flit guns are finally ready for mass distribution. All Redpills are urged to collect one of the weapons from any of the distribution centers throughout the city. At last, all have the power to defeat the Assassin.
  - Now that they stand a chance against him, the Redpills of the city begin a widespread hunt for the Assassin. Despite his fast movements he is no match for the mass combined forces of Zion, Machines and Merovingian. He is brought to near death several times but somehow still manages to escape.
  - In a last ditch attempt for survival the Assassin somehow splits himself into four separate beings. He takes refuge at the places hinted at in the Corrupted codes: Club Avalon, the Uriah wharfs, the Abandoned Subway and the Church of the Disciples.
  - Redpills finally decipher the Corrupted codes and the final showdowns begin at all four locations. The Assassin is severely weakened from his previous encounters with the insecticide code and fights a losing battle. He eventually falls to the might of the united Redpills, and he fades out of existence once and for all. Those that landed the killing blows are awarded copies of his mask from Seraph himself, a gift from the Oracle it seems.
  - The Assassin was apparently killed yet the Corrupted still spawn and the skies are yet to clear; something is amiss. Niobe decides to search the Assassin's barge just in case some aspect of him managed to survive. Unfortunately, her suspicions prove correct as the final aspect of the Assassin lies in wait. Taking Niobe by surprise, he is able to bring a gun to her head but just in time a Redpill arrives and strikes the crucial finishing blow against the last Assassin. It is finally over, as the remains of the Assassin sink into the river below.
  - Despite his eventual destruction, the Assassin's corruption still lingers within the Matrix's code. Some is even strong enough to take the physical form of dead flies. As a result, Redpills are sent on code clean up missions and as a reward are given a memento, a fly in amber.
  - After rigorous clearing of the Corrupt code the skies are made clear again. It appears the Assassin's foul grip on the matrix has finally ended and in celebration of their victory each organization holds a party. Niobe, Agent Pace and the Merovingian personally congratulate the operatives on their hard work and tell all to enjoy this moment while it lasts.

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### Chapter 3.1: The Effectuator

- A large group of Lupine programs rebel against the Frenchman, as they are tired of “being treated like dogs.” The uprising is quickly crushed by Merovingian operatives. Flood believes Ookami to be the one behind the uprising but with a lack of hard evidence linking her to anything no action is taken.
- In light of the Merovingian’s involvement with the Assassin program, Commander Lock and the Zion council come to the realization that if the truce is ever to be a success and the Matrix a safe haven for all then the Merovingian must be taken out of the picture.
- Zion realizes that the Merovingian is far too powerful to approach directly so instead it is decided that he must first be weakened by finding a weak spot in his organization and exploiting it.
- The Merovingian is known to frequently use areas that exist outside of the main Matrix simulation to conduct his business away from the surveillance of the Machines. These pocket worlds are called “constructs” and are a vital part of the Merovingian’s power base.
- Zion wishes to know more about the construct network and perhaps use it to their advantage in the fall of the Frenchman. It is ultimately decided that an operative be sent to investigate one of the sites believed to be a construct entrance.
- The operative arrives and quickly takes care of the exile forces defending the portal door, but is ordered to be extremely careful when entering the construct as they can be coded completely to the authors will; anything and everything could wait beyond a construct portal. Unfortunately it’s a dud, as it seems the exile guards were somehow able to pull the plug and remotely re-route the signal to another location.
- By accessing one of the computers on-site the operative is able to learn the new location of the portal feed and proceeds immediately. Tyndall tells the operative that they shouldn’t be disheartened by the construct’s re-route; it was expected all along that the Merovingian would have active monitoring over them. She simply sees it as further proof to their importance.
- Again the portal turns dud and is re-routed but the mission isn’t a complete failure as a new breed of exile was present that the location: a “Dire Lupine.” Tyndall believes this new type of exile may be related to the constructs in some way and asks the operative to upload the data that was found on its body.
- After careful analysis of the data it is learned that the Dire Lupines are simply modified versions of normal Lupine programs with added subroutines for stealth and infiltration, making them a deadly foe. Fortunately the data allowed Zion to determine the Dire Lupine code signature and add it to their databases. Scans

- begin for Dire Lupine hot spots; Tyndall still believes them to be connected to the constructs.
- An operative is sent in to one of the determined hot spots to investigate Dire Lupine activity, and it turns out the data was correct and the operative proceeds to fight off against several of the upgraded exiles. In the end the operative stands victorious over the last remaining Lupine; its last words being 'You can't touch the Effectuator'. Tyndall doesn't recognize the name but presumes that it must have something to do with the Lupines and the constructs.
- Zion manages to track down and secure the location of a control terminal for one of the construct portals. There should be no fear of this portal shutting down prematurely. However, after clearing the portal site of Dire Lupines the operative chosen to enter the construct comes face to face with the Effectuator himself. Appearing out of nowhere the oddly dressed and eccentric exile claims he has already shut the portal down and beckons the operative to follow him. As they enter a new room the Effectuator somehow clones himself as another copy is already waiting. He tells the operative that his programming makes him incorporeal within the Matrix, meaning he cannot be harmed and is able to flit around wherever he pleases. He also admits to indeed being the program in charge of the both the Dire Lupines and the construct pocket worlds, all under the employ of the Merovingian.
- The Effectuator suddenly disappears leaving the operative to fight more Dire Lupines, one of which drops a data disk. Unfortunately, after uploading the disk as ordered the operative hears that it was actually a virus that began deleting all the mainframe data concerning the Dire Lupines, the Effectuator and the constructs. Apparently Anome didn't remember to security check the data.
- Machine operatives are sent to question witnesses to strange events going on in the Megacity as of late. Unexplainable black boxes of about 10ft all surrounded by a thick smoke have been appearing on the streets and the Machines are determined to discover their origins. However, some of the machine questionings are actually disturbed by commando interference killing off witnesses.
- In their questionings the Machine operatives learn that men wearing bandannas around their faces have been sighted around the boxes; it appears the masked men are somehow involved.
- In retaliation to the earlier incidents the Machines lead their operatives on strikes against the commando soldiers. In one of the strikes a secret file containing information on an individual known only as "The Colonel" is found. He becomes the Machines' new primary target. In another strike the operatives find an encrypted file concerning the Colonel's exact location but apparently it is heavily coded in an almost Machine-like manner and will be a challenge to crack.

- - Commander Lock is determined to stay on the Effectuator case but rather than going after the troublesome Dire Lupines he decides instead to send an operative to infiltrate a circle of the Club Hel guards; perhaps they have had dealings with the mysterious exile. This turns out to actually be true. Apparently, he has been requesting information on the shifting of the Matrix code; he appears to need more power. Tyndall presumes that the recent activities have started taking their toll. Unfortunately, just as the operative gets close to finding out the arrangements of the deal, a Dire Lupine turns up and ruins the operation. After dealing with the situation the hard way the operative uploads the details for analysis.
  - The data found from the last operation allows Zion to begin tracking the Effectuator's network movements in an attempt to find his base of operations.
  - The Machines successfully decode the location of the colonel and proceed to lead a strike on the base with the deletion of the Colonel in mind. However, before he is engaged the Colonel randomly asks that the operatives to have the Machines check a certain sector of the pod fields for broadcasts signals. It turns out that there is an explosive device planted in that sector that could kill hundreds of sleeping Bluepills, and the signal is connected with the Colonels RSI, so if he dies the bomb goes off. The Machines are forced to withdraw for now...
  - Zion sends an operative to collect and administer a virus disk designed to not only lead them straight back to the Effectuator's base of operations but also completely destroy his entire personal network. The virus is a success and the operative is able to find the Effectuator. However, he is heavily guarded by Dire Lupines and even after they are out of the way the he appears to the operative as several copies of himself. He tells the operative that it will take more than that to allow his programming to be harmed and that all this has been a waste of time. Just before the operative leaves he states that Zion will never get to the Merovingian through him.
  - Machines operatives are able to break into a Commando base and receive the deactivation codes for the pod bomb and it is eventually disarmed despite heavy Commando resistance at the transmitting station. Without the pod bomb protecting him the Colonel is again targeted for deletion. It takes a couple of dead ends but Machines operatives finally find his hiding place and are able to take down the deadly Commando.
  - As a side note the Commandos appear to be more complicated than first thought, considering these files were found during the machine raids...
    - From The General: "We need to know how much the Machines know about us. They are (obviously) the only ones who pose a true threat to us. I expect answers."

- - From The General: “This Machine interference has gone on long enough. Colonel, I expect you to put a stop to it. That shouldn't be so hard, given the amount of resources at your disposal... and your obvious passion for dealing with humans. I will not permit any failures -- our project must proceed according to plan.”
- Agent Gray appears at Mara Central and declares that all Zion operatives must be purged from the Matrix; apparently they have “corrupted it with their stench.” He then proceeds to attack any Zion Redpill present. Mass fighting breaks out between Zion and Machine operatives and Gray eventually hyper-jumps away. He returns shortly after ordering the fighting to stop. He demands an answer as to why the violence began but when the Redpills speak of his earlier actions he fails to recognize that any of it happened. He leaves by telling them that investigations will have to be made.



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## Chapter 3.2: Enigma of Cryptos



- The Machines begin to pick up on increased communications chatter concerning the masked men. Intent on learning more, operatives are sent to plant listening devices in suspected masked bases. The data feeds collected from these devices clearly show the increased chatter to be centered around the subject of Veil; her name resurfaces numerous times and it seems something big is in the works.
- After hearing increased talk and various rumors surrounding them, The Merovingian also becomes interested in knowing exactly what the masked men are up to. Operatives are sent to infiltrate known masked bases and report their findings.
- The street magician Cryptos, mentioned in the latest edition of the newspaper *The Sentinel*, begins his performances throughout Megacity. Interestingly, Cryptos is seen wearing a blue pill encapsulated in a crystal around his neck at all times. However, even more interesting are his performances themselves. He appears as if by magic in one of the many boxes set up around the city, proceeds to preach to the crowd, then disappears and moves to another box within minutes. This may seem innocent at first but the speeches he gives certainly aren't. He talks of, amongst many other things, "not being able to dream if you are fully awake," having to "return" and "submitting to a higher authority." These speeches immediately strike Redpills as Cypherite propaganda; he even encourages watchers to "seek the Veil."
- Zion becomes very concerned about Cryptos; his preachings are far too suspicious and, in the eyes of Zion, warrant investigation. Even his pill status is unknown: his acts strongly suggest that he's awakened but there's really no way to be sure without taking further action. In an attempt to uncover more details, operatives are sent to interview Bluepills who have seen the performer in action.
- Unfortunately, the interviews are unsuccessful; it appears the sleepers don't know anything either. Anome, who has been put in charge of the operation, decides to ignore increased friendly relations and spy on the Machines in case they know anything. An operative is sent on a secret mission to set up a listening device on a Machine network node. The mission is ultimately a success and the data feed begins being monitored by Anome and his associates.
- Anome contacts his operative again; apparently the listening device was successful in picking up data on Cryptos. An audio recording of the mysterious

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street performer has Cryptos saying “Niobe is only driven by hatred for the Merovingian; that’s no way to lead people.” The message clearly shows Cryptos is indeed awakened. Oddly though, the contact who handed over the recording said not to say a word to anyone for fear of any “higher ups” finding out. It seems Anome’s little spy operation was not officially backed.

- During their investigations into the masked men’s resurfacing, Machine operatives uncover a plot to free Veil from Zion; in their own words their operations are “doomed to failure” without her guidance. It is however unclear whether the break out has already gone ahead or is simply still a plan.
- The Merovingian spies also learn of the plot to free Veil. This only increases the Frenchman’s interest and he becomes determined to break Veil out himself. However, by the time his plans begin to formulate rumors of Veil’s escape spread throughout the Matrix; it seems the masked got to her first.
- An emergency Zion meeting is called. The subject matter at hand is Toorima, aka Veil, being broke out of imprisonment and fleeing Zion. It appears the great masked leader truly is free once more. As a result, the masked men are made Zion’s top priority. Cypherites are to be killed on sight and Veil recaptured at all costs.
- The Machines learn of Anome’s spying and confront Zion; luckily Tyndall and Lock are able to cool things over with them. Tyndall is put in charge of any further Cryptos or Veil-related operations.
- Zion investigations reveal that Veil had somehow been in contact with her masked soldiers for at least a week before her escape, re-affirming the fact that the masked are still a very real threat even within the city itself. In a twist of fate it turns out Zion accidentally recorded the last few transmissions between Veil and her operatives. Unfortunately, they’re far too heavily encrypted to draw any conclusions.
- The Merovingian refuses to give up so easily. He sends his operatives all around the city tracking Veil, and most leads turn out to be dead ends or secret hardlines meet by static. However, one operator is able to track the static back and ends up opening a comm. link with Veil herself. Impressed, she sets the operative under the controller several tasks, killing guards, collecting items, etc. She promises further contact once the operative has proved themselves worthy.
- In an attempt to help patch relations Zion turns to the Machines for assistance with Veil’s encrypted messages. The decryption is done in seconds and two possible Veil locations are relayed. The Machines send forces to one and Tyndall sends the crew of the Nescire to the other. Unfortunately, despite heavy masked activity, Veil is nowhere to be seen.
- The Merovingian operative completes all the set tasks set by Veil. She keeps her word and agrees to a meeting with the Merovingian.

- - Reports indicate that Veil is set to meet with someone of major importance soon. Zion and the Machines plan to intercept the meeting, trace Veil's hovercraft signal as well as find out who this other person is. Both organizations send operatives to try and uncover clues as to where the meeting is being held. These investigations turn up several possible locations and both send squads to check them out. One of the sites gives positive readings on Veil and other masked operatives but just as the area is about to be stormed the signals somehow disappear, leaving behind a strange residual reading. To add to the confusion, communications between Tyndall and Agent Gray are suddenly cut. Tracing the residual readings the Zion operatives are able to get to another location but all that awaits them is a mass of bodies, already found and searched by the Machines. Shockingly, all their cranial jacks had been externally tampered with; they're all dead and by Cypherite hands.
  - After avoiding Zion and Machine interference Veil and The Merovingian are finally able to have their meeting. After some flirtatious banter the two agree upon a partnership of knowledge. Flood assures the Merovingian operatives that this is not considered an allegiance or truce, but simply an agreement on mutual terms. Veil believes she is using the Merovingian and the Merovingian believes he is using Veil.
  - Tyndall believes the recent strange occurrences can only be the work of traitors. Due to the possible security breach an operative has to be sent in person to receive and transport communications data for analysis. The risk of sending it over the network is simply too great. Tyndall hopes this data will lead back to the traitorous crew. Her hunch proves correct and the hovercraft Nescire is verified as those sabotaging the recent operations. The ship is found by Zion authorities and the crew arrested.
  - During their recent operations each organization finds highly sensitive audio files. Again, Cryptos is the speaker and in each he shows negativity towards the current organizations: Zion, Machines and Merovingian. While this may point towards Cryptos' motivation being purely Cypherite, there was another audio file found by Machine operatives, a very mysterious file that raises more questions than it answers. It has Cryptos speaking with an agent...
  - **Agent:** It has been another period, please report.
    - Cryptos:** I'm fine
    - Agent:** There is concern you are unstable. The process could not be complete, of necessity.
    - Cryptos:** I am in full control. But the memories are still there, along with speech patterns, and habits of language construction.
    - Agent:** They can be accessed freely?
    - Cryptos:** Screw you, you damn robot! Nobody's gonna fall for this load of bluepill crap. You don't know humans. You don't know jack!
    - Agent:** This is control?

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**Cryptos:** There are degrees. No concern is warranted.

**Agent:** I will report.

- The Machines suddenly end their involvement with Veil, the masked men and Cryptos; both Zion and Machine Redpills are left uninformed and confused.
- The masked men begin storming Megacity's most popular hardlines. Anyone present, regardless of organization, is attacked on sight. War breaks out on the streets as Niobe, Seraph and others join the battle against the masked foes. The attackers do eventually pull back but recent activities are proof enough of their determination: the Cypherites are far from gone.
- The Merovingian throws a huge party at club Parallaxis in Uriah. Everyone is invited regardless of organization and there's even a slice of Merv cake for all attendees. Also, Persephone attends a local Redpill wedding and wishes the couple the best of luck in their new found love. The awakened of the city can't help but wonder, why these recent activities? Why appear so casually at a time of such high tensions? The most common belief is that they were used either as a distraction to move attention away from Veil or the Frenchman is simply trying to boost his public relations.

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### Chapter 3.3: Veil of Cryptos



- Niobe holds a private meeting on a Richland rooftop. There she tells her followers that things are going to get tough from here on out and that they'll need more firepower if they hope to achieve their goal of defeating the Frenchman. Just as the Zion captain is wrapping up her speech, one of the General's helicopters flies overhead. Commandos drop down on the meeting and Niobe believes them to be attacking. Fighting soon breaks out. The General himself stops the madness and proposes a deal in "common interest." After close negotiations the two groups ultimately decide to join forces in their battle against the Merovingian.
- The Merovingian learns of the meeting between Niobe and the General but is as yet unaware of what transpired, something he wishes to change. Flood puts a team of Redpill operatives in charge of the investigations. Having been supplied with a stolen Zion access card the team make their way to the nearest Zionite base. The plan is to hack their computer systems and track data back to the local Zion database. Flood wants everything on Niobe's meeting: what was said, by who, when and how. The strike on the base is successful, as not even a single guard seemed to be on duty at the time. The hack is done cleanly and without interruption. The team continues on to the database site.
- The Zion database site is heavily guarded and a long fight ensues, eventually won by the Merovingian attackers. However, when searching the databases files for information of Niobe's meeting the team are greeted with a deleted files message. It seems their battle gave the Zionists time to wipe the system. For once the Merovingian is the one left one step behind.
- It appears none of Flood's attempts to uncover information on the details of Niobe's meeting are successful. The exile instead decides to change his priority to retaliation against Zion directly. As always with Flood this involves manipulation of others, in this case the Cypherites. As to not break their agreement Merovingian operatives are sent undercover as Zion soldiers to attack a Cypherite base, the hope being that the attack will have the two organizations at each others throats in no time. The attack goes ahead flawlessly and the Cypherites are none the wiser.
- It seems not all went to Flood's plan; it seems the Cypherites are regularly under attack from Zion, and the false attack made little difference. However, Flood is not one to be outdone so easily. A new plan is quickly thought up and put into practice, a heavier blow to the Cypherites. Using the extent of their deal Flood is able to get his operatives into one of the masked database sites. Once inside the team begins

- searching for something that would really make the Cypherites attack in numbers. Unfortunately every computer they search is filled with nothing but seemingly random number and letter combinations, none of which are any interest to Flood. However, the team's quick-minded operator picks up on something: a set of numbers at the end of the records correspond to the location of the Union Hill Cryptos box, yet another connection between Cryptos and the masked.
- Flood comes to the realization that if Cryptos and the Cypherites really are connected then they'll take notice if one of the boxes, namely the one in Union Hill, is sabotaged. To do so Flood requires operatives to raid a Zion base for some "equipment," virus codes with Zion data paths; the perfect set up tool. The raid is successful and the virus acquired. Just in case, Flood also assigns some more fake Zionists to accompany the sabotage. A return to the Cypherite database is in order. After dealing with all the on site guards and planting the viruses Flood takes a heartless turn: to make the scene more convincing he orders the elimination of the false Zionists. The order is carried out without much question and Flood's deception mission is branded a success.
  - Cypherites begin increasingly attacking Zion recruitment teams; they plan to stop any more Bluepills from being awakened "against their will." Operatives are sent out to deal with the revived masked threat.
  - During their anti-Cypherite operations Zion manages to trace on-site data streams back to a possible masked network station. Raid teams are dispatched immediately. After clearing the site the operatives check the computer systems present. One file in particular catches their eye: a report that the Union Hill Cryptos box has encountered an error and that there will have to be increased security. This only strengthens the link people have been making between the Cryptos and the Cypherites.
  - Masked men begin to spawn around the Union Hill area; it appears their orders for increased security weren't just a report stored on a computer.
  - Seeing his sabotage a success Flood returns to his original goal of discovering info on Niobe's meeting with the General. During their time manipulating the Cypherites a special virus designed to re-route Zion communiqués was being developed, now fully tested and ready to go. Flood entrusts the task of planting it to a single Redpill operative. Sneaking past the on site guards, the Merovingian follower is able to stealthily plant the re-router on one of the Zion mainframe computers, and the data begins to come into Flood's inbox immediately. Included is a message ordering all operatives to cease hostilities towards the Commandos, which is just what they were looking for.
  - The Machines lose contact with one of their couriers inside the Matrix; a case containing certain items of value is known to have been in his possession. The importance of the cases contents it seems is paramount and Agent Gray sends Redpill operatives to investigate immediately. The last known location of the courier



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was in the Kedemoth district. Entering the building, the team are confronted by numerous Furies gang members. As the prominent gang of the area, Gray suspects the Furies to be the most likely party behind the theft. After clearing the site and searching bodies the operatives are led in the direction of one of the Furies local bases.

- The Machine operatives investigating the missing case make their way to the Furies base with the intention of questioning the gang leader there. Agent Gray says their records show her as a weak fighter and to expect a non-violent interview but if not, any and all measures are permitted in the retrieval of the case. After easily dealing with her bodyguards the Machine Redpills are able to question the exile. She claims the furies had nothing to do with the cases disappearance and that she only sent troops out to

the building to investigate a rumor. She points the team in the direction of Argon, the local exile mob boss. Apparently if anyone will know what happened it'll be him.

The team make their way to Argon's club, Club Duality, for some questioning. Gray shows concern over wasted time dealing with street gangs but accepts the operatives judgment and allows the operation to continue. Argon tells them that of course he knows of the case's disappearance but also that he was in no way involved with it. He is however also surprised they have not yet talked to Kalt, owner of Kalt Chemicals, as she is the one responsible for the contents' creation. Gray informs the operatives that what Argon says is true but that he did not wish to involve Kalt with the investigations if possible. It appears, however, that it is indeed needed. Gray promises to make the necessary arrangements and ends the mission.

- Zion decides to take the Cryptos lead further; as revealed in the latest hidden *Sentinel* relays, Cryptos used to be a captain of Zion back before Neo brought the truce. What wasn't said was that since then his crew have "retired" and sought lives in the Matrix. Zion believes it would be useful to question his old comrades in an attempt to find out if Cryptos may have had any earlier ties with the masked. Operatives are sent to hack a Bluepill citizen database and find where the old crew members have taken residence.
- After fighting through numerous Machine security forces and cracking a complex firewall system, the Zion operatives are able to track the locations of Cryptos' old crew- the two of them who are still alive anyway.
- The first interview proves fruitless; the crew member had since married a Bluepill and left the real world behind her. She was understandably less than happy to have Zion knocking at her door. However, before the operatives leave she does tell them she stayed away from Cryptos, Morpheus and other "saviors." Apparently she wasn't a believer. This does raise the question: "Savior? Was Cryptos once like Morpheus?"
- Luckily the second interview proves more useful. This crew member tells the team that back in Zion Cryptos was a very strong protester against the Machine

- civilization, but more interestingly, was good friends with Cypher of the *Nebuchadnezzar*.
- Agent Gray contacts his investigation team again; the arrangements for their meeting with Kalt have been made. They follow the directions given to a large office building owned by none other than Kalt Chemicals. Inside they find themselves confronted by armed security but after some quick ID checks allowed to make their way to the meeting room. Kalt reminds the operatives that she prefers to be left alone but also informs them that she does indeed have some valuable information. While she doesn't know the identity of the thieves, she has learned that a device was found at the scene, some sort of advanced signal jammer. According to her the only person capable of making such a program is the exile researcher, Silver.
- The Machine investigation team continue on to the address given to them by Kalt: a shabby apartment in Camon Heights, which is apparently Silver's newest Richland hideout. Inside, the exile doesn't seem too surprised to see them; in fact it's almost as if he was expecting it. Slasher gang members storm the room but the operatives dispatch them with relative ease. Silver seems disappointed in his programs' lack of effectiveness. Thanking the operatives for helping him with his research the exile agrees to answer their questions. He tells them that he was approached by the Demons Army gang of Tabor Park to make a jamming device capable of blocking Machine scans. According to him they even supplied one of the main components themselves. How they got it is beyond him.

Following up on their newest lead the Machine operatives make their way to Tabor Park. Agent Gray gives the explicit order to destroy any Demon Army exiles on sight until something is found, a very striking direction for a Machine program. Nevertheless, the order is carried out and a base of Demon Armies is cleared and looted with no survivors. A data disk is found on one of the bodies and immediately uploaded to Gray for analysis, with results apparently to be forthcoming.

- Zion tries to further investigate Cryptos' past but unfortunately almost all the archive files on his activity back in Zion show signs of tampering. Lock suspects sabotage. Instead, Zion is able to link Cryptos with two of their current field operatives who recently went missing while investigating Cypherite activity. The task of tracking down and recovering the lost soldiers begins.
- After much investigation the Zion recovery team finds themselves at a possible lead. They believe a friend of the operatives, a wild card who is known to indulge in the Matrix's simulations and lies, may be behind their disappearance. When they arrive at the suspect's address the team are met by heavy Cypherite activity. After dealing with the armed resistance they find one of the missing soldiers locked up in the basement. Upon freedom he tells the team that him and his comrade were kidnapped for "knowing too much" and were being held at separate locations. Luckily he overheard the guards talking about the other lock up and is able to lead

- the team in a rescue attempt. Catching the Cypherites off guard they are able storm the lock up and save the other soldier just in time.
- After being briefed on the suspicions surrounding Cryptos, the rescued soldiers are able to recall a time, a few weeks after the Truce, where Cryptos suddenly changed. According to them he became even more fanatically anti-Machine, stopped talking to people, would only ramble on about the Matrix being evil and wanting to end the entire simulation. Apparently he even went to the extreme of urging people to wake the sleepers even if they weren't ready. This is highly interesting information as it directly conflicts with any recent information on Cryptos, his speeches, the audio files, etc. If the soldiers are right then he went from a fanatic Redpill to an apparent equally fanatic Cypherite.
- The analysis of the Demon Army data disk is complete but even after decryption it makes no sense, gibberish of meaningless words and phrasing. However, Gray believes it to be of some sort of value to the local street gangs and directs the investigation team in the direction of the Demons Army's rival gang, the Crossbones. The plan is to make a trade with the leader of the Crossbones: the decrypted data for the location of the Demon Army ring leader. Arriving at the base of Hatchet, the Crossbones leader, the operatives are immediately set upon, believed to be Demon Army spies. After dealing with their attackers the team confront Hatchet with their intentions, and the exile soon agrees to the deal as long as it could cause harm to the Demons Army. He orders two of his henchmen to lead and assist the team in "roughing up" the leader, Mammon.
  - Agent Gray reminds his operatives that the retrieval of the lost case is absolutely imperative and that they must not waste time. The investigation team, along with their exile assistants, rush to storm the base of the Demon Army leader. Strangely, there are no guards present and the team are able to directly confront Mammon. He apparently knew of their arrival all along, his spies having told him prior to their departure. He does however tell them what they want to know. The name of the contact that supplied him with the jammer component and was to retrieve the case was named "Cacophony," though they never met in person. The arrogant exile then summons a hoard of guards into the room, the Machinists are able to fight their way through and escape to safety, but their assistants are not so lucky. Gray doesn't trust Mammon but the name given is the only lead they have left, so the scan through the Machine database begin.
- After checking through the records with a fine toothed comb and running literally hundreds of scans through the Zion database, admins are able to trace the tampered Cryptos files back to an address within the Matrix. Operatives are sent in to investigate the scene, apprehend any masked present and, if possible, recover the original files. It turns out the site is a popular Redpill party spot, an ideal cover for a Cypherite base. Access to the site's computer systems, despite obvious clearance, is denied by the stationed Zion guards. Tyndall isn't surprised as she

- apparently always suspected an inside job. She gives the team clearance to force their way in if necessary. After detaining the rebellious guards the operatives are able to coax one of the partiers into accessing the system for them. Unfortunately, it's clean of any Zion archive files but the data is uploaded for further analysis all the same.
- After careful study of the data found at the party site, Zion learns that the computer system there was simply a router for the actual archive hack. Teams are sent to several other locations but all prove equally void of any archive files. Tyndall suspects their activities are being tracked and countered.
- The Machine's search for Cacophony draws no conclusions; Gray can only surmise it is a code of sorts to keep its owner real intently hidden. Left at a dead end the Machines decide to take final and desperate measures in the recovery of their case. The investigation team are given a data disk to take to their new contact's bodyguard as a gift of good will and proceed to the pre-decided meeting location. The Machine operatives are met by the one and only Seraph, guardian of the Oracle. After handing over the data disk, a list of program names and locations, Seraph allows them through to the next room. Sure enough there stands the Oracle. She begins by telling the operatives the meaning of the word cacophony, someone who doesn't like peace and quiet; someone who thinks that if they make enough noise, they can control things; make things turn out the way they want them to. In her own words, The General. The meeting is over and despite Gray's dislike of the Oracle's involvement the investigation can continue.
- At a loss Zion sends an undercover operative to a suspected gathering of illegal traders. All sorts of hacked information, access codes and even blue pills are up for sale. After striking a deal with one of the traders the operative is sent to a contact who apparently deals in "this sort of thing." Tyndall reminds them that the file directly relates to the time Cryptos suddenly changed, it is vital that it is recovered.
- At the location given by the black-market traders Zion operatives are faced with heavy rogue resistance, including the contact they were sent to find. After dealing with the rebels they finally find the missing archive files stored on an active computer. According to the records Cryptos jacked into the Matrix without permission a couple weeks into the Truce, encountered some agent activity then completely disappeared off his operator's screen. He returned about an hour later and after being jacked out refused to talk about where he'd been. It wasn't soon after this that Cryptos went missing from both the Matrix and the real; only to return recently as a completely changed man. It seems after all their searching Zion is only left with more questions and suspicions surrounding Cryptos than ever before...
- Zion learns about the meeting between Veil and the Merovingian. Using their new found allegiance, they have The General dispatch elite Commandos to assist in further operations.

- - The Machines are willing to get their case back at all costs, even within the prospect of negotiations with the General. Operatives are sent to contact the Commandos and propose a meeting. A scan of the nearby area shows a squad to be operating nearby, and after tracking them down the operatives have a brief conversation with their leader, leading to their request being “passed up the chain.”
  - It isn't long before Agent Gray has contact from the General's forces. The meeting is arranged and the investigation team forwarded to the location. The single objective is negotiations over the return of the missing case. The team arrive to find the meeting already underway with a pair of agents and a number of Commando squads. The agents tell the operatives of the Commando's... stubbornness. They demand sanctioned control over certain areas of the city, which is obviously unacceptable. The agents feel the Redpills may stand a better chance at negotiations and allow them to address the meeting. However the Commando representative, Waite, feels insulted to be talking to a 'lackey'; he sees this as the final straw and surmises the Machines must be plotting something, and the Commandos open fire. With the help of the agents present the attackers are easily dealt with. It is obvious peaceful negotiations are out of the question.
  - After interviewing some of Cryptos' old Bluepill associates Zion learns that the mysterious magician used to perform at one of the city's many warehouse clubs. Anome instantly assumes this warehouse is Cryptos' secret base and not only sends a squad of Zion operatives to storm the place but also calls in Commando support.
  - Much to the arrogant Zion controller's surprise, Cryptos is nowhere to be found, however, the warehouse is crawling with exiles. After fighting their way in the squad question the exiles as to what they are doing there. The leader of the gang tells the team she brought the warehouse from its former Redpill owner, Acuben, fair and square and that they have no right to attack them like this. After obtaining Acuben's contact card the team leave the exiles to deal with the mess. Anome seems a little confused; he's convinced the exiles must've been working for the Merovingian who in turn must be working for Cryptos. He's even set on the belief that Acuben will turn out to be Cryptos in disguise.
  - When the squad arrive at Acuben's address they are met with strong masked resistance. They fight their way through to the Cypherite Redpill and proceed to question her. She protests that Cryptos has preached nothing but for peace and harmony between Machine and human since his re-arrival in the Matrix. Suddenly, mid-sentence, she falls the ground... dead. It appears her cranial jack was tampered with by an external force, likely Cypherite. The team search the body and find an audio file, a conversation between the Zionite Cryptos and one of the soldiers who were kidnapped. In it Cryptos is suggesting the only way to defeat the Machines is to destroy the entire Matrix simulation, to deprive them of their power source. His justification for such mass genocide is that the sleepers are hardly alive

- as it's just a "TV show beamed to their heads." The audio file is hard proof of Cryptos' miraculous change of belief.
- Just as the Zion operatives are about to leave, their operator picks up on a heavily encrypted signal being transmitted into the building. At that exact moment one of the phones on site begins to ring. One of the team proceeds to pick it up and is greeted by the calm calculated voice of Veil. Apparently she had to cut the conversation with Acuben short because "loose lips sink hovercrafts." She also hopes they can talk again more... personally sometime soon. Of course Anome doesn't believe a word of it, and he thinks the operatives are making it up to hide their "failure."
- The Machines intercept Commando transmissions and are able to trace them back to a local command post. A strike force of Machine operatives are sent in to clean sweep the base and look for any info concerning the missing case. Three computers and two squads of Commandos later and no information is found. Gray becomes... frustrated. It is then that the agent is contacted in an encrypted Commando message: the General wishes to speak to the Machines operatives via simulacrum recording. With no other options Gray sends the investigation team to the location given.
- In his recorded message the General explicitly states the Commandos are not in possession of the case the Machines accuse them of stealing, nor do they have any information regarding it, thus any attacks of them regarding its whereabouts are futile. The message is short and to the point, almost suspiciously so. Gray points out that the General's statement directly conflicts with their information. The agent believes there must be some misinformation. The investigation has hit a dead end and Agent Gray admits they can no longer count on retrieving the case. Damage control and contingency plans must be brought into action and a certain level of... instability is probable.
- Zion becomes highly concerned about the increased numbers, efficiency and discipline of the Cypherites; it's obvious that since Veil's release they have become an even deadlier threat. To investigate further an operative is sent to interview an ex-Cypherite who recently returned to the cause of Zion.
- According to the ex-masked, before Veil it used to be very basic: a bandanna and a gun, that was it. However, since her return Cypherite training increased in leaps and bounds with strict procedures and secret facilities. He gives the operative the address of one of these training centers but warns it's probably long gone since they moved around a lot.
- As expected, no Cypherites are present at the old training site but it does turn out they left behind an old simulacrum program of the one and only, Veil. She introduces herself as the Cypherite mission controller and begins the masked training program. Unfortunately, before any valuable information can be obtained,

- the simulacrum is remotely shut down by an external signal. The operative's operator is however able to dump the little data they did gain onto hard disk.
- Thanks to their earlier experiences with Cypherite data structure, Zion is able to trace the external signal that shut the Veil program down back to its source. This intelligence proves correct as a masked base of operations is found and cleared. Another training program is uncovered, but this is time spawning a simulacrum of the mysterious Cryptos. He is introduced as the leader of the Cypherites, who, in his own words, are dedicated to letting people live the best possible lives. The recruitment process continues in subsequent rooms as a total of three Cryptos simulacrums glorify and give praise to the masked cause. Tyndall sees it all as propaganda, pure and simple. She ends the mission promising the operative that the information uncovered will be relayed to Commander Lock and the Zion council ASAP. Finally some of the questions surrounding Cryptos, Veil and the Cypherites have been answered.
- The Merovingian, accompanied by a group of elite Redpill guards as well as the feisty Ookami, throws a party at Club Sphinx for all his loyal followers. The Zion operatives present are less than happy about the Merovingian's unannounced take over of the club and threaten to call in Commando support. The Merovingian simply dismisses them as cave dwelling pawns. Commando soldiers do indeed arrive and warn the Merovingian that he should be fearful of the General's power. The Merovingian decides he can not be dealing with such interruptions and orders his troops clear the club of all protesters. Due to the sheer number of Merovingian forces the Zionists and Commandos are forced outside and kept out by the elite bodyguards. However, when Ookami decides to take a stroll away from the club she is quickly set upon by a large group of aggressive Zionists. The Merovingian and his followers soon come to her aid and it isn't long before mass organizational fighting breaks out across the entire Dannah Heights neighborhood. After calling in heavy assistance from her Lupines, Ookami is finally able to disperse her attackers and make it to safety. Tensions between Zion the Merovingian reaches an all-time high.



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## Chapter 4.1: Retribution

- Niobe sends out a Zion wide broadcast, she reminds all operatives of their partnership with the General and his commandos. She also reveals that the commando soldiers are inexperienced with fighting other exile programs and that she has agreed with the General to have operatives participate in combat training. Her request is simple, a number of commando soldiers have been assigned to training duty around the city and she wishes any and all operatives willing to assist to do so. Running missions, gearing them up, teaching them new techniques, that sort of thing. Many are troubled by this revelation, trust and respect for the General is low, rumours spread and discussions are many. It is a time of definite unrest within the ranks of Zion.
- Zion operatives meet with the General himself to co-ordinate offensive operations against the Merovingian and his forces. After a short briefing he assigns a team of commandos to join the Zionists in an upcoming mission. Anome, the controller for the operation, warns the operatives not to look bad in front of their allies. The group proceed to successfully clear out one of the local exile hideouts and, pleased with their progress, the General sends out one of his elite commandos to assist and study the operatives on further assignments.
- The Zion operatives and the General's elite commando proceed to clear out another, tougher, exile hideout; Anome seems almost desperate to show the commandos what Zion is capable of. After using his enhanced sensors to analyse and upload the battle data the commando tells the operatives that the General wishes to speak with them in person for debriefing. The General congratulates the operatives on their success and assures them the extensive data gathered is being converted into superior anti exile sub routines as they speak.
- The Machines, more specifically Agent Gray, decide to apply pressure to the Merovingian's assets, they plan on making the Frenchman lose focus and in turn to weaken his 'pathetic' empire. Machine strike forces are sent to numerous Merovingian bases.
- Flood finds himself confronted with attack reports from all across the city; he sends Merovingian operatives to 'resolve the situations'. It appears Zionists are behind the attacks, targeting specific exiles. The operatives are able to defend several of the sites and disperse the Zion attackers, but not without heavy losses, many programs lie dead before they even arrive. One of the wounded is able to give the operatives a data disk which he demands must reach the Merovingian; It leads them to yet another attack site, this time at the hands of machine programs. After a tough battle the operatives are able to clear the site and search bodies, unfortunately nothing of interest is found.

- - Agent Gray selects a crew of machine operatives to lead an attack on one of the Merovingian's key exile lieutenants, termination is the objective. After fighting through the lieutenant's personal guard the crew's operator picks up on a strange code fluctuation in the next room, they rush to investigate but find nothing, it seems the exile was able to escape out of thin air. Further analysis of the fluctuation confirms it to be the work of the mysterious Effectuator.
  - Determined not to be out done by exiles Agent Gray orders the machine crew to proceed and attack the base of one of the Mervs known security captains. Preliminary scans show the exiles signal clearly but as soon as the operatives enter the building the readings disappear, the place completely empty. Agent Gray comments on the Effectuator's talents becoming an... inconvenience.
  - Tyndall sends a crew of Zionites to accompany a squad of the General's commandos on a special combat run. The purpose of the exercise is to evaluate the new anti exile combat upgrades developed using the data from the recent training sessions with Zion. The chosen targets are a group of the Effectuator's dire Lupines; they have apparently been unusually active as of late and Tyndall sees it as the perfect opportunity. The mission is a success and the upgrades seem to be effective. As the crew leave the mission area they receive a request to meet with the General in person, he has another vital mission for them.
  - The General explains to the Zion operatives that the data collected from the previous tests suggests a possibility of creating special weapons for use against specific exile's defences. He needs the operatives to lead a group of specially programmed commandos to further test the theory and collect the data they need. Tyndall is hopeful that the weapons the General spoke of could be the turning point in their battle against the Merovingian and encourages the operatives to help the commandos gather as much data as possible. The team are lead to the location of another group of dire Lupines, unfortunately there are many more than expected and a tough battle ensues. However, thanks to the help of the upgraded commandos the Zionists are eventually able to defeat them all, gathering a lot of data as a result.
  - Flood decides to retaliate against the recent attacks but as Merovingian forces are laid out thin enough as it is he plans to 'persuade' the Cypherites to assist. Disguising themselves as Zionists a squad of Merv operatives attack one of the masked bases. Believing Zion to have attacked them the Cypherites lead a counter strike on a known Zionist base of operations; Flood sends troops to assist but when they arrive they find nothing but dead Cypherite bodies and a single data disk. Flood demands it uploaded for analysis.
  - Agent Gray assigns a team of machine operatives to track the Effectuator's movements. Armed with a powerful data recording device the team proceed to follow the sporadic code trail across the city. They hit many dead ends, empty rooms and battles with dire Lupines but Gray assures them they are in fact getting

- close enough for valuable data to be collected. He believes it to be only a matter of time before the Effectuator is in their custody.
- The General's liaison informs Tyndall that the data collected so far is helping greatly in their development of the anti-exile weaponry, however, their database is still incomplete and they require operatives to assist in data collection on one more exile type. A crew of Zionists are sent to meet with the assigned commando team and head out immediately. After successfully clearing yet another exile base and uploading the battle data Tyndall reports that the General has found his missing link in the chain and has ordered his coders to begin work on the new weaponry ASAP.
- Given the vital importance of the anti exile weaponry development the Zion council orders that operatives be sent to help guard the General's coder labs in case of attack. They can not afford to lose such a powerful tool in their battle against the Frenchman. Several of the labs are indeed held under siege by exile forces but the united Zion and commando guard teams are able to eventually fight them off.
- Flood is able to finish his analysis of the data disk found on the dead Cypherites, it seems they have begun running extra scans on the union hill Cryptos box. fearing the masked may be on their trail Flood quickly sends an operative to meet with the Cypherites to try and cool things over, the truce between the two organizations is too valuable to lose. Unfortunately the operative is met with nothing but relocated bases and eventually, gunfire. Veil contacts Flood accusing him of the betrayal, the deal between them is over and Merovingian certainly won't be pleased.
- Thanks to the assistance of Zion the General's coders are able to finish their work on the enhanced anti exile weaponry. Mass distribution to all Zion operatives begins. These enhanced versions of wooden stakes, silver bullets and holy water are able to deal significantly more damage to exiles than their regular versions, a valuable weapon against the trafficker of information indeed.
- The Machines finish work on a device designed to lock down the Effectuator's RSI, he is finally within their grasp. The device needs to be placed on the exile's body by hand and the task is entrusted to a loyal crew of machine operatives. They do their best to track the Effectuator, becoming ever closer with each new location but like always he seems to slip right through their fingers at the last step. Agent Gray aborts the mission stating another strategy must be formulated.
- The Zion council decide that to better combat the Merovingian they will again temporarily join forces with the Machines and give them some of the newly developed anti-exile weapons. The General shows definite distrust for the machine civilisation but respects the council's wishes and allows the deal to go ahead. Anome will be put in charge of the trade off.
- The assigned Zion operative retrieves the weapon codes from a group of commandos and begins to make his way to the trade location. However, Anome's sensors pick up on alarming numbers of exiles in the area; it seems the

- Merovingian was somehow tipped off to the location. After sending sweep up squads to deal with the exiles Anome instructs the operative to carry on and do the deal as quickly as possible. The operative meets with a machine redpill and his agent guard, the trade goes ahead successfully. However, before either party is able to leave, the area becomes under siege from exile forces. Fighting side by side the 2 operatives and agent are able to hold off the waves upon waves of attackers and finally make it the safety; the mission is a success.
- It is now required that after any meeting with the enemy Zion operatives must be debriefed by a senior member in case of 'contamination'; the operative who made the anti exile trade off makes his way to the debriefing point. Here he meets with the man himself, Ghost. The veteran Zionist assures that neither he nor the Zion council particularly trust the Machines but they all understand the necessity of working with them under the truce. Ghost finishes up by congratulating the operative on a job well done and takes his leave.
- Agent Gray instructs the machine operative to take the anti exile codes to one of their top scientists within the Matrix for decompiling; they will certainly come in useful against the Effectuator. During the long analysis and decomposition process the scientist rambles on about his work with the human body, how he once worked on a 'damaged' human found on the edge of the... he never finishes his sentence. The slightly modified codes and Effectuator locking device are handed back to the operative, it is time.
- The machine operative makes his way to a tracked Effectuator location, inside he is met with near hordes of dire Lupines. However, all of them take a massive hit of damage due to the area effect machine anti exile kill code; finishing them off from proves an easy task. The operative is then able to take the Effectuator by surprise, the eccentric exile wasn't expecting his Lupines to fall so quickly and let his guard down. Just as he is about to phase out the operative is able to plant the device, locking his RSI in place. 2 agents then enter the room and take the Effectuator into their custody; the mission is a clear success.
- Tyndall announces that now Zion have the anti exile weaponry in their arsenal it is finally time to up the offensive on the Merovingian. Operatives are to sent on combat runs all across the city but first they must learn the locations of appropriate testing bases. A recon squad are sent to attack and clear a Merovingian redpill base, to gather intelligence in any way possible. The Merv forces are taken by surprise and are soon waiting to reconstruct, that is apart from one. The redpill claims to have only joined the Frenchman the day before and is regretting his decision already. He promises to give the team the information they're after if they take him back into the ranks of Zion. They accept but promise that if the information proves false they will hunt him down.
- The Zion/Commando alliance forces plan a strike on the location given to them by the Merv traitor, preliminary scans of the area prove his information correct and the

- forces move in. The exiles within are easily dealt with due to the enhanced weapon codes, they fall like flies as the operatives and commandos clean out the building. Having just jacked in and hearing of their success caption Niobe requests a meeting with the leader of the strike force, the others stay behind to secure the area. Niobe congratulates the operative on a mission well done, she also reminds them not to worry about the Cypherites or be fooled by those mistrusting of the General; according to her they have the people, skills and firepower to win the battle and that's all that matters.
- Flood is again bombarded by attack reports from Zionists, commandos and the Machines, he sends what little squads of operatives he can spare to their defence but all arrive too late, the exiles lie dead, killed by enhanced codes. The attackers are dealt with but the damage is already done. After cleaning up the attack sites Flood receives another urgent report, the Effectuator is under attack by machine forces. All available operatives are sent to his defence ASAP, they can't afford to lose the Effectuator. But it is too late; they arrive to find the building empty, no traces of phasing, no exile left alive.
- The Machines are unsuccessful in interrogating the Effectuator; they believe it to be inherent in his coding and are left at a dead end. Agent Gray decides to see how a redpill operative fares in interrogation. The exile does speak to the operative, but only of the Machines foolishness. He does however tell the operative he can show him something, something on his computer. The operative proceeds to the address given and accesses the terminal there, a data disk is ejected and the unloaded to Agent Gray. The virus within is easily recognised and destroyed, the Effectuator's games didn't work this time.
- The Merovingian grants Flood a single chance to redeem himself; the defence of one of the Frenchman's major research centres, under attack by commando forces, is put in his hands. Operatives rush to its location and arrive to find the scientists have barricaded themselves in one of the rooms, having locked down all the on site computer systems. The attackers are dealt with swiftly and the scientists freed but there is no time for congratulations, another centre is under attack. Here a similar scene is found but this time before the operatives could defeat all the commandos the entire attacking squad fall dead. The scientists explain that it must have been the EMCP (electro magnetic code pulse) they just let off to disable their computers. This information comes as a great pleasure to Flood, a device capable of instantly killing all commandos within a set radius, just the thing to get him off the hook. Not only that but perhaps the Merovingian is not beaten yet.
- Agent Gray sends out a forum broadcast requesting that his listed machine factions provide one representative each to attend an operation of urgent importance. The names are to be sent to the machine liaison officer, DifferenceEngine, ASAP and

- the meeting take place later that week. All details on the upcoming mission are kept secret.
- The day arrives and Agent Gray contacts the selected operatives to attend a meeting on the Kalt chemical building's rooftop. Keeping the group in order Agent Gray and DifferenceEngine find themselves confronted with unwanted guests, namely Zion and Merovingian spies. The decision is made to take the machinists somewhere a little more... private. After arriving at the white room the operatives meet with Agent Pace for their briefing. A machine program, bugsweep, recently went missing while investigating a report about the machines stolen case. The operative's mission is simple; track bugsweep, rescue him if possible and at all costs find the kidnapper for interrogation concerning the case. Having little to go by apart from the programs last known location the operatives are teleported back to Megacity, the operation begins. Within minutes the machine operatives are able to find the wounded bugsweep in an alleyway but there is no time for celebration. The weakened program barely manages to warn his saviours that the man who attacked him was fleeing the city, they had to hurry. While some stay behind and tend to bugsweep the others make their way to the only route out of the city the machines couldn't track, the downtown helipads. Their intuition pays off and they find the man, Darago, attempting to escape. He proves impressively combat able and fights off the operatives with relative ease but is forced to flee once agent backup arrives. A chase through the city ensues; Darago is blocked off at several subway stations and is forced to run, eventually leading the group to Camon Park. Here he calls on the assistance of the demons army gang and it doesn't take long for a mass brawl to break out. However, under the collective might of the machine forces, Darago falls and the exile gang disperses. Agent Pace arrives at the scene, accompanied by Agent Gray and DifferenceEngine; she examines the runaway's body to find some kind of communication device. After running its code through Gray's advanced analysis subroutines it is determined to be tuned into the same signal used by the General's commandos. The agents conclude that the General is indeed responsible for the theft of their case and that it is in his possession at this time. After congratulating their operatives on a mission well done the machines officially close the operation and return to their duties.
- While attending to public relations duties DifferenceEngine begins to show... odd behaviour. After short while the machine liaison suddenly snaps and apparently loses himself. Almost as if possessed he demands the access codes to the Zion mainframe and complains of the stench humanity gives. The Redpills realise this to be another case of the remnant Smith virus, much like Agent Gray occasionally encounters. The crowd try and calm the unstable program down but he continues to speak on about how the Oracle and 'Mr. Anderson' must be killed to pay for his freedom. When questioned as to The One's livelihood the possessed program tells them that after the final battle Neo was provided with a hovercraft and left the machine city

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alive. A shocked crowd are soon met by Agent Pace who proceeds to detain and send DE offline for debugging; she informs the gathered Redpills his statements were the ramblings of a malfunctioning program and should be treated as completely false. The liaison soon returns to duty back to normal and with no recollection of the event.



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## Chapter 4.2: E Pluribus Neo

- The Kid, the youth awakened by Neo, the one who opened gate 3 in time for the hammer's EMP to save the city, holds a small meeting at Mara church. Here he discusses with other likeminded Redpills the importance of Neo's 'legacy' and how Cryptos and the Cypherites are dishonouring it. In the end it is suggested that they form their own splinter group to uphold these ideals and take the fight to the masked. 'From many, one' E Pluribus Neo.
- The Zion council becomes increasingly concerned over their hazy knowledge of cryptos' Cypherite movement. For the time being his moves are predictable, disrupting awakenings and spreading propaganda, but Zion find themselves completely unable to predict what the masked are going to do next. As such operatives are sent on missions to track and observe Cypherite groups in the hopes of learning more.
- Agent Gray has a machinist redpill investigate an 'unfortunate incident' that has occurred in the slums, apparently the nature of this crime is yet to be determined but the operative figures it must be important if it warrants Agent attention. Arriving at the forwarded location the machinist redpill finds several dead bodies scattered around the room, oddly without any sign of struggle, and begins to question the on site witnesses as to what happened. According the incredibly distressed Bluepills there was a loud bang, like an explosion, and then loads of 'green stuff' appeared. It also looked as if the others had died from convulsive choking and one witness even swears they saw someone dressed like some sort of priest run out of the building in the chaos. The operative's operator confirms their suspicions, it sounds as if the 'dead' Bluepills have been forcefully awakened from their pods, and going by the descriptions given, it was a code bomb that did it.
- Agent Gray informs the Machine investigator that the Machines had thought code bombings to be long over, apparently they were in error. He also runs a scan of the local area to search for the priest like figure described by one of the witnesses. Turning up a positive match and following local reports the agent is able to lead the investigator to a nearby building. However, the area turns out completely clear of activity, except a single computer terminal that when hacked logged in as 'N30\_LIVES'. Agent Gray proceeds to designate the 'priest' as prime subject for the forced awakening.
- A Zion spy team are able to trace the Cypherites back to a 'Somnus Consulting Services' The company name is surprisingly empty in the city archives and Tyndall, feeling its all too suspicious, sends operatives to investigate. On site the office seems normal enough, no masked, only Bluepills. However, one of said Bluepills gives the operatives a key to the company safe, apparently he was already

- expecting someone to arrive. Inside the safe the Zionists find a small data disk, which they upload to Tyndall ASAP.
- The data found by the Zion investigation team suggest the Cypherites are working on some sort of forced reinsertion program, very worrisome to both Tyndall and the Zion council. The disk also contained co ordinates for an upcoming masked meeting; soldiers are sent to intercept. However, they find themselves surrounded not by hostiles but by dead bodies. Going further the team find a single wounded operative; the young man simply says 'For Neo' and suicides before the soldiers can question him. Tyndall is baffled by the unknown operative's involvement and promises to run some checks for similar accounts, unfortunately she also reminds the troops that his interference has cost them a valuable lead.
- Flood informs a team of Merv operatives that The Merovingian is interested in consolidating his many 'items of interest' that he has spread out throughout the Matrix, it also turns out it's the team's job to start collecting said items. The first, a certain statue, is being held by one of the Merv's loyal exiles who apparently has a certain... taste for humans. Luckily the team are able to play it cool and receive the item without much hassle. Flood goes on to inform the team that the second item is in the possession of an exile outside the Merv's employ and may be a little harder to acquire. The team's operator seems slightly confused as to why the item is being held by an exile outside of their organization but carries on none the less.
- Arriving at the hideout of the exile who holds the second item the Merv operatives are met with an uncooperative, and rather slow witted, program who refuses to hand over the item. Flood suggests that getting rid of a couple of the exile's guards may incite a better attitude and indeed after a quick clearing of the area the exile soon hands over the key to the site's vault. However, making their way to the vault the team are met by the neighbourhood contact 'Hypatia'.
- Hypatia starts to talk about her hearing rumours of "Him collecting his things" and asks starts to ask the team questions like "Where is he going?" and "How will he get there without his Effectuator?". Of course she refers to the Merovingian but the team have no idea as to what she's talking about. Realising herself they know nothing Hypatia allows the operatives to take the item, a small book, from the vault. On their way she even warns them to try and be aware of 'the bigger picture' and not to be swept up in 'circumstances beyond their control'. The team's two items are then successfully handed over to a Merovingian lieutenant at the local Merv drop off point. Flood declares the mission a success, the team's operator however can't help but be concerned over the Merovingian's sudden desire to gather his items.
- Zion are determined to follow up on the Cypherites and decide to pursue other leads, namely one of a man accusing cryptos' boxes as being stolen from his warehouse. When interviewed by undercover the owner claims that cryptos had

- been using his warehouse as storage but one day, without warning, they were suddenly gone. Apparently no one saw what happened nor has he heard from the mysterious magician since. The owner even still has Cryptos' deposit; a watch he was wearing the day they met, the Zionists take it for help in their investigation.
- After uploading data on the watch given to them by the warehouse owner the Zion team are able to track its origins back to a specific jewellery store, ran by the exile 'The Jeweller'. While waiting to see the exile in his regional offices the operatives talk to the bluepill workers, apparently they saw cryptos on the day of the sale talking to some 'Gmen', suits and ties, slick hair and earpieces, agents. This raises questions in itself but there is little time to ponder. When the team finally do meet with the jeweller he confirms the watch to be his work, a special request actually as it was required, strangely, not to run. The exile ends the meeting by giving the operatives Cryptos' customer file, complete with home address.
- Anome, who's in charge of the investigation, orders cryptos' watch be uploaded to him personally so he can wear it the next time he goes 'slumming'. After following their orders the team are joined by a squad of commando soldiers and sent to investigate cryptos' apparent home. Unfortunately they are again met not by the masked but with more Neo and Trinity look-alikes. The over zealous teenagers actually end up attacking the team, believing them to be the Cypherites. After dealing with their attackers the operatives try and search the house but find nothing useful. Anome deems the mission a failure and doesn't even believe the team's story about the fanatics; to him they're just making excuses.
- Flood sends one of his operatives to assist with the research and development of a portable weapon version of the EMCP device that he claims to have invented (even though it was an accidental discovery by the Merovingian researchers). It seems the development has hit a block and requires the assistance of a certain exile; Flood orders his operatives to use whatever means necessary to convince the exile to help them. Arriving at the determined location of the required program the operative is met with several of the exile's bodyguards. Taking them down the operative is able to meet with their boss in the next room. It seems he already knew of their coming and what they wanted, he goes on to explain the commandos have gave him his fair share of troubles and he would be willing to help but only if he receives 'advance payment'.
- The exile needed to continue the EMCP development requests that the Merv operative destroys a certain rival program of his. Flood shows definite distain for the request but has no choice but to accept it and patches through the location of the rival exile to his operative. The redpill is able to assassinate the program with deadly precision and returns to escort the required exile to the Merovingian lab. Work continues on the portable EMCPs.

- - Zion's checks for the Neo/Trinity look-alike reports reveal that groups of these Redpills have been spotted several times confronting suspected Cypherites and in turn interfering with Zion investigations. On top of that several hovercraft that recently left Zion have since cut contact and when researching the crew data Zion find it mysteriously wiped from the mainframe. Commander Lock suspects the Neoites wiped the data, took the ships and have gone renegade.
  - Zion technicians discover a backup copy of one of the missing ships crew data, running it through the Matrix feed Tyndall is able to track their location in the Matrix and a team of operatives is sent in to question the renegade Redpills. Upon arriving at the site the operatives are immediately attacked by the renegade youths, again they think them to be Cypherites. After dealing with the rebels the operatives search the fallen for any clues, they find the renegade squad's operating orders, the fact they were carrying them while out in the field is a clear sign of the group's disorganization. Tyndall hopes that they can return the rebels to the cause of Zion while their chain of command is apparently still weak.
  - The Zion operatives follow the address on the acquired operating orders to another renegade hideout, after fighting through more of the rebellious youths the team are able to gain access to the on site computer systems. They find an open conversation window with a 'Fracastoro'; he talks about how the Cypherites are 'going down' and 'Shimada' knowing what she's doing. Tyndall recognises the name and begins running checks. In the mean time the operatives are sent to the origin of the conversation window to question Fracastoro.
  - Arriving at the traced renegade base the Zion operatives yet again become under attack but the mention of Shimada's name instantly stops the fighting and the rogues lead the team into the next room to speak to their squad leader, Fracastoro. The redpill is weary of the operatives' purpose but ultimately decides to let Shimada decide for herself. He orders 2 of his men to escort the team to her.
  - Tyndall reports back to the team being escorted by the rebels, her research is complete and it appears Shimada was indeed a Zionite and in fact a captain of one of the missing ships; it seems Commander Lock's suspicions were correct. The team arrive at a heavily guarded renegade base and are allowed audience with Shimada. She tells the operatives that their group, E Pluribus Neo, is devoted to following the teachings and ideals set out by Neo himself, the belief that every human being should be allowed the chance of freedom. She then requests that the team leave quietly. Tyndall feels Shimada is young, naive and hiding something but still believes they can deal with E Pluribus Neo peacefully. However, she is fearful that if the situation is not dealt with quickly EPN's awakenings could cause the Machine's power supply to become threatened and Zion accused of breaking the terms of the truce.
  - A member of E Pluribus Neo, Brian, has second thoughts about his joining of the group and contacts Zion; Anome is put in charge and an operative sent to go talk to

- Brian. The redpill confesses to being a follower of EPN's ideals but apparently he felt the leadership was far too weak, not Shimada but another, The Kid. Upon hearing about The Kid's involvement with EPN Anome gets more than a little annoyed, calling the youth a 'no good punk' and saying how they should take him out 'execution style'; it certainly seems like he has something personal against the boy.
- Flood contacts one of his operatives and informs them that the EMCP devices are now ready for field testing and that they have been tasked with escorting the tester. Arriving at the Merv lab the operative is briefed by researchers there and assured that 'the feedback issue' has been taken care of, however a nearby computer tells a slightly different story as it lists the survival rate of users as only 85%. Taking some of the prototype devices the operative and the designated tester are forwarded to a local commando held location. Storming the building the Merv operative begins to do battle with the commandos, however, the fight is short lived as the EMCP is activated successfully and nearly all the commandos are deleted in an instant.
- Flood forwards his operative and the EMCP tester to a second location for further testing, the same situation unfolds as before with the commandos dropping like flies, except this time the tester is also physically harmed by the device. Flood recalls the scientists' mention of a feedback problem and has the operative escort the tester to a nearby lab for analysis. After delivering the subject to the local lab and having the scientists promise to look into the issue the operative decides to have a little snoop around, hacking into an on-site computer they learn that the scientists have recently hacked into and deleted entries from the public service's missing persons database, the reason why is unknown.
- Flood declares the EMCP testing to be a total success and distribution of the deadly weapon codes to all Merv operatives begins.
- Anome claims to know where one of The Kid's friends hangs out in the Matrix, he sends a team of operatives to go question the redpill. The operatives arrive only to stumble upon a small meeting of EPN followers; the team are spotted and immediately attacked. After the rebels are dealt with Anome comes up with a plan, if they contact another one of The Kid's associates and say the first group sent them with urgent news for the Kids ears only just before they were attacked then perhaps in the foolishness of youth they'll lead the team straight to him.
- Using his contacts Anome is able to find the location of another EPN group within the Matrix and operatives are sent in to try out the controller's previous idea. The plan goes off without a hitch and the rebels are easily fooled as they begin escorting the team to The Kid. However, upon arriving at the meeting site a jamming signal is activated and the operatives lead into a room full of E pluribus Neo crusaders; it appears they were on to Anome's plot all along. The Kid, who refers to himself as Michael, tells the operatives that Zion have got EPN all wrong;

- in his own words it is not a group all about him nor is it lacking in organization or dedication. As for the group's large numbers he says the ranks of EPN are not only from Zion but in fact from all orgs, apparently they consist of anyone who believes in what Neo believed and are growing by the day. The team pull out and Anome soon becomes infuriated, he promises that all those 'traitors' will burn for thinking they're better than Zion.
- Agent Gray contacts a team of machinist operatives regarding information obtained from one of the Machine organization's Zion contacts. The wanted 'priest' has been linked with a certain group of Zion radicals and another code bombing is thought to be on the horizon. Gray has the team meet up with the contact in the Matrix to try and find out the timeframe and possible locations of the upcoming 'illegal activity'. The informant reveals that The Kid is the one behind the radicals and that they plan to set off 2 code bombs very soon. The Zionist promises to lend support by trying to block the radicals comm. signals as long as the machinists stay quiet about his helping them.
- In a race against time the Machine team hurry to the first bomb location given by the Zion informant. As they enter the building their operator is met with a 'crazy' code signal and the operatives come face to face with another code bomb aftermath, confused Bluepills breaking down and forcefully awakened scattering the floor. With no time to waste the operatives gather their thoughts and rush to the second location. On the way Gray confirms that their informant has kept his word and is currently jamming the renegade's signals, it's now or never.
- Arriving at the second locale the team find bluepill workers confused as to why everyone is storming their offices, it seems the machinists may have made it just in time. Continuing into the next room the operatives are faced with numerous youths dressed in prophet dusters going by the handles of 'E Pluribus Neo Crusaders'. They claim that what they're doing is for 'the good of humanity' and engage the machists. In a quickened battle the Machine operatives are able to fight their way through to the final room and find the leader of the bombers who is readily preparing the code bomb for detonation. He is promptly stopped and the code bomb retrieved without any casualties. As a debriefing Agent Gray reminds his operatives that innocent lives were saved and that awakening Bluepills in such a way is not only counterproductive but also very destructive, as they've already seen.
- The Zion council decide to leave E pluribus Neo be for the time being, due to their connections to the human race's saviour and with Morpheus rumours on the rise again attacking them would be political suicide. Instead Zion returns to concentrating on their war against the Merovingian.
- Agent Gray receives reports that E Pluribus Neo has launched a raid on one the Machine's code storage facilities inside the Matrix. Believing the attackers are searching for components needed to construct more code bombs the Agent

- controller immediately calls up a team of Machine operatives to deal with the situation. As they arrive the machinists find a large number of EPN crusaders engaged with Machine security programs. The programs fall before the operatives' eyes and the defence of the facility is left up to them and a hand full of brave on-site Machine mechanics. After a long and tiresome battle the crusaders fall and the facility is secured.
- Becoming agitated at the intolerable level of interference from EPN operatives Agent Gray requests a meeting with a Zion representative to discuss the matter. Unfortunately, Zion sends Anome. After some tactful comments regarding the Machine organization Anome lets the Machine representative know the details on E Pluribus Neo, that the Zion council are hesitant to deal with them and that they have been officially disavowed. Anome also lets slip that he has people "working on it". Agent Gray however is fully satisfied with the fact that Zion have essentially given the Machines "What humans call Carte Blanche", the freedom to pursue the issue how they wish. He ends by predicting the Machine's campaigns against E pluribus Neo will be "very... satisfying".
- Flood again contacts one of his operatives concerning the EMCP devices, this time however he details how the devices could be further improved, modified to also destroy any Machine programs within the code radius. The operative's controller isn't as optimistic saying the idea of killing agents in an instant is just too good to be true. Nethertheless the operative is sent to meet with the project's lead scientist and a chosen tester. The scientist hands over the prototype Machine EMCP device and taking the exile ironically named 'Tester' with him the operative sets off in search of a testing ground.
- Looking through the report logs Flood soon finds a Merv held building currently under siege from Machine forces and forwards the operative and Tester there. He does however ask that the operative makes sure Tester goes through with activating the device since he seems hesitant for some reason. Arriving on site the Merv redpill and Tester meet up with the defending exile forces and begin to fight back the Machine security forces. However, the moment Tester activates the prototype Machine EMCP all the exile programs, including Tester, fall to the floor. Dead. While the Machine programs still stand. As if things weren't bad enough already the operative's operator then picks up on Agent activity in the building; the redpill desperately tries to escape but is cut off by the agents storming the building. Upon reconstructing the operative is again contacted by Flood who declares whoever thought of that idea should lose their job and that he'll personally find who's responsible. Even though it was likely him in the first place.
- Agent Gray contacts a squad of Machine operatives and informs them that they have "unfinished business" to attend to. He goes on to explain the recent city-wide operation where Machine operatives located and killed the renegade 'Darago' who was directly involved in the loss of the Machine's case of valuables. After some



- quick post analysis it was revealed that it was The General who was behind Darago and the case's theft. Unfortunately, due to his alliance with Zion, it is difficult for the Machines to confront him directly, difficult, but not impossible. However, these plans are not yet ready to be discussed and the Agent instead directs the team's attention to the much easier goal of dealing with the neighbourhood gang who had assisted Darago, the Demon Army.
- The machinist squad are thus sent on a mission to travel to the Demon Army's self described 'turf' of Tabor Park and hunt down their leader, Mammon. He has been scheduled for deletion. After fighting their way through a group of Demon Army Cheitans at one of their known local hideouts the team find an encrypted data disk. Once decoded on one of the on site computer systems the disk reveals a comm. message concerning Cacophony, Darago and a payment of 200 million info to someone by the name of Grover. The team's operator is baffled but Agent Gray soon explains that earlier operations found Cacophony to simply be a code name for The General. It seems the data relates to the Demons Army's payment for their services and Grover must be the one running the deal.
- Agent Gray confirms this Grover figure is not unknown to the Machines; he is apparently an exile who is well known for lending his services to the highest bidder. The team of Machine Redpills is quickly forwarded to Grover's last recorded whereabouts so they can 'question' him concerning the location of Mammon. Frightened by the presence of the operatives and the mention of Agent Gray's name Grover quickly begins to tell them what they want to know, that he was nothing more than a messenger and package handler between the two parties and that he would also give them the location of the drop point so long as they leave him be. Agent Gray agrees.
- The Agent controller predicts not only that the location provided by Grover is correct but also that Mammon will have an exceptional number of Demon Army guards. As such the Machine operatives are to be granted back up units for support. Meeting with the Machine PR liaison, Agent Pace, the team are designated 2 agent programs for assistance in the deletion of the rogue exile. Making their way to the location given by Grover the squad soon blast their way through to Mammon, his guards falling easily to the might of the agents. Mammon too is easily dealt with but not before he claims he will 'only rise again'. Agent Gray then ends the mission by expressing how unfortunate it was to have had the original theft be successfully aided by a street gang but also by reminding the operatives that the system will not tolerate such actions.
- Zion catches word of an important exile communications base within the Matrix and after scanning the area send an operative to plant a bug in the mainframe there. This bug will allow Zion to get advance notice on the exile's plans, a valuable asset indeed. However, intelligence shows the building to be heavily guarded and planting the bug without being noticed is deemed impossible as is. Zion thus uses

- - commando forces to create a disturbance in another area of the building, leaving the mainframe vulnerable. Tyndall does warn the team to be wary of Merovingian followers armed with EMP style devices, Zion have heard rumours of such weapons and although they appear to be in short supply they are still a deadly threat, capable of killing commandos almost instantly. The mission is a flawless success and the bug begins transmitting straight to Zion.
- There is a small secret meeting between Zion's top commanding officers; here they discuss the next phase of action against the Merovingian, an all out offensive against his remaining troops. There are still plans that need to be put in place but the time is nearing, it could be a few days or a few months but all operatives are ordered to remain at the ready as the battle draws ever closer.
- The Merovingian decides it is time for him to reclaim the captured Effectuator; he has Flood arrange the details. The Merv controller calls up a team of his operatives and informs them of the Merv's wishes and that a large scale operation is already under way. Their job is to infiltrate security control locations in the Tabor Park neighbourhood and have hackers ready to disable the systems there when the time is right. At the same Flood has other operatives attacking Machine sites around the city to distract them from the main operation, Agent Gray falls into his trap and spreads his forces to deal with the assaults while their reasoning is "being determined". The Merv operatives on the other hand strike with deadly and swift precision as they clear the security sites of Machine security and have their hackers take position.
- Retrieving reports of the strikes at Tabor Agent Gray soon realizes that the Merv have simply been using distraction tactics to blind him from their now apparent ultimate goal, the freeing of the intangible Effectuator. He immediately has his squads consolidate and also deploys additional security program as support. However, Flood has already had his Merv operatives from the distraction operations as well as those from the security building strikes and even additional redpill support gather for the final strike on the Tabor facility. The force's operator guess that the extensive use of redpill forces is probably due to the exile kill codes now at the machine's disposal.
- The Merv squads storm the holding facility and are met with strong resistance from the heavy defence set up there; however, it is still no match for the combined might of the many Merv Redpills gathered for the rescue. With no backup support due to the thinly spread machine forces the security programs fall. The team then proceed to, with the help of the hackers at the security buildings, deactivate the terminal controlling the Effectuator's holding program. The Effectuator is freed. At that exact moment the consolidated machine forces storm the building with Agent support, a fierce battle erupts in the Effectuator's holding room but ultimately the Merv forces do not stand a chance against the onslaught of machine Redpills, programs and agents. They fall to ground, left to reconstruct. Their mission was a success

- however as the Effectuator remained untouched and is able to mock the machinists with copies of himself before teleporting to safety.
- The machines are debriefed by Agent Gray who details his regret at underestimating the Merv's level of coordination in their strike and how it was also unfortunate his forces were stretched so thin with all the new threats emerging, such as EPN and The General. However, holding the Effectuator was deemed highly inefficient in the long term anyway and he reports future operations will concentrate on more... tangible targets.
- Cryptos, leader of the Cypherites, posts a public recruitment message on Data Node 1. This message is a call to those who wish to 'embrace the world as it should be'. In the secretive style of the Cypherites Cryptos leaves a riddle for applicants to solve; only with its solution can they gain a meeting with the newly appointed Cypherite liaison. The Matrix sees a definite influx of both public and secret masked supporters.
- The Kid, leader of E Pluribus Neo, posts a public recruitment message on Data Node 1. His message is directed at those 'with Neo in their hearts' and invites those able to pass the EPN liason's test to join up and do 'What neo died for, to free everyone from the clutches of the Matrix'. The Megacity sees a definite influx of both public and undercover EPN supporters.
- A mysterious program by the name of 'ProtectorProgram' writes a report concerning the current situation within the Matrix; she writes directly to The Architect but also requests that The Oracle broadcast it to the Redpills of the city via DN1. Within her writings protector program states that the Redpills of the city do not seem realise her presence could mean an eminent reboot of the system. It seems she is concerned for the welfare of the Matrix and warns of trouble ahead.
- Once again the Machines liaison program, DifferenceEngine, begins showing odd behaviour and again, he loses his mind. Taking the insanity shown by the remnant smith virus to new levels DE goes on a rampage around the city, attacking Zionists at random and easily repelling anyone who tries to get in his way. To deal with the crisis an emergency meeting of all Machine captains is called but half through discussions as to what should be done reports reach the operatives of DE's presence in Debir court. Here the deranged program is cornered by the many Redpills of the city, some try to calm him while others try to take him down. The confrontation comes to its peak with DE releasing dangerous modified agent programs to defend himself. Agent Pace is soon informed of the deadly disturbances and arrives just in time to take control and reclaim the loose programs. The female agent then detains and sends DifferenceEngine for extensive code cleansing in the Machine city, however, how long this will take and indeed if it will even be successful at all is unknown. To compensate, Agent Pace assigns one of the Machine organization's top Redpills,

- Turring, as their new liaison officer. Hopefully his human nature for allow for more... stability.
- The Megacity sees a sharp rise in confrontation between the Cypherite and E Pluribus Neo groups, at war with each other over their entirely opposite ideals the two splinter organizations always seem to break into bickering and violence. Such actions do not escape the Machines however as Agent Gray holds a meeting with machinist Redpills where he declares the two groups illegal in the system. Their leaders and liaisons have also been placed on the Machine's most wanted criminal lists.
- Veil, Cypherite controller, holds a secret meeting with the city's Cypherite Redpills. She confirms to them the presence of a splinter within their ranks, members of the masked who feel dissatisfied with the group's new methods and wish to speed things up by somehow reinserting everyone on masse. These individuals are of great concern to Veil and she marks them as enemies to all loyal cypherites.
- Word of the Cypherite's splinter group and their deranged goal soon reaches the streets of Megacity. Not knowing if fact or only rumour all the other organizations inform their operatives to stay alert and keep their eyes open for any news or confirmation on this potentially dangerous group's existence.
- Agent Gray calls for a meeting of all Machine captains, apparently concerning matters of the utmost importance. He informs the operatives of distinct 'power fluctuations' that have recently been detected throughout the system. Their origins are, of course, currently unknown but they can not afford to continue. The Machinists are told to keep their wits about them and report any unusual activity to Liaison officer Turring immediately.

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## Chapter 4.2b: A Piece of Blue Sky

- Redpills jack in to find large concert sites set up at certain parks around the city. These sites show the banner of 'A piece of blue sky – a musical celebration of dreams fulfilled'. Their sudden presence instantly fuels all manner of rumours, speculation and accusations. More so when people look to the sky, blue, more blue than anyone has ever seen before, even greater than the special sunsets created by Sati. Many believe it to be a Cypherite plot, more propaganda for their cause.
- A mysterious masked group going by the title 'The Sleepwalkers' start attacking Redpills throughout the city; dressed in dark blue clothing they reveal nothing of their purpose or intentions but are certainly violent to all awakened, across all organizations.  
Again, rumours spread about their possible involvement with the Cypherites and the Blue Sky concert sites. There's also the definite possibility also of them being the dangerous splinter group earlier rumours spoke of.
- The Cypherite liaison officer, Matarax, makes an official announcement to the Redpills of the Megacity; the sleepwalkers are not operating within the Cypherite organization. They are indeed the extremists who hope for a forced mass re-insertion, an act the real Cypherites apparently have not, do not and will not support. According to Matarax Cryptos fights for 'education and enlightenment' over force and not to mention would never support such a strong strain on his 'beautiful' system.
- Zion, cautious of the real purpose behind the blue sky concerts, sends their operatives to meet with ghost for briefing on the situation. According to him the machine simulation doesn't allow for blue skies, only when Sati is permitted to change it; but a concert certainly isn't her style. This raises the question, where did the sky come from?  
Ghost has no answers but he does report that the retired Metacortex co-founder 'Decius Wadsworth' has claimed the concerts to be his 'gift to city'. Oddly, Zion's contacts within Metacortex had no warning of the announcement and Wadsworth is dodging investigations. All operatives are reminded to keep on their toes as Zion expects trouble at the concerts.
- After close investigation the Redpills of Megacity note some odd developments surrounding the blue sky concerts. The spotlights that are present at the site are seen to be emanating small pieces of matrix code from their bases. This coupled with the fact their light is a deep blue has Redpills wondering, could they be behind the change of sky? There's also the small patches of black smog that seems to be intermingled with the sky itself, many are suspicious.
- Numerous security personnel start patrolling the blue sky concert sites, arriving and leaving at irregular intervals these mysterious individuals bring more rumour and

- speculation. They regularly clear the sites of local gang members, break up any redpill brawls and quietly converse with the blue sky vendors. However, most interestingly, they make absolutely sure no one interferes with any of the concert equipment. Their origins and purpose? Oddly enough they act as if they're just Bluepill, hired help and nothing more, yet they are seen using hardlines and occasionally hyper jumping. The Redpill simply don't know what to make of them.
- The Architect, creator of the Matrix, enters the Matrix to hold a top secret meeting with machinist faction leaders. His presence in the simulation alone lets those present know the seriousness of the situation. The matter at hand is the recent network power fluctuations, while their origins are still ultimately unknown the Architect concludes the sleepwalkers to be the cause. Both the unauthorised blue skies and concert grounds coincided with the sleepwalker's arrival in the system and the Architect determines, due to their fundamental flaws, the recent events to be the work of a human mind. The most frightening thing about the meeting is the fact the Architect calculates that, if the power drain continues at its current rate of growth, the simulation will soon suffer a cascading system failure and every human being currently jacked in will die. However, it is pointed out that the sleepwalkers would not simply allow this to happen, instead the Architect suspects they have powerful devices and subroutines for not only draining the system's power but also for separating residual self images from their physical counterparts and rerouting the bluepill neurological data. The sleepwalkers are thus deemed the system's number one enemies and must be stopped at all costs.
- All organizations rally their troops for battle against the sleepwalkers; the Cypherites believe it their duty to preserve the system from the threat they inadvertently created, E Pluribus Neo feel it is their purpose to rid the Matrix of these fanatics even worse than the normal masked, The Merovingian feels his power threatened and can not afford to lose the system he depends on for life, The Machines fear a cataclysmic system crash and Zion sees the sleepwalkers as a threat to all humanity. The concert sites are put under constant surveillance.
- Over the next couple of days the sky slowly darkens from its initial brightness into a foreboding deep blue. With it comes a definite tension; Redpill of all organizations keep watch on the concert sites, sleepwalker attacks are ever present and the security guards kept up their strange patrols. Everyone is counting down the minutes until Wadsworth's 'gift' begins. They can do nothing but wait...
- The time arrives, the blue sky concerts are set to begin. Crowds of Redpill from all organizations are gathered at each and every concert site. The show starts and the true nature of the whole ordeal is revealed. A loud voice is played over the concert speakers, it speaks "The time is now, behold the blue lights and feel your powers melt like ice to a flame. This is our spectacle and it will change you. Lie down Redpill and return to the dream. Some of you will try to shut down the pretty lights but you will be opposed, you will fail. Our brothers tried sweet persuasion with you.

- You could of been slicing the steak, but instead the knife cuts you. You wouldn't take the bluepill, now feel the blue light. And Sleep..." Just as the voice finishes the speech all hell breaks loose.
- The spotlights at the concert sites begin to shake and convulse, blasting out blinding blue light they begin to truly strain the simulation, not only that but they release a virus into the immediate vicinity weakening all Redpills. Sleepwalker operatives begin storming the concert sites and the Redpills struggle to hold them back. Fortunately not all hope is lost, after realising that the current threat outweighs any sort of difference of opinion the Redpills from all 5 organization join forces, united they hold their ground while trying to figure out how to stop the sleepwalker's plan.
- Through the chaos and the seemingly never-ending legions of sleepwalkers the brave Redpills fight their way to the spotlights themselves. While their allies hold off the attackers they manage to get a better look at the lights and discover an emergency panel located on the underside. When removed the panels reveal fail safe controls which given time allows for the lights to be deactivated. The Redpills now know how to stop the sleepwalkers, it's just a matter of holding them off long enough to do so.
- The battle wages on across the entire Megacity as the united awakened slowly but surely fight back the sleepwalker hordes and get closer to deactivating the sleepwalker spotlights. However, even deactivating the lights is dangerous as the closer they get to deactivation the more unstable they become. When at the final stages they even begin to burst out visible clouds of virus code as well as blue bolts of energy that immediately activates the redpill's auto jackouts. Straining the system to the point of cataclysm isn't what anyone wants but it is a necessary risk if the sleepwalkers are to be defeated.
- After a gruelling fight the spotlights around megacity are finally deactivated, somehow without crashing the system. An uneasy silence falls upon the concert sites. What now? That question is answered when the security personnel seen around the concert sites prior to the chaos arrive at the concert sites. No longer with their baseball caps they reveal their dark blue hair and true nature, undercover sleepwalkers. Leading a new wave of elite fanatics the security personnel storm the concert sites and soon reach the spotlights. To the dismay of the united Redpills the security are quickly able to reactivate the destructive lights. The battle for The Matrix still wages.
- Time wears on, the fighting looks to never end with the constant loop of deactivation and reactivation, the Redpills try in vain to defeat the security personnel only to have them reconstruct moments later. It looks as if all hope is lost when suddenly the Architect himself sends a broadcast to all the Redpills. After extensive work on the hacked coding of The Matrix he has found a way to defeat



- the sleepwalkers themselves. The Architect activates a system subroutine whereby if all the spotlights are inactive at the same time then a highly advanced tracking program would initiate and a feedback code be sent to each and every sleepwalker in the system. This will either destroy their cranial jacks in the real or, ironically, return them all to bluepill status within the system.
- The final battle commences. The security guards, along with their sleepwalker army, fight back strong but in the end the united Redpills, with renewed vigour, ultimately stand victorious. The spotlights are eventually deactivated and the sleepwalkers instantly destroyed, either killed or reinserted with no knowledge of what happened. As a matter of fact a number of Redpills actually saw the security members alive and wandering the concert sites. The Redpills question them only to learn they are indeed none the wiser to the real world or the madness that had just occurred moments earlier.
- It appears the troubles are not quite over as several of the more powerful sleepwalker bosses seem to have somehow avoided the Architect's feedback loop and are currently in hiding somewhere in the Matrix. Zion, the Machines and the Merovingian each send their operatives on missions to track down these dangerous criminals before they have the chance to cause any more chaos. Following the distinct code signature left from the architects tampering the operative's operators are soon able to pin point their locations. They find substantially weakened sleepwalkers, desperate and still dangerously fanatical. Defending themselves the operatives are able to end the sleepwalker threat once and for all. There is however one uncertainty that still lingers, what of Decius Wadsworth? He has yet to been heard from since...

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### Chapter 4.3: Cheat Codes

- On a rooftop, the General meets with Niobe and her followers, offering her the key to the cheat codes his commandos have obtained from the Machines. He tells her the cheat codes will give them powers beyond their wildest dreams. But when he tosses the key to Niobe, Anome makes a grab for it, and the key falls to the streets below, landing on a van that speeds it away.
- Anome noted the Van's license plate number before it was out of sight. Anome forms a plan and quickly sends one of his operatives to the Machines' Transportation Department, where bluepill license plate records are stored. Anome figures the Machines won't mind if they "borrow" a little information if it's for a good cause. The owner of the van is traced to the Achan, but the owner reveals that members of the Bells gang broke in to the van and stole the key. The Bells subsequently lost the key, apparently to the Crossbones gang.
- Merovingian operatives are also seeking the key to the cheat codes, but after tracking down the location of the van, arrive too late as the Bells have already taken it. After investigating a complex turn of events, the Exile Silver is found to know the location of the key, claiming that it is tucked away in a construct. Silver wants to broker a deal with the Merovingian: bring him the case with the cheat code vials, and he'll bring the key to the case, and they can split the contents. However, an attempt to retrieve the case from Zion fails, as the case has already been moved.
- The Machines are eager to retrieve the case with the vials, and include Kalt Corporation in the investigation, since they manufactured the case for them. Kalt Corporation provides a code sample to Machine operatives so that the case can be tracked down. Their code scanner leads them to a building, encountering members of the Bell gang who also seek to regain the key. Although the key is not at the current location, the Machine operatives thoroughly scan the location to find a clue as to where the key could be. After further investigation, including meeting with the Oracle, Machine operatives discover that the key is in a construct thanks to Silver. The Machines begin to devise a way to obtain the key...
- Zion operatives storm through several Crossbones cell locations, but subsequently come up empty regarding the key. After following up on some leads, they discover that Silver has the key.
- Zion command believes that the Machines have new data on the key, and order operatives to infiltrate a Cypherite base that is known to have Machine contacts. After attacking the base, the intel they discover there reveals that the key has re-entered the Matrix. The trail leads them to Silver and his bodyguards. After takin9g down the bodyguards, Silver has no choice but to give up the key. It is taken to Zion guards for safekeeping.

- - As the Machines prepare to crack the security code to the key's construct, they hear word that the key is back in the Matrix. Machine operatives are able to pin down the location of the key and storm it, only to find the key is in Zion's hands.
  - The General meets with Zion operatives, informing them that the Machines have marked the Commandos and himself for extermination for stealing the vials. The Commandos will keep a low-profile and take a lesser part in the crusade against the Merovingian. Zion operatives are called away from the meeting to the location of the team that has the key, who are under attack by Merovingian forces. After defeating them, Zion operatives obtain the key from Anome and transport it to Niobe, who will keep it safe.

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## Chapter 5.1: Betrayal

- Niobe and her followers gather as she ingests one of the vials. After doing so, she remarks that she does not feel different, when she is suddenly shot. Anome is the one holding the gun, and several of his comrades open fire on the others. After a shootout, Anome and his followers confiscate the vials for themselves, and leave. Upon leaving, and after ingesting a vial, Anome uses his newfound powers to separate the room they are exiting off into a separate construct, trapping the mortally wounded Niobe and cutting her off from contact with the rest of the Matrix.
- Zion operatives rush to find a way to save the critically injured Niobe. An investigation of the building proves pointless, as the elevator won't go to the floor she is on and the stairs simply end before arriving at her floor. Hindering their efforts are attacks by Anome's followers. The situation is desperate enough that Zion contacts Machine Agents in order to find a way to save Niobe.
- Machine operatives are ordered to assist in the effort to retrieve Niobe. Agent Pace reveals that, in a previous version of the Matrix, Agents were given amazing powers to allow them to carry out their jobs. Powers that have never been witnessed within the Matrix, that would astound anyone. It soon became apparent that such powers were counterproductive. Agents of the Machines, using those powers, caused enough problems to warrant the end of the program. Now imagine those same powers in the hands of the unpredictable, willful, humans. The codes for these powers were put into storage, never to be touched again, until the General stole them from storage. The Machine operatives investigate but are unable to locate Anome and his followers, both within the Matrix and the Real. It is as though they have disappeared...
- Merovingian operatives investigate the matter as well, uncovering the information both Zion and Machine operatives have found. The Merovingian decides that Anome's betrayal could be quite useful after all...
- Zion operatives are stumped as to how to access the special construct that Niobe is trapped within, and with no little choice decide to contact the Merovingian Exile, the Effectuator. They meet with Flood, the Merovingian controller, who agrees to help Zion, for a price. The Merovingian has decided to help Zion so that they may be in his debt, and cease hostilities against him. Zion grudgingly agrees and operatives gather data to help the Effectuator find a way to get to Niobe.
- Machine operatives discover that Anome is killing off old acquaintances, and a strange code signature is always detected near or at the scene of the crime. Although they arrive too late, Machine operatives are able to fight off several of Anome's men, who have used the cheat codes and are beginning to show some unusual effects...

- - The Effectuator makes an unusual discovery. Due to Anome using one of the cheat codes to trap Niobe in the construct, time is passing more slowly inside the construct than in the rest of the Matrix. Although this is little comfort to Zion operatives, it does offer a glimmer of help in saving Niobe.

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## Chapter 5.2: Unlimit

- Anome's followers, now calling themselves Unlimit, begin partaking of the cheat codes, gaining incredible powers (such as projecting energy from their eyes) and begin wrecking havoc in the city. Meanwhile, Niobe clings to life in the construct.
- The Effectuator enlists help from Zion operatives. Anome's people are making it difficult for him to pin down Niobe's location, and the Effectuator needs Zion operatives to go to several network locations to stop Anome's men. Zion operatives engage Anome's men, but they are now different. They are stronger than previously, and their eyes constantly drip green Matrix code. Eventually, the Effectuator hits upon a potential solution, requiring Zion operatives to repair several hardline junctions. Zion operatives are able to do so (despite Unlimit's interference), and this proves critical in rescuing Niobe.
- Unlimit's attacks draws the attention of the Machines, who begin to assess Unlimit's threat to the system. Machine operatives investigations reveal that not all of Anome's followers ingested the cheat codes. They also discover that Anome appears to have compiled weaker, diluted versions of the cheat codes and passed them on to other Unlimit. Finally, it appears that the cheat codes have corrupted the user's RSI, so that they are unable to jack out of the Matrix. Later, Machine operatives are tracking an Unlimit within the Matrix while Sentinels in the Real target and destroy their hovercraft. Machine operatives are shocked to find that, thanks to the vials, Unlimits can continue to exist within the Matrix after their bodies have been destroyed.

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### Chapter 5.3: System Shock

- Zion commits to ridding the Matrix of Unlimit. Curiously, Brenda Utley, of PendhurstAmaranth corporation, approaches Zion operatives to assist her with a matter. Figures matching Unlimit descriptions have been lurking around the company's warehouses, and she asks them to investigate. Zion operatives do indeed find Unlimit at PenhurstAmaranth warehouses, and defeat them. Further investigation reveals Unlimit has been sabotaging boxes of Tastee Wheat, the cereal the corporation markets. People are dying from the poisoned food, and Zion operatives are quick to intervene and put a stop to Anome's plans to further poison the bluepill population, not only through the Tastee Wheat but also bottled water and the city's water supply. However, after thwarting these activities, Brenda Utley goes missing...
- Machine operatives stop Unlimit's attempts to tamper with the city's aqueduct shunt pumps and power stations. However, the resources used to stop the Unlimits is putting a strain on the system, and the highest priority is placed on finding and terminating Anome.

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## Chapter 6.1: Investigations

- Zion operatives begin searching for Brenda Utley. It soon becomes apparent that there is corruption within Pendhurst-Amaranth corporation, and this is connected to Ms. Utley's disappearance. It is discovered that Unlimit has infiltrated PendhurstAmaranth at a high corporate level, and Brenda Utley is subsequently saved. The mole placed on the Board of Directors for Pendhurst-Amaranth is dealt with, and Anome is dealt another setback.
- Machine operatives, in an attempt to locate Anome, decide to follow a lead, namely someone called Caboclo, who was one of Anome's highest ranking officers. Through their investigations, they messages from Caboclo regarding Anome's past. It is revealed that Anome was pod-born, but something was wrong with his mother. She knew that the Matrix was not real, but she mistakenly thought all the people in it were unreal, as well. This included her son, Anome. She'd talk to him sometimes as if he were a spy; inhuman; a device. She'd contrive to hurt him in a deniable way- "accidentally" dropping him, letting him touch the stove burner, or fall off a porch. His screams meant nothing. But then she'd shake it off, love him despite everything. The next day she would tell Anome that he was a machine, a robot. She would slap and pinch and twist his fingers, then tell him he wasn't really feeling pain, just acting like it hurts to control her. "Robots can't hurt," she would tell Anome. Her husband and therapist would threaten to take him, and she would shape up. She was afraid of being institutionalized. But it never lasted. Then one day, when Anome was six, she tried to pull him with her as she jumped off a bridge. "It's not real, sweetie. We're going to a real place," she said. He wrestled free and watched her fall. A Redpill who kept watch for likely recruits- kids who didn't conform to the Matrix- running through the social welfare system approached him, explained in the standard way Zion operatives did to kids, and gave him a red pill. But Anome misunderstood. He thought he was going to see his mother again in the better place. He wanted to, despite all, because he was a six-year-old kid. For a couple of years he thought she would turn up, somewhere in Zion. Slowly he fit in, buried the trauma deep. But the liberating effects of the elixirs have brought his psychoses back up. He is getting back for everything she did to him. Nobody is safe. Finally, Caboclo reveals Anome's hiding place: above the Creston Heights North hardline, on the balcony. With the Anome's location now known, and a killcode specifically designed for him, the Machine begin to make their move...
- Thanks to some exposure to the cheat codes, the Merovingian's men have found a way to detect the code remnants of the Twins (last seen in the movie *The Matrix Reloaded*, where Morpheus blew up the vehicle they were in). It is discovered that their code fragments have been floating around in the atmosphere, out of reach until now. Merovingian operatives scour the city and are able to piece the Twins back together, and they rejoin the Merovingian ranks.



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## Chapter 6.2: Uneasy Peace

- Agents arrive at the Creston Heights location where Anome is hiding. One of the Agents uses a disguise and takes on the appearance of Anome's mother. They exit onto the balcony area, and Anome is shocked to see his mother. A fellow Unlimit is holding the case with the cheat codes and, seeing the Agents, takes off into the air to escape. However, she is too late, as Agents gun her down and the case falls to the floor. Anome is unable to move from the shock, not believing his eyes, and the Agent disguised as his mother turns slightly, revealing the gun behind its back with Anome's killcode inside. The Agent shoots Anome, who falls off the roof to his death. The Agents retrieve the cheat codes, finding only 65% are still in the case. They then enigmatically proclaim that they can now proceed to "Phase 2."
- Without access to the cheat codes, the remaining Unlimit begin to grow weak, and will eventually die due to the corruption in their RSIs. They begin one last rampage across the city, but are subdued by Machine operatives. Unlimit's threat is ended.
- The Machines call a conference with Zion representatives. Due to recent threats to the Matrix such as Anome/Unlimit and E Pluribus Neo (who all came from Zion's camp), the Machine feel it would be able to detect and stop threats faster and more efficiently if granted access to Zion's mainframe. Zion subsequently counter-demands with greater access to the Machine's databases and systems within the Matrix. Both sides come an impasse.
- E Pluribus Neo contacts Zion operatives, offering information from the Machines that they have accessed in return for safe passage through Zion's tunnelspace for their hovercraft. Shimada, EPN's controller, gives Zion operatives the access codes to a Machine system as proof of their goodwill and the veracity of their claims. Zion operatives sneak in to a Machine facility and use the access code, gathering information from the computer. What they find is surprising: the Machines have a strike force standing by of over 524,000 Sentinels, aimed at Zion in case the Truce fails. This sobering information does prove that EPN is able to gain access to critical Machine information, but casts a pall over Zion operatives.
- Cypherites contact the Machines, and operatives are sent to meet with them. The Cypherites claim to have access to Zionist information, and these claims are proven true when Machine operatives are shown simulacrum of Morpheus and Niobe from the Zion mainframe. E Pluribus Neo crusaders attack the meeting but are subdued. Although cautious of the Cypherites, the Machine decided to further pursue information brokering with the Cypherites. The Machines are further impressed when the Cypherites confiscate a code pulse device used by EPN operatives, which sends out a pulse of customized code that permeates to certain

- receivers and captures specific data out of the simulation. The Machines decided to make more effective use of the Cypherites...
- Merovingian operatives are sent to the Slums discover why revenue is falling for their master. They discover it has to do with the Exiles known as the Elements. Fingers are pointed between each other, as Silver admits to holding back some earnings but immediately dimes out Mercury. The trail leads from Mercury to Thallia, to Raini, to the Blackwoods gang.

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### Chapter 6.3: Kidnapping

Subchapter 6.3 of The Matrix Online story began with the abduction of the Oracle's young ward, Sati, by the General, an old military program exiled from the Machine mainframes. The General's commando programs deployed across the city, and may have killed Seraph, who was last seen plunging into the river after falling from a commando helicopter as he tried to rescue Sati from their clutches.

*(As seen in the Subchapter 6.3 Cinematic)*

After several weeks, it became clear that the General had a new type of commando program at his disposal: elite troops equipped with synthetic black bodysuits allowing them to escape detection by standard code scans.

Sati's absence soon began to cause problems with weather patterns in the Matrix. Some fear that unless she is returned soon, the simulation's weather will spiral out of control.

#### **Cypherites**

The Cypherites, whose goal is to achieve peace for humanity by returning everyone to sleep within the simulation, helped search for Sati across the Matrix archive constructs. They continued working to attempt to get to the bottom of mysterious movements of material out of the caves of Zion, going so far as to hijack a Zion hovercraft. When its captain refused to cooperate, their ruthless control officer, Veil, sent the hovercraft on a collision course for the Zion dock.

The Cypherite leader, Cryptos, seeking guidance from the Oracle in this time of uncertainty, received from her a prophecy of widespread death and destruction, to be triggered by a choice the Cypherites had already made. She reminded Cryptos of the placard over her kitchen door: "Temet Nosce": "Know Thyself."

#### **E Pluribus Neo**

The radical Zion offshoot led by Neo's fervent believer, the Kid, worked hard to find and eliminate Cypherite spies within its ranks. These spies were already responsible for the deaths of several EPN hovercraft crews. One spy, at least, was finally unearthed.

EPN also sought to assist in Sati's rescue, deploying their data-mining Code Pulse Devices both to slow down the General's progress, and to learn the location of his base on the Earth's surface. The Machines, who regard EPN as a dangerous terrorist organization, responded to the deployment of the devices with deadly force, culminating in the termination of a high-ranking EPN officer, Keterina, by means of a kill code.

#### **The Machines**

The Machines worked methodically to locate and disable the network access points used by the General to bring his troops into the Matrix. After the elimination of many commando programs, and after hacking through several layers of the General's network, the

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Machines succeeded in manufacturing a program that could override the General's systems. They used this virus to locate the General's base on the surface of the Earth, code-named "Stalingrad." The Machines swiftly dispatched a portion of the Sentinel fleet monitoring Zion to eradicate the General's stronghold.

### **The Merovingian**

The Merovingian took advantage of Seraph's disappearance to make his way to the Oracle, where he reiterated an old demand. At her refusal he swore revenge, and began searching for a termination code capable of wiping out the fortune-teller. After exhausting his usual contacts within the Matrix, he turned to the General. The stubborn warrior rebuffed his initial overtures, but eventually agreed to a cease-fire while considering the Frenchman's proposal.

### **Zion**

With the Oracle's powerful guardian, Seraph, out of the picture, Zion scrambled to her defense, fighting off assaults by the General and the Merovingian. In response to determined pursuit by the Zionites, the General tauntingly revealed that he was the Sentinel program who led the deadly Machine assault on the Zion dock at the end of the war.

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## Chapter 7.1: The Search

The weather in the simulation took on a distinctly off-color orange hue, as weather patterns suffer to the continued absence of the Oracle's ward, Sati, kidnapped by the ex-Sentinel leader known as "The General." The General struck an alliance with the leader of the Matrix underworld, the Merovingian, bringing the Frenchman into direct conflict with the Machines, who are working to eradicate the General's commando forces.

Zion pursued the Oracle's guardian, Seraph, dramatically returned (as seen in the chapter 7.1 cinematic) after his disappearance while pursuing Sati's kidnapers, and found that he'd been deleting Machine programs from the minds of humans in the Matrix, including the Cypherite leader, Cryptos, who had secretly been under Machine control.

E Pluribus Neo continued their dogged hunt after signals apparently sent by the ex-Zion captain, Morpheus, and finally came across a clear message from the former leader.

As if this, and a certain sanity-shattering party crashed by a notorious Merovingian weren't enough, an outbreak of the Smith Virus threatened to take over the city. Resistance, organized by the Oracle, eventually managed to defeat powerful manifestations of the virus, but as it faded away, it left a message claiming to have taken on a much more insidious, unkillable form.



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## Cypherites

The Cypherites attempted to understand Seraph's apparent rampage across the city, and to do what they could for his "bluepill" civilian victims. This quest came to an abrupt end when Seraph ambushed the Cypherite leader, Cryptos, performing a strange "exorcism" that left Cryptos extremely disoriented. As his concerned operatives attempted to aid him, Cryptos began uttering strange sounds, which, as his articulation increased, were clearly identified as Machine error codes.

Concluding that Cryptos had been operating under Machine overwriting, removed by Seraph's attack, the Cypherite controller, Veil, ordered Cryptos returned to his ship and put under intensive care, while she assumed interim leadership of the organization.

The Machines were quick to acknowledge that Cryptos had been operating under their guidance, forming the Cypherites as a means of preventing Zion from awakening more than their Truce-allotted 1% of the Matrix' population to the true nature of the simulation. The Machines attempted to renew the terms of their agreement with Veil, but she thus far has put off accepting an accord with the Machines, and relations between the two groups remain uncertain.



## E Pluribus Neo

EPN put great effort into pinpointing the mysterious signals seen intermittently around the city of late, in which a man resembling the famous Zion war leader, Morpheus, appeared to isolated operatives, delivering messages appearing to allude to the One, Neo, being alive, but held captive by the Machines.

After a difficult process of mining for data concerning a newly detected broadcast of the signal, EPN tracked the signal to the Hypercube monument in Mara, where they were confronted by a clear message from this apparent Morpheus, saying that the Machines had failed, and that Neo was alive, held captive by the Machines, and in need of rescue.



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## The Machines

The Machines hacked the General's network in the Matrix, gaining the capability of scanning the exiled program's plans and data. Led by Agent Gray, they captured one of the General's Elite Commandos, gaining enough data on the soldier's stealth routines to enable them to engineer a sensor scan capable of detecting hidden commandos.

Machine pursuit of the General's forces brought them into conflict with the Merovingian, who recently agreed to an alliance with the harassed General. After some frustrating initial engagements, the Machines realized that the Merovingian's opposition may slow down their timetable in eliminating the General.

Meanwhile, the Machines also had to deal with the exposure of their secret control over the Cypherite organization when Seraph found and removed the Machine program that had overwritten Cryptos' mind. Because Seraph's "exorcism" left the Cypherite leader damaged and confused, the Machines attempted to regain control of the Cypherites by striking a deal with Cryptos' second-in-command, Veil, but she remained aloof, showing anger at the long-standing Machine deception.



## The Merovingian



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The Merovingian came to an agreement with the General under which the Merovingian would provide transportation in and out of the Matrix for the General's forces, while the General would help the Merovingian hunt down ingredients necessary for a kill-code capable of terminating the woman who has frustrated so many of his schemes: the Oracle.

The General's commando programs and the Merovingian's operatives worked together to secure a vital ingredient, the last remaining Machine cheat code, held by an unwitting civilian. The General revealed, however, that they would need a special program to put the kill-code together: The Apothecary. Following the General's directions, they tracked down an old code trace of the Apothecary and, from the mouth of an ancient program, learned that the Apothecary was held by the Machines in their mainframes, and could only be retrieved by an old Merovingian employee: the Trainman.

Under growing pressure by the Machines, the Merovingian's operatives located the portal to the Trainman's private construct, hidden in the Abandoned Subway. Leaving an encrypted "note on his doorstep," they eventually coaxed the paranoid Exile out of hiding, and brought him once more into the Merovingian's service.



## Zion

Zion pursued Seraph, apparently deranged after his plunge from a helicopter into the highly polluted Aqueduct while fighting the commandos who had abducted Sati. They found that although Seraph's attacks on operatives and civilians alike appeared indiscriminate, the victims all shared memory loss after an episode of suspicious personality change in their past.

Zion was eventually able to make contact with Seraph, who revealed that he was nearly done with his work, and that the operatives should be careful to guard their minds.

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Seraph's removal of the Machine program overwriting the mind of the Cypherite leader, Cryptos, finally made it clear that the Oracle's guardian was, thanks to his exposure to the remains of Machine cheat codes in the Aqueduct, able to detect and remove such programs from the minds of humans.

With Zion's assistance, Seraph completed the eradicating of Machine overwriting around the city, and returned to the Oracle's side. The Oracle, however, directed him to rescue Sati from the General, a task that Seraph quickly began, again aided by operatives from Zion.



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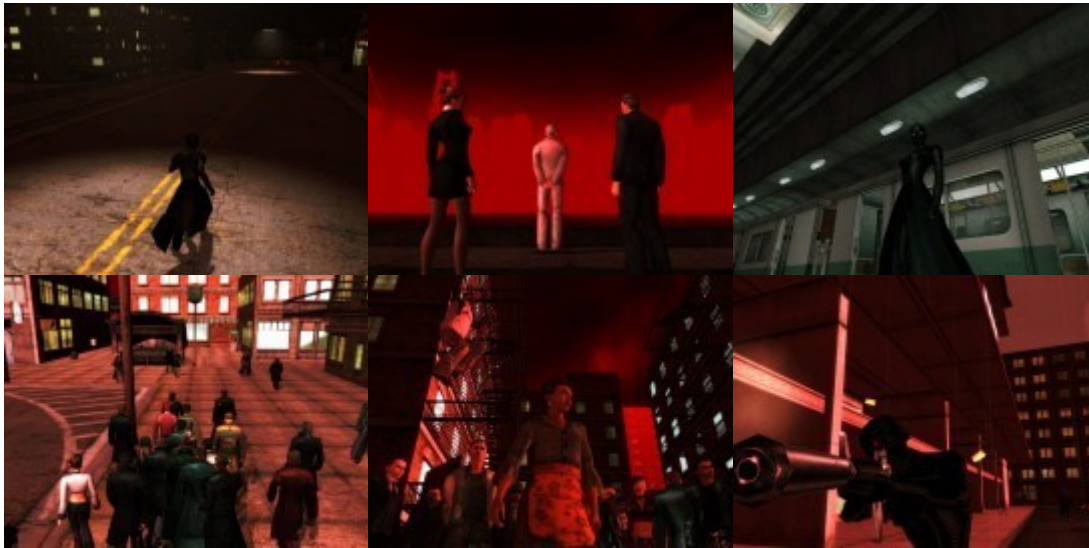
## Chapter 7.2: Desperation

With the climate-controlling Sati still in the hands of the General, the weather within the Matrix took a dramatic turn for the worse, signified by a vivid red hue that caused concern even for the normally aloof Architect. While his Sentinel fleet assaulted the General's base codenamed Stalingrad on the Earth's surface (as seen in the chapter 7.2 cinematic), within the Matrix, Machine forces steadily overthrew the General's systems, even as Zion, with the aid of Seraph, searched for Sati, eventually rescuing the girl from the General's control.

The harried General came to rely more and more on the support of his new ally, the Merovingian. The Merovingian, however, showed a marked disregard for the preservation of the General's commando programs, going so far as to use them as cannon fodder for his own aims, and even secreting some of them within his own hidden constructs, unknown to the General.

Meanwhile, the Merovingian continued his project of eliminating that frequent foil of his plans, the Oracle. He brought a deadly program known as the Apothecary into the Matrix, putting her to work on a code powerful enough to kill the fortune-teller, who managed to complete the killcode despite much interference by the Machines. As a reward for the Apothecary's hard work, the Merovingian, at the instigation of his wife, Persephone, betrayed the Apothecary to the Machines, and she was deleted by a group of hostile operatives.

In the midst of these warring forces, the signal of Morpheus continued to appear to followers of Zion and E Pluribus Neo, declaring that Neo lived, a prisoner of the Machines, and calling on the assembled operatives to fight the Machines in order to rescue the One. Certain inconsistencies and glitches in these signal broadcasts began to raise doubts, however, particularly after E Pluribus Neo found that the signal, made to look like an emergency hovercraft beacon, was in fact originating within the Matrix itself.



## Cypherites

The recuperating Cypherite leader, Cryptos, whose Machine overwriting had just been violently purged by Seraph, finally appeared and spoke to some of his operatives, who to their dismay found his mind clouded, and prone to wandering. Evidently, the Machine program that had been controlling him, though overthrown, was now partially merged with his previous, violently anti-Machine psyche.

The Cypherite controller, Veil, viewing her crippled leader with disdain, took command of the organization, leading them in attacks against the Apothecary, and against their mortal foes, E Pluribus Neo. The Cypherites succeeded in capturing an EPN crew, and defended themselves, with help from the Machines, against a counter-attack led by the EPN controller, Shimada. Veil also came to an agreement with the Machines' Agent Pace to resume spying operations in Zion, with the aim of discovering the destination and purpose of large amounts of material and personnel apparently leaving the caves of Zion.

Eventually Cryptos, sufficiently recovered, met with the Machines' Agent Gray, complaining of the pain of his current existence, and asking to be reinserted into the Matrix, as Cypher himself had asked of Agent Smith. Much to the Cypherite's surprise, Agent Gray told him that there was no such procedure.

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## **E Pluribus Neo**

E Pluribus Neo strove to make further contact with the mysterious Morpheus signals, receiving aid from the Oracle in locating them. The authenticity of the signals came more and more into question as they continued to preach the same message of war against the Machines.

To put these questions to rest, EPN sought to trace the signal to its origin, even in the face of Machine attacks. They succeeded in this endeavor, finding, to the dismay of many, that the signals, encoded in the form of emergency broadcasts from Morpheus' hovercraft, the Nabonidus, were in fact coming from a source within the simulation itself.

EPN also found themselves under increased pressure from the Cypherites, led by the aggressive Veil. They attempted to rescue an EPN crew member captured by the Cypherites, but were unable to reach the operatives, who were guarded by massed forces of Cypherites, Machines, and even some Merovingian operatives.





## The Machines

As the battle for Stalingrad raged in the Real, the Machines began a concerted takeover of the General's systems inside the Matrix, commandeering his helicopter fleet, his communication channels, and even his holographic broadcast.

They closely pursued the Apothecary, taken from their servers and brought into the Matrix by the Merovingian without their consent. The Frenchman meanwhile struck down Agent Pace with a preliminary version of the Apothecary's kill-code destined for the Oracle. The Agent recovered quickly, but seemed altered, adopting a colder, more businesslike demeanor, and demonstrating a heightened enthusiasm for the violent suppression of System enemies.

Following the successful termination of the Apothecary, the Machines located, assaulted, and disabled the General's primary base in the Matrix, found in the complex inhabited by Project Nine soldiers beneath the Abandoned Subway. They then shut down the General's network within the Matrix entirely, and prepared to continue with further operations against the Merovingian, who gave the harried General asylum.



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## The Merovingian

The Merovingian, wanting to kill the Oracle, had the Trainman bring the program known as the Apothecary into the Matrix, and put her to work on a kill-code powerful enough to eliminate the fortune-teller. Blood samples from Sati and from the irradiated ex-Unlimit commander, Beirn, were obtained to increase the code's potency.

The Merovingian wished to test a preliminary version of the code, and the General suggested the Machines' Agent Pace as a test subject. Persephone lured the Agent to a rendezvous where a Merovingian hit squad, armed with kill-code samples, struck down the Agent, much to the Merovingian's delight. Spy reports confirmed that the code had made a lasting impact on the Agent.

The Apothecary eventually completed work on the code, despite continued interference from Machine attacks. Frustrated by the constant threats to her safety, she demanded transport out of the Matrix, which the Merovingian promised to grant her. However, partly at the instigation of Persephone, who had a longstanding feud with the Apothecary, he instead tipped off the Machines as to her location, and the kill-code manufacturer was deleted in an attack by hostile operatives.

Under increasing pressure himself from the Machines for sheltering the General, the Merovingian, unknown to his would-be ally, began smuggling the General's commando programs into hidden constructs under his own control.



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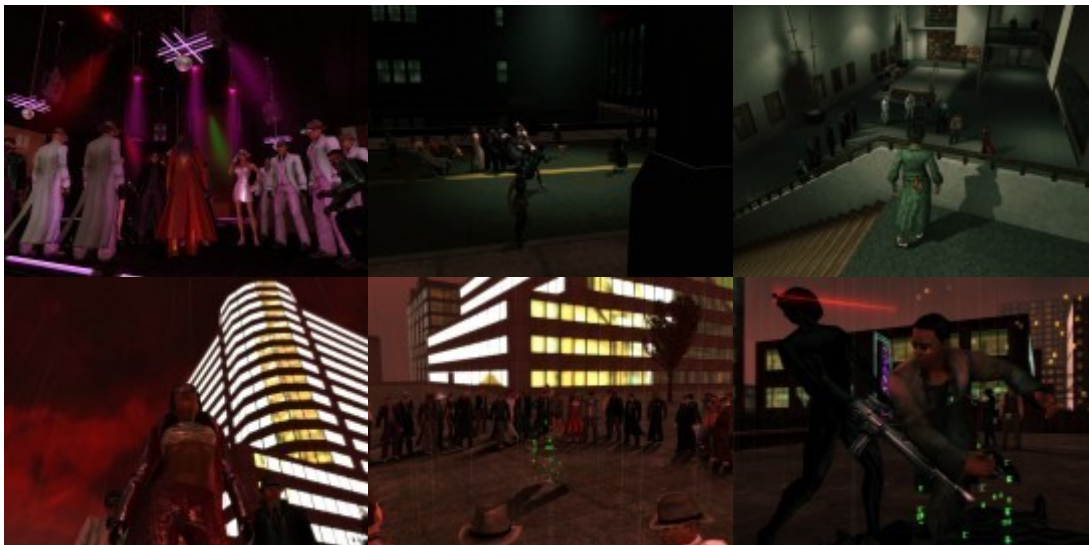


## Zion

Zion worked with Seraph to track down Sati, held prisoner by the General. After fighting through many platoons of the General's commandos, and solving a perplexing assault by Sati doppelgangers created by the General, Sati's program was retrieved and restored to the Oracle, who declared that the girl would soon be well, and able to restore the weather to its normal condition.

Although they succeeded in guarding the Oracle against attacks by the General, Zion decided that her usual home in Mara had become too easy a target for the General and the Merovingian. With Seraph's support, they finally managed to persuade her to leave the neighborhood, and began moving her under guard between secret safehouses across the city.

Zion also tracked the Morpheus signal, eventually finding it and catching it as a strange glitch occurred, causing it to repeat the same line four times. This raised further suspicions about the signal's true origins. Tracking was complicated by the appearance of die-hard Morpheus supporters, wishing to emulate and further his old agenda.





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### Chapter 7.3: Fall of the General

The Machines destroyed the General's base on the Earth's surface (as seen in the chapter 7.3 cinematic), driving him into hiding in the Matrix. With Sati rescued from the General's grasp, the weather in the simulation returned to its standard green-tinged overcast skies.

Zion and E Pluribus Neo pursued the simulacrum who had been appearing recently in the city, impersonating Morpheus. They found data appearing to suggest a link between the simulacrum and the General. The Machines, concerned that the simulacrum might try to threaten the System's stability as Morpheus himself did, questioned it, but decided that it was confused and non-violent, and only bore further monitoring.

Meanwhile, the Merovingian had begun using the Trainman to shuttle the General's commandos out of the Matrix, and back into the real world. The General himself delayed, leaving the train platform to confront his Morpheus simulacrum. He ordered the simulacrum to deactivate itself, but it refused, and successfully defended itself against the General, who was forced to leave. Returning late to the Trainman's station, the General was confronted there by Machine forces. The Trainman managed to shove the General onto the departing train, but suffered severe injury at the hands of the Machines.

Undeterred, the Merovingian put his plan to kill the Oracle into full execution, attempting to get his kill-code into the hands of an assassin planted in Zion's security teams. Zion found the assassin in time, forcing the Merovingian to resort to a new plan, using a stealth commando and a very special key to attempt to surprise the Oracle. She, however, was saved at the last moment by the Kid and E Pluribus Neo. The frustrated Frenchman consoled himself by activating an override code on the General and his Sentinels.

The Cypherites continued searching for information on the mysterious exodus of men and material from Zion. Cryptos, gradually recovered from Seraph's attack, took command of the organization back from the stubborn Veil, to the relief of Agent Gray and the Machines. Veil, however, continued her ruthless quest for information, executing the crew of the Zionite hovercraft Pelageus when they refused to cooperate. In response, the Oracle could offer only dire-sounding predictions, saying that you can't save someone who doesn't want to be saved.

### Cypherites

- Cryptos wandered for some time in the Matrix, asking those he met about purpose, right, and wrong. He appeared to settle some question in his mind, however, and reasserted his control over the Cypherite organization during an operation in which he led Cypherites to capture a redpill whose attempts to awaken Bluepills freed by Seraph from Machine overwriting, like Cryptos, had led to the deaths of some of those civilians. The vindictive Cypherite controller, Veil, grudgingly agreed to recognize Cryptos as leader.

Veil continued leading operations designed to discover the mystery behind unregistered workers and machinery slipping out of Zion, a topic of particular interest to the Machines. She staged an attack on a E Pluribus Neo base as a distraction, while other Cypherite operatives successfully infiltrated a Zionite computer system, recovering data.

Her zealous pursuit of her task led her to hijack, and eventually execute, the crew of a Zionite hovercraft, the Pelageus. Agent Gray, who had supported Cryptos over the Veil's volatile leadership, questioned her methods, but Veil refused to curb her activities, responding derisively when told that her actions threatened the truce between the Machines and Zion.



## E Pluribus Neo

E Pluribus Neo, searching for information on the Morpheus simulacrum, discovered a hidden network of old followers of Morpheus, still carrying on the rebel activities that led to Morpheus' death, including the distribution of seditious posters. One of these individuals,

Joshua Maston, told the EPN members who found him that they had been distracted by Cypherites and super-villains from what was truly important, and that he fully expected to be killed by the Machines for his activities, but carried on because he believed that what he was doing was right. The Kid said that belief is important, but so is hope.

- Recognizing the kill-code threat to the Oracle posed by the Merovingian, EPN asked Zion for permission to assist in guarding her; when the Oracle herself insisted, Zion agreed to share guard duties.

When the Frenchman finally launched his Elite Commando assassin at the Oracle, the Kid, on guard duty at the time, responded to her cry of alarm in time to intercept the fatal bullet with his body. Nearby EPN operatives pursued and eliminated the commando, while the Oracle watched over the stunned Kid. She said he would be all right, but would need rest. Once he reluctantly jacked out to his ship, the Oracle went outside to enjoy the fresh air for the first time in weeks, and moved back to her old home in Mara.

## **The Machines**

The Machines tracked the fleeing General through the Matrix, rooting him out of the temporary safety of the Merovingian's chateau with the assistance of the Cypherites, and then from the Trainman's tunnel system. They caught up to the General at the train station as he was about to exit the simulation, but the Trainman sacrificed his own chance to escape in order to make sure that his appointed passenger made it aboard the departing train.

With the General out of the Matrix, the Machines switched targets within the simulation, now locating and questioning the Morpheus simulacrum, which showed some indication that it might take up Morpheus' old terrorist tendencies. They found that it had the capability of simulating redpill jack-out and reconstruction. The simulacrum, however, appeared to be non-violent, and the Machines determined that careful monitoring of its activities was a sufficient precaution.

Agent Pace ran an operation in which a special party was staged as a trap for the Merovingian, with the intent of punishing the Frenchman for his role in the General's escape. The Merovingian, however, sent his wife in his stead, and she escaped when loyal operatives pounced on the Agent sent to infiltrate the club. A massive Machinist onslaught cleared the club, however, and Agent Pace decided that this demonstration had served its purpose.

Ever-increasing concerns about the purpose behind materials and manpower sneaking out of Zion led the Machines to attempt gathering information through their own contacts, but this proved less efficient than employing the Cypherites, although Cypherite production, from the Machine point of view, continued to suffer under Veil's stubborn leadership. Cryptos' re-assumption of Cypherite command came as a relief to the Machines, but tensions with Zion caused by their activities remained high,

- particularly after Veil's hijacking and execution of the crew of the Zionite hovercraft Pelageus.

## **The Merovingian**

The Merovingian forced the harried General to give him control over the program used by the commandos to move between the Matrix and the real world. With this in his possession, the Frenchman employed the Trainman to transfer the General's commandos out of the simulation, saving them for the time being from extermination at the hands of the Machines, but losing the Trainman to the Machines in the process. The Trainman managed to limp away from a Machine attack into his own private construct, but it was unclear if the paranoid Exile would survive his injuries.

The Merovingian attempted to send the kill-code made to terminate the Oracle to a spy placed on the Oracle's security detail, but Zion detected the intrusion, and forced the Frenchman to extricate the kill-code from their systems.

In need of an alternate means of getting the deadly code near the Oracle, the Merovingian seized upon a key dug up by the Landlord at the Mahath Tower construction site, formerly occupied by the government building used by Neo to reach the Architect; when this building self-destructed with the body of the Keymaker inside, the key he had been making in the Merovingian's dungeon was buried in the rubble. The Frenchman had originally planned to use this key, capable of transporting the user to a portal near a specific target, to kill the Oracle's previous shell.

After several false starts, the Effectuator managed to transport a borrowed Elite Commando squad back into the city. Seraph detected and hunted the commandos, but Merovingian operatives managed to save most of them, and finally one of them, equipped with the key and the kill-code, attempted to assassinate the Oracle, but the Kid blocked the shot at the last moment.

Frustrated with this failure, which he blamed on the General's soldier, the Merovingian executed a hidden override program the Trainman had inserted into the General and his men when they were transferred out of the Matrix; the program compels the General and his Sentinels to obey the Merovingian's commands in the real world.

## **Zion**

Zion tracked down the Morpheus simulacrum, finding evidence of some sort of connection between the unpredictable simulacrum and the General; this connection was confirmed in dramatic fashion when the General himself confronted the

- simulacrum, berating it for failing in its designated task of re-igniting conflict between the Machines and Zion. Cheered on by surrounding operatives, the simulacrum refused to obey the General's command to deactivate itself, and successfully defended itself when the incensed Sentinel leader attacked.

Meanwhile, Zion found indications that the Merovingian had transferred his Oracle killcode into their own network. They managed to find the Frenchman's undercover team of operatives, and his spy within Zion, forcing the Merovingian to abort his plan, and extricate the kill-code from Zion's systems.

Although Zion's agreement to allow E Pluribus Neo to help guard the Oracle, at her own insistence, paid off when the Kid saved her from the kill-code-laced bullet fired by an Elite Commando, Zion subsequently suffered the loss of the crew of their hovercraft Pelageus at the hands of EPN's sworn enemies, the Cypherites. The Oracle tried to console Zion over the loss, but could not keep a sense of foreboding out of her message.

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## Chapter 8.1: War

Cypherite spies discover that Zion has built a new, strongly defended city. The Machines declare that Zion has broken the Truce. Open hostilities between Zion and the Machines begin. The Merovingian, skeptical about the Morpheus simulacrum's story of humans used as batteries, sends his commando Sentinels to scout the Machine "fields" and pods.

- Cypherite spies discovered that Zion has been constructing a new city, situated in a vast complex of natural and artificial caverns far beneath the Earth's surface, protected by a combination of heavy sediment layers, EMP devices embedded in the rock, and live EMP fields powered by geothermal energy. The Machines declared this base, popularly termed "New Zion," to be a violation of the truce, and revoked Zion's privilege of recruiting humans who reject the Matrix simulation.
- Machine forces moved swiftly to neutralize Zion's systems within the Matrix, achieving rapid early success. Zion operatives found themselves under attack by Agents anywhere outside of the Richland slums.
- E Pluribus Neo began examining possible ways in which they could strike back at the Machines, possible outside of the simulation itself. Concerned lest Zion fall to the Machines, the Kid offered to assist Zion hovercraft, under fire from hostile Sentinel patrols.
- The Merovingian threw a party, gloating over the possibilities for profit opened up by the return of the war between Zion and the Machines.
- Zion attempted to put an emergency firewall system in place to protect their network interfaces from the Machines, but the Machines quickly bypassed the new System, and inserted viral routines into the Zion network, impairing their communication system.
- As a fall-back plan, Zion established a temporary network uplink, that they could use to get data directly out of the simulation.
- The Machines began attacking Zionite extraction points, seeking to prevent Zion from "unplugging" more humans from the pods.
- The Merovingian stole tunnel mapping data from Zion, and used this information to keep the General's Sentinels from being found by Machine patrols in the Real. The Merovingian informed the General that he must stay within certain designated areas, or be shut down by an override command.

- - In the Matrix, the Merovingian verified the allegiance of other powerful Exiles, including Yttri, Amber, Cerulean, Madame T, and the Auditor. The Exile named Synn insisted on more protection from Agent intrusion.
  - Cypherites continued stealing information from Zionite data clusters, despite increased resistance from Zion.
  - Zion managed to get sensitive broadcast control data out of the simulation thanks to intervention by the Merovingian, who sent Beirn to stop the Machine Agent threatening Zion's uplink portal. With the preserved data, Zion was able to keep their broadcast control system essentially intact, although because it is now shared from ship to ship, their hovercraft must rise closer to the surface to send signals into the Matrix.
  - Zion finally tracked down Daelyn, a Cypherite spy who'd been smuggling information to Veil. The Cypherites, however, obtained the address of a Zionite recruiting official from a potential Zion recruit, killed in a crossfire with Zion defenders. The Machines captured the official, and then the high-level recruiting data to which he had access.
  - Meanwhile, a flight of Sentinels dispatched to probe New Zion's defenses were deactivated by hidden EMP charges. The Kid, pointing out the danger to even Zion's new city, urged Niobe to consider opening a direct offensive against the Machines in the Real, but Niobe did not seem inclined to consider such a gamble.
  - The Merovingian, besides taking a little time to discipline the unruly Murasaki Exile, Synn, became increasingly curious to probe Machine capabilities. An attack by the Twins and operatives at a leading Downtown company, Metacortex, provoked only a relatively meager Machine response. Deigning to question the Oracle, the Frenchman was told that "power isn't everything," and was prompted to look around for himself.
  - Questioning the Morpheus simulacrum, who reiterated the widespread story of a Machine civilization powered by humans trapped in pods, combined with a form of fusion, the Merovingian was struck by the lack of key factual data to support the story.
  - Armed with lists of potential awakening subjects captured from Zion, the Machines aggressively pursued Zion extraction and recruiting operations. One bluepill in particular, Navin Manohar, was arrested, terminated, and replaced with a specially prepared bluepill, one partially overwritten by a Machine program. After being reconfigured by operatives to resemble the original Mr. Manohar, the overwritten bluepill was sent back to Manohar's residence.

- - E Pluribus Neo, attempting to save as many compromised potentials from the Machines as possible, confronted and eventually extracted Rachel Dunkirk, friend of a woman named Sarah Edmontons, who had disappeared from a hospital several years earlier, apparently walking out under her own power despite having been on life support machines for over a month with almost zero brainwave activity.
  - Zion strove to save their compromised recruiting teams and potential awakening subjects from the Machines, with some success. The Machines, however, gained information on the location and configuration of the Zion mainframe when they tricked Zion into attempting to extract a subject who had secretly been overwritten with a Machine program designed to exploit a security hole in the red pill trace program.
  - The Merovingian had Raini and Silver questioned about fusion and biological power generation; the questions stemmed from Morpheus' account of humans in the pods and the Machine energy source. Information gathered made the Merovingian question the efficiency of the supposed Machine system of a form of fusion combined with humans as energy-generating devices, and he determined to learn the truth for himself by sending the General's Sentinels to scout the fields and pods.
  - Ghost had a run-in with Pace while on a recruiting mission; Pace hinted that "your program is compromised," and that she was visiting other Zion potentials.
  - The Cypherite controller, Veil, and Cypherite operatives strove to counter Zion's recruiting efforts with Bluepills, and succeeded in putting a number of potentials "back to sleep" with the pills, although one had to be fed the pill by force.
  - Malphas and several operatives won back a feather from Seraph, stolen by Seraphim. Malphas explained that Seraph's feathers were stripped from him as punishment for his betrayal of the Merovingian, in the days when he served the Merovingian as an enforcer.
  - Niobe came close to losing data she was attempting to rescue from Machine capture, but E Pluribus Neo operatives saved her from Machine forces in the nick of time.
  - The Merovingian held a "peace party" for all operatives in Tabor Park, but turned it into a bloodbath after tempting Redpills from all organizations into close proximity with cake, dancing, and Ookami.
  - The Exile leader Dame White was involved in some wheeling and dealing, first getting a new Exile program that controlled animal emotions stolen from her by Persephone, the Effectuator, and Merovingian operatives, and then tipping off E Pluribus Neo that the Merovingian might have access to detailed information on



- Machine power lines in the Real, in exchange for information they gave her, obtained from Cypherites, about a mysterious "Mr. G."
- As it turned out, "Mr. G." was Itarrot, a long-missing Cypherite officer. Having serious RSI trouble due to fried systems on his hijacked hovercraft, Itarrot was found and rescued by Cypherite operatives, and restored to his old position on Cryptos' hovercraft, "The Blue Dreamer."
- The Cypherites also rescued the crew of the Solstice, held by Zion since trying to defect to the Cypherite cause. Cypherite operatives staged a party in Club Sphinx, handing out blue pills as a distraction, while a team of high level Cypherite operatives broke into the Zion outpost where the crew was held, and liberated them.
- Zion and the Machines clashed in the Zero One construct, as Zion conducted a desperate search for a Machine hacker who was threatening a vital Zion system. Despite efforts by Machine operatives and Agent Pace, Zionite operatives managed to locate the hacker and disrupt his efforts. After this success, the assembled Zionites attacked Agent Pace en masse, temporarily damaging her RSI and forcing her to retreat from the construct. Ghost warned, however, that Zion's systems were still under heavy Machine attack on multiple fronts, and that it would be vital to get all of these systems transferred to the safety of Zion's new city.

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## Chapter 8.2: Open Hostilities

Zion turns to ex-Zionite specialist Danielle Wright when the Machines compromise their red pill program. Wright develops a new, secure pill for Zion, but is killed by the Machines, who use her hidden, direct access to Zion to insert a virus into Zion's mainframe, while a Cypherite spy destroys Zion's command center with a bomb. The Merovingian finds that the Machines do rely on humans for power, with regular pod centers across the otherwise barren surface of the planet, and have barely enough energy to run the Matrix and their own city.

- Zion turned to Danielle Wright, the ex-Zionite and mastermind behind the elite "Wright Research" technology company, for aid in coding a new red pill program that would not be vulnerable to the exploit the Machines used to gather data on the Zion mainframe.
- With their recruiting program in great danger due to Machine data captures, Zion continued their attempts to save compromised potentials from the Machines, staging a large distraction near the government building in Tabor West while a small team rescued two potentials held under System guard.
- The Machines, having received indications that the General's Sentinels, directed by the Merovingian, were approaching the Fields and pods near the Machine city, began operations against the Merovingian with the aim of forcing him to recall the General. The Auditor was ordered to cease auditing Merovingian code, and the information-gatherer Hypatia, who has given the Merovingian useful information in the past, was arrested. The Machines met with less success when they tried shutting down the relay the Merovingian uses to communicate with the General, however, as they found that the Merovingian already had at least one backup system in place.
- Machine operatives, finding that Zionite hovercraft had destroyed a scanning beacon used to return data on the Earth's depths, found an old human probe that could serve as a temporary replacement, and then located an exiled program capable of communicating with the probe. Agent Gray permitted the program to return to service in order to direct the probe. Gray also consented to the establishment of a ranking scheme in order to organize and motivate Machinist hovercraft operations.
- The Merovingian received scouting reports from the General's Sentinels with estimates of the human population held by the Fields and pods near the Machine city. Together with data gathered within the simulation on birth and death rates, the Merovingian achieved a rough estimate of a possible total Matrix human population, but suspected that the figures were too low, not to mention

- incongruous, and said that they would have to continue their investigation until the numbers added up.
- Finding the General hunted by Machine Sentinels on the Earth's surface, the Merovingian sent operatives to draw the attention of the Machines in the simulation by attacking important facilities across the city. Meanwhile, Merovingian hovercraft helped draw off Sentinels, and the General managed to escape detection.
- E Pluribus Neo, considering a strike on the power lines leading from the pods to the Machine city, stole mapping data on the area from the Merovingian.
- The Cypherites, feeling that the Merovingian was accessing information on the simulation that could be dangerous to the humans sleeping in the pods, investigated one of his information sources, the Coroner, who led them to data held by his nemesis, Hypatia. The data pointed the Cypherites to a hidden construct housing some of the General's Elite Commando programs, which the Cypherites defeated after a fierce battle.
- Danielle Wright succeeded in creating a new red pill program for Zion, after some preliminary less-than-successful test runs. Forced to move her activities underground when the Machines discovered her work, Wright, finding Cypherites attempting to decode her encrypted jack-in signal, decided to leave the simulation for good, telling Zion operatives that there was work she had to do, but she could no longer do it in the city. She also rejected invitations from operatives and even Commander Lock to seek refuge in Zion's new city, saying that her goals differed from theirs.
- The Merovingian launched a small urban terror campaign designed to dissuade the Machines from attempting to hamper his various information-gathering activities. Even so, Sentinel patrols around the pods and Fields on the Earth's surface forced the General to pull his forces back.
- Meanwhile, the Merovingian discovered E Pluribus Neo's theft of the General's maps of the area around the Fields. Piqued, the Merovingian looked into the matter, and, finding that EPN intended to use the maps to conduct a raid on the power lines leading from the pods into the Machine city, concocted an elaborate plan designed to pinpoint the position of the EPN strike force, and send this data to the Machines. This plot succeeded, and despite detonating strategic code pulse devices across the city to disrupt Machine communication, the EPN attack ran into an overwhelming Sentinel presence waiting for them at the power lines, and was forced to retreat without having reached their intended target.
- Having resolved that matter to his satisfaction, the Merovingian turned his attention back to exploring the Machine power base, and used a modified red pill program to trace a bluepill's body to a previously unknown set of pods farther away from the Machine city.

- - Zion began distributing the new red pill programs to their recruiting teams, and to their allies in E Pluribus Neo, but this distribution met with opposition from Cypherites, and the Machines.
  - Investigating reports of Sentinels hovering suspiciously around the city of Zion, E Pluribus Neo, thanks to a bargain struck with Pepper, was able to capture Machine data showing that the Sentinels formed a thin cocoon around Zion--a nearly perfect spherical distribution. These Sentinels, however, would evade Zion or EPN ships, rather than attempting to engage them in combat, and the Kid expressed concern over what might lie behind this unexpected behavior
  - The Machines investigated Wright's business, Wright Research, and found that they had worked closely with a small company, Argent Biometrics, specializing in encryption across biological interfaces similar to that used by Wright on her own jack-in signal. Discovering that Argent Biometrics was a cover company set up by the Exile, Silver, the Machines tracked, pursued, and confronted Silver, demanding the key to Wright's signal encryption, and threatening to delete all of Silver's research if he did not cooperate. Silver grudgingly handed over the required information.
  - When the Merovingian learned of Silver's deal with the Machines, he sent operatives, and Ookami, to punish Silver by wiping out several of Silver's labs in Camon Heights. Summoning Silver to Club Sphinx, the Merovingian angrily reminded him that no commerce was to be conducted with the Machines without his permission, and finally allowed operatives to delete the unrepentant researcher, saying that he could be restored from a backup copy, possibly after modifying his code to make him less intractable.
  - The General's Sentinel scouts, ranging further across the Earth's dead surface, reported more human pod clusters, arranged in a rough grid pattern, roughly 100 to 150 kilometers apart. Meanwhile, the Exile Sunshine was consulted, and estimated that, taking the cooling of the Earth's climate due to the perpetual storm clouds into consideration, the Machines might be able to use about 1/16th of the Earth's surface for pod clusters. Malphas calculated that this could mean the Machines have about 300 million people in pods worldwide, but the Merovingian felt that something still wasn't adding up.
  - Operatives tracked a powerful Exile program, called "Incidence 5.991" by the Machines, and found it using deceptive simulacra to retrieve data from hidden nodes. These simulacra were deleted without retrieving their data in time, but more nodes were believed to exist.
  - Information was sketchy, but available details indicated at least two nearly simultaneous acts of deadly sabotage in the old city of Zion, bearing similarities to past Cypherite attacks: a hijacked hovercraft rammed the main gate to the city's dock, and shortly thereafter, all communication with Zion Command was cut off, following what may have been a large explosion in the command facility.

- - At about the same time, the Machines were sending a virus directly into Zion's mainframe, using a device captured from Danielle Wright's lab near the Earth's surface, which the Machines located by tracking her broadcast signal, whose encryption they had unlocked. Wright herself, in her last known appearance in the Matrix, remained characteristically calm when confronted by the triumphant Machines; she collapsed, lifeless, as Sentinels dispatched her body in the Real.
  - Several days later, Ghost pursued rumors about the sabotage that had taken place in Zion, finding strong indications of Cypherite involvement, in collaboration with the Machines. Ghost warned operatives not to try reaching the old city with their hovercraft, as it was now entirely infested by Sentinels. A number of Zion hovercraft have been missing since the attack on the city; Zion's Commander Lock, present in Zion Command at the time contact was lost, has also not been found.
  - Reports to the Merovingian from the General's Sentinel scouts, ranging farther across the surface of the Earth, indicated regular arrays of small pod clusters in a loose grid-like pattern across the otherwise lifeless land. The only significant variation found was another large pod cluster and set of human-growing Fields over 6000 miles away, from which power cables led off into the distance; contact to the scout sending this report was lost, however, and the remainder were recalled to preserve them from Machine patrols. Merovingian estimates based on a compilation of recent findings placed the Matrix population at approximately 300 million humans; according to the Merovingian, these would scarcely provide sufficient power for the Machines' needs.
  - With Lock still missing after the destruction of Zion's old city by the Machines, Captain Roland was promoted to Commander of Zion's military.
  - Fighting over the new red pill programs continued, with Machines working to keep the pills out of E Pluribus Neo's hands. A hard battle was fought between the two groups in Westview, ending with Machinists recovering some of the programs.
  - Zion, investigating Cypherite involvement in the attacks leading to the destruction of the old city, captured some data from the Cypherites, and decoded it after fighting to gain access to Cypherite computers. The data consisted of a brief message about Danielle Wright: "We found a neologism from Wright: Alphadecimal." Operatives began to investigate if this information could relate to any previously discovered details about the mysterious researcher.
  - A high-level Zionite fought off Merovingian operatives while complaining about having to find his way to Pillsen for Commander Roland. The Zionite was bald, muscular, wearing a green sleeveless T-shirt, arm tattoos and green glasses, but his name was unknown.

- - Machinists found Brenda Utley touring the headquarters of Wright Research in Vauxton. Utley hinted that her company, consumer products giant Pendhurst-Amaranth, may be interested in acquiring the research firm of the missing Danielle Wright.
  - The Oracle bumped into a few operatives of various organizations in Downtown, inviting them to an impromptu picnic in One Zero, where they discussed peace, war, and economics while munching freshly baked cookies.

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### Chapter 8.3: Evacuation

Sentinels attack Zion's crippled city, forcing Zion to abandon it. Zion's Commander Lock is missing. Roland, whose ship was destroyed in the attack, is promoted to replace Lock. Roland's crew member Colt becomes a Zion captain; another crew member, Mauser, thought to have been killed, is seen on Sentinel surveillance tapes helping Lock escape through rubble in Zion. The Machines use data captured from Zion's mainframe, unlocked for them by the confused Morpheus simulacrum, to hunt down and kill veteran Zion operatives. The Merovingian finds evidence of the Machines removing live humans from the pod system.

- Colt, Captain Roland's first-mate, newly promoted to captain since Roland's own promotion to Zion Commander in place of the missing Lock, helped direct operatives in heading off attacks on Zion data stores by both Machines and Merovingian Exiles. Colt described the destruction of Roland's ship, its systems fried by feedback when the Machines destroyed the old Zion mainframe. He feared that some of his crewmates, including Mauser and AK, had not survived the crash, or the swarm of Sentinels around old Zion, where the ship went down.
- The Machines captured some potentially useful data from the Zion mainframe: a three-year-old archive of operative RSI signatures. The data could be used to lock the known operative's signal, and prevent their emergency jack-out system from functioning, making a death in the simulation truly fatal; however, the archive was neurally encrypted, and would unlock only when receiving signals matching the brainwave patterns of those who "signed" it: Lock, or Morpheus. Attempting to solve this problem, the Machines constructed their own crude simulacrum of Morpheus from available data, but it was found lacking in correct human responses, and was scheduled for training by operatives.
- Some of the General's Sentinels were among the swarm in on the sack of Zion, and caught glimpses of Lock and another man fleeing through the wreckage. After capturing Machine Sentinel reports detailing which Zion ships were present in the vicinity at the time, the Merovingian's researchers identified the other man as Mauser, from Roland's crew. Neither Lock nor Mauser have been seen since.
- Colt and Ghost, anticipating that the Machines might try to use the General's Morpheus simulacrum to unlock the captured RSI data, led Zion operatives in their own pre-emptive search for the sim, but it proved elusive, and heavy Agent attacks prohibited further pursuit.
- The ex-Unlimit, Beirn, discovered AWOL Elite Commando programs in the white hallways. Failing to call them back to duty under the General and the Merovingian,

- Beirn disposed of the rebel programs on hand, but, tired of the disorienting maze of hallways, left the others to their own devices.
- The Merovingian ambushed the Machine Morpheus simulacrum, hoping to extract some useful data from it. Although he managed to coax it into a startling display of some of Morpheus' old codes, he found its comprehension highly limited, and apparently incapable of giving him the kind of information he was after; he seemed almost relieved when the Machines recaptured it.
- Machine operatives led the sim through re-creations of scenes from its memory, hoping to attune its mind to the state necessary to match the real Morpheus' brain patterns, and unlock the RSI archive. But the sim's recall of and reaction to the events was shaky, and in the end it failed to access the archive. Agent Pace had operatives delete it.
- The Furihata-based redpill named "Grace" was found by Cypherites, pursuing Silver Dragon gang members across the International District. With help from the operatives, she eventually found what she was after: data confirming that hers was among the RSI signatures in the archive captured by the Machines. Grace, once a Zionite, but now independent, worried that she would have difficulty obtaining the firmware necessary to reconfigure her broadcast signal.
- Following a tip from the Oracle, the Merovingian found evidence that the early, pre-War Machines were much simpler, and lacking in complexity. He pondered whether this could have led to their reliance on humans.
- Merovingian operatives found Persephone in a library in the Chateau. She read them poems by Swinburne dealing with love, loss, and death. Something from her past seemed to weigh upon her mind.
- Both Zion and the Machines pursued the Morpheus simulacrum, attempting to win it over to their point of view relative to the dangerous information, captured from Zion's dead mainframe, that it could possibly unlock for the Machines. But it appeared unsure of what it should do, and even a face-to-face meeting with Niobe failed to persuade it to commit itself one way or the other.
- E Pluribus Neo spoke to the Oracle and Seraph about the simulacrum, but the Oracle was exceptionally vague on the topic, although she seemed very familiar with the sim.
- Seeking more information on how the Machines might possibly be forced to give up power from the Matrix, EPN targeted code pulse detonations on power centers in Westview and Downtown, confirming that simulation power concentration is higher in the Downtown area, despite the presence of power plant facilities in Westview.



- - The Morpheus simulacrum broke the encryption on the RSI signature database the Machines had captured from the Zion mainframe. Zion veterans whose signatures were on the list evacuated the Matrix to avoid signal-lock and termination; Niobe and Ghost were among them.
  - The Cypherite controller, Veil, led several assassination missions against compromised Zionite veterans. After one of these she was opposed by Colt, Zion's remaining ranking field officer, as well as other Zionites and Merovingian operatives who converged on the scene. Colt also led a mission to rescue data from a Zion organization area to which the captured archive had opened up access for the Machines.
  - The Merovingian tracked down and summoned the pod subroutine who had been in charge of overseeing the vanished bluepill, Mary MacHenry, but the subroutine refused to cooperate. Undeterred, the Merovingian arranged to have its log files stolen, and found that the Machines had subjected MacHenry to vigorous physical reconditioning before removing her from her pod.
  - The Effectuator snuck a team of Merovingian operatives into a Machine detention block where they rescued Hypatia, returning her to the city for some scheme of the Merovingian's.
  - Zion tried desperately to get its last signature-compromised operatives out of the Matrix before they could be terminated by the Machines. Before he can be led to an exit, operative Strenlo, who stayed in the Matrix trying to save important information backed up from the lost Zion mainframe, is terminated by Agents. Zion succeeded, however, in evacuating loner Joshua Maston, an ex-Zionite who has been working to continue Morpheus' legacy inside the Matrix. Before allowing himself to be evacuated, Maston told Zion that while he was grateful for their help, he would leave them after they reconfigured his RSI signature to protect him against signal lock and termination.
  - Persephone recalled a time during her work for the Machines at the pods when a human was removed, where the log files were very similar to those that have been found concerning the mysteriously vanished Mary MacHenry. Hypatia, to return the favor for her rescue from the Machines, put the Merovingian in touch with the Archivist Society, who could not find information on the specific incident recalled by Persephone, but were able to look up yet another similar incident, this one having occurred during the first version of the Matrix. Stealing the fingered information from the Machines, the Merovingian found log files describing the simultaneous live disconnection of fourteen individuals from the pods.
  - Suddenly and inexplicably, on the verge of completely incapacitating Zion's operations within the Matrix through termination or forced jack-out of nearly all of their veteran operatives, the Machines recalled their forces, both inside the Matrix

- and in the Real. Before retreating himself, the General sent a broadcast to the Merovingian, hurriedly reporting a large number of Machine Sentinels taking up positions around the Machine city, and another large formation of Sentinels approaching.
- The Exile known as Digger showed some operatives a dungeon room hidden in the tunnels deep below Rawlins Corner, explaining that he believed it to be a direct code re-creation of a room from the second version of the Matrix. Digger and the operatives also engaged in some speculation as to Machine manipulation of symbols from the Book of Genesis, along the lines of theories propounded by philosopher Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach, and the possibility of multiple Matrix simulations running one inside the other. Among other ideas floated, GreatWorm suggested that the Earth's ruined sky could be compared to the flaming sword set down to prohibit man from reentering the biblical Garden of Eden.
- A number of operatives went on a tour of the Ouroboros corporate headquarters in Creston Heights, conducted by an irritatingly chipper, yet somewhat evasive, tour guide. Several odd pieces of information came to light about the giant electronics manufacturer.
- Machine operatives were contacted by a Zionite named Cpahr, hoping they would return to him a personal digital assistant program he'd lost when the Machines sacked the old Zion mainframe. Upon interrogation, it appeared that the program, ZAITSO, might have some knowledge of previous conversations with the EPN leader, the Kid. Operatives decided to keep ZAITSO for further questioning, much to the sensitive Cpahr's dismay.
- Zionites attempted to evacuate a veteran operative, Viellard, compromised by the RSI archive the Machines had captured from the Zion mainframe. Machine programs formed a cordon at the nearest hardline, however, and Viellard, attempting to evade the cordon, was caught by the Machine operative Darjarian, and killed by Machine operative Starschwar.

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## Chapter 9.1: Intrusion

A glowing "intruder" appears in the city, instantly killing Agents who try to stop him. He wants information from Zion. The Machines pull back their forces in the Real, and try to prevent the intruder from making contact with Zion, but refuse to attack him directly; they eventually admit that he is a freeborn human, with some direct control over the Matrix through "override codes." The Merovingian tries to win the intruder over. Pluribus Neo moves into the wreckage of Zion's old city.

- A large man composed of a glowing wireframe mesh appeared at Ascension Monument, terminating a squad of Agents who confronted him before disappearing into the Barrens.
- The Machines pulled back their forces within the simulation and in the Real, concentrating on locating and expelling the mysterious intruder. However, he demonstrated the ability to delete or override their programs at will, confounding their attempts to deal with him by force. He was less dominating when confronted by operatives, but they found him to be extremely powerful; he appeared more amused than concerned when dealing with their attempts to control him.
- The other organizations also pursued the intruder, interested in both his power and his purpose. E Pluribus Neo retrieved strange codes left behind by the intruder, some with the ability to influence large areas of the simulation. Zion took some of these codes to the Auditor, who, having analyzed them, became agitated, saying that they shouldn't be in the Matrix at all. When Zion asked the Oracle for information on the mysterious man, she responded evasively, appearing to know more than she was willing to say about him.
- When confronted by Cypherites, the intruder countered them with overridden Machine programs. In a later operation, Cypherites, led by Veil, stopped Zionites from making contact with the intruder.
- The Merovingian, hoping to use the intruder's power, tracked him down with the expensive assistance of the information expert, Cerulean. Attempting to impress the stranger with displays of power and influence, the Merovingian introduced him to Cerulean, Malphas, Ookami, and Hypatia, but the intruder, while hinting at some familiarity with Exile programs and Matrix history, seemed only mildly interested. Attempts by Merovingian operatives to win the intruder over met with equally lukewarm success, as he appeared to regard their claims of Merovingian might with great skepticism.
- Zion, using data retrieved from intruder codes, found a way to contact the mysterious man by hacking into landlines, and managed to get a message through to him, despite Machine jamming attempts. His brief reply indicated some interest in hearing from the Zionites.

- - E Pluribus also used the landline exploit to reach the intruder with a message, and were able to meet with him deep below the city streets. He questioned them about their plans to combat the Machines, seeming skeptical of their chances.
  - Cypherites showed concern that the intruder's high profile was disturbing citizens of the simulation. Cryptos led operatives in a plan designed to disrupt attempts by E Pluribus Neo and Zion to reach the intruder, with partial success; the intruder displayed a baffling mix of interest and disinterest in operative affairs.
  - The Merovingian had Elite Commandos brought into the Matrix to demonstrate his military capabilities to the intruder, who was mildly interested; however, a further demonstration, a battle between commandos and Merovingian operatives, bored the intruder, who wiped out the commando programs, much to the General's displeasure.
  - The intruder met with Niobe, and expressed an interest in Zion's rebellion against the Machines. He later met with Zion operatives, asking many questions about their defenses, armaments, and plans for combating the Machines.
  - The Machine policy of avoiding the intruder while preventing other organizations from contacting him became frustrating to their own operatives. Agent Pace explained that the intruder is inextricably linked with highly sensitive System information that absolutely cannot be compromised. She also said that because the Matrix was not designed to support his code, his presence within the simulation is causing problems; because they cannot remove him directly, they will have to work to minimize his impact on the simulation as much as possible, while avoiding aggravating him further.
  - Cypherites looked into how the intruder might be entering the simulation. Although they couldn't find out if he was using some sort of unknown jack-in technology, questioning the Auditor revealed that the intruder's code is a higher version than the Matrix itself.
  - The Merovingian attempted to impress the intruder with Persephone and various simulated delights, but while the intruder seemed interested in the possibility of the Merovingian's usefulness, he did not respond enthusiastically to the programmed temptations.
  - The Merovingian staged a party in the Hel Club, and succeeded in getting the intruder to appear, although he seemed more interested in looking around and sparring with operatives than in light conversation.
  - E Pluribus Neo began moving their ships into the abandoned, wrecked city now known as "Old" Zion, where they have initiated plans to improve the defenses so that the city, fairly close to the Machine city itself, can be used as a forward base.

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## Chapter 9.2: Interface

The Intruder pumps Zion for information about their history. EPN begins to fortify Zion's old city, and find Commander Lock lying wounded in a hidden lab at the surface. Lock says he was saved by Mauser, who died defending him from Sentinels. The Machines try to convince the intruder to leave. He becomes increasingly frustrated, and demands that the Machines give him a "biological interface program." They claim that only one exists, and it is not in the Matrix. The Merovingian searches for programs the intruder might be willing to trade for, without success.

- The powerful Intruder examined the Morpheus simulacrum, made demands to the Architect, pumped Zion and EPN for information on Neo and Trinity, and teased the General by displaying knowledge of his old "Seeker" missiles. When Cypherites, opting for Cryptos' approach of talking to him over Veil's desire to attack him, attempted to question him, he refused to answer. After most of these encounters, he left powerful, hostile programs in his wake, including a large program that pumped out a continuous stream of overridden Machine forces. Even the Merovingian, snooping through Machine files, did not manage to dig up definite information on the intruder.
- Around the confusion caused by the intruder, the man-machine war continued, with EPN rescuing the crew of their hovercraft Horizon, who had been captured while obtaining Machine maps of the wrecked old Zion city, while Cypherites began working to hijack the Zion hovercraft Juggernaut, whose extremist captain had been eliminating Bluepills, whom he regarded as sub-human.
- EPN detected a Zion-type emergency beacon signal coming from the surface above the old city, and sent crews to investigate.
- Cypherites hijacked the Zion hovercraft Juggernaut, whose captain, Cinquez, they accused of the murder of Bluepills who refused the red pill. Taunted by Cypherite operatives in the Matrix, Cinquez learned of the hijacking and managed to jack out and detonate the hovercraft, killing all on board.
- Hunting through Machine systems, Merovingian operatives found a partial note of a meeting between the Machines and the intruder that took place before the intruder entered the Matrix, in which the intruder appeared to have referred to the General's old "Stalingrad" base. The Merovingian called a conference on the subject with operatives and the General, in which it was decided that the presence of Sati at Stalingrad at the time of the Machine attack may have been what attracted the intruder's interest.
- Machine operatives managed to reach the intruder and get him to agree to a meeting. At the meeting, he was surprised that Agent Pace was female, but grew angry when she said the Machines did not have what he was looking for. The

- intruder demanded to meet with the Architect, and Agent Pace said this would be arranged.
- Zion found the intruder taking code readings in the slum building where Neo was awoken by Morpheus.
- EPN followed an emergency beacon to a wrecked surface facility above Zion, where they found Commander Lock, weak and recovering from wounds, but conscious. They evacuated him to the old city.
- Tailing the intruder, EPN found him examining upper floors of a skyscraper in Center Park. Comments by the intruder suggested that it was the spot where Trinity hacked the Machine power grid and received a fatal gunshot wound from an Agent, before being caught and miraculously revived by Neo. The intruder did not offer an explanation of his presence there, but it appeared to have something to do with the object of his search. He also mentioned that he didn't want operatives knowing what it was, because they might want it too.
- Zion's Commander Lock, guarded by EPN and recovering in the old city, sent a message to Zionites with the story of his rescue from the Machine attack on Zion by Mauser, who took him to an abandoned lab facility on the surface, and tended to Lock's injuries until being killed while leading Sentinels away from his position.
- Overhearing this story, the intruder expressed surprise that Mauser had a gun effective against Sentinels. Colt was expanding upon this by describing how Neo could zap Sentinels with his bare hands when he was suddenly interrupted by the intruder flying into an inexplicable rage, saying "They WERE lying!"
- After this, powerful override programs created by the intruder began to appear around the city, including Accelerators, and the newly encountered "Decelerator" and "Runtime" programs.
- Zion, attempting to track down the intruder and convince him to exercise more discrimination in his attacks, ran afoul of Cypherites out to shut down the intruder's programs before they could endanger citizens. When a group of Zionites organized by Ghost finally caught up with the intruder, he accused them of being involved in a coverup with the Machines, and attacked them.
- Shortly after Cypherites removed a series of the dangerous programs from Downtown, including some around the Government Building, Agent Gray called upon Machinists to eliminate Agent programs that had been turned against the System by Accelerators.
- The Merovingian, following evidence suggesting that the intruder may have been interested in the Oracle's ward, Sati, sent operatives to question the intruder about the girl, but was unable to locate him. Flood directed an attempt to kidnap Sati without the intruder's input, but the operatives sent into Mara found only Seraph, who warned them that Sati would not be found while certain conditions persisted.

- - Another attempt to locate the intruder, assisted by one of the General's Elite Commando reconnaissance programs, succeeded in finding him, and convincing him to meet the General, although the intruder appeared to be unfamiliar with Sati's name and significance. Her role in causing the Machines to attack the General's Stalingrad base caught his attention, but not to the point that he was willing to pursue her himself. Instead, he suggested that the General recover his own data on the Exile from the Machines, and asked to be kept apprised of any progress made in that regard.
  - The Kid contacted Zion with details on the surface lab in which EPN found Commander Lock: the structure showed signs of damage from Sentinels, and a Zion "lightning gun"; Mauser's fingerprints, and traces of his blood, were found inside. The lab equipment was entirely wrecked. Tyndall sent Zion operatives to capture Machine logs of Sentinel activity at the site, but no records of any such activity were found.
  - The Machines found an intruder-spawned "Terminator" program behind the deaths of many System Agents. Fortunately, operatives were able to eliminate the program.
  - The General helped Merovingian operatives recover some of his data that had been captured by the Machines, but his data on Sati appeared to be missing. After consulting with the intruder about the Sati question, the intruder, hearing that Sati was only out of the Matrix once, as a stored computer program in the General's base, decided that she couldn't be what he's looking for, which is something he called a "biological interface program," adding that if the Merovingian could obtain one for him, he would make him "king of the Matrix."
  - Machine operatives looking for the intruder tracked him down in the vicinity of the Metacortex building. The intruder exhibited anger and impatience, and was unwilling to answer questions put to him by the operatives. When Agent Gray intervened, asking why the intruder skipped the meeting that had been arranged with the Architect, the intruder used an override code to terminate Gray, then told operatives that the Machines were still "jerking his chain." Agent Pace appeared on the scene, despite operative warnings, and told the intruder that the Architect would await the meeting, saying that the intruder would be able to terminate the Architect himself if he found the meeting displeasing. The somewhat mollified intruder said that he'd see about it.
  - Zionite operatives were called in after a report of the intruder near the Chelsea Convention Center, where they found him fighting overwhelmed Bookwyrm. The intruder cut through the Bookwyrm in the Center to reach Hypatia, and demanded that she give him a biological interface program. When she said that she didn't have such a thing, the intruder terminated her. Wandering through the building's lobby, he said something about being "trapped," before appearing to jack out.

- - Operatives identified contact between Seraph, Morpheus, and Lo Ruhamah. Morpheus was seen with Ruhamah at the Abandoned Subway.
  - A confused computer hacker named "Murphey" dressed as an Agent and went "on patrol" around parts of Richland and Downtown, occasionally saying odd things, even long binary numbers. Agent Griffin appeared on the scene and informed operatives following Murphey that Murphey was believed to have located a large cache of the intruder's override programs, but that a close examination of the programs had unhinged Murphey's mind. It was hoped that an analysis of Murphey's utterances would reveal the location of the dangerous programs. This was achieved by Ouranos, who located the programs in the building housing the Deus Lounge.
  - Beirn submitted himself to examination by the intruder at Club Cyclo. The intruder detected the Machine cheat codes in Beirn's system, and was only convinced that Beirn was not a Machine after subjecting him to various override codes. The intruder invited Beirn to try his cheat code abilities on him, and Beirn was surprised to find the intruder immune to them. The intruder questioned the General about the origins of the cheat codes, but eventually dismissed them as irrelevant to his search.
  - Hypatia had been imperfectly restored by her loyal Bookwyrms after her termination by the intruder, so Machine operatives saw to the job properly, removing the code overrides from her routine with a clean kill.
  - Agent Gray, still recovering from an encounter of his own with the intruder's termination routine, facilitated a meeting between the intruder and the Architect, with Agent Pace and a senior operative also in attendance. The intruder demanded a "biological interface program," saying he knew that it existed. The Architect confirmed this, but denied having created it, and told the intruder that the only surviving copy was removed from the Matrix, as the intruder himself had witnessed. The Machines hoped that this information would inspire the intruder to leave the Matrix.
  - Zion searched Wright Research in the hopes of finding something about the "biological interface program" the intruder has mentioned wanting, but even though interface technology was one of Danielle Wright's areas of particular expertise, nothing promising turned up at the Wright facilities. The intruder didn't seem surprised by this, hinting that the program wasn't written by a human.
  - The Merovingian, deciding to procure the mysterious program himself, checked with possible Exile sources, such as Persephone and Silver, but came up empty-handed. Asking the intruder, who they found surrounded by dead N30 AG3NTS, to provide more information about the program, operatives were told that programs made by the Exiles in question were nothing like what he wanted, and that he was



- certain the program is somewhere in the Matrix. The intruder also mentioned something about someone else having "taken the other one."
- The Kid helped operatives Demedrian and Tsusai clear powerful override programs out of Ikebukuro, although the task was complicated when engagement protocols were overridden. The Kid also encountered operatives in Stamos, where he was wondering about recent activity in the area. While talking, an override routine hit the area, and the group was unexpectedly attacked by N30 AG3NTS.
- Others had also taken an interest in the Morpheus simulacrum's recent Westview activity. Agent Pace led a search for the sim in Westview, but when operatives attempted to hold the simulacrum for questioning, they found themselves pushed away from him. Agent Pace ordered the sim to surrender, but he fled across the district, eluding pursuit. Before fleeing, the simulacrum said something about "the watchers."
- Veil, in the company of operative Fyror, tracked the simulacrum down to a ramshackle building, and asked him what he was up to. The simulacrum responded with a quotation from an ancient source, which included references to certain omens, and "the teaching of the watchers."
- The Merovingian sought information on the simulacrum's activities as well, with Flood sending operatives, led by Ookami, to question two prominent Westview Exiles: Indigo and Amber. Indigo claimed to know nothing about the simulacrum's activities, calling it an outdated reject. Amber mentioned that the simulacrum had been in contact with many "gutter" people in the area, similar to the "riff-raff" who often associate with the Oracle. Various conspiracy theories were discussed, but Flood dismissed them as paranoia.
- Eliminating some override programs in Downtown, Ghost and other Zion operatives encountered the intruder, who began asking questions about the relationship between Neo and Trinity. Those present were not interested in giving him the information, and he left frustrated.
- In Westview, Zion operatives eliminated one of the intruder's Accelerator programs that was overriding the Demon Legion gang in Sobra Shores. The zealous redpill Father Jonas led the Brethren and other Zion operatives to the gang's leader, Jezebeth, who helped track down the Accelerator.
- Merovingian operatives found Persephone contemplating one of the intruder's Decelerator programs on the top floor of a building downtown. Persephone stated her opinion that the intruder was an empty shell of a man, saying that he would not, for instance, have used his abilities to defend someone, like the assembled operatives defended Persephone against marauding Zionites.

- - Shimada and other E Pluribus Neo members went after a Machine installation in downtown, trying to obtain data relating to the "biological interface program" the intruder has mentioned being interested in. EPN was tipped off to the existence of the information by a hacker, Pigo, who found a reference to it in a two-month-old Machine data archive. An overwhelming security counter-attack by Agents at the site prevented EPN from retrieving any data, however.

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### Chapter 9.3: Rivals

A second glowing figure, Carlyne, enters the Matrix, attacking the first intruder, Halborn. The Morpheus simulacrum contacts Exiles in Westview. Halborn learns from the Machines that the Oracle created the program he seeks, and pursues her. He is supported by the Merovingian, and opposed by Zion, who have help from Carlyne. The Oracle contacts EPN and the Cypherites, giving each group part of an encrypted program, and asks them to watch over Sati. Halborn reaches the Oracle, who refuses to help him, and kills her.

- With Sister Margaret's help, Cypherites searching for the Oracle found Seraph, who alluded to a widespread plan, and said that others would be called upon to help at the right time.
- A second wireframed man appeared, confronting and fighting the intruder in Westview. According to their monitored conversation, they appeared to be at odds over the acquisition of something.
- Halborn, known until now only as the "intruder," complained to Zion that the other man, Carlyne, whom he has known for some time, is a practiced liar. Carlyne, on the other hand, visited the Machines, telling them that he wanted to help them by removing Halborn from the Matrix.
- The Merovingian met with both men, assuring them of his full aid in their fight against the other.
- In a later meeting with Machinists in the Government Building, Carlyne told them that Halborn is searching for what he's called a "biological interface program" because his real body is essentially dead, and Halborn hopes the program will offer a remedy for this condition. Meeting with the Cypherites, Carlyne apologized for the problems caused by override programs, and said that he hoped he wouldn't be needed at all to remove Halborn, but that Halborn's override activity appeared to be reaching a dangerous point.
- Halborn, meanwhile, frustrated by his failure to locate the interface program, even with the assistance of Merovingian operatives, decided that he would have to go back to the Machines and ask them who made the program.
- The busy Carlyne continued his rounds, encountering E Pluribus Neo, again mentioning Halborn's critical condition in the real world. He said that his main goal is to get Halborn out of the Matrix, and that that would benefit him in certain ways; he also mentioned that he was curious to see if the interface program Halborn wants really exists, or if it is just a figment of Halborn's desperate imagination.
- Halborn demanded to see the Architect, and asked him to name the creator of the biological interface program. The Architect told him it was written by the Oracle.

- - When operatives were asked by Carlyne whether they had seen Halborn, who he is searching for, they were instructed to say "no."
  - Stonewalled by Zion, Halborn went out on his own to look for the Oracle. After the departure of Halborn, Carlyne contacted Zion, saying that he wants to help them stop Halborn.
  - Merovingians found Halborn in the process of overriding more Exile programs. He requested information on the Oracle, which the Merovingian was happy to supply.
  - Searching for the Oracle, Machine operatives recovered data fragments that may have been authored by the Oracle. These fragments were provided by the Exile gang leader Zero, in return for assistance in a business deal with other shady characters.
  - Cypherites came across evidence of a Machine investigation of override code use in Apollyon, but Agent Pace claimed to be unable to provide them with any information beyond speculation that one or even both of the wireframed intruders was involved. Searching further afield, the Cypherites found code overrides in use in the One Zero construct, and neutralized them.
  - A member of the Archivist society polled operatives in the new Datamine construct on their opinions of the area. Malphas wondered if there was another motive behind the recent increase in Archivist Society activity besides their usual profit-making from archived historical data.
  - Carlyne was invited to a Merovingian meeting at the Jade Room. He mentioned to the Merovingian that he'd heard Halborn was asking questions about the Oracle, but the Merovingian assured Carlyne that his primary interest was in aiding him against his rival. To demonstrate this, he had operatives guide Carlyne to override programs placed by Halborn in Murasaki.
  - Colt led a search by Zion operatives for the Oracle in Mara, to contact her about Halborn. Mara gang boss Owl Bangheart, whose gang had been suffering from code overrides in the area, told the operatives that the Oracle hadn't been around lately, but that he'd seen Seraph disappear through a doorway. Operatives located Seraph in the system of white hallways branching off of the White Lotus Hotel's side entrance. Seraph said that the Oracle had expected something like the current situation, and that this was not the right time to meet her. He added that others would be trying to locate her as well, and that the Oracle would not be able to avoid them all without help.
  - Halborn searched for the Oracle in the vicinity of Mara while Carlyne, backed by Zion, searched for him. The Machines mobilized their operatives to keep hostiles away from Halborn in order to allow him to complete his task, hoping that afterwards he would leave the Matrix.

- - The Merovingian conducted his own search for the Oracle, uncovering evidence of a deep-seated plot among certain Exile groups. This investigation, however, was interrupted by Carlyne, who saw it as confirmation of the Merovingian's support for his rival, and severed his connection with the Frenchman.
  - The pressure-cooker situation around Mara resulted in numerous violent encounters involving operatives, the two wireframed rivals, and their override programs.
    - Ghost and Colt, conducting a covert operation in Westview, had to abort and call in reinforcements when the Agent they were fighting became Accelerated by an override program.
    - Niobe and Zion operatives battled Halborn, deleting many of his programs in Mannsdale.
    - Machinists battled override-supported Zionites at Magog South. While the Machinists fought to hold off the Zionites, Halborn showed up and eliminated the override codes, allowing the Machines to send in Agents to secure the area.
    - A large wave of programs, some aligned with the Machines, some with Zion, and some with no operative group, appeared throughout north Richland. Operatives battled to remove them.
  - Meanwhile, small groups of Machinists located the Oracle in Mara, but the appearance of Seraph, and directives from Agent Gray detailing Machine concerns regarding the overall situation, required the operatives to depart without arresting her.
  - Shortly thereafter, Merovingian operatives, tracking suspicious movements into the Sakura construct, found EPN soldiers there. A battle broke out, in the midst of which Seraph appeared, proceeding to eliminate many of the Merovingian operatives from the construct, despite the significant support the Merovingians received from their healer, CiaoYun. The survivors found themselves face-to-face with the Oracle, who told them that they might soon find something very valuable, but warned them against trying to use it selfishly.
  - Zion located Halborn, and communicated his position to Carlyne, so that he could be stopped before reaching his goal: the Oracle. Halborn, still unable to locate her, demanded that the Machines help him locate her, but the Machines claimed that she had been designed specifically to be unpredictable. And the Merovingian, sensing that Halborn was faltering in his search, arranged a strategic planning meeting to revitalize his campaign, but Halborn did not arrive.
  - Ultimately, Carlyne, with help from Zion, intercepted the isolated Halborn. Operatives from all organizations attempted to interfere or monitor the encounter, but an incredibly powerful override code blast forced everyone to evacuate the area, and overloaded monitoring sensors throughout the district.

- - The Machines continued working to understand mysterious data fragments they'd recovered several weeks earlier in Richland, possibly connected with the Oracle. An eccentric Machine technician came up with a plan to decode the fragments' unique fuzzy logic routines with the help of unstable code within the Datamine construct. While this plan cost the technician his existence, and did not retrieve a full data set, some information was obtained, and Agent Pace took personal charge of the fragment project.
  - The Oracle called Veil and Cypherite operatives to a surprise meeting in the One Zero construct, where she handed Veil what appeared to be an encrypted code fragment, and asked the Cypherites to watch over Sati for her. Although very curious as to what the fragment contained, and what was motivating the Oracle to make these requests, the Cypherites agreed to help her.
  - EPN operatives, removing override programs from Debir Court, were confronted by Seraph, who invited them to step through the doorway at the end of the courtyard. Doing so, they found themselves in the Ashencourte construct, where the Oracle greeted them, giving Shimada a piece of encrypted code, and asking the operatives to watch over Sati. The operatives assured her that they would do what they could to help her.
  - The next day, Cypherites led to Uriah by Cryptos in order to remove override programs from the Uriah docks ran into EPN, who happened to be holding a meeting in nearby Club Parallaxis. Fighting broke out between some members of the two parties, while others concentrated on removing the programs. With most of the programs removed, concentrated sections of both organizations began a fierce battle that ended when Cryptos, supported by his operatives, who at that point held a numeric superiority at the scene, managed to defeat the Kid. Cryptos called a retreat, declaring the Cypherites' job complete. When his troops rallied, and the operative Tygrius revived him, the Kid led them to remove the last of the override codes in the area.
  - Searching for Halborn around the site of his clash with Carlyne in the Slums, Ookami suffered domination by override programs infesting the area. Merovingian operatives called in to locate her had to resist her out of control attacks, but, retracing her steps, located Halborn, badly injured and holed up in a decrepit apartment building. When the overridden Ookami found them there and resumed her attacks, operatives asked Halborn if he could remove the overrides on her program; he forcibly rebooted her, saying this might cure her, if she survived the process. Making their way through surrounding override codes and hostile operatives, the operatives led Halborn to temporary security in nearby Club Duality, where Beirn met them, inviting Halborn to hide and recuperate in the safety of the Merovingian's extensive underground network. Halborn insisted that he had no time to waste in getting to the Oracle, but was unable to put up much of an argument in his severely weakened condition, and Beirn whisked him away.

- - The Oracle crossed a few wires to speak to Zion operatives individually, but was uncharacteristically at a loss for words, saying that she couldn't say what she wanted to say, but that nevertheless she felt she'd made the right choice.
  - The Machines found code fragments in the override-infested Richland area that somehow had not been affected at all by the fallout from the clash between Halborn and Carlyne. Analysts were able to examine these fragments along with those recovered weeks ago from Exiles, which were written in the Oracle's trademark "intuitive" style, and concluded that the fragments were left over from the process of writing a kill code.
  - The Merovingian arranged a distraction for Carlyne, enabling the wounded Halborn to bypass him and head for northern Richland, still intent on locating the Oracle.
  - EPN found the Morpheus simulacrum, and asked him about the mysterious encrypted code given them by the Oracle. The sim told them that she may have chosen them precisely because they are able to choose for themselves. He also suggested that while the Matrix is a system of control, Zion, in opposition to the Matrix, could be considered a system of control as well. This conversation was interrupted by a Cypherite attack led by Veil.
  - A forecasted outbreak of the Smith virus arrived in the city, its manifestation strengthened here and there by the presence of override programs.
  - Merovingian operatives attempted to steal some information from E Pluribus Neo, but this was foiled when the Exile contact used by the Merovingians operatives turned the data back over to EPN, apparently in repayment of a favor.
  - The Cypherites stole information on potentials, among other things, from a Zion system in Richland, although the operation was complicated by attacks from override codes in the area.
  - Ghost led Zion operatives into Richland in search of the Oracle, but found only override programs and Halborn, who showed his violent impatience at operative interference in his plans.
  - Players fought off another outbreak of the Smith Virus across the city.
  - EPN managed to set off a code pulse device in the Zero One construct, for reasons yet unknown. Machine operatives were unable to stop the device's detonation, but, led by Agent Griffin, they removed the EPN operatives from the construct.
  - Halborn found the Oracle waiting for him on a bench in Debir Court. He demanded that she give him "the program." After she told him that she couldn't help him, he became angry, and threatened her, but she said this was a waste of time. Halborn asked if he would ever get the program. She told him that he wouldn't, and he terminated her.

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## Chapter 10.1: Oligarchy

Sati, Seraph, and the Morpheus simulacrum have disappeared. Halborn continues his stubborn search. The Machines turn him over to the Cypherites, who lead him to the spot in the Real where EPN is handing the recovered Lock over to Zion. Halborn flees the large hovercraft battle that ensues, but his ship was noticed by Zion, who, with EPN, defeat the opposing ships, and take Lock to their new city. Following a chance remark by Halborn, the Merovingian, using the General and his Sentinels, locates a "no-fly" area far to the northwest of the Machine city, avoided by Machine patrols, where they find a heavily defended facility, and a data feed from a massive "Oligarch Network." Zion and Carlyne succeed in surprising Halborn and removing him from the simulation. Cryptos begins research on anti-override codes. Carlyne leaves the Matrix.

- Although he terminated the Oracle, his last apparent hope for retrieving the program he craves, Halborn remained inside the Matrix. The Machines asked him to leave, but he refused, hinting that he had a new plan in mind. Meanwhile, Carlyne met with Zion, declaring that he was working on a more direct means of removing Halborn.
- Flood ran Merovingian operatives through a review of the Oracle's actions leading up to her termination, concluding that she orchestrated recent events in order to achieve something relating to either to the program Halborn seeks, or to the intruders themselves.
- A small group of Zion operatives led by Deffdog rescued two Exiles, Palorina and the Evaluator, from an Exile gang that had kidnapped them.
- Machine operatives defended the ZAITSO program from EPN and Merovingians, and succeeded in retrieving information from it relating to a series of mysterious "image fragments." ZAITSO was then sent back to officer SIMLO for repairs.
- Ookami and a band of Merovingian operatives hunted for Seraph, Sati, and the Morpheus simulacrum in Mara and Westview, but found their usual haunts abandoned. Finally, at the Abandoned Subway, they found the exiled monitoring program Lo Ruhamah, who spoke of other worlds beyond the Matrix before vanishing herself.
- Pluribus Neo operatives found Halborn attacking Carlyne in a building downtown. Operatives restrained Halborn while Carlyne escaped. Frustrated by a barrage of hindering attacks from the operatives, Halborn retreated. Afterwards, Carlyne told EPN that Halborn had tried to run a trace program through his RSI, and thanked them for intervening.
- The Architect had a group of Machine operatives brought to the Oracle's apartment, where he questioned them about their outlook on the current situation. The operatives had many questions as to what could be done to solve the threat posed



- by the intruders, particularly Halborn, but the Architect did not respond to these directly. He did remark that Halborn's "predicament" was the result of a choice Halborn had made a long time ago, overlooking the long-term drawbacks in favor of immediate benefits--a typically human decision.
- Halborn attacked one of Zion's broadcast control clusters in the Matrix for reasons that were not immediately clear. Carlyne mentioned that Halborn is probably trying to shut him down by attacking his hovercraft.
- Carlyne met with Agent Pace and Machinists, telling them that once Halborn was removed from the Matrix, he'd see to it that Halborn's access was restricted by "the Oligarchs." The Machines moved on to investigate the encrypted codes the Oracle gave to the Cypherites and E Pluribus Neo. Veil said that the Cypherites hadn't been able to crack the encryption, but that they were keeping the file safe outside of the Matrix. Subterfuge by Agent Gray and Machine operatives led Agent Gray to determine that Pluribus Neo were likely to be keeping their encrypted file at their base in Zion's old city.
- A surly Halborn agreed to meet the Merovingian, but refused to discuss his goals, or the program he's been looking for, citing a concern that Carlyne might find a way to use such information against him. Halborn went on to say that he could get rid of Carlyne if he could find his ship; he also mentioned a location "800 miles away" to the northwest, in relation to Carlyne.
- Halborn attacked a Pluribus Neo stronghold in the slums, but was repulsed by operatives, although not until he had damaged the file system on the servers there.
- The Machines launched a small Sentinel attack on EPN's base in old Zion, in tandem with an attack on a high-ranking EPN hovercraft. Operatives within the Matrix delayed contact between the assailed crew and the Kid, preserving the attack's element of surprise, and allowing Sentinels to capture the craft. Data returned by the Sentinels from the base and the captured ship indicated reinforced defenses at the old city, but a high probability that Pluribus Neo did not maintain a central mainframe there.
- E Pluribus Neo located and held Halborn while Carlyne tried to run a trace of his own through Halborn, but Halborn had already equipped himself with a countermeasure to the trace routine. Carlyne said that there were other methods he could try.
- Having heard rumors of Commander Lock's imminent recovery with EPN from injuries sustained during the Machine and Cypherite attack that destroyed Zion's old mainframe, Veil led an attack on an EPN hideout, trying to crack their computers to search for more information about Lock. A counter-attack by Shimada and EPN operatives foiled the Cypherite plan, despite Veil's defeat of Shimada during the pitched battle.

- - The Merovingian and his operatives captured Machine mapping data on the area Halborn had referred to, 800 miles northwest of the Machine city. The data showed that the mountainous region there was avoided by Machine patrols.
  - At Niobe's insistence, Carlyne gave Zion rough descriptions of the advanced ships used by himself and Halborn. Zion captured information from a Machine surveillance database that seemed to confirm the descriptions given by Carlyne; the database also contained a record of a ship like Carlyne's that was present at the Machine city over two years ago.
  - Halborn demanded the location of Carlyne's ship from the Machines, but they told him their ability to give out such information was restricted, and suggested that he check with the Cypherites--Veil, specifically. Veil told Halborn that she had some interesting things to show him in the Real.
  - The Merovingian and the General determined that the area to which Halborn had referred, 800 miles northwest of the Machine city, was classified as a "no fly" zone by the Machines, and avoided by their Sentinel patrols, although other patrols were blocking the General's route to the area. Merovingian operatives attempting to disrupt Machine Sentinel control routines found that command protocols given them by the General no longer worked, but the General obtained updated data by capturing a Machine Sentinel, allowing operatives to disable the Machine systems long enough for the General to make his way past their patrols, and continue on his way to the blackout zone.
  - When Sentinel attacks still proved a hindrance to his progress, operatives got a commando, Lieutenant Petrov, through to a Machine mainframe, where he uploaded his own program into a Machine Sentinel, buying the General time by attacking the other Machines in that Sentinel's squadron.
  - Cypherites, assisted by a spy named Pernicia, decimated the crew of a hovercraft commanded by Zion's Captain Suda, and captured data that Veil turned over to Halborn. Halborn very pointedly did not invite them along, but Veil intimated that the Cypherites would be flying somewhere with Halborn in the Real.
  - A further attempt by Merovingian Exiles to disrupt Machine Sentinel routines was overcome by a quick response from Machine operatives, who wiped out the Exile group, found in the vicinity of Pendhurst-Amaranth plaza. Beirn rallied Merovingian operatives, and defeated most of the Machine programs remaining in the area, but faced stiff resistance from the Machinists, and was even forced to reconstruct by the Cypherite operative SaintDaniel.
  - Halborn attacked a Zionite hovercraft in the Real. One of their crew members, Ramin, managed to jack into the Matrix, where he contacted Zion operatives. With assistance from Ghost, Halborn was called into the Matrix on the pretext that the Machines had agreed to give him the program he wanted. Disguised Zionite

- operatives stalled Halborn long enough for Ramin's crippled hovercraft to reach safety.
- Colt hurried through the city's bars and clubs, apparently looking for his ship's mechanic. Despite help from operatives, he was unable to locate his crewmate, and jacked out after complaining about Commander Lock, and the loss of his old crewmate, Mauser.
- Shortly thereafter, EPN and Zion hovercraft transferring Lock from the EPN base in Zion's old city to New Zion were attacked by Machine, Cypherite, and Merovingian fleets. After a prolonged battle, the transfer of Commander Lock from EPN Captain Steelle's "The Hand of God" to Zion Captain RedBindi's "The Titan" was completed successfully, and New Zion prepared to welcome their old Commander to the city.
- Halborn destroyed a Zionite hovercraft that was following his ship; the crew had tried luring Halborn into scan range at Carlyne's suggestion. Although the crew were killed, Carlyne said that the partial information they'd returned might help him finish a program he'd been working on to eliminate Halborn.
- Halborn, angry at finding himself in the middle of a large hovercraft battle after following coordinates given him by Cypherites, demanded to see the Machines again, but the Machines did not meet with him. Halborn took his anger out on Cypherites inside the Matrix, and muttered about operatives being manipulated by someone who knows all about the program he's after.
- Machine programs pursued Merovingian operatives and commandos, seeking to prevent further Merovingian interference with Sentinel systems. Although the Machine programs were eliminated in part by taking advantage of one of Halborn's Accelerator programs, the Merovingian declared that Halborn's usefulness to him was at an end.
- Niobe led Zion operatives to a Cypherite installation where they'd detected a spike of override activity, and they found Cypherites and Cryptos there, as well as a Decelerator program, which caused problems for Zionites and Cypherites alike, as well as for some Merovingian operatives seeking to cash in on the confusion. Cryptos departed, and the Zionites sealed off the area, but did not, as Niobe had hoped they might, find solid information on a link between the Cypherites and Halborn, which their joint presence at the scene of Commander Lock's transfer had led her to suspect.
- Agent Pace and Machine operatives warned Halborn that his ship had probably been compromised by terrorists. Despite an attack by EPN operatives armed with code pulse devices, Halborn thought little of the warning, saying that everyone could go to hell as far as he was concerned.

- - Cypherites running checks on their computer systems found override programs at some locations. Pluribus Neo, using captured data, made their way to one of these installations as well, where a fight erupted between Cypherites, EPN, and override programs. The Kid defeated the outnumbered Cryptos, and Pluribus Neo managed to gain temporary access to the Cypherite mainframe at the site, but they only had time to extract fragmentary data from it before the Cypherites finally secured the mainframe.
  - Zionites found and fought Halborn in the Historic District. Carlyne appeared on the scene and distributed instances of a special program to a group of the operatives, saying that if they could hit Halborn with it, it should be able to disable his broadcast signal at the source. The operative Coroebus was able to bypass Halborn's defensive routines and strike him with the program. Halborn fell to the ground, inert. Carlyne said that it looked like the program had worked, although he'd have to check his data before he could be sure.
  - Merovingian operatives accompanied by Beirn tried to persuade Carlyne to remain in the simulation, entertaining him at Paradise Lost, but Carlyne, although apologetic, was adamant about having to depart, for various reasons, most of which he did not describe.
  - Carlyne thanked Zion for their help, saying he was going to leave the Matrix now that Halborn can no longer jack in due to his ship having been disabled, and that he had to leave to take care of certain concerns, one of which was ensuring that Halborn would not be able to return. Carlyne had a similar message for the Machines, saying that he hoped there were no hard feelings. With the intruders and their override routines out of the picture, the Machines mobilized their programs to begin fighting Zion once again.
  - Cryptos theorized that the override routines had been able to operate by taking advantage of a fundamental vulnerability in the simulation. Having noticed that they had no controlling effect on his own RSI, which is partly Machine code, he declared his intent to begin working on an algorithm capable of resisting the override programs, using his own code as a starting point.
  - The General reached the Machine no-fly zone on the Earth's surface, northwest of the Machine city, and encountered a heavily fortified facility. Unable to penetrate the facility's defenses, his Sentinels found a data conduit nearby. Tapping into the data stream, they encountered unusual data protocols, only partially matching known Machine formats. Merovingian operatives within the simulation forced their way into highly secured Machine servers, and, after much effort, located a data type similar to what the General had found. Using this new information, the General's soldiers began decoding the foreign data feed, but their transmission was cut off just as they sent back a partially scrambled decoding identifying the data stream as part of a massive system labeled the "Oligarch Network."

- - Operatives encountered override programs on rooftops across the city, possibly remaining from a last-ditch effort by one of the intruders.
  - The Exile Rose, having heard that the intruders had left, took a bold trip from her station in Southard to the heart of Downtown with the help of a couple operatives.
  - Ghost visited the site of Captain Suda's ambush and death at the hands of Cypherites in Widow's Moor. He discussed the possibility of larger motives or relationships behind the recent events surrounding Suda's death, including the actions of the intruders, and the attempted interception of Commander Lock by Cypherite and Machine hovercraft. This discussion was interrupted by an Archivist, who demanded that Ghost and the operatives with him leave the construct, enforcing this command with a swarm of Gargoyles.
  - Zion operatives pursuing Machine Data Technicians in the Datamine construct crossed paths with Captain Raeder, apparently an officer in the security division of Supersymmetric Research, the company who had owned the artificial island. Raeder rambled on about research, experiments, and bureaucracy while attempting to expel the "trespassers."
  - In a remarkable coincidence, with the departure of the intruders, massive parties broke out in the simulation, with Merovingian operatives packing the Hel Club for a party hosted by Les Enfants Terribles, and operatives from all organizations partying it up in Club Duality.
  - Machine operatives were called in to deal with an Exile sniper attacking pedestrians in Morrell. Operatives worked to locate the sniper by posing as civilian targets. The taciturn Agent Griffin was concerned that the way in which this was implemented gave the sniper an opportunity to escape, but nevertheless he was located and neutralized by operatives.
  - Cryptos summoned Cypherite operatives to Zero One for a test against programmatic enemies, including Accelerated programs. Cryptos studied the combat sessions, and said that the information gathered would help him in his research into the override codes.
  - Operatives encountered override programs on rooftops across the city, possibly remaining from a last-ditch effort by one of the intruders.
  - An unidentified broadcast signal was briefly detected in northeast Richland. Agent Gray asked operatives to report any further information found on the signal.

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## Chapter 10.2: Ouroboros

Mauser, who was freeborn and never had jacks, appears in the Matrix. He hops through unmarked hardlines, avoiding contact, saying to Zion only that he's working to win the war. The Merovingian seeds the storm between the Machine city and the no-fly zone in order to reestablish contact with the General. They find Oligarch network data flowing into the Ouroboros Corporation in Downtown. The Machines nearly isolate Mauser's signal, but are interrupted by the Morpheus simulacrum. Mauser steals data from the Merovingian, then disappears. Missile barrages devastate the General's forces in the no-fly zone, forcing him to retreat. EPN detects a small craft outbound from tunnels below the old city, heading north.

- Colt reported to Zion that his old crewmate Mauser, thought to have been killed rescuing Lock from the destruction of Zion, had been seen in the Matrix. This was doubly surprising since Mauser never had jacks for entering the simulation. Zion picked up readings thought to be Mauser at several hardlines, and at an internet café, but did not locate the man himself.
- With the departure of the intruders, the Machines resumed anti-Zion operations in the Matrix, disabling their computer systems, and interrupting coppertop awakenings. Some Machine operatives, however, encountered a large Zionite force headed by Niobe, who stated Zion's determination to resist offensives by the System.
- Signals between the Matrix and the Machine no-fly zone becoming too weak to maintain communication with the General, Merovingian operatives inserted a program designed by Malphas into Bluepills around the city, with the intention of using the EEG wiring and human energy fields of people in the pods to create a wide broadcast array, but the signal generated proved insufficient to reach the General.
- The Machines sent operatives to delete a small group of override programs remaining in Zia. The operation was complicated by the unexpected presence of Zion captain Niobe, enemy operatives, and nearby overridden Agent programs.
- Cryptos led Cypherite operatives on an information-gathering mission against Zion strongholds, hoping to find out more about the mysterious broadcast signal picked up earlier by Zion in Richland. No pertinent information was found, and the Cypherites discussed the possibility of Zion themselves lacking further data, and of recent occurrences suggestive of a larger conspiracy.
- Veil and her operatives infiltrated Zionite hovercraft to intercept a courier, capturing data, programs, and a copy of a message from Zion's Councillor Dillard to Commander Roland, telling Roland that ex-Commander Jason Lock was not due to be reinstated.
- Merovingian operatives helped an operative named Medea gather information from broadcast towers in Downtown. The information was the final ingredient needed by Medea's crew to set up a new, more powerful communication relay to the General on

- the Earth's surface, but on the verge of completing the station, the crew was wiped out by Machine Sentinels.
- Colt called for a sweep of hardlines across the city, hoping to find his old friend Mauser, who still had not contacted Zion. Mauser's signal was narrowed down to the vicinity of Mannsdale, where he was eventually seen heading for a hardline, but when he spotted the operatives around the phone booth, he made a dash for a pay phone down the street, and vanished.
- Zion found that the line Mauser had escaped through was part of an old, pre-Truce Zion hardline network to which only certain operatives had been given access. Zion's current data on the network was incomplete, since some was lost when the Machines sacked Zion's mainframe, and it was also suspected that some areas of the network had never been documented.
- After some difficulty in navigating the network, Zion operatives encountered Mauser, who, before exiting along a spliced restricted line, said only that he was working to win the war.
- Machine operatives worked with law-enforcement officials to investigate break-ins by the individual said to be Mauser. Evidence of computer tampering was found, leading to the discovery of a backup log showing that one of the tampered computers had been used to connect to a remote system via network tunneling using an unknown, encrypted protocol.
- The Merovingian, needing to re-establish contact with the General, stranded on an investigative mission in the Machine no-fly zone 800 miles northwest of the Machine city, sent operatives to find a way to improve the communication link. Research indicated that cloud seeding of the mysterious, global storm, created early in the ManMachine war by a human project called "Operation Dark Storm," could possibly boost communication range through a weather phenomenon known as "tropospheric ducting." Specially-equipped commando Sentinels were dispatched to begin the seeding operation along the route to the no-fly zone.
- Theresa Morton, a bluepill, helped E Pluribus Neo locate a phone line on the old restricted network in Downtown, near a terminal that had been hacked by Mauser, and investigated by the Machines. Zion operatives caused a distraction elsewhere in the city to keep the Machines away from Pluribus Neo during the investigation, but when EPN tried accessing the line, security quickly appeared on the scene in large numbers. Morton was taken into Machine custody.
- Machine operatives fought to protect mechanic programs as they modified hardlines in Downtown to prevent access by Mauser's unusual broadcast signal. Strong resistance from Pluribus Neo and Zion operatives forced the Machines to send successive mechanic programs in order to complete the work.

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- Soon afterwards, Pluribus Neo operatives hunted for possible unmarked hardlines around the city, particularly in Downtown. Machine and some Merovingian operatives hindered the search, but it was hoped that the line location data gathered would lead to the mapping of more of the hidden network.
- Merovingian operatives seeking more information on the "Dark Storm," with the goal of improving the tropospheric ducting project, located a program named CAR80N in One Zero. CAR80N, claiming to be a pre-war Zero One assembly line worker, proved to have very limited data on the storm and its origin, but gave what may have been a uniquely first-hand perspective of Machine attitudes at the time in which Operation Dark Storm was put into operation. CAR80N's reminiscence painted the picture of a peaceful Machine population forced into war by human jealousy that they did not understand.
- Zion began the process of shutting down known sections of the old restricted access hardline system, now compromised by Mauser, and possibly under threat of scrutiny by the Machines. Progress along one of the branches came to a sudden halt when a Decelerator program, one of the intruder overrides, appeared nearby, its command routines scrambling the line.
- The Machines began investigating the restricted line system, using data captured from Zion's old mainframe, as well as intelligence gathered by spying on Zion operatives, to determine that an unusual broadcast signal associated with the system--possibly Mauser's Matrix connection--was coming from the vicinity of old Zion.
- With the tropospheric ducting effect of the seeded Dark Storm re-enabling communication with the General in the distant Machine no-fly zone, the Merovingian started looking for Machine links that would help unscramble complex data found in the strange network there. Data was obtained, but the General's comm link into the Matrix was severed just after he relayed a report of an incoming missile attack on his forces, from an unknown source.
- Pluribus Neo helped the ex-Zion operative Grace work out some personal issues with her nemesis Ginjiro, leader of the Silver Dragon gang, in exchange for whatever she could tell them about Zion's old restricted hardline network. Grace showed EPN the phone line in Furihata that was her appointed emergency exit when she worked there for Zion, but said that she had never used it, and that Zion had informed her that the system was being shut down when the Truce with the Machines went into effect.
- Merovingian operatives helped a commando program salvage flight data from the General's downed Sentinels in the no-fly zone. Retrieving the remains of their programs after these were returned to the Matrix by the commando, it was found that just before they were destroyed by missiles, some of the General's Sentinels had detected a distant ship matching the profile of the craft used by the intruders, Carlyne and Halborn.
- Now able to access sections of the restricted line system, Zion operatives chased Mauser through unmarked lines across the city. They caught up to him several times,



- but he did little to acknowledge them, uttering only one sentence in Downtown, and ignoring his old crewmate, Colt, before vanishing through a phone near the Hel Club. A Runtime program appeared where he had been standing, bringing overridden Machine programs that attacked the assembled Zion operatives, and disabling the line Mauser had used to escape.
- The Machines captured Pluribus Neo scanning stations on the surface above old Zion, and accessed their control interfaces inside the Matrix to begin using them to help pinpoint Mauser's broadcast. But, much to the surprise of both the Machines and Pluribus Neo, the scanning station network security systems, which had been disabled in the earlier Machine attack at the surface, suddenly re-engaged, forcing the Machines to give up the attempt.
- Mauser's course through Zion's old restricted line system ran through Merovingian territory, causing problems for the Zionites tracking him, and for the Merovingian and his Exiles, who found themselves victims of the theft of the topographic data on the no-fly zone they had stolen earlier from the Machines.

The Machines, encountering an unexpected error message when trying to capture surface scan data from EPN computers, resort to the internet black market in order to obtain information on EPN's rescue of Jason Lock, in which Mauser, according to Lock's account, had been involved. Lock's account contained noteworthy discrepancies, however, not the least of which was that Sentinels were supposed to have killed Mauser, in spite of the fact that, according to the Machines, they had no Sentinels in that area at the time. After obtaining a copy of flight data from the EPN ship that had picked up Lock from the ruined building on the Earth's surface where he said he had been hidden by Mauser, the Machines realized that the building was the same lab where, roughly nine months earlier, they had found and killed Danielle Wright, whose connection to Zion's mainframe had then become the key to the Machine destruction of Zion's former city. Agent Gray suggested that Mauser, a highly skilled technician, may have salvaged Wright's technology from the ruined lab, which could explain some of his surprising capabilities in the simulation.

- Pluribus Neo, following up overheard police reports of a person matching Mauser's general description in Westview, ran into dedicated Morpheus follower Joshua Maston, who said that police may have had Mauser confused with the Morpheus simulacrum, whom he had just encountered in the area.
- A previously unknown operative contacted the faction Temet Nosce, asking for help in reclaiming his former life from a program the Machines had put in his place. His attempt to assassinate the program was brought to an abrupt end by Agent Griffin, who shot him dead, and explained to the operative whose cooperation he had hired that the assassination target was a real bluepill, and that the would-be killer was in fact an exiled program. The Temet Nosce operative was skeptical of the Agent's spin on the story.

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- Machinists helped guide a team of operatives on foot through the raging electrical storm at the Earth's surface, searching for the fugitive Mauser's broadcast location. The furious storm claimed victims among the surface team, but, guided by operatives analyzing the scans they returned of the area, they succeeded in locating a Zionite "lightning gun" firearm at the edge of a large chasm in the Earth's crust.
- Ookami and Merovingian operatives followed Mauser's erratic trail across Downtown, fending off Mauser's former crewmate, Colt, who was also looking for the evasive former technician of The Hammer. The Merovingians found Mauser just as he jacked out in a far corner of Creston Heights.
- Zion searched for whoever it was that was in Westview, Mauser or the Morpheus simulacrum, but found only an old disconnected phone line, Cypherites, and a cryptic message on a mysterious computer.
- Pluribus Neo detected an unidentified small craft heading north from a deep tunnel location around old Zion. Searching the tunnels, they found a recently used site strewn with pieces of Sentinels and hovercraft. A terminal from one of the hovercraft was found to contain some data, which they set to work decoding.
- The Machines located Mauser's RSI, and were moving to lock his signal, when the Morpheus Signal appeared in their scan control room, disrupting the procedure. By the time they could reinitialize the process, Mauser was nowhere to be found.

The General, returning from the Machine no-fly zone, sent back all of the data he had pulled from the mysterious network line found there. The data was found to contain circa-1999 traditional human network headers. These were tracked by Merovingian operatives to a private corporate provider, where they were ambushed by security guards from the Ouroboros Corporation.

- A bluepill named Gerald Croyden complained bitterly about the difficulties of moving and coming back to the city, but persevered to attend his son's high-school graduation.
- Merovingian operatives pumped Ouroboros tour guide Judie Lahler for information in Club Janus in her off hours. Judie, who leads tours in Ouroboros' corporate headquarters in Creston Heights, indulged in a number of drinks, and seemed unhappy about her job, calling it boring and restrictive. She said that the things she had to tell tour guests about the corporation were just silly lies, that no real work was done there, and that nobody ever told her anything.
- Cypherites found the Morpheus simulacrum in a church in Westview. The simulacrum admitted that it had intended to be disruptive in its sudden return, and made mention of the difficulty of achieving peace. The simulacrum directed the operatives to a nearby construction yard, where they found Pluribus Neo operatives in the act of using Code Pulse Devices. The Cypherites eliminated the operatives and defused the devices.
- Pluribus Neo shut down the Matrix interfaces to their scanning equipment around Zion's old city, after finding the Machines attempting to hack into the interfaces once

- again. Shimada said that from now on they would have to rely on indirect communication with the scanning arrays in the Real.
- Machinists tracked down a dangerous escaped Lupine, Vulg, and eliminated him. Their Exile informant, Rosaleen, startled by the sudden approach of one of the Twins, was killed by the trigger-happy Machine operative BlazinWolf.
- Ghost and Zion operatives stopped a Machine attempt to hack a previously undiscovered section of Zion's old restricted-access hardline system in Park East. The Effectuator was caught by operatives while trying to gather information at Kalt Chemical Engineering in Kedemoth. Kalt herself appeared on the rooftop, warning the group of operatives to disperse. A strong security force appeared on the scene shortly thereafter.
- A small group of operatives found Persephone musing at an old bookshelf in a hidden study in the chateau. A conversation about the nature of love followed, and Persephone invited operatives to write down their own love stories to share with others.
- Operatives found Ghost standing quietly in Debir Court, near the bench where the Oracle was killed. Ghost and the operatives talked about the war and the views of the opposing sides. Ghost remarked upon Machine insistence on remaining emotionless, and wondered if humans had reason to fear that Machines might become better at feeling emotions than humans, whom they have already surpassed in industry and science.
- Disguised Cypherites infiltrated a party held by the Merovingian at the Hel Club. The

operatives, in the guise of Exiles, attempted to get the Frenchman to talk about his ambitions in investigating the Ouroboros Corporation, but his replies were light-hearted and insubstantial. Ookami appeared, examined several of the Cypherites, and unleashed an attack of Lupines that drove the operatives out of the club.

## Chapter 10.3: Checks and Balances

Cypherites find the Merovingian hacking into Ouroboros. Cryptos captures some of the Oligarch data to assist his research. EPN discover data on the no-fly zone left behind at the small craft's launch site, and begin to prepare ships of their own to investigate. Machines try to get the Merovingian out of Ouroboros, concerned that trouble there will bring more Oligarchs into the Matrix. Wright Research sues Pendhurst-Amaranth for a break-in by Mauser. Pendhurst-Amaranth's Brenda Utley helps Zion get information about Mauser's activities, but Seraph appears, and asks them to stop. The Merovingian finds the biological interface program inside Ouroboros' network.

- Deciphering a cryptic message found while searching Westview several weeks earlier led Zion operatives to the Camon Heights Exile, Silver, who had already taken the precaution of going into hiding. When checking up on Silver's old business partner, Wright Research, the operatives heard of a break-in attempt at Wright weeks earlier by an individual matching Mauser's description.
- Machine operatives took care of problems caused by EPN and Zion operatives, and asked a coppersmith meteorologist for an "intuitive" analysis of the heightened storm in the Real; the meteorologist's opinion was that the storm activity could last for some time, possibly growing worse. After hearing the report of these various operations, Agent Gray said that the most efficacious course of action at present would be putting a stop to the Merovingian's disruptive activities.
- Merovingian operatives kidnapped an Ouroboros network manager, delivering him to Exiles for interrogation on means of accessing that company's secured data. They also found that they had been observed by a Cypherite spy during the course of this operation.
- Operatives delivered data to the Effectuator in Ashencourte, where they encountered resistance by EPN forces. The transfer was completed, although EPN obtained another set of data that had been hidden nearby.
- Niobe led a small group of Zion operatives into the Merovingian's chateau, looking for clues about what he was after at Ouroboros. Meanwhile, other Zion operatives sought to distract the Merovingian's attention by battling security forces outside his Hel Club; this battle grew quickly due to an unexpected attack by Cypherite operatives. Niobe and her team were located and chased from the chateau by a Twin and powerful Exile guards, but not before they confiscated some data.
- Disguised Cypherite operatives snuck into Ouroboros, seeking to capture a sample of the Oligarch data said to be feeding into hidden computer systems there. During their search, they crossed paths with Merovingian Exiles, possibly pursuing a similar goal. The Cypherites overcame the Exiles and Ouroboros security forces long enough to extract some of the foreign data.

The Merovingian, annoyed by Cypherite interference, tracked down the Cypherite leader, Cryptos, and warned him against further disruptions. Cryptos said that he had wanted to obtain the Oligarch data sample from Ouroboros in order to advance his research into developing a counter-agent to the override codes used by the intruders.

- E Pluribus Neo used information obtained from Exiles, including a scheme captured from a Machine mainframe, to decrypt the file they had recovered from a hovercraft terminal found among bits and pieces of dismantled hardware in a maintenance tunnel near old Zion. They found that the file contained a topographic map of the no-fly zone established by the Machines far to the northwest of the Machine city--the same area to which the Merovingian had recently dispatched the General and his Sentinels. In light of this coincidence, Shimada said that it was time EPN looked into the area themselves.
- Zion found nothing but hostile guards at the Wright Research facility Mauser appeared to have raided weeks earlier. Shortly thereafter, Pendhurst-Amaranth chairwoman Brenda Utley contacted Zion, and revealed that Wright Research was threatening to sue her company; Wright alleged that Mauser broke into their office at PendhurstAmaranth's behest, basing this on claims of connections between Mauser and Zion, and between Zion and Pendhurst-Amaranth, dating back to the Unlimit affair.
- Cypherites contacted the Machines, confirming Merovingian raids on the Ouroboros Corporation, intended to retrieve information related to the intruders. The Machines located Merovingian forces attacking an Ouroboros office and repelled them, taking care not to harm the corporate guards at the site. Gray noted that Ouroboros had failed to notify the proper authorities of the attack by the Merovingian.
- Merovingian operatives kidnapped an Ouroboros network manager, obtaining a list of Ouroboros network passwords from the information he supplied. They began putting the passwords to use, infiltrating Ouroboros systems, but encountered resistance from the Machines.
- Zionites assisted Brenda Utley at a court-appointed hearing, attempting to resolve the Wright/P-A dispute. Although Utley and Zion strongly maintained their position that they had nothing to do with any action by Mauser, Wright Research's representative insisted that Wright had information to the contrary, and said that they would continue to press their claim.
- An Ouroboros security guard attempted to kick Merovingian operatives out of a parking lot in Lemone. The guard put up a tough fight, and had hopes of being promoted to an easy job in network security, but operative reinforcements put an end to his hopes of landing a dream job.
- Machine operatives investigating the disappearance of a SWAT unit encountered and pursued the Twins across Downtown, tracking them all the way to an Ouroboros complex, where the Twins were at work cutting through the company's guards. Machine operatives joined in the security melee around the Twins, who departed without much delay. The operatives were then quickly recalled by Agent Gray, who said that it was extremely important that the Machines avoid engaging Ouroboros

security forces, as this could result in an alert being sent back to the real power behind Ouroboros: the Oligarchs.

Flood and Merovingian operatives disguised as Agents attempted to use their assumed federal authority to enter an Ouroboros lab, with the aim of confiscating valuable data. They were surprised when the Ouroboros guard at the site stated that their federal jurisdiction did not apply at the company's facility. A battle ensued, and although the operatives eliminated the guard, reinforcements eventually forced the operatives to join Flood in choosing discretion over valor. A safe distance away, Flood pointed out that Machine authority was evidently worthless when it came to dealing with Ouroboros.

- Brenda Utley, saying that her company, Pendhurst-Amaranth, was getting too much legal heat from Wright Research over an alleged break-in by Mauser, which Wright blamed on P-A, asked Zion to search for clues about Mauser's activity at the Ouroboros Corporation, rather than at Wright Research.
- Utley put Zion in touch with an informant inside Ouroboros, where, after speaking with an Ouroboros security guard, Zion operatives found that a security incident at that company four weeks ago, about the time of Mauser's last known activity in the Matrix, was a hack attempt that came over the internet, cutting right through the Ouroboros corporate firewall. Zion captured the firewall server's log of the incident, which showed that data transferred in and out of the company's network during the attack used an encryption scheme bearing a resemblance to the encryption Danielle Wright used for Zion's revamped red pill program; this suggested that Mauser, or whoever was behind the attack, may have been using stolen Wright technology to hack into Ouroboros.
- The Machines stated that they've known Ouroboros is a front for the Oligarchs, a group whose number includes the two powerful "intruders," Halborn and Carlyne, who recently caused so many problems in the Matrix with their override codes. Agent Gray emphasized that trouble at Ouroboros could cause a security alert to bring Oligarch attention back into the Matrix, raising the spectre of another wave of overrides disrupting the simulation.
- To prevent this possibility, Machine operatives attempted to set up a system inside Ouroboros' network that would re-direct any communications being sent out into the Real, but had to abandon the project when powerful override programs appeared, disrupting the communication programs.
- Merovingian operatives armed with captured passwords continued their exploration of Ouroboros' computer network. They encountered resistance from Ouroboros security and Machines, but a distinct lack of cooperation between those two forces somewhat alleviated the problem. Noting this, the Merovingian dispatched an operative to Ouroboros executives with a letter detailing Machine and Cypherite tampering attempts at Ouroboros.
- Brenda Utley helped Zion operatives discover the name of a network engineer at Ouroboros, Sheldon Brewer, said to have access to a virtual map of the company's internal network.

- Cypherite operatives impersonated tourists on a site visit to a large Ouroboros office building, while operative Marias snuck past guards on the upper floors and killed Ouroboros security officer Matthews. Veil hinted that Matthews had been in charge of sending out a security report.

Machine operatives located and eliminated an Exiled hacker, C0wb0y, who Agent Gray said was responsible for generating civilian currency inside the simulation in such vast amounts that it could destabilize the population's economy. Operatives began working with officer Vogt to track down and confiscate all of C0wb0y's hacked funds, which had been concealed in various investments.

- Merovingian operatives seeking to distract public attention from their own target, Ouroboros, got help from gang leader Seven in creating a scandalous scene at a Wright Research office, where they also obtained security passcodes. Using the codes, the operatives broke into Wright Research headquarters, wrecking mainframes and leaving hacker programs designed to look as though they had come from rival corporation Pendhurst-Amaranth.
- Zion found that the Ouroboros employee with access to a map of that corporation's network, Sheldon Brewer, was an unassuming technician with the network data surgically implanted in his physical, pod-housed brain. This made obtaining the information difficult, but a red pill trace program and coordination with a hovercraft overcame the obstacle.
- Wright Research declared their intention to go ahead with their lawsuit against Pendhurst-Amaranth, claiming that they had security camera footage of Mauser breaking into their facility, as well as other information demonstrating his ties to Zion, and Zion's close relationship with Pendhurst-Amaranth. Machine operatives delivered a subpoena to Pendhurst-Amaranth chairwoman Brenda Utley, requiring her to appear in federal court to answer questions about the case.
- Merovingian operatives ran into a puzzling speed bump in their infiltration of the Ouroboros network: a missing connection between two active network sections. Attempts to study and locate the absent connection failed, and even the Effectuator became discomfited by the baffling problem. Setting it aside for the time, investigation continued along the rest of the network line, returning reams of financial data.
- The Machines obtained operative help in questioning Brenda Utley about her company's involvement with Mauser and Zion. The P-A chairwoman emerged from a barrage of questions and warnings apparently unfazed. Agent Pace, backed up by an operative, caught up with Ms. Utley in Downtown, delivering a warning that if Utley's company continued to associate with Zion, it was possible that they could be subjected to a time-consuming federal audit.
- A Zion operative, Negligible, made off with data Cryptos was using for his research into countering intruder override codes, making declarations to the effect that the Cypherites couldn't be trusted to use such information selflessly. Pursuing Cypherites managed to catch Negligible, and recover the data.
- A disoriented Sheldon Brewer stumbled out of an apartment building in the slums, questioning nearby Machine operatives about the time and location. Brewer did not



understand how he had gotten there, and grew concerned that he would be late for work, although he couldn't quite remember where his office was. An Ouroboros security officer appeared, curtly dismissed the Machine operatives, and took the confused Brewer back into the building.

- EPN operatives, with the help of the network map obtained by Zion, located the Ouroboros security server holding the record of activity on the company's network during the widespread hacking incident weeks earlier, attributed to Mauser. After overcoming heavy security at the site, the EPN operatives obtained a full log of the hacking incident, complete with the network addresses of the specific Ouroboros computers the attacker had targeted.
- The Effectuator dragged Merovingian operatives back to the missing Ouroboros network link, taking another crack at solving the mystery. The search for information seemed fruitless until frustration grew among the search team, at which point network activity readings began to appear. Through experimentation, the team found that displays of emotion caused the readings to grow stronger. Furious emoting ensued, sparking a surprise outbreak of Accelerated Ouroboros security guards. These were defeated, but the team wasn't able to get a lock on the network link until Persephone arrived to assist in their performance.
- Using network addresses from a captured log of the hacking incident at Ouroboros attributed to Mauser, Zion operatives located data on an Ouroboros computer that referred to what may have been a location on the surface of the Earth, with information about power ratings and network links. This data display was suddenly cut off, and Seraph appeared, asking Zion to stop investigating the data, as their investigation could be harmful. Niobe was not happy about the interruption, but admitted that she still trusts Seraph.
- Machines listened in on Ouroboros security transmissions to facilitate their pursuit of Merovingian forces attacking the company's network, where Machine operatives encountered evidence of violent clashes, as well as a powerful Decelerator override program. The transmissions and activity ceased when the operatives ran into Seraph, who warned them that their search must end.
- Merovingian operatives overcame numerous obstacles, some with surprising ease, to find a computer terminal surrounded by powerful override programs and Ouroboros security teams. A heavy firewall protected the terminal, but penetrating it took less time than expected, and the triumphant operatives returned to a gleeful Merovingian with an incredible find: the "biological interface program" sought by the intruder Halborn.
- The Kid and other EPN operatives battled Cypherites who had ambushed a courier transporting red pills. The operatives defeated the Cypherite leader, Satiare, and recaptured some of the pills, but the Kid found evidence that the pills had been tampered with, and a foreign program inserted into their carriers.
- Zion operatives decided to visit the Kalt campus in Kedemoth, to ask Kalt to help Zion ally Brenda Utley and her company Pendhurst-Amaranth, which is dogged by a Machine-supported lawsuit from rival Wright Research. Kalt's receptionist had some trouble contacting Kalt at the operatives' request, and while they waited, an Agent

arrived, asking them to leave the building. Most of the operatives did not cooperate with the request, and the Agent called in SWAT teams to disperse the crowd. While this met with some success, the Machine forces were eventually defeated by the Zionite teams. By this time, the receptionist had departed, and operatives were left wondering if it would still be possible to contact Kalt.

- After a long day of business involving her husband Mr. Black, the Merovingian, and the Ouroboros Corporation, Dame White went to Club Haus to relax, escorted by her watchful, silent bodyguard, Ebony. The Dame ran across operatives at the club, running a "fight club" contest on the club's trendy whips-and-chains upper floor. The frosty Dame seemed amused by the energetic exhibition put on by the operatives.
- Ookami encouraged Merovingian operatives to get in some "practice" by joining her in a street brawl with enemy operatives in Tabor Park, where many important lessons were learned.
- The Effectuator threw a "Biological Interface Party" at The Sanguine Room, whose itinerary included the wide distribution of heady code snacks, Ookami and Malphas costume contests, and an exhausting battle against colorful ninja, all under the club's intense purple and white spotlights.
- Veil and Cypherite operatives raided a warehouse in Camon used by Zion to store red pills. The Cypherites defeated the Zionites in the building and set fire to the pill containers, but then had to scramble to rescue bluepill workers who had unexpectedly lingered in the building's basement, while fending off a spirited Zionite counter-attack.
- The youngest member of the powerful Spectrum family of Exiles, the Southard mission contact Rose, went on a shopping spree after using a hack to access the operative Marketplace from a hardline in Uriah. Operatives in the area provided helpful fashion tips and accessories.
- Lurking around Mara, Beirn pondered the implications of the Merovingian's possession of the biological interface program. The ex-Unlimit expressed concern that the hunger of the powerful "intruders" for the program would lead to unpleasant changes in the Matrix.
- A member of the Archivist Society invited operatives to a re-creation of the original Sleepwalker spotlight attack in the Sati's Playground archive construct, and a review of the powerful Sleepwalker "Security" team who led the defense of the spotlights.
- The Kid contacted several operatives to make sure they knew about an upcoming EPN expedition to the Machine "no-fly" zone, and then helped them fight off attacks by hostile operatives.

## Chapter 11.1: Fractures

- Zion found Exiles pushing around Wright Research employees. Pendhurst-Amaranth's Brenda Utley told Zion that if Mauser is gone, the Wright lawsuit against her company would collapse, but rumors of internal troubles at Wright Research are increasing.
- The Machines, finding that the Merovingian probably does have the very same "biological interface program" that the intruder, Halborn, was looking for, began a sweep for the program among the Merovingian's Exiles.
- The Merovingian began analyzing the program, finding it to be a baffling mix of complex Machine functions and "intuitive" routines. Even exotic analysts such as Ethereal 2 and Madame T. were unable to make headway in their examination of code samples from the program.
- Agent Griffin called upon Machine operatives to force a Pluribus Neo member to reconstruct, which would allow a Machine signal scan to obtain information possibly helping them track suspicious EPN ship movements. Operatives Chmarr, Pascal, and Samael completed the Agent's assignment with great dispatch.
- Cypherites led by Cryptos captured the biological interface program from a Merovingian server, but the program somehow transferred itself away from their possession just as the Cypherites were counter-attacked by a Lupine force led by Ookami.
- Merovingian operatives testing the interface program's responses by attracting it into a simulacrum inadvertently triggered a storm of hostile simulacra, which had to be speedily eliminated.
- The Kid and E Pluribus Neo operatives pursued Machine programs seeking the interface program. The EPN operatives eliminated a Machine strike force, but were delayed by Malphas and his blood-drinkers when they made an attempt to hack into the Merovingian servers that the Machines had been attacking.
- E Pluribus Neo crews departed for an expedition to the mysterious Machine "no-fly" zone, while EPN and Machine operatives fought over Machine hovercraft communication relays. Pluribus Neo succeeded in hacking one of the two relays, but some Machine hovercraft still managed to track the departing EPN ships, and engage them in battle. Most of the EPN fleet was able to escape from the battle, and continue on their way.
- Zion came across evidence of attacks on Wright Research's network, quickly hushed up by Wright Research security, although the Wright security teams had not been able to find any evidence of the attacker.
- Machinists investigating riots in the city found Bluepills enraged by loss of their cable television and internet access, due to a mass failure of the leading consumer set-top box and home router devices, manufactured by none other than the Ouroboros Corporation.

- Merovingian operatives dug up the scientist Silver, enlisting his special knowledge in the effort to understand and utilize the biological interface program. Silver agreed to help only on threat of deletion--a threat the Merovingian has carried out in the past.
- Ghost and Zion operatives tracked Silver down and questioned him about his activities, including his involvement with recent security issues at Wright Research; in the past, Silver had worked closely with the company's founder, Danielle Wright. Silver denied any involvement, and escaped from the operatives, but not before they captured a device from him that led them to a hidden research lab in the slums, guarded by Exiles. A code scan of the area showed that Silver had been isolated there for several months, which seemed to support his claim of non-involvement in the Wright Research problems.
- Merovingian operatives checked on the progress of Silver's research, finding him engaged in a series of gruesome experiments on docile Bluepills. The operatives were highly skeptical of the usefulness of Silver's activities, and Ookami arrived to warn the scientist that he was expected to produce results.
- Agent Pace called on Machine operatives to hold Bluepills who were rioting at the Ouroboros Corporation's headquarters in Creston Heights, until their pod treatment could be sufficiently modified to pacify them. Some of the Bluepills were killed in the resulting melee, but the mob was eventually dispersed, and the operatives arrested rabble-rousing bluepill Enoch Horner, turning him over to Agent Pace.
- Zion discovered network equipment prototypes had been stolen from Wright Research. Checking on one of the prototypes, they found that the research project from which it originated had been headed by Danielle Wright herself. The former manager of the project said that it had to be abandoned after her death, because nobody else could understand the technology.
- The Machines attempted to contact the Ouroboros Corporation, but the representative they were to meet did not arrive. Investigating, operatives found Ouroboros' internal mail and paging systems offline, and their technicians completely baffled as to the cause.
- The biological interface program went missing from its server, and flitted around the Merovingian's network, causing a number of problems before settling into another mainframe. The scientist Silver appeared unsurprised by its temporary escape, saying that the program's unique code enables it to circumvent traditional security routines with relative ease.
- Cypherites and other operatives strove to deactivate code bombs planted by an extreme ex-EPN crew, Libertas Verus. They were able to disarm some of the bombs, defeating a number of the Verus' crew, including the captain, Uticensis, despite the crew having unleashed a dangerous flame virus at the first bomb site.
- While fighting off a Machine raid on the biological interface program's computer, Ookami found that the program had jumped from its server into the RSI of one of the Merovingian operatives, Nicks. Operatives evacuated her to a safe location, where they succeeded in coaxing the program back into a secure server.

- Cypherites seeking answers about Ouroboros' failure to correct its problems tracked down three of the company's executives: Edward Young, Pamela Bagwell, and Barry Morganthal. Questioning them closely about Ouroboros' problems and activities, it became clear to the Cypherites that the company's own executives had no clue as to the cause of the breakdowns there.
- E Pluribus Neo, at the site of a civilian demonstration against the Ouroboros Corporation and its failed media distribution services, witnessed the killing of a demonstrator at the hands of an Ouroboros security guard. EPN evacuated the remaining civilians, and fought off aggressive resistance by the Ouroboros security team at the site.
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- Zion, investigating the ongoing rash of thefts at Wright Research, found a Wright employee who was somehow in two spots at once: a security lab analyzing the attacks, and the most recent break-in site. When caught and questioned by Wright security, however, the employee appeared to be a completely normal bluepill.
- The Machines, starting to take the Ouroboros network offline in an attempt to isolate the cause of the problems within that corporation, tracked a suspicious data stream to an Ouroboros employee, apparently hacking into her own company's network. She provided information leading to the discovery of a series of commands sent to the power plant at the company's Creston Heights headquarters--commands that had already triggered a condition that would lead to a catastrophic overload capable of leveling northwest Downtown.
- Silver's experiments using the interface program continued, with Merovingian operatives playing unwitting hosts to the program. It was found to be capable of transferring from RSI to RSI at will, or, as Silver put it, to "interface perfectly with human broadcast signals."
- A small group of Machine operatives reached the control terminal for the Ouroboros Corporation's Creston Heights power plant, finding themselves faced there with a mind-boggling security program while other Machine operatives fought off Ouroboros security forces in the plaza outside. Minutes away from meltdown, the Ouroboros hacker whose information had led to the discovery of the impending catastrophe reached the plaza's perimeter. Operatives escorted her inside, where she input a command that deactivated the overload process. She fled as Ouroboros security launched another attack.
- Zion found a lab technician in an office at Wright Research, after the building had been evacuated due to a security alert. To their surprise, the technician changed from male to female, then changed form several more times as it attempted to escape from the pursuing operatives. It eluded them for a time until being spotted, in the form of a combat simulacrum, several blocks away. Niobe ordered it left alone while a scan was run, but a number of overzealous operatives fired upon the simulacrum, terminating it. Although the scan was incomplete, Niobe said that they might be able to spot it if it reappeared and varied its signal again.
- Carlyne interrupted a social event being held by the Merovingian, demanding that the Frenchman give him the biological interface program. The Merovingian said that it would take some time to prepare the program for a safe transfer. Carlyne gave him one day to have it ready.
- Operatives located Carlyne at a forlorn Westview location, impatiently awaiting the preparation of the interface program by the Merovingian. Curiously, none of the Merovingian's operatives were among the group who came to question the intruder, and Carlyne, growing frustrated with the delay, advanced to Hampton Green, where he placed override programs around the Merovingian's Hel Club in what he termed a means of "encouragement."
- Zion tracked the variable-signal program stealing from Wright Research to a hidden lab, where they found a highly sophisticated network device built partly from the stolen equipment. By accessing a computer in the lab, they were able to shut down the

"spider" thief program, which had been able to penetrate Wright security using Wright access codes, and the likenesses of Wright employees.

- The Machines froze the assets of the Ouroboros Corporation, notifying its staff of the federal takeover. Large-scale confiscation of Ouroboros data led to a single computer at an Ouroboros office, found to have a connection to the Oligarch network.
- A series of program terminations found its way to the Merovingian, manifesting in the person of Carlyne, an Oligarch who had departed the Matrix months ago after helping knock off his rival, Halborn. Carlyne demanded that the Frenchman give him the biological interface program, and then, to everyone's surprise, fell to the ground inert as a wireframed female appeared beside him. She coolly asked that the program be turned over to her. Thinking quickly, the Merovingian directed his operative to flush the program into the simulation at large, and then fled the scene.
- Silver was found by operatives, making his way--via a simulacrum--through a residential area in Camon Heights. The operatives surprised him by mentioning that Carlyne had been killed by the female intruder, but he took this as all the more reason to stay away from anything to do with the interface program.
- A spying Malphas, and some operatives monitoring from a ledge outside, noticed the female intruder inside Wright Research's Vauxton headquarters. When a Wright security guard came across her, she addressed him familiarly, telling him that she was deleting the last of her files. After some prompting, the stunned guard recognized her as Danielle Wright, brilliant inventor, ex-Zionite, and founder of the company, who had been thought killed by the Machines shortly after the end of the Truce.
- Ookami gathered a team of operatives to find something tickling her senses in Ashencourte: a Taskmaster robot, normally found only in the Zero One archive construct. Venturing there, the Merovingians found scores of robot bodies piled in the dusty wasteland. Ookami, thinking she sensed something she could not identify, became irritable and departed.
- Operatives escorted Persephone to the White Lotus hotel, where she asked them to fetch the Black Widow, denizen of the hotel's labyrinthine basement. The Widow was pleased that the Merovingian's wife had finally returned an invitation made long ago (Past event info here.), but Persephone shocked her former associate by asking if she could kill her. The Widow refused to think of such a thing, and Persephone left, saying it had been nothing more than a passing fancy.
- Agent Griffin distributed tranquilizer pistols to a team of operatives and proceeded with them into Wright Research's headquarters, where they swiftly disabled the company's technicians while Griffin searched one of the computers. Griffin indicated that files from Danielle Wright had indeed been deleted, but cautioned operatives against taking less reliable sources of information at face value.
- Machine operatives working with officer Vogt confiscated data from Cross Financial Logistics, a company that may have been involved in an Exile's financial scam.
- Shimada and EPN operatives obtained special codes from Merovingian operatives, and then lured the leader of the dangerous Libertas Verus group, Pileus, into an ambush, where they were able to capture him.

- Colt led Zion operatives on a data mining operation around the Hel Club, hoping to turn up information on the biological interface program. Ookami and her Lupines defended the club. When the Zionites defeated Ookami's force, she told them that the program wasn't there anyway.
- Cypherites investigating mysterious network issues at a downtown company located override activity at one of the company's buildings, and several dead Bluepills. Some of the circumstances suggested that something other than just overrides had been involved.
- Shimada and EPN operatives using Sati's Playground for combat practice were ambushed by Veil, who hacked the Sleepwalker simulacra there to help her. As the battle began to turn against Veil, the construct she had hacked crashed, allowing her a messy escape from EPN retribution.
- Zion followed a series of coordinates given out by the device they'd found with the strange Wright Research thief, encountering override activity, and then Danielle Wright herself. Wright removed the overrides the Zionites had found, and departed. When Zion regrouped at the device, Wright suddenly reappeared, destroying the device, which she claimed as her own work.



## Chapter 11.2: Wright



- The E Pluribus Neo expedition to the Machine no-fly zone reached the outskirts of the area, but found heavy Sentinel patrols around the zone's perimeter. The Kid left old Zion, heading to the zone with reinforcements for the expedition.
- Zion found that the device they'd recovered from the thief stealing from Wright Research was tracking the biological interface program.
- The Machines confirmed the identity of the female intruder as the ex-Zionite researcher Danielle Wright, thought to have been killed by Sentinels shortly after the end of the Truce. Agent Gray was uncertain how Wright could still be alive, but confirmed that she is not a member of the "Oligarchy," and the old termination order for her remains in effect. Operatives sent to execute the order found that it would be no simple matter, as Wright seemed to have full command of Oligarch simulation override codes.
- Merovingian operatives encountered a cascading series of glitches centered on the white hallway connection to the Merovingian's chateau construct. Malphas said that the source appeared to have been internal, but undetectable, which suggested that it might have been the interface program.
- Zion followed a series of coordinates given out by the device they'd found with the strange Wright Research thief, encountering override activity, and then Danielle Wright herself. Wright removed the overrides the Zionites had found, and departed. When

Zion regrouped at the device, Wright suddenly reappeared, destroying the device, which she claimed as her own work.

- Cypherites located Danielle Wright and scanned for her broadcast signal, but to their surprise, they found no trace of a connection at all.
- Machine operatives snuck into an EPN meeting attended by the ex-Machinist and recent EPN convert, Dislodge, hoping to obtain intelligence on the E Pluribus Neo expeditionary force that has advanced to the no-fly zone. Dislodge, realizing that something was amiss, made a break for it, but was forced to reconstruct by Machine operatives guarding the exits.
- Merovingian operatives searching the chateau for the source of disruptions there encountered a training simulacrum, behaving slightly irregularly. The simulacrum engaged the operatives in combat, but eventually stopped fighting, looked around, said "where," and fell inert. Operatives concluded that the simulacrum had been controlled by the interface program. Flood was skeptical.
- Cryptos summoned Cypherite operatives to the rescue of a Cypherite team that had been ambushed downtown. Veil, arriving at the ambush site on her own, found a Pluribus Neo operative there, along with the remains of the Cypherite team, and an override program. She took some time in relaying this information to Cryptos, who quickly had a search run for EPN activity in the area, leading to a facility where EPN was trying to decompile the data they had captured from the Cypherites, having to do with Cryptos' research into formulating a counter-agent to override codes. The Cypherites eliminated the EPN operatives and recaptured the data.
- Zion operatives on the trail of the interface program hunted down guard programs from the Merovingian's chateau, where the program had recently appeared. The chateau guards behaved oddly, and a data transfer from the proximity of one of them led to a home computer, with a message saying only "this isn't."
- The Kid and his reinforcements met up with the EPN expeditionary force and entered the Machine no-fly zone, seeking answers on the mysterious area, and the dangerous Oligarchs who seem to have a connection with it.
- Danielle Wright agreed to talk to the Machines, provided they would tell her why the interface program was created, and do it in the presence of their operatives, who would serve as what she called "witnesses."
- Merovingian operatives defending chateau guards from Zionites encountered Danielle Wright, who mentioned that Carlyne, who had helped Zion, had been more useful than he'd intended. Thinking over this remark, it occurred to the Merovingian that Wright could have been in close physical proximity to Carlyne in the Real when she somehow deactivated his RSI in the Matrix. The Merovingian dispatched a flotilla of the General's Sentinels into the no-fly zone, said to be Carlyne's home.
- Machine operatives and Agent Gray met with Danielle Wright in the One Zero construct for an exchange of information. Gray told Wright that the biological interface program had been created to assist in control and monitoring of humans who had been unplugged from the Matrix. Wright told the Machinists that she was able to survive the

termination of her body by entering the Matrix as a "complete consciousness," totally independent of her physical form.

- E Pluribus Neo operatives, following a finding from their expeditionary force indicating an Oligarch connection to an Ouroboros computer, infiltrated the company and captured data that they hoped would improve their understanding of the Oligarch network's strange protocols.
- Zion operatives hacked their way through the white hallways, looking for signs of the interface program. Bypassing attacks from Exiles and one of the Twins, they reached a white room, where they found Danielle Wright. A conflict ensued, ending when Wright left, saying her target lay elsewhere.
- Merovingian operatives entered the Hel Club in response to a distress call from Flood, who claimed that Exile programs had attacked him there. The operatives subdued the inexplicably hostile Exiles, and found a cake vendor program in the club's upper level behaving oddly. The program moved, and even spoke, saying "i'm not." Investigation of the program was interrupted by Wright, who entered the club, looking for the interface program. Wright began using override programs to rid herself of the Merovingian operatives blocking her path, but a flood of cake vendors, duplicating out of control across the entire club floor, forced an end to the battle.
- Operatives responded to hostile override program activity in Chelsea, located just south of the Hel Club.
- Overrides and rumors of Danielle Wright and the interface program increased in Richland, with override activity eventually coming to center around Debir Court.
- Seraph directed Zion operatives to an apartment in the area, previously occupied by the Oracle, where they found a computer hosting a short message: "not here."
- Machine operatives overcame difficulties, including overridden programs, two disabled computers, and a lost black cat, to find Danielle Wright in Mara. Wright commented that, in the right hands, the interface program could be an elegant control mechanism.
- Merovingian operatives had to deal with dominated Hel Club Exiles and hostile Zionites in order to locate Seraph near Debir Court, trapped by an override program.
- Advanced fighter craft struck without warning in the Machine no-fly zone, attacking both the E Pluribus Neo expeditionary force, and the General's Sentinels; the groups retreated with heavy losses. EPN reported that the Kid's hovercraft had managed to damage one of the attackers, but was then shot down, and the Kid injured.
- Cypherites found the elusive operative who had been handling pill programs for Zion, and discovered information that could be used against him.
- Cryptos distributed prototypes of his anti-override routines to Cypherites, who tested them against overrides in the Mara area. Operatives reported only a few cases of the routines successfully blocking override effects, and Cryptos admitted that there was much work yet to be done.

- Zion, Machine, and Merovingian operatives clashed around Debir Court, as Agent Pace and Ghost, separately, led operatives in attempts to clear out powerful overridden programs.
- Zion and Merovingian operatives fought for control of the building where Seraph was trapped by an override code. Merovingian operatives succeeded in eliminating their enemies, and secured the building for the Merovingian.
- The Merovingian and his operatives interrogated Seraph about his activities, and about the override program. Seraph's answers suggested a larger plot behind the program's movements, and he said it was "remembering." Before he could be questioned further, a metallic coating appeared over his body, and engagement protocols failed throughout the entire Debir area. Without saying a word, Seraph battered his way through the operatives and past the override program, which seemed to have no effect on him. Once outside, he received combat assistance from EPN and Zion operatives, and jumped away into the sky.
- Zionites looking for the cause of blue-pills dropping dead across the city found Danielle Wright, examining a blue-pill whom she addressed by a reference number--0026:05:0149:032--before the blue-pill dropped dead. A red pill trace program run on another such body turned up a pod location at which most of the adjacent pods were empty. Suspecting that Wright was systematically eliminating the people housed in that ring of pods, Zion tried to locate a survivor inside the simulation, but found their home guarded by Machines.
- The Machines surrounded the pod tower with a heavy Sentinel guard, and took one of the surviving occupants of the devastated pod ring, Imelda Kroller, into protective custody after discovering that the biological interface program had moved into her body in the pod, where it took over her somatic nervous system. As Wright closed in on Kroller inside the simulation, the Machines suddenly lost contact with her pod's reporting system; Kroller's RSI said "impossible," then vanished. The Machines reported that her pod had obeyed an unauthorized request to reinitialize her RSI.
- Merovingian operatives used the reference number Wright had let slip to Zion to track down Kroller's pod: the number was Machine pod serial format, with the third part, 149, indicating the ring in which that blue-pill's pod had been situated on the tower, likely the same ring in which Kroller's pod was located. Persephone overrode the Merovingian's plan to hunt down the local pod caretaker program, saying that she, a caretaker program before her exile, would handle it herself. Persephone succeeded in taking control of Kroller's pod, forcing it to relocate Kroller to a safe place inside the simulation, but was heavily damaged by Machine defensive routines while doing so.
- The Merovingian, irked by his wife's headstrong behavior and apparent lack of consideration for her own preservation, received some good news from the General, who reported that his men had located and salvaged an unusual android body from the wreckage of an advanced fighter craft they had come across on their way back from the Machine no-fly zone.
- E Pluribus Neo operatives located and defended a denizen of pod ring 149, Daryl Chester, from Danielle Wright, but after a long chase through the city, during which

Wright's progress was slowed significantly due to attacks by Machine operatives and others, Wright caught up to Daryl and crushed his RSI.

- Cryptos and Veil accompanied Cypherite operatives during some R&R at Club Noir, briefly interrupted by an EPN attack.
- Persephone had Merovingian operatives help her reach a Machine control terminal, where she made another attempt to save Imelda Kroller by manipulating the woman's pod controls. Machine defenses prevented this, however, and Persephone, still very pale from her previous attempt, was wounded by a Machine counter-attack, escaping thanks to valiant defense by some of the operatives. Afterwards, she and the Merovingian held an angry exchange of words in which he accused her of acting foolishly and irresponsibly, and she rejected his callous attitude toward the lives of the humans plugged into the Matrix.
- The Machines, having re-established their connection with Kroller's pod, located her RSI in Club Kaos. Kroller proved unresponsive to all but direct visual stimuli; eventually, operative movements caught her attention, just as Danielle Wright arrived outside the club. Kroller uttered the words "oh god," but followed the body of operatives outside. A savage exchange of hacks between Wright and the operatives followed, with Wright just managing to crush her attackers. Wright then approached Kroller and compressed her RSI, apparently killing her. Wright told the reassembling operatives that by doing so, she had released the interface from Kroller's body, back into the simulation, where she had no doubt she would catch it eventually.
- EPN operatives fought Cypherites, obtaining information about a Cypherite plan to put those bluepills who'd survived Wright's attacks on ring 149 firmly back to sleep, since some of them had begun showing increased signs of rejecting the simulation since the attacks.
- The Machines have their hands full trying to deal with her and protect themselves. The Cypherites, thanks to Cryptos' research, manage to compile a few prototype versions of their override immunity codes, and have some success in using these to protect against Wright's programs.
- The biological interface program's movements through the channels of the simulation gradually become less erratic. Strange text output is found on terminals across the city. This culminates, for the Merovingian, in his own (or the player's, anyway) terminal being overridden, with the words "Wake up" left behind. For Zion, who has received help from the Morpheus simulacrum, their search ends with a terminal displaying the words "Knock, knock" and leaving an open connection...

## Chapter 11.3: Overrides

- The General shows the android body to the Merovingian, says they've completed retrieval, and that it isn't a Machine mechanism.
- Shimada is told that the Kid will be back from the no-fly zone soon; he was injured but will recover. Veil sneaks up on Shimada while she's jacked in, muttering something to herself about looking for the program the Oracle gave Shimada. When surprised by an EPN crew member, Veil pulls Shimada's jack, killing her, and escapes.
- Gray monitors Wright as she continues her disruptive search through the city for the interface program. Gray tells another Agent to avoid Wright, and to find the program.
- Niobe gets a "Wake up" message like the one from the 11.2 crits. This turns "Wake up, Neo," and then a constant stream of "Wake up Wake up Wake up..." Niobe is alarmed, and Ghost speeds away.
- The Machines can't detect the program themselves, but Wright seems to have some means of doing so, so they follow her, running into a disrupted computer, dead bluepill, Accelerated Suits (Hampton gang), and finally Wright in Maribeau, where she says she'll have it soon, and the Machines had better stay out of her way until then. She adds, "The Machines left a gaping security hole in their core programming a long time ago. They were only as perfect as the people who made them."
- The player scouts Wright activity in Hampton, where she's been disrupting things. With help from Nicky G., they find Accelerated Suits, and track down Manager, the Suits boss, in the Historic District, who mentions hearing about a Cypherite in Morrell who's got override countermeasures.
- In Chelsea, a scarred Kid has news of suddenly losing contact with a transmitter they'd left monitoring the Oligarch network line in the no-fly zone. He says the Oligarchs could be on their way to the Machine city and the Matrix. He's also determined not to let Shimada down. The Council thinks the interface program has some central role in all this, and wants it kept out of Wright's hands, to the player catches her trail in Hampton. The operator mentions that the program has used Trinity quotes. They run into Accelerated Suits and then Wright, who says that Zion should be helping her, since she's doing this to put the Matrix in mankind's hands.
- Machine operatives talk to Veil about newfangled Wright Accelerated Programs (tough Exiles/Machines with wireframe overlays). Veil points the player to a Cypherite in Morrell, Neglect, who is distributing anti-override routines the Cypherites, led by Cryptos' research, have been cooking up. Gray says that being able to resist overrides will be necessary if Wright's going to be dealt with. The anti-override routines are consumables protect against override abilities like Deceleration, Runtime spawns, and Signal Jamming for a limited time.
- Merovingian researchers find that the androids have "data structures similar to what we've found on the Oligarch network," so Flood sends the player to hunt for a data match at an Ouroboros office in Vauxton. The Machines took over Ouroboros a while

back, and the player runs into Ouroboros Security and Machines there. Flood says the Machines must have confiscated the data, and sends the player to raid a Machine facility in Maribeau to track it down. The player is ambushed by a Wright Accelerated Program on their way. They capture the data from the Machines, and it does have similarities to the android's hardware. Flood figures the Oligarchs built it. He also mentions that Cypherites think the Wright Accelerated Programs carry valuable data.

- Still trying for the program in Hampton, Zion operatives get some static from a Decelerator and Machinists. They're also ambushed by one of Wright's new Accelerated Programs, and run into more of them around a dead Cypherite. Tyndall mentions rumors of a Cypherite in Morrell, wondering if it's related.
- With Wright closing in on the program in Hampton, Machine operatives battle a tough Wright Accelerated Program, then talk to Cryptos, who speculates on how Wright could be disabled: "As for what may happen if critical damage can be inflicted on her RSI, that I cannot predict. We know that she has co-opted the jack-in protocol utilized by the Oligarchs, and we know, from Halborn's example, that they were to some extent vulnerable both within and without the simulation. Wright, on the other hand, has claimed to be able to enter the Matrix without maintaining an exterior connection. How that could affect the outcome remains unclear." Gray comes through with the coordinates of Wright's position on a rooftop in Hampton (98 131 -216), saying that she's been staying around there, which probably means the interface program is in the vicinity.
- Merovingian operatives go hunting a Machine mainframe in the Park East Gov Building to get real data on the android. There's a tough battle, and they get some help on the mainframe from the Effectuator. In Center Park, the Merv says the data was interesting, as it shows the android was designed to be controlled by a human consciousness--for the Oligarchs to control themselves as a surrogate body? He also wonders what destroyed the ship carrying the android, and speculates that foul play was involved. Persephone is there, still in black and very pale.
- Overrides are keeping the Machines busy, which gives Zion a shot at checking out a burst of override activity in Park East, normally heavily guarded. They find a message ("Soon") which the operator thinks is from the interface program, but while tracing it, they're interrupted by a tough Agent, and the trace is lost. The operative is sent to Ghost in Hampton, who says that he thinks Wright's around there, probably high up, and probably with the program. He's determined to look for her. Tyndall says taking on Wright may be the only option left.
- Wright is found on the Hampton rooftop where Gray said she was, with some tough Accelerated Programs around her. She is eventually defeated, and when she dies a floating gold code ghost figure appears. Its details say "'It's beautiful...'"

## Chapter 12: Trinity?

- The Architect is in his TV room, with Wright, dead on a Hampton rooftop, on the monitor. He asks Gray if the (biological interface) program has been found; Gray says no, but they found Zion looking for it, too. The Architect frowns, then tells him to "prepare for our visitors."
- Ghost lands on a rooftop (supposed to be the rooftop pointed out in the coordinates at the end of the cinematic, Ikebukuro 630 9 -180), looks around, opens a door, goes down dark stairs, opens a door into a dark, mostly empty storage room. Looks around, doesn't see anything, and is just turning to leave as a monitor in a dark corner of the room flicks on and prints out "Ghost."
- Code falls down into a female form next to the monitor. This is the golden code character who appeared when Wright was killed. A halting conversation begins, in which Trinity (which is the name that appears above this character in this subchapter) says "I...didn't know," by which she meant that she didn't know she was a program.
- Agent Pace interrupts the conversation, her gun on Ghost, who steps between her and Trinity. Pace says the program (Trinity) can't survive there, and will be removed, but then she in her turn is interrupted by a bright flash, out of which gleaming male and female forms appear, descending to the ground. They have no clothes, wires, eyeballs, or hair. In missions, it will be found that the male (red) is "Helian," and the female (purple) is "Tesarova," and that they are Oligarchs. Helian is fairly straightforward and serious, although not as blunt as Halborn.
- Pace touches her earpiece, looks frustrated, reluctantly lowers her gun from Ghost's head, and stalks out. Helian looks at Ghost, and asks if he's going to resist, but Ghost says there's no need; H&T realize that Trinity has vanished, and while they look around to find her, Ghost makes a sudden unseen exit as well.
- Helian and Tesarova leave, and the room goes dark. A pause, then Ookami creeps out of the shadows--she's observed the entire scene.
- Ghost stands on the rooftop, looks up at the moon, and finally says Trinity's name.
- Gray sends Machine operatives to Akasaka, scene of the latest sighting of the program. He implies a need to find it before either the Oligarch representatives, Helian and Tesarova, or Zion do. Gray doesn't refer to the program as "Trinity," but the operator discusses it a bit. They find Zionites and a blank computer entry in her recent style (">\_"), but nothing else, and are re-routed to head off Helian and Tesarova, who have arrived in the area, along with Pace. Helian and Tesarova are slightly bemused--although not really surprised--by a human operative working for the Machines. Helian says they're there for the BIP and won't be needing any help getting it. Tesarova says something odd about "the exciting ones" (operatives) "escaping" from the pods, and that this explains "why our entertainment's been so dull lately." Helian mentions they know what happened to Halborn and Carlyne, and that those two were operating independently. He says they (the Oligarchs) have "made adjustments that will ensure our safety from the compromises they allowed to our security" [partially an explanation



for the difference in their appearance from Halborn and Carlyne: Helian and Tesarova are less transparent, and have no wires]. Pace seems a little relieved to have the player there to talk to the Oligarchs, and purposefully speaks aloud to the player so that Helian and Tesarova will overhear, saying that they'll leave their guest in peace.

- On the way out, Machine operatives encounter Satiare, a shoeless female Cypherite boss. She says it would be nice to pop "those pretty new bubbles of theirs" (the Oligarchs), and suggests that the Machines might even have something that could do it, but they probably wouldn't tell the Machinists even if they did, and wouldn't use it themselves. Gray summons the player for their report, concluding that Helian and Tesarova are operating as agents for the Oligarchs, rather than independently like Halborn and Carlyne. He thinks this might cause them to behave a little more levelheadedly, but says it also means the Oligarchs will be watching developments closely. After saying this, he very deliberately states that the Machines do not consider them a threat.
- Flood sends Merovingian operatives into Stamos to find the program (like Gray, he doesn't refer to it as "Trinity," but the operator talks about the identity possibility). They don't find anything besides a computer with ">\_" but Ookami arrives, and "leads" (ie is escorted by the player) to a Manssen location, where they find Tesarova. Tesarova coos over Ookami, calling her the player's "pet," then gets down to business, saying that she just thought she'd mention that there seem to be others nearby who are also trying to find the program; while sort of playing her ditzy blond act, what she says shows that she's aware of a lot of what's going on: what the player's after, what the other orgs are doing around there--and she even takes a veiled swipe at the player's operator. With coordinates from Tesarova, the operator guides the player to a Guinness Lake location, while Flood mentions that there's also this "Helian" Oligarch around, and saying that they'll play Tesarova's "little game," since they don't want to show that they're on to her. Flood also refers to their names as "barbaric." ["Tesarova" is a Czech name, and "Helian" is a Chinese name. Tesarova's "game" in this case was sending the player to intercept Machinists, who appear, from their comments, to have been trying to keep tabs on her. Flood wraps up by asking the player to find four groups of programs they've lost in South Vauxton.
- Tyndall mentions to Zion operatives that Ghost found "the program" by "checking places he'd been with Trinity when they operated together in the Matrix." She sends them to get more details on the Trinity thing from Ghost, who is in an International District room with a computer (">"), convinced that Trinity was just there. He says he doesn't understand how Trinity is the program, but insists that she really is. He guesses that the two strangers he encountered (in the cinematic) were Oligarchs, and says he isn't going to let them or the Machines get Trinity. Tyndall says she trusts Ghost's instinct about "whatever Trinity or the program is now," and reminds the player that the Council had already decided (mentioned in Zion 11.3.1) to do what it could to ensure the program's safety. She sends the player to check a reading in Murasaki, where they find a message on a computer:

"How well do you know yourself?"

Are you sure?

I thought I knew. But this \_"

(The dangling cursor at the end there is a hint that this is probably from Trinity, although the operator doesn't make anything out of it.)

Inbound hostiles are reported nearby, and the player finds Machines and Machine redpills. Tyndall mentions that intel shows the Machines are cooperating with the two Oligarch representatives. After the hostiles are taken care of, Tyndall says that they could use the player's help in Shirakaba, where their teams have been hit by Machines while looking for the program; they've also started picking up override signals there.

- Still in International, Machine operatives deal with some searching Zionites, and are then sent to answer a summons from Helian, who's got a couple of his "Override Function" NPCs with him (whitish-skinned forms similar to Helian and Tesarova, with a mixture of hacker and MA abilities, pretty good accuracy and damage, and high viral defense), and he loans these two NPCs to the operative, suggesting that he's doing this to help the Machine operative deal with the Zionites (he refers to Zionites here as "the other "Awakened"), although the operator and Gray hint that Helian has found he actually needs help from the player. The Override Functions don't talk; H refers to them as "basic" combat programs. The player checks for enemy activity and finds Merovingian redpills. One of them rather obviously pretends to be a Zionite (sort of a play on the Merv knowing that what he's doing is probably going to cheese the Machines off, although he isn't so worried about it as to halt his Oligarch power grab). Gray says a Merv Exile named Azuna is known to have obtained sensitive information on the Oligarch's Matrix activities. Between missions, the player has to go find Azuna, following the mission's hint "northwest Downtown." Azuna is a female lupine with a teal mohawk, and she's placed as a collector NPC on the second sublevel of the Museum dungeon in Creston. The player has to kill some of the Merv-aligned lupines around Azuna (a little farther away from her are some Machine-aligned Override Functions).
- Flood says the Merovingian thinks "exploiting the Oligarch Tesarova's softer side" might get them some juicy override info, and sends the player to collect data from a contact, Azuna, for whom they'd spared no expense and skullduggery to get into a spot where she could get some dirt on Tesarova's Matrix activities. The player heads to the Downtown rendezvous, but Azuna isn't there; instead, there are a couple dead Machines. Flood is annoyed, and sends the player to look for Azuna in her spying location. She isn't there either, but some hostile Override Functions are. In a separate part of this same area, a certain optional and unspecified series of actions will cause Trinity to appear. She does /talkscared, saying:

"I'm not. I'm not what-- God! What have they done?"

Flood says that some checking has shown Azuna has taken cover in the second sublevel of the Creston Heights Museum. Between missions, the player has to kill Machine-aligned Override Functions near Azuna, and trade the tokens they drop to Azuna, who then hands over her intel.

["Azuna" is a corruption of "Asena," a "she-wolf with a sky-blue mane" in Turkic mythology, according to good old Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asena.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asena)]

- Tyndall sends Zion operatives into Downtown, following the trail of data that they think may have come from Trinity (Tyndall is still hedging a bit on the name, and here says "from the interface program--from Trinity"). She gives the names of Helian and Terasova, saying they found them out from "our sources within the Machines". The player finds a computer, activates it (it says ">Yes.\_"), and Trinity appears. She says, "I don't have much time. I don't know what...this means. Before... I thought I died. I was with him... I said goodbye. I don't remember...until-- I don't know how to make it make sense... They're getting close. I have to go."

Tyndall gives the player the location of the intruders, and although she thinks they're Machines on Trinity's tail, they turn out to be Merovingian Exiles. Tyndall thinks this is an indication that the Merv is trying to get in on the Trinity action, and hopes that his machinations with Halborn and Carlyne, which ended up causing a good deal of trouble for the Machines, will at least give the Machines some incentive to act against him. She ends by asking the player to look into an "unusual signal" and override activity in Baldwin Heights.

- Gray says the Merovingian's found out that Helian and Terasova have a "virtual space," and is planning to invade it; this should be stopped so that the Oligarchs aren't "aggravated." The operator mentions that the Merovingian tried hitting on Terasova to get Oligarch programs, but wasn't successful in his advances. Merovingian operatives take out some Exiles and gets a trace running through their computer. In this same area, a certain unspecified and optional sequence of actions will cause Trinity to appear in a side room. She appears upset, even angry, at the situation she's in, doing /talknegative as she says:

"I don't-- I didn't choose this. This can't be--..."

Following the trace, the player runs into heavy Dire Lupine resistance, but in the end gets data that Gray says is about access routes "through 'white hallway' systems." He doesn't have exact coords, but says there seems to be an entry point somewhere high up in north Union Hill. A dead Override Executable NPC was in the room with the lupines/computer. Executables are dark grey humanoids in the same bubble-skin way as Functions and Helian and Terasova.

- Flood says that thanks to the information from Azuna, the Merovingian has been able to meet Terasova. Hints indicate that the meeting has not gone well, possibly because Persephone found out about it. The player finds Persephone and Terasova together. Persephone is still in her "dark" outfit, but her skin is back to its normal healthy hue. Terasova says the Merovingian been showing her interesting things, including the android, which she identifies as "Carlyne's android body." She almost seems genuinely surprised about the Merovingian having it, saying she didn't think she'd see it again "after Carlyne let the podling woman steal his signal." ("The podling woman" was Wright--she jacked Carlyne's signal / android body when Carlyne crumpled just before

she appeared as the wireframed woman in Chapter 11.1, which forced the Merovingian to dump the BIP/Trinity.) All Persephone says is "Only a human can be 'inhuman.'" Past them, the player finds the Merv, who rants a bit about Tesarova laughing at his offers of power in the simulation. He sends the player to contact Flood for a plan B, which involves getting a trace through an Oligarch-occupied computer in order to locate H&T's Matrix power base. The player runs into some of their Functions, and then a hostile Override Executable, who can spawn a small swarm of additional, higher-level Functions to attack the player. Executables have a constant blur FX over their dark bubble body (this sorta causes them to flicker light/dark), and boosted defense and speed, but no actual combat loadout or weapons. Success results in coordinates of an entry point to the Oligarch hideout: 129 223 789, Union Hill. (This is a doorway at the top of one of those skyscrapers with the flying buttresses.)

- Zion operatives respond to an alert from Ghost, who's still been combing International for Trinity. They find him facing Helian and Tesarova, with Helian asking Ghost why he's going after the program. Tesarova coyly interjects that she thinks she knows (wink wink). Ghost doesn't respond to them, and whispers to the player to make sure that Trinity's safe, saying Sparks will have info for them. Tyndall gets the information from Sparks, which is a location where Trinity might have been hiding "from the Oligarch scans." They find an Override Executable there, as well as some Override Functions, but no sign of Trinity. Tyndall, who feels able to refer to her as simply "Trinity" by now, says she thinks they stopped those programs from finding her, but that stopping H&S is going to be tough. She mentions reports of the Merv having got access to some kind of area the Oligarchs have set up, and that they're picking up activity from his operatives on rooftops "at the extreme northeast end of Downtown."
- A teleport from the area referred to in the last missions takes the player into some white hallways, which eventually may spit them out into an interior office space [that is pretty similar to floor 77 of the Government Building in Park East]. It's full of nasty Overrides and Executables with special prizes. The only exit is a rotary telephone on a desk in one of the offices, which teleports the user to a public phone on the north side of the base of the SE tower in Park East.

**Important Note:** *Developer / Game designer Ben Chamberlain, a.k.a Rarebit, announced that he was leaving The Matrix Online after chapter 12.1. It was also announced that the story would not be continued after this and that the game was closing down. Rarebit released his documents and notes for the planned remainder of the story thus far, Chapters 12.2 through the end of Chapter 14. Everything after this point is based on those notes and documents, and could be considered the "official" story of The Matrix Online. Considering this was the intended direction, and that no more story is forthcoming, it is included here for the sake of completion.*

- Helian completes negotiations with the Machines. Helian now pursues the Trinity program, with help from the Machines, and opposition from Zion, EPN, and the Cypherites, who do not think that helping Oligarchs is the way to protect the System.
- The Merovingian, meanwhile, thinks he has convinced Tesarova to capture Trinity for him. He commits his programs to helping track her down. After the attack by Morpheus, he guesses that Seraph may try his hand to protect Trinity as well. He promises Tesarova that he will remove this obstacle for her; he has coded antiSeraphic darts out of Seraph's pinfeathers, carefully collected over the years (there was an old Live Event with Malphas and one of the Seraphim about this). These are given to operatives, who hit Seraph with them in a Live Event. Suddenly weakened, he has to flee, but not before mentioning that preventing the Oligarchs from obtaining the Trinity program was not his intent.
- Even with Machine help, Helian is obstructed by the other organizations, but distracts them sufficiently for Tesarova to capture Trinity. The Merovingian is holding a party to celebrate the capture, when Helian appears, and Tesarova smiles at him: they've been working together this whole time. The Merovingian, aghast, plays the elegantly polite host, and offers Tesarova some cake, which she accepts. The two laugh, and disappear.
- Cypherites are relieved that the Oligarchs are gone. Machines are glad about that, and that they've taken Trinity away, too, but the Ouroboros connection is showing another increase in activity. Zion wants to get Trinity back. EPN is mindful of what the woman told them about keeping the encrypted program safe. The Merovingian is having fits about Tesarova tricking him, and is tracking her progress in the Real (the cake is a tracking program--this was revealed in critical missions somewhere around chapter 8). He finds what he guesses is her or Helian's base, but then her signal turns around and comes back.
- Helian and Tesarova reappear in the Matrix. This time, they're normal RSIs, not wireframes; they're using the Trinity program's interface, and jacking in from human bodies, not androids. This time they've brought hunter-seeker programs to assist them, though. They want to find the Oracle, and have her make some modifications to the program: they want it to be easier to switch bodies, and to interface with their backup mainframes, and so forth.
- Zion puts up a fight. The Machines aren't pleased that they've returned, either, but first try diplomacy with Helian. The Cypherites want the Oligarchs gone.

- The Merovingian, meanwhile, is back to work wooing Tesarova, although this time he's just trying to distract her while his Sentinels and operatives locate and surround her hovercraft. He's about to take it out when another, apparent bluepill, woman appears. She tells him that he won't get anything out of Tesarova unless he makes her leave the Matrix, now: the Trinity program was a trap. When he asks why he should trust her, the woman replies that he should know better than that. The Merovingian forces Tesarova to leave.
- The Oligarch hunter-seeker programs have been following Seraph. Seraph contacts Veil, telling her to bring the encrypted program the Oracle gave her into the Matrix, to a specific location. The Morpheus sim contacts EPN with the same message. Veil arrives first, but Seraph is nowhere to be found. She sees the girl, Sati, flickering for a moment in front of a computer, before disappearing. EPN operatives appear. Just as a message appears on the computer screen, asking them to input their halves of the encrypted program, the Oligarch hunter-seekers attack. A battle ensues, but eventually both parts of the program are input, and the hunter-seekers stop swarming in. Later, a Machine party sent to meet Helian finds his inert body.

## Chapter 13: Uprising

- Machines and the Cypherites become determined to take advantage of the Oligarchs downtime to remove their control of the Machine core once and for all. The Machines allow operatives into mainframe subroutines, who encounter hostile Oligarch subroutines, in the guise of gray-suited "clerk" programs.
- The Merovingian sees an opportunity and orders the Trainman to access the Machines mainframe so that he can gain access to Trinity and gain leverage and power. He suspects that such action may garner the attention of the Oracle, who he suspects is still alive somewhere and manipulating things.
- Zion sees this as an opportunity to both get into the Machine mainframe and get Trinity back. They find that it is not as easy as they thought, though, and they find themselves blocked at every turn.
- The Trainman brings the Oracle back into the Matrix from the Machine mainframes, where she had been restored from backup.
- The Oracle is able to grant Zion operatives access to the Machine mainframe. Zion uses this opportunity to seek out Trinity.
- The Oligarchs counter-attack the Machines, sooner than expected, through the network and into the mainframe.
- While in the Machine mainframe, Zion operatives discover the coordinates for Helian and other Oligarchs' locations. This information is transferred to EPN, who in turn take a hovercraft fleet to Helian's base of operations to free Trinity.
- The Machines and their operatives form stiff resistance to the Oligarchs attempts at infiltrating the Machine mainframe.
- Zion operatives join the Oligarch/Machine fighting within the mainframe. Trinity makes contact through the network, but she's confined at Helian's in the Real.
- The Machines begin to gain the upper-hand against the Oligarchy routines in the mainframe.

## Chapter 14: Freedom

- The battle within the Machine mainframe becomes fierce, as the Oligarchy subroutines begin to make headway towards the Source, which appear as golden hallways.
- The Oligarchs arrive at the Machine city and jack into the Matrix. Once in, they initiate overrides which white out the simulation's sky. This begins to affect the bluepill population and cause civilian casualties. As bluepills die in their pods, the Machines begin losing power.
- The fighting in the mainframe is approaching the Source, and the Machines find themselves losing ground. Machines begin to have control problems, as they can't remove the Oligarchy root control, and this is hindering their attempts at resistance. EPN arrives at Helian's domain, and finds most of his defenses are down. EPN is successful in freeing Trinity into the an access port and into the Machine network.
- In an attempt to force the Machines to capitulate, the Oligarchs begin shutting down the pods. Within the Matrix, the Oligarchy overrides are causing the sunsets to get longer. Sati attempts to fight it but has great difficulty. The Matrix begins to break down and is in danger of a catastrophic crash.
- The Oracle reveals to operatives that the Oligarchy's attack is more than just against the Machines or the Matrix, but against the human subconscious. She says that the Matrix is more than just Machine code- it runs on and is in large part shaped by manipulated human brains. In the end, she reveals it will take a human to free it.
- Trinity is able to enter the Source, but is unable to hack and remove the Oligarch's root control programs.
- The Machines allow a human operative to enter the Souce. The operative and Trinity merge, activating a black room which eventually turns back into the White Room of the Source. This act allows the Matrix to be reset. The Oligarch root control is finally removed, and the Machines are freed from fear of Oligarch interference.
- As a result of the cooperation, the Machines and Humans come to a new understanding and agreement. Any newborn humans will be raised in a new Matrix where they can shape their own surroundings, cared for by the Machines. The old humans will remain in the old Matrix, and a new era of co-existence begins...



## Appendix

### A. Dramatis Personae

#### Primary Characters

##### Niobe



Niobe has a fearlessness that imbues her with charisma. She is fated to be a leader in the postwar Matrix under the new rules. However, rules are often tested and broken, and people are killed in the process. A woman like Niobe cannot let that pass.

Zion's intrepid field commander directs her forces aggressively. Bearing the personal scars of past betrayals, Niobe places what little faith she has left in actions, not words.

##### Ghost



First Mate of Niobe's hovercraft, Zion's philosopher-warrior, though haunted by shades of the past, has proven himself to be a formidable fighter, and an inspiring leader.

##### Anome



Tenacious and competitive, Anome gets the job done--one way or the other. Whether it's the right job is another question. He is high-tempered, and prone to shouting when things don't go his way--which is often.

Anome wound up betraying Zion when he shot Niobe and his people stole the special code vials from the General. In consuming the vials, Anome and his people gained powers beyond any redpill. They called themselves Unlimit.

### **Colt**

Promoted to Captain at the same time that his former Captain, Roland, was promoted to Zion Commander, Colt now plays by his own rules.

### **Tyndall**



A tall Icelandic beauty, all cheekbones and snowy blond hair, Tyndall addresses operatives as "Warrior," and speaks constantly of vigilance and preparedness. She tries hard to imbue missions with nobility, and encourages you to be your best. Her manner is practiced and professional, but encouraging. She often ends conversations with inspirational phrases.

### **The Oracle**



A program who is seen as a guide to the Zionites, the Oracle was the one to speak of a prophecy and an anomaly who would end the war by reaching the source. She has an ability to read future events in the Matrix, though it is somewhat limited, and she is reticent to give straight answers to questions about the future. She often claims that "we cannot see beyond the choices we do not understand."

The Oracle is the mother of the Matrix, and it was she who discovered the need for choice in order

for the illusion to work. She realizes that the best way for both worlds to progress is together.

## The Architect



His eyes hold yours by sheer strength of purpose. The precise intonation of multisyllabic words reveals an intensely logical intellect.

This man's eyes hold yours by sheer strength of purpose. His frequent use of multisyllabic words reveals a keen intellect, and perhaps a bit of an urge to show it off.

The designer of the Matrix.

## Agent Gray



Selected to interface with humans who the Machines have determined may assist in the maintenance of the Matrix simulation, his normally aloof manner has been tempered somewhat by close interaction with Redpills.

Agent Gray was selected to act as recruiter and Controller for human beings that the Machines believe can assist them in controlling the Matrix. Like all Agents he is normally dispassionate and aloof, with a precise manner of speaking, but

his forced dealings with humans have left him with somewhat more understanding of them than most Agents.

Selected by the Machines as the program in charge of directing human operatives in the Matrix simulation, Gray's extensive dealings with humans have left him with more character quirks than one usually expects to find in an Agent of the System.

## Agent Pace



Simultaneously the most professional and the most beautiful-looking program most Redpills have ever seen, Agent Pace embodies the more...personable image of the modern Machine organization. But rest assured, her logic routines are calculating every possibility even as her warm Italian accent works its magic on the senses of susceptible humans.

Agent Pace embodies the more...personable image of the modern Machine organization. Rest assured, however, that her logic routines are calculating every possibility even as her warm northern Italian accent works its magic on the senses of susceptible humans.

A new kind of human liaison program.

## The Merovingian



The Merovingian is the hedonistic crime lord of the Matrix. He is selfish, and self-interested, with "business concerns" that range from harboring Exiles to hoarding rare illegal codes and



eventually taking over sections of the Matrix. He has remained in power through several iterations of the Matrix, and claims to have faced off with Neo's predecessors and survived.

The Merovingian's control of events in the Matrix is far-reaching, but not complete. He is still an Exile, and still must fear the Machines, though he would never admit it. His unique assets include a construct called the Mobil Avenue station - a place between the Machine City and the Matrix that programs can use as a secret conduit to reach the Matrix if they are to become Exiles. Expatriate programs often find themselves indebted to the Merovingian when they reach the Matrix, and must serve him in return for their passage.

In addition, some Exiles have given their children over to the Merovingian at Mobil Avenue, sending them into the Matrix rather than allow their code to be deleted in the Source. These Exile orphans usually end up at the L'Ecole de la Tour--an elite boarding school run by his organization, where Exile children are schooled in academics, culture, business, and combat.

Graduates of "the Tower" (as the students call it) often go on to become his most effective and trusted operatives; valuable assets to his organization.

The Merovingian is married to Persephone, an Exile who he once coveted enough to force to his side through trickery, but whom he now cheats on regularly. Their relationship has deteriorated greatly, but the Merovingian is trapped by his own past deeds into spending at least half of the year with Persephone in residence at his Chateau.

The Merovingian is not an easy man to see, but he can most often be encountered at his restaurant, La Vrai, or at the ultra-exclusive Hel Club, both located Downtown.

## Persephone



The Merovingian's wife. She is a program and an exile as well. Her sensual attractions may have been tied to her original function; bodies in the pods had to reproduce somehow, and perhaps she prompted certain necessary physiological events. She is preoccupied with love in all its dimensions. Small wonder the Merovingian had to possess her, even if he has a wide-ranging appetite.

## Flood



Flood assigns missions for the Merovingian. He's clad in flamboyantly chic Italian couture, his hair bleached, his features androgynous. He's sassy and sarcastic. He laces his instructions with qualifiers that suggest you're incompetent ("if you're able," "should you astonish everyone and get that far," etc.). He also hints that his servitude to the Merovingian grates, and that he has better things planned. His catchphrase: "Do we understand? We do."

## Malphas



Although he is leader of the Blood-Drinkers, and the Merovingian's chief intelligence officer, no one can say what this proud, brooding Exile's goals really are.

It is obvious from this man's extremely pallid, almost corpse-like complexion, that if he ventures outside, he does so almost exclusively at the darkest hour. His extravagant suit, trimmed with scarlet, indicates high rank in the Merovingian's organization.

Malphas considers himself an aristocrat among blood-drinkers.

When

the "fairytale" version of the Matrix was reset he made a deal with the Merovingian, bringing many of the other "monstrous" Exiles with him into the Frenchmen's employ.

## Ookami



One of the Merovingian's chief lieutenants, and leader of the Lupines.

To the uninitiated, Ookami's heavily lidded eyes might suggest the wiles of an arch-seductress. Her Lupine pack, however, knows that she assumes this expression as she imagines herself pouncing on her victim, burying her exquisitely sharp claws in their entrails.

## The Trainman



This unkempt and wild-looking man ferries programs between the Matrix and the Machine mainframes.

## Beirn



One of Anome's lieutenants, Beirn makes no attempt to hide his obsession with the Merovingian's wife, Persephone

After gaining great power from stolen cheat codes, Beirn was captured and preserved by the Merovingian's wife, Persephone. His obsession with her has made him a willing- and dangerous--captive. His human form having long since perished, Beirn is now more Exile than man.

This man appears slightly preoccupied.



## The General



Eyes narrowed and teeth clenched, the General pursues his goal with brutal efficiency. A master tactician and keen analyst, he is seldom taken by surprise. The General was the Sentinel program who led the deadly Machine assault on the Zion dock at the end of the war. When told to stand down his attack on Zion so that the Machines could see if Neo would be successful in defeating Smith, the General refused, and was relieved of his duties. Frustrated, without purpose, and knowing that only deletion awaited him, the General and his loyal Sentinels fled into the Matrix.

## The Kid



The first self-substantiated human, the young man known as "The Kid" was a fanatic follower of Neo, even as a bluepill. The death of his idol, and of Morpheus, left the Kid in search of a purpose.

## Shimada



This young woman's slow, heavy accent and tendency to use flowery metaphors reflect the depth of her dedication to Neo's ideals of self-awareness, freedom, and peace. She has been a friend of the Kid since Neo brought him back to Zion.

## Cryptos



This opulently dressed man radiates power and charisma. The locket around his neck contains a blue pill.

Seraph attempted to remove the Machine program that had been imprinted on this former staunch Zionite, but the Machine and the man proved to be inextricably linked. The resulting fusion radiates immense power of a code type never seen before.

Gold code forces his eyes wide.

## Veil



This dark, statuesque, and beautiful woman somehow manages to appear elusive, even when staring you directly in the face. Try as you might, you can't quite get a good look at her eyes.

## A. Neighborhood Contacts

Throughout Megacity are NPCs which are called “Contacts.” Each contact will dole out five missions for you, often with a theme or storyline attached to them. Many of the Contacts are Exile programs, some of which are family. Contacts make for an excellent source of sidestory material in *The Matrix Online* and some take part in the larger ongoing story. Here are the contacts and their side stories.

### **Lotus**

Location: Jurong, Jade Room, club

Lotus is an Exile that has taken on the role of a lounge singer in the Jade Room, whispering sweet ballads and belting out tunes. Fans from all over the city come to the Jade Room just to see her.

Lotus speaks softly but directly, and a fair number of Redpills consider her to be a source of information and even freelance employment. Unlike many Exiles, Lotus has garnered a certain degree of trust from the Redpills that have had dealings with her. However, like all Exiles, she certainly has her own agenda.

She's never been caught in an intentional lie, but Lotus often does withhold information, and she has a bad habit of overestimating the abilities of those she hires.

#### **Mission 01: Carry a Tune**

This is fairly straightforward; I was tasked with carrying a music CD from Bouzerah to Minnie. Minnie, it turns out, has been seriously injured during a fight with enemies of Lotus, and needs the power of Lotus' compositions, Track 9 in particular, which possess a healing effect. This is a very creative idea; it would be good to see more done with imaginative notions like this.

#### **Mission 02: Change of Tune**

In this Mission, initially quite similar to the first, you recover an illegal copy of Lotus' music from a server and take it to someone who needs its palliative effects. However, this copy has been tainted, so instead of healing it does something quite different! You must stop it before too much harm is done. This time, Lotus is angry! And who wouldn't blame her? It's as if you put on a CD labeled Tracey Chapman, and out comes Eminem!

#### **Mission 03: Dissonance**

You plant a bug (perhaps using the Sony rootkit!), and then find the thieves who have stolen the mix. You find them and get the tape. But others need its healing immediately, and you must quickly get it to them.

### **Mission 04: Suicide Notes**

Lotus has heard of some experimental work being done with the neural network effects of music, and needs you to obtain some samples for her. These are then delivered to some other appreciative exiles, who don't show the congenial response you might expect.

### **Mission 05: Crescendo**

This Mission must be a record industry executive's fantasy. Together with a team of Lotus' operatives, you must overcome a group which has been pirating Lotus' work. "You're the only one I can count on" Lotus told me breathlessly. There is a crunch with Blood Drunks, and many a /throat gesture. When the tape has been put on, one burly Elite Guard blurts "I like flowers" (apparently some mods in some games take their inspiration from the elite guards- go figure!). In addition to eliminating the pirates, you must reboot their server.

At the end the cryptic Lotus gushed to me, "You've exceeded my expectations again, Sugaree. There's something special about you, I just cannot put my finger on it". I wish I could say the same about this suite of missions. Granted, my expectations were so inflamed with anticipation that perhaps no one could have satisfied me. But more feedback from Lotus during the Missiones would have been nice. And more backstory would have been nice: why people were stealing her music, what her goals were, her relations with other exiles, etc. The textual allusions to music, mostly in the mission titles, were witty. If the designers had actually, you know, used some special music for these Missiones (just two or three five-second segments), the effect would have been delightful. Also, since the story brims with parallels to the music industry's efforts to squelch music sharing, some more direct allusions, ironic or heartfelt, would have been good.

## Indigo

Location: Guinness Lake (Westview)



As the eldest and most powerful of the siblings, Indigo is the master of Club Dante, a popular nightclub and hangout in the Guinness Lake neighborhood. Indigo is interested in amassing and consolidating power for an eventual attempt to usurp his father's position. He has operated cooperatively with Dame White for the most part, and is generally believed to be "Mother's favorite" by the rest of the family.

Indigo often enlists his siblings as pawns in his plans, which they hate, but tolerate because Indigo can help them in their efforts to thwart the other siblings. This allows Indigo to keep his siblings at each other's throats and continually weak, simply by shifting his favor from one to the other (a technique he no doubt learned from his parents). Indigo has a frightening chill demeanor, and is almost impossible to agitate.

### 1. Interference

The classic first mish: go and step on my rival's schemes. But in this case there is a wicked family twist. Indigo's brother, Grisaille, is up to some couriering mischief in Indigo's territory: blitz it and get a package from the courier! There's some witty dialog from Grisaille's troops, and some engaging fighting even after you drop it off with one of Indigo's folks. And at the end, the great Indigo himself weighs in on your side: "Hm. It appears at least some of the stories about you are true." Well, thanks for the vote of confidence, buddy!

Notice, by the way, how even the run-of-the-mill interference mission gets much more interesting when there is a family angle to it. Imagine if in the future, fighting broke out among the Indigo family to get some artifact or please some person, and various organizations needed to get involved. When there're personalities involved, the adventure writes itself.

### 2. Spyware

Remember the package you just captured? Well, now you return it to one of Grisaille's men who is really working for Indigo. Got all that?

Your contact says "Let's see...medium height, weird clothes, kind of stupid-looking... yep, you must be the courier Indigo described". "Come on, take the package. Geez, maybe you really are as dumb as you look." Really, I could feel the love!

When I dropped off the package, Rocky, the recipient, paid me off by directing his men to shoot at me. Yes, it's great when we're all on the same page! This was kind of a disappointment, but Indigo was thrilled at how well his "brilliant plan" worked out, and crowed about showing it to his mother sometime. Like she has nothing else to think about!

### **3. Pulling the Trigger**

Indigo has another man inside Grisaille's organization, and this one seems to be holding out. Our mission is to pay a courtesy call, and make sure he understands where his interests lie.

At the site, my operator told me he thought this should be an easy mish. I looked up at the objectives (kill any hostile guards) and thought differently.

And, really, how could it be otherwise? The contact resists, the guards attack, and I slay. When the dust has settled, the contact swears tearfully to never hold back on Indigo, and the data has been delivered. I scowled at him as I left so he knew I would remember him.

### **4. Pegged**

By the way, did you know that the Guinness Lakes Reservoir is a strategic asset? And that Indigo controls it? And "that bastard" Grisaille wants it? Read on! So, once more into the breach. Go, fight, get data. But there's more. The data must be taken to a reporter for Network Media as an anonymous informant without answering her questions. Oddly, two of Grisaille's toughs show up in her kitchen (!) looking for trouble when you arrive. According to my notes, she was wearing a chef's stovepipe hat; perhaps she was the food editor, looking to transfer to the local news beat.... More oddly, she ignores them to challenge you about where you got the scoop (!). At the end, Indigo is pleased that Grisaille's latest daffy scheme will soon be tabloid fodder. Poor Grisaille! How will I face him when I go to the next Sirens party at the Succubus?

Lots and lots of hiking for this mish, never a good thing. But the ingenuity in Indigo's plan was laudable. And the reporter could be a fine continuing character, and become a mission contact in her own right, though as a bluepill, not as a Neighborhood Exile contact such as the Newsie. They have a natural competition, and there is a natural motivation for more story development.

### **5. Gang Rumble**

You might think that there is no such thing as bad publicity, but Grisaille differs. Now he is on an angry roll, and has contracted with Amber for some backup to take the fight to Indigo. Grisaille's "Crow Bars" and Amber's "ASPs" will be the muscle in this. In response, the dour Indigo wants you to lead his folks into battle. So far, so great!! However, when you rendezvous with them, you discover that Indigo has neglected his

logistics, and they have arrived without ammunition! Major d'oh! And they are looking to you for help!

This was exceptionally tough on solo, since the enemies attack in force, and by the time I killed one and got the ammo, I was dead. And again. And again. Eventually I slipped past the sleezes and skanks and got the ammo to Indigo's guys, who promptly mopped the floor with the Crow Bars and ASPs (mostly because I had already severely depleted their ranks).

## Molly-B

Location: Moriah, Slums



Molly-B is the "sweet young thing" of the Elements. She presents the picture of civility, dressed in a flower-pattern 1950's-style dress. Molly-B has taken it upon herself to try to curb the more unruly behaviors of the other Elements, or repair their transgressions when she can. Because she's not as ruthless as the others in her bid for power, she is significantly weaker than the others, and thus her activities have not caused significant damage yet. Molly-B feels protective of the other Elements, as they do of her, in spite of their differing viewpoints. None of them can imagine hurting Molly-B, no matter what other repugnant business they may be into, and no matter what she might do to their plans. She is their conscience. That doesn't mean they won't strike at her powerbase, though. Argon makes her heart go flip-flop, but she's well aware of what kind of man he is, and would never consent to be with him.

### 1. Saving Blue

An interesting first mission: a self-actualizing bluepill needs to be protected. Then I groaned when I realized it was an escort mish! As I reluctantly stepped into the blue's apartment, she jumped up from her lonely Chinese takeout and Oprah rerun, and cried, "I've seen you before! I knew you were coming to save me! .... You are my savior!" I told her to take her time, that it was the last good meal she would ever have. Other than that I was encouraging, and got her safely to her destination, decommissioning a good number of Exiles along the way. Molly B. was pleased; I could see I had won her trust: "Thanks for taking care of that for me, Sugaree. You're a keeper." For sure!

### 2. The Prelude

"The Matrix is still an enigma to you. I can sense your inner turmoil, even if you deny it." I am the last person to deny this, and appreciated someone who could sense how I felt. I sighed deeply as I read through the mission description. I am asked to protect someone, who has an important role to play in the future. This reminded me a little of Madame T.'s missions downtown.

For such a pacific mission, this one started out with a bang.

While I was still reading through the mission description, I came under attack! And as I jumped away to heal, I could see a malevolent little red dot following far, far below, waiting for another bite. This did little for my inner turmoil. The escort component of the



mission goes well, as long as you take care to kill everything between you and the destination before leading the principal from the building.

Eventually I got her to the destination, and a woman looking a lot like Molly B. took her over for me. I felt puzzled as I left, wondering how in a world where everything begins with choice, one could see the future at all. Molly B.'s warm voice interrupted my reveries: "Your actions shall reap rewards you cannot yet know." As I start doing my taxes this week, I'll bear this in mind....

### **3. No Go Boom**

Argon has some characteristically destructive plan which needs Molly B.'s intervention. This mission takes the form of confiscating four detonators disguised as cell phones, each secreted within a different box in one of Argon's offices. This can be done without killing everyone there, but uncompromising slaughter does make things more convenient. When you are done at this single location, Moll B. sends praise your way: "Your services have saved innocent lives, Sugaree". And scored some coin and xps along the way! **4. Data Points**

"Silver is so obsessed with the perfection of his creations that he often cannot understand the long-range implications of what he is building" So we have to disrupt them." Escort a scientist associate of Molly's to plant false data. Getting her there safely takes some serious escorting skill. On the other hand, once you reach Silver's research site, it turns out that there are no guards and no locks! Go figure! And then when you are done, the scientists elaborately yawns and says she will find her own way out and no further escort is necessary. She didn't have to say that twice!

### **5. Grab the Boom**

After absconding with Argon's detonators, now we return to finish the job and steal his explosives! But we are not alone for this mission; the bluepill we escorted earlier has grown into a capable 50th level partner for us (What? Three hours to 50? Someone ccr this scheming sploiter!!!) Interestingly, the building she is in is surrounded not just by the area's indigenous Crossbones, but by a pair of Furies as well!

She turns out to be a mixed blessing. Twice she pulled me into fight I wanted to avoid. But on the other hand, she did some great buffing for me as well. And the mobs didn't dare even look at her! Once you have her, all you need to do is get some cardkeys, and then break into Argon's storage center and kill all his guards. But without injuring the bystanders. Molly B has a team who will move in to do the rest, i.e., actually get the explosives. I left my protégé in the elevator while I did the killing; I did not want to risk her being injured, and I did not want to risk her witnessing me kill any bystanders who got in my way.

## Sammy "Lilac" Wien

Location: Lamar (Downtown)



Sammy is a big man with big appetites. He can often be found at The Vault, nattily dressed in his trademark color. His form, mannerisms and presence are only slightly out of place in his environment. Like the other buildings of Lamar, Sammy appears to be from a time past, a bygone era, when deals were sealed with a word and a handshake. Overtly, his history is pretty shady, and he seems to like it that way. Everyone knows who he is, and gives him a wide berth and a lot of respect. His methods are old-fashioned but effective, and his living enemies are few.

Sammy is comfortable in his neighborhood, and will typically try to hire Redpills to assist in maintaining his position of luxury and power. He is not above putting Redpills in conflict with his gang - he justifies it as a training exercise for his boys, and as a test of strength for the Redpill. Sammy is not entirely trustworthy, however, he will not endanger his position by sending known operatives of other factions into suicide missions. Instead, he may add a task or two to a mission in order to use a Redpill's special talents to his own ends.

### 1. Odd Jobs

His consigliere tells him I'm good and he needs a package delivered. Someone tries to cut in and hijack the delivery. Does this sound familiar, or what? Well, it turns out this is a test. I pass it and he says to come back for some real work. In case I had not noticed, my operator tells me he is still a very dangerous program. Thanks, but isn't this the kind of thing you should hear before taking on an assignment? The Operator seemed quiescent and passive for these mission suite; maybe he was off playing Second Life or something.

### 2. Cleaning House

The "real work". Almost half a dozen street gangs have been at each other's throats, and Sammy wants to put an end to it. As a preparatory step to arranging a meeting, he needs you to check out a site for the talkfest. Alas! It turns out a sixth gang, the Bookwyrms, is there waiting to cause trouble. Kill three of them and you're done! For a mission on Hard setting, I was surprised that so few were thrown at me, and that they waited separately in different rooms for me to defeat them piecemeal. Maybe this was the Classics Illustrated version of the Bookwyrms?

### **3. The Exchange**

The Suits are holding a White Security gang member hostage, and the White Security folks have a disk they stole from the Suits. Sammy tasks you with arranging the exchange. I'll admit I have extreme nerves about anything resembling an escort mission. Happily, though, the White Security hostage is dead, and you don't need to escort him anywhere! Just kill everyone, take back the disk, and drop it off with one of Sammy's folks.

There were many neat touches about this one. I spoke with the White Security folks, and one looked at me and answered "Nice shoes", and then burst out laughing! (Nice foreshadowing, as we see at the end.) Sammy's cut-out at the end shakes his head commenting about these stupid squabbling gangs. I love touches like this.

### **4. Keep the Peace**

Someone once said that the best way to achieve peace is to kill all the bad people, and that's exactly what you do here. First the Shades and then the Assassins. When I arrived at the third site, spattered with blood and smelling like a wicked hacker, the third group decided to be more accommodating. Sammy approvingly observes at the end:

"They fear you, Sugaree. That's the most valuable asset you can have in business." I purred in satisfaction.

### **5. Shell Game**

Now the five-way negotiation is all set to begin! Three gang representatives are already waiting impatiently, and you need to escort two more to the confab. Strangely, this twopart escort mish is trouble-free! I kept expecting attacks from mobs, from lobby guards, from bystanders, from spontaneously-generating attackers, and from UFOs. But nothing happened. Until I got everyone together, that is. Then you discover that not everyone wants peace as much as Sammy does. Maybe they just don't fear him enough...

## Mandarin

Location: Lucero Point (Westview)



Second youngest of the siblings, Mandarin is a spoiled brat prone to rants to Dame White and Mr. Black about his siblings treatment of him. Neither of his parents really care, but it's a convenient excuse for punishing someone on occasion, and they know Mandarin is the most likely to tattletale on his siblings when they are planning something against their parents. Mandarin is seen as rather a dim bulb by his siblings, but actually has a shrewd and devious (if intensely selfish) mind. He is absurdly fixated on creature comforts, gorging himself in rich fabrics that he is ill equipped to appreciate. He lacks even the rudiments of style or grace.

### 1. Angels and Daemons

In this first mission, once again someone wants rare data. However, "I can't spare any of my own people. I've always found you reddies to be an eager sort." We first seek Taylot Yamin, a librarian program who is good at tracking down things. As the Operator tells us, "nearly every string of inanimate code passes through her systems at some point". Sounds like a good person to get to know! I looked forward to a awesome networking opportunity.

It was not to be. I got to the librarian's apartment, but it was filled with attacking simulacra. No guiding hand is apparent. Yamin is nowhere to be found, but someone else is, one Elwood Meritel, or something like that. He refuses to emerge from the room until the simulacra are all gone. He's such a wuss! And he knows nothing! Yamin seems to have disappeared. The big mystery is twofold: Who killed the simulacra in the room with the wuss (check for a CD)? And what happened to Yamin? Yamin never turned up, and this absence was never noted by operator or exile, so I assume it to be a mission blemish.

We track down the simulacra to on Aitken, a 50th level master of coding. After I decommissioned his minions, he was very amenable, and agreed to take me to the storehouse where Mandarin's stuff has been placed. A few of the local thugs attacked us, but Aitken easily withstood them (a nice change!), and I easily dispatched them.

Aitken brings us to the storehouse, and unlocks for us the information Mandarin wants. One room is locked and needs the Pick Lock ability and tool, neither of which I brought to the party; nonetheless I was able to complete the mission; opening the door was not necessary for mission objectives completion. Once everything is over, then when I

checked out Aitken, I had the option of fighting with him! I couldn't resist, and put a couple of slugs into him to remember me by. But I didn't kill him. I swear! As I moped my way to the elevator, Mandarin told me "You're not bad for a reddie. Come back soon and I'll have another job for you".

Mysteries: Where was the ostensible librarian? Editing blemish? Who killed the simulacrum in the same room with the cowering Elwood? What was going on with the locked room which was superfluous to mission success? What was the significance of being able to shoot Aitken at the end?

## **2. Broken Connection**

One of Mandarin's contacts broke off contact in mid-call; see what's going on. Seems fairly straightforward. Oh, there's a data disk that he wants retrieved. Everyone you were looking for is dead, and Mandarin instructs you to go ahead and kill everyone left there. You find out that the contact owed money to the folks who killed him. Guess this explains why he was in a hurry for me to pay him, Mandarin glumly noted. So, anyway, I found a CD that has to be dropped off with Arachne. When I arrived, I mistakenly spoke to Ananke, who gave me the warm greeting, "Talk to Arachne and get out. We were busy, you know." And a few seconds later, "Aren't you done yet?" Arachne is much better when I give him the CD: "Awesome. You can leave. NOW." Mandarin was a serene island of warmth: "Excellent! The artifact is almost within my grasp! Uhh, I mean, you did a good job".

Good news! This mission ends up right next to the same building as Mandarin's club!

## **3. Far From Home**

More artifact mania. "My stupid, stupid, STUPID sister is nosing around after my artifact. Amber just wants what belongs to ME!" To distract Amber, I was sent to kill some of her men, and send the head of their leader to one of her chief lieutenants. Unfortunately, when you kill the target, and "get his head" there is still a head on the figure lying on the ground. When I arrived at the dumpy building used by Amber's folks, I was surprised to see an Agent accosting me! Does Amber have contacts I did not know about? The agent asked if I had an appointment!! Perhaps it was just someone wearing an agent disguise? The advisor was impressed with my delivery: "What's this? OH GOD! It's Adzhimushdjaj! You animal! What have you done?" I thought that would have been pretty clear. At the end, Mandarin was pleased. "Nice application of violence, Sugaree. That's what I pay you for." And we end up right next to his club again!!

Being accosted by an apparent Agent while doing an Exile's bidding was counterintuitive. So was the head on the headless figure, especially since all one had to do for the right effect was have the target fall so his "head" was inside the wall, giving the impression of headlessness.

## **4. Flutter Away, Little Bird**

Mockingbird (the artifact magnet) has some information about Mandarin's artifact of interest. As he puts it, "Mockingbird thinks she knows everything about artifacts. She's all superior with her talk talk talk." This is reasonably straightforward, and soon you end up with a business card. That's it! The most interesting part of this mission took place at the drop-off. Two other exiles interrogated me. One asked me why humans reject the Matrix, and then followed this up with "Like it or not, we programs are a species capable of free thought and feeling. Think about that next time you take an action that harms the Matrix." I'm a Machinist! Why am I getting this lecture! After the drop-off, Mandarin affirms, "Very very, very good. We're almost there!"

## **5. Compression Artifact**

The artifact Mandarin so craves is hidden in a crate at a warehouse; we need to find out which one. This involves two locales. The first warehouse eventually yields the location; the second yields the artifact. The exile holding it, Nightingale, reluctantly turns it over, with a stern warning that this is not over. It turns out that the artifact is simply some candy from a previous iteration of the Matrix. Candy! More detail, and a description, would have been wonderful for this: the color, shape, form, and texture, not to mention the taste! Oddly enough, once the handoff was done, I had the option of shooting at Nightingale or fighting with her. I took a few shots at her to let her know I wasn't scared. Then I ran off to give the artifact with a contact, who remarked, "After he is presented with this gift, perhaps The Merovingian will finally forgive Mandarin." The meaning of the mission title is not clear, unless it somehow refers to the candy?

Mandarin made no mention of this when he said "Thank you, Sugaree. I cannot thank you enough for recovering this artifact". But people often hide their true motivations, treat big things small, and small things big, so this was not a huge surprise.

## Grace

Location: Furihata (International)



Grace was once a Warrior of Zion. Today she carves out an existence for herself in the Matrix, assigned the unenviable task of keeping tabs on the Silver Dragons. Commander Lock is concerned that the Silver Dragons' activities will shatter the truce negotiated by Neo, and Grace knows the group well.

Grace met an Exile named Long in the Matrix, and allowed herself to become involved with him. Of course she kept the affair a secret, knowing that no one would have approved. She thought she was in love, but Long wanted more than just survival. He used their relationship to find and recruit Redpills into his gang.

When she discovered his activities, their love turned to hate. Since that time, Grace has devoted herself to stopping Long and his supporters and will let nothing stand in her way, not even official orders from Zion. She has not reported in for some time, apparently having found another broadcast point to enter the Matrix.

Regardless of her past mistakes, Grace is a consummate professional and insists on the same level of professionalism in those she deals with. She is known to hire mercenary operatives of any association to carry out tasks for her.

### 1. Hell hath No Fury

Grace seeks to penetrate the Silver Dragons organization through you. You will achieve this through successfully completing a mission for them. This task is to kill an enemy of theirs, one Arabis. This is easily done, and you are soon accepted into the Silver Dragons organization. You have, in effect, been blooded. At the end you discover that Arabis was a well-known software security engineer, who specialized in the detection of malicious software. This was one nice touch- when resisting me he used hacker attacks. The Silver Dragons, as we shall see, have a pronounced sense of humor; my Dragons contact initially gave me a folder with the identity of my target, and I saw my own name! She got a good laugh out of this, and soon directed me to a nearby computer which held the information I needed. This was an interesting feature- Exiles with a sense of humor.

### 2. Inside the Action

This seems simple. Pick up a disk, take it to an exile with information Grace desired. The site for the pickup was a Zionist extraction point, a nice nod to Grace's

background. Several redpills there, allied with Grace, shared misgivings with each other about the wisdom of this project. I felt reassured. Then I went to drop off the information with one Zyskin, a blood-drinker-looking sort of guy with four or five burly bodyguards. Prast, one of Grace's staff, was there to help. After I dropped off the information and prepared to leave, she revealed she was a captive now, and appealed to me for help. I did, and soon all lay waste around me. With this part of the mish screwed, I was told to drop off Prast, and took her to a safehouse. "Safe" house might not be the right word for it though, since the folks there started speculating on the terrible things Grace had in mind for those who screwed up missions.... "Hah! I heard that she's going to make her clean her hovercraft with a toothbrush", and "Hah! She's in for a world of hurt, that's for sure!" I bid Prast a fond farewell, put her out of my mind, pocketed my consultant's fee, and was on my way.

### **3. Second Time Around**

After intervening to rescue Prast last time, there seems to be some uncertainty in the Dragons about where my loyalties lie. In this mission, I kill an enemy gang leader, making sure to leave a witness so the word gets around. This proved easier than I thought; even my operator commented that maybe this guy just sucked. Grace tells us that this gambit seems to have worked and my star with the Silver Dragons is on the rise.

### **4. Dark Side**

This mission is billed as an effort to "delve deeper into the Silver Dragons' network". It involves having me "distribute and maintain network connections for the Silver Dragons secret network". Sounds like a good deal, but it translates into helpdesk work! This has two parts. In the first one, all you have to do is mix around parts from each of three computers to re-establish their network connectivity. There are two "perimeter monitor devices" and one "computer parts". The Silver Dragons may know a lot about networking, but when it comes to networks, they're hopeless! Perhaps they disdain such "mere hardware" issues and leave them as an exercise for others.

In the second part, I swing by another Silver Dragons site, and as I started to examine the ailing hardware, the elite guards and pale blood-drinker there all attacked me! They're Black Moons, and held me responsible for killing their leader las time! Eventually I put them down, and went back to my original mission, checking their computer. Its message was a dull, blinking "connection missing". You can say that again!

I was puzzled, to say the least. So was Grace, who rambled disjointedly as she counted out my consulting fee. She looked confused and said, "I didn't think any of the Black Moon gang would find you. We'll have to be more careful in the future. But I don't know what the Silver Dragons will think of all this". We will find out soon enough!

### **5. Password: Dragon**



It seems that I have been promoted again, at least this is what Grace tells me. On the strength of this, she sends me to obtain a password from Long, which will give her access to their system. Simple enough, and builds on the goals she shared in the very first mission.

When I went to meet the Dragons, I talked to the ones there. One said, "You're here for the password? Ah, good!" and started laughing and laughing. And did not stop. This gave me cause for concern... Sure enough, Long springs his trap as soon as I talk to him, and a long fight ensues. At its conclusion, they are all dead, and Grace is furious: "Grr! Tricked me again! I'll show him! Someday, somehow, I will get my revenge!" Classic! At the end she gave me some level-50 clothes as a consolation prize, so it could have been worse. However, it could also have been better. Frankly, considering the loss of resources across these five missions, one might think that Long came off much the worse for wear. But Grace has a new reason for the anger and jealousy which propel her. As if she needs one!

## Argon

Location: Achan (Richland)



Argon is an Exile who likes to think of himself as a careful planner and strategist, but in truth he is somewhat rash in his moves, pushing forward out of hubris and ego more than anything else. Under his expensive suit, he is truly just a thug. However, do not take that as an excuse to underestimate him. Argon has no compunctions about doing whatever is necessary to gain more power and influence over the Matrix.

As a program, Argon was a controlling routine. As an Exile, he still expects to be obeyed, and is known for his terrible rages when matters fail to go his way. He is jealous and possessive of his paramours, which has proved to be a vulnerability in the past. In the end, though, Argon cares for no one more than himself.

### **Mission 1. Bug the Broad**

When we meet Argon for the first time, he tells us, "Listen up, Sugaree. I heard you been helping the other Exiles; well, I'll let you know right now: you've been dealing with chumps. I'm the real deal, right?" And all his Missiones underline the image of an aspiring Al Capone, seeking respect and validation. Here, in this first one, we must plant a bug in Beryl's network because Argon worries about her and Anti-M (as well he should!). The entry and execution is straightforward, and at the end, as I was counting my info, he burst out, "You actually did it? Ahh, I mean, yeah, great work there, Sugaree!". Thank for the confidence, bro!

### **Mission 2. The Phone List**

Argon informs me at the outset that he worries that Beryl has been two-timing him. The distrustful gangster wants to know about Beryl's social circle and socializing, which requires you to retrieve a copy of her contact list. Most people would hack for this, no? But Argon wants the personal touch, and perhaps some intimidating visuals as well. Otherwise, a break-and-enter. Having done all the Missiones for Beryl and Anti-M, I could have just told him, but figured it would be better for him to find out for himself.

### **Mission 3. Dig Up Something Good**

Exile Digger is on Argon's blacklist, and your task is to steal three files from him. Not all the files are obviously accessible, but otherwise the Mission is a standard break-

andenter. This is a notable Mission because it is the only time we learn of Argon's connections with other major Exiles. Tragically, we cannot read the contents of the files, and I was left dying to know what was in them. Argon's praise – "Hey, that's great, Sugaree. Top job." – did little to satisfy my consuming curiosity.

#### **Mission 4. Sending a Message**

Argon continues to feel the need to assert his disapproval of his rival. This time, he asks you to assault one of her offices and kidnap a beancounter. For this he wants someone who cannot be traced, and that's you. Plus, Argon informed me, "he's just a pencilneck and he knows better than to cross someone like you." Yeah! What he said! This is an escort Mission, and you have to keep your ward alive. It took me more than one try.

#### **Mission 5. Set Her Up The Bomb**

Now it's time to "get serious" with Anti-M, says Argon. He then tasks you with planting a bomb in one of Anti-M's operation centers. Nothing mind-bending: you travel there, deal with some guards, and plant the explosive.

These Missions are straightforward, bread-and-butter. We learn little of the relations among the exiles other than from his suspicions. And though Argon clearly styles himself "the real deal", it's not clear at all who he works with or against. It might be that these five Missions were originally viewed as preliminary, and once I had proven my worth from small domestic chores, he would accept me into the operations of his professional activities. But this has not come to pass. Basically, he seems like a thug. In essence, Argon's Missions are lightly-adapted standard Missions, still a diversion from the standard ones while helping people powerlevel.

What could have made these even more enjoyable? Well, I had already done the Missions for his girlfriend and rival before contacting him. If the AI detected this and reflected this in its responses, it would be even better. More of a departure from the standard Mission format would have been nice. More on Digger and the contents of the files would have wonderful. And some responses from Argon reflecting his surroundings in Club Duality would have been great, something like inviting me to have a drink, talking expansively about his business, etc. Standing impassively in the purple mists of Club Duality, he could have styled himself like the Merv, etc.

## Silver

Location: Achan, Slums



With eponymously colored hair, Silver is the most focused among the Elements, valuing order and \$information above all else. Silver is not an imposing physical specimen, looking like a bit of a nerd, but he's a self-possessed man with a distinct air of superiority over the dullards he's surrounded by. Silver is often called on by the other associates when they need \$information about something, or require something very complex to be figured out fast. His prices are steep indeed. Silver is engaged in several lines of Matrix-research that require field tests to be carried out. Typically, this requires the movement of specific pieces of code to certain places for execution, e.g. "Take this umbrella to the top of the Network Media building. Open it. Then close it and return it here to me. You couldn't understand the reasons if I told you, Meatshadow."

### 1. Meet the Meat

Like most first mishes, this one is simple, if not exactly easy. Silver is "studying the field density fluctuation of the Matrix and how it is affected by 'free roaming redpills' like you". To measure this, he wants you to pass through an area and kill everything there. Works for me! As an afterthought, he genially sneers, "Even you ought to be able to handle that." I guess he has been talking to the Weaver.

After our powerful team laid waste to every single Exile there, Silver nodded curtly, "Passable performance, meat. I suppose I can use you again." "Curb your enthusiasm," I said.

### 2. Software Run

This second mission is actually one of his easiest. You have to run in, insert a virus, and run for your life. "It's very easy so you should be able to do it," Silver reassured me, adding, "Oh, and don't get killed by the guys that run the place."

As instructed, I ran in, inserted the virus in the computer in the guards ready room (the one right next to the elevator), leaped past the guards over the counter, ran for the elevator, and died one foot from it, five hot slugs in my back. But we got credit for a success, so what's not to like?

### **3. For Tat**

In this most fascinating mission, Silver needs help in a deal with the cool, bewitching Hypatia from downtown. She wants someone killed, and thought of Silver, who thought of us. In exchange, she'll help him with some research on some unusual code frags which have appeared recently. The hit is straightforward. The most interesting thing was meeting Hypatia. She complimented us on work well done, and invited us to look her up in Chelsea if we were looking for work.

Silver was characteristic: "At least you didn't drool on Hypatia's feet". I think he is falling in love with me.

### **4. Mercury Sabotage**

Silver hates Mercury as much as Mercury hates him. He thinks that the "lesser inventor" has been scheming to steal his research, and wants to discourage this interest. A nice virus, nicely inserted, does the trick. And for this mish, we just had to run in, pop in a disk, and run for our lives. Our powerful band was able to do this.

### **5. Just a Peek**

But Silver is not done with Mercury yet. Now he tasks us with stealing one of his prototypes. Not that he needs it, mind you, he is simply "curious". We found the location, we broke in, we killed all the guards, we got the prototype, and we dropped it off with a huffy, impatient aide of Silver's. While we were running around, Silver barraged us with reflections. About how the Truce is a bad thing. About how scummy humans are. About how unclean he feels to be working with us. I can't tell you how encouraged I felt, and how much it made me want to please him.

And when it was all over? Silver looked up from approving our timesheets, sighed, and barked: "You know, I'm sick of working with meat; it is more trouble than it is worth. Why don't you go bother someone else?"

And that was it! He turned away and went to optimize a database or something. Love us and leave us, why don't you? At least his check cleared.

## Amber

Location: Rogers Way (Westview)



As one of the middle siblings, Amber knows she is unlikely to ever gain the highest position, but she is committed to making sure she's there, to stand at the right hand of whoever wins the battle and siphon off the spoils. To this end she is exceedingly cautious, and craves all the knowledge she can about her siblings' operations. Amber always looks good. She is a smooth talking sycophant who excels at talking out of both sides of her mouth at once. She is willing to deal with any and all of her siblings, working both ends against the middle for Indigo or one of her parents, but always for herself in the end. She's working toward getting on Gray's good side, but is coming to the conclusion that he doesn't have one.

### 1. A Suspicious Character

Rogers way is Amber's turf, and some guy has been showing too much silent interest in it. This is seldom a positive development, and she wants you to investigate him and his motivation. He's not hard to find. But when you do enter his apartment, he says, "about time you got here. Tell Amber her response time sucks." Quite the surprise! Amber is not expecting this and directs you to take the disk to have it checked out.

When this is done, there is indeed more to him than meets the eye, as Amber confirms. She seems impressed. Your patron does not share the results, and you complete this mission without ever knowing who this guy is or what he is all about.

### 2. A Safe Place

Amber has an escort mish for you: an informant needs to be taken to a safe place. But the informant, aptly named "Craven", refuses to emerge from her bedroom until you have killed everything else there: some big, bad vampires. Then, there is a long, eventful hike to the safehouse, with many mobs to slay. And when you get her to the safehouse, filled with Amber's ASPs? She warmly responds, "What are you waiting for, a tip?"

I love this job!

### 3. Second Try

The bluepill we escorted last time is now missing, and needs rescue and escort. This starts with finding a dead exile, whose picture leads us to another location, where the straying informant is found. Both locations are those weird, maze-like buildings in Westview that are so trashy and filled with junk. I always get lost in them! Her escort involved much, much killing of local mobs. Paradoxically enough, these mobs you have to kill are the exact same mobs (ASPs) that Amber supposedly controls. How curious! Anyway, eventually you get her to the protection safe house again and you are done. She adds, "Look I know you have some sort of weird crush on me, but I want you to leave me alone." With pleasure, my dear!

#### **4. The Final Clue**

Amber continues to fret about unfriendly efforts to cut into her turf. She needs to know who is behind this. The clue is found on a CD which is held by a band of fierce hackers. Not easy to take them all down, and I had to withdraw a few times to rest up. Eventually the CD is procured and delivered to Shingo, one of Amber's lieutenants, who hangs out surrounded by Level-51+ level security staff. Glad I didn't have to fight my way past them! Amber is pleased with the fast, efficient work. I was pleased to be alive.

#### **5. Payback Time**

Based on the last mission's CD, Amber has determined that her mischievous brother Mandarin was behind the attacks, and wants payback, through a special virus placed in his systems. Getting into the room with the target computer involved a lot of gun fighting. I could overhear two guards speaking disparagingly of Mandarin being

clueless "as usual". Then I had planted the virus, and was fleeing for my life.

This final, finale mission was surprisingly straightforward, not to say simple. Not that I complained!

And with this, all my Westview missions were over! This region ended well, with warm praise from Amber, claiming that "I won't forget you, Sugaree; you'll always have a home in Rogers Way." How nice it would be if after you have completed all the region's missions, the mobs of the last Exile lord would leave you alone, or even come over and /dap you! But I appreciated the warmth, after so much callous, crude behavior from the others.

## Hypatia

Location: Chelsea (Downtown)



Hypatia believes that information is power; and that the most valuable information can best be gleaned by reading between the lines. She has spent her existence pouring through book after book, looking for any scrap of information that might reveal more about the nature of the Matrix and how to gather information to increase her own power. Consequently, she guards all of her secrets and her turf jealously. Her unimposing appearance belies her greedy and vicious nature.

It is rumored, however, that certain Exiles who have a relationship with Hypatia can gain access to the information repository for a quick scan. Redpills and Exiles lucky enough to make it to the Library's restricted stacks should not overstay their welcome.

It is further rumored that Hypatia maintains contacts with the owners or employees of many bookstores in the city, to keep her apprised of new or used books that arrive in their shops. Many of her contacts are also members of the Bookwyrms, but maintain a low profile and will contact Hypatia before taking any action against Zionites or Exiles.

### 1. Past Due

But enough of me! Like so many people, Hypatia lends books and has trouble getting them back. Of course, it's not the book is important or anything, it's just, you know, the principle. So she tasks you with getting it back at all costs, killing anyone who resists, and leaving one witness to spread the word. Just, you know, on principle. Every bibliophile out there will warm to this.

In this mish we learn of a rogue group of Exiles who style themselves "The Book Club". They're former academics, though you sure couldn't tell from looking at them. Their leader claims the book is awesomely valuable and rare, and no way is it going back! Well, a polite word and a Devastation Field gets you more than just a polite word. The volume is then returned to another of Hypatia's flunkies; apparently she does not want you to know its ultimate destination: her kitchen table. The Exiles here have some great lines, and some pathos at the end. A tough, good mish on solo.

### 2. Thieves in the Night



This mish is deliciously ironic. After recovering a notebook for the Coroner just a few days ago, now I'm tasked with stealing one from him! Hypatia is curious about his "Frankenstein" experiments on reviving bluepills, and would like to study his journal. Along the way, you might as well kill his scientists, she adds as an afterthought. Note to self: stay on her good side.

### **3. The Wrong Hands**

An exile named The Collector has a book with dangerous information; Hypatia tasks you with replacing it with a safer, dumbed-down ersatz copy, and destroying the original.

We pick up the ersatz book from an Exile counterfeiting expert who is currently trying to copy herself. One copy gravely asked us "Do you like pie?" Then Hypatia, apparently as an afterthought, directs us to kill everyone at the site with the book, "to make it look good". So on we go to slay and mislead for our patroness. But in the end she praises us, saying we have made the Matrix a better, safer place. But be careful to destroy the real book, and place the genuine fake back. Or something like that.

### **4. Pre-emptive Action**

This mission is uncharacteristically simple. Hypatia has learned of a plan to attack her (so she says, anyway), and directs us to disrupt it. This involves two groups of Exiles, all of whom must be wiped out. Again, carnage and blood; in the end Hypatia is quietly gleeful that her books are safe. Inside a safe, we found a gold coat!

### **5. In Pursuit of Knowledge**

An Exile named Alvarez has infuriated the phlegmatic Hypatia. He not only acquired a rare book of Exile lore which she does not have, the fiend destroyed it before she could read it!! But he memorized the content, or at least all the important parts. We must guide him to a meeting with Hypatia so they can have a conversation about this.

This is more complicated than it seems. When we go to get him, we find he has been kidnapped. Then we fight our way to him, only to discover he has been killed. But Hypatia is nothing if not resourceful, and she will not be denied his knowledge....

Intelligent and bookish though Hypatia is, she seems like one of the easier ones to manipulate. Her thirst for knowledge would be easily kindled and directed against almost anyone. It is best to satisfy her when you run her missions; I would hate for my name to be written down in the wrong book of hers.....

## Yttri

Location: Tabor Park, Slums



Yttri was a late addition to the Elements, a subroutine added in the later days before their flight to the Matrix. She is an exotic woman with unique viewpoints. Think of her as the exchange student thrown into the Sorority House. Some of the other Elements resented the attention she garnered at first, others sought to take advantage of her, but nobody really understood her. Yttri is given to long, thoughtful pauses in her conversations, and insightful comments that imply she knows a great deal. She has settled into a comfortable existence on the fringes of Bluepill society, as a street musician in Tabor Park. She is the one other Element most in touch with Ruth, but she's had cause to run up against Argon in the past, as he's tried to intimidate her.

### 1. Code or Coda

Anyway, Yttri elaborates on a theme I first noticed with Lotus: that music can be a powerful behavior modifier. And she likes to steal things. In this standard break-and-enter, Yttri wants the only existing copy of a new, marvelous composition. The standard enemies opposed me, and were dealt with in the standard manner. Two ways to get it, find the combination in a desk for the safe, or hack a computer to disable the safe. To be on the "safe" side, I did both. Why the manuscript had to be purloined was unclear, since documentary materials have been clandestinely captured by cameras for almost a hundred years. Maybe she was also sending someone a message? Maybe she collects artifacts, like the Digger or Hypatia? We do not know. Walked in past a fidgety Bell Madonna, little knowing how soon I would be feeling fidgety myself, in the next mission.

### 2. Free Music

One thing leads to another, after savoring the work of this composer, Yttri craves more. Not only that, she wants to free his mind. This entails grabbing him and escorting him to a Zionist base for the Pill. And naturally, everyone for a kilometer around wants to frustrate this. For example, as I waited inside with the composer, two 51-level elite guards outside kept firing at me through the door, and shrugged off my repeated devastation fields and code nukes. So, after one failure, I went out through the back door, obliterating every Bell from here to kingdom come, and got the composer safely to Zion. What memories it brought back, of other escort missions from hell!

### **3. An Instrumental**

Yttri seemed quite serious about this; the air hissed with tension as she explained in a low, menacing voice. An instrument of hers has been stolen, and “I am charging you with its return. Do not fail me in this”. It reminded me of Hypatia’s first mission, where she wants you to retrieve a lent book. Unlike your sponsor, the target is no wilting aesthete, and within ten harrowing seconds I was on death’s door. I was tempted to buy a ukulele from a street vendor and say “Oh, he decompiled it and recompiled it, and this is how it came out”, but I persisted. It turns out that the malefactor has the instrument on his person, so it’s more likely to be a kazoo than a Stradivarius!

### **4. Blood Music**

Remember the Coroner? The creepy guy from downtown? With the spooky experiments? Well, he’s back, and in possession of a street performer with some information about blood drinkers which Yttri wants. I paused before busting in, thinking of past missions, and many deaths, mostly mine. They were still unsettling. I came across a virus and on a whim put it into the station’s mainframe; the staff took a dim view of this. At the end I staggered to a phone booth and uploaded, and this is what I got: “The data is very interesting...very interesting indeed. Thank you.” Big deal! The Bells were much in evidence here; several times I passed two Bell Madonnas standing mournfully over a fallen third.

### **5. Beat the Matrix**

The freed composer has made a composition for Yttri, and now some of Tick Tock’s men have taken an interest in it and are searching for it. For someone with Tick Tock’s quiet obsessions, this seems out of character; maybe I don’t know him as well as I think. The task itself was simple: kill three foes and open one safe. At the end Yttri murmurs about how the works of a master are beautiful to behold and she is looking forward to examining this one. The thing is, composers seldom venture into hardware construction, so it’s hard to imagine how Yttri’s guy ever came up with this scheme. Especially for a metronome!

## Ruth

Location: Mara (Richland)



Ruth is the oldest of the Elements (think of her as the one who was a senior when the others were freshmen). She's also the one who appears to have fallen the farthest, taking on a menial role as a cleaning woman for the Church in the Slums. In reality she has simply learned a lot more about how the Matrix works than the others have. She believes that the key to getting into the heart of the Matrix's \$information is to be an innocuous pary of it. Standing atop an office tower puts you too far up to see what's really going on. She prefers to be right down next to the Bluepillls that drive the \$information flow, moving about completely beneath their notice. She has a semi-cooperative relationship with the other Exile who lives at the Church, Sister Margaret.

### 1. Rescue Blue

A bluepill is being harassed by five bullies, for no obvious reason. They seemed to have camped out in his apartment, perhaps intending it as a base for operations. So I killed two, sat down for some milk and chow mein (bad combination!), and the slew the rest. The bluepill was overjoyed; Ruth less so: "That wasn't bad, Sugaree. You might have some good moves."

### 2. The Viper's Nest

Strike against Thallia's network. She is a social "viper" who needs to be "taken down a peg"; she tears down other Exiles to make herself look better to the Merovingian, so Ruth says. And I have to say, this is quite consistent with that I saw of her during her missions. Ruth's idea is to put a small virus in her network that will throw her social calendar into disarray. This will have her showing up at all the wrong events; the worst kind of hell for her. And the mish is simple enough: run in, insert disk, and run out. "You're a pretty competent one, Sugaree." The apparent squalor of Thallia's office surprised me, especially considering how luxurious her lair is! Perhaps Ruth is not the only one that likes to slum.

### 3. Gadget Grab

Silver's been up to some mechanical mischief, and now Ruth wants to know about it. This mission was surprisingly difficult. Four very tough Machine staff awaited me, and my membership card for The Collective did not carry much weight with them. Eventually I killed enough to get a key, and ran past the others to reach my goal. "Sharp moves, Sugaree", judged Ruth.

#### **4. Poison the Well**

Silver has been up to some serious trouble-making, even for an Exile. He has come up with "some sort of prototype decompiler that works on bluepills". It would permit Silver to take apart bluepills for their raw code. Yes, I agreed, this would not be a good thing. Ruth bids me insert a virus into his network (as usual). But this is not the usual, garden-variety, format-the-hard-drive virus. That would precipitate tape restorations, after all. This virus simply adjusts the data flow imperceptibly so that things do not work correctly. Nice thinking, Ruth! She agrees: "You've saved some innocent lives today, Sugaree." More than "some", I should think.

#### **5. Both Ends Against the Middle**

The last mission was a half-way measure to delay Silver. The next step is to distract him. This is done by exposing his research to Tick Tock, a wily intelligence-oriented Exile from downtown (we did his missions a while back). If they start fighting, this will slow them both down. However, complications arise. Your contact for Tick Tock has been killed, and someone else impersonates him and tries to brewko you. Eventually you put the ersatz ally down, and upload the file and folder, but the identity of the third party is never clear. Who tried to cut in? How did they find out? What was their interest? All is not clear, though I would put my money on Hypatia, who has an unparalleled thirst for knowledge of anything and everything.

## Mercury

Location: Uriah Industrial Park (Richland)



Mercury has a head for crafting things that require vector and movement calculations, including vehicles and speed buffs. He wanted to make a big name for himself, but found himself locked out of the market by the Merovingian after a faux pas at the Frenchman's restaurant. He now operates a garage in the Uriah neighborhood of the Slums, and has developed a relationship with another Exile named Pepper (whose slavish devotion to her buffed muscle car keeps her tied to him). In spite of his relationship with Pepper, he still carries a torch for Raini and occasionally sends her gifts or letters.

### 1. Turnabout is Fair Play

This first mission is a fine example of Mercury's endless anxiety. He bids you steal some files from the obsessive, possessive Silver's network, and blurts out at the end that he is a better inventor. This mission is fairly straightforward; Mercury's ingenuity does not extend, it appears, to narrative design.... My partner for this mission, Blackfir3 from The Collective, was so high-powered that by the time I had found my way to the mission site, he had the whole thing wrapped up! Whoah!

### 2. A Prize for Molly B

In this brief mission, you travel to a nearby location to get a package for Mercury from one of Molly B's guys, and then drop it off. The contents are not disclosed, and nothing else ever seems to happen with this mission. I think the technical term is "filler", though when I do Molly B's missions, maybe a connection will emerge.

### 3. Component Parts

He has a shipment of some parts that needs to be escorted for safety's sake. He's buying some stuff from The Collector, and needs to make sure it gets safely to his storehouse. The contact looks like a clone of Mercury, and tells me to get out and stop bothering him as soon as I plucked the items from their cardboard box! What a team! Then I evaded an attack, and dropped off everything with some grateful aides of Mercury. Their boss has been keeping an eye on things, and calls at the end: "Nice work, Sugaree. Not too tough, eh?"

#### **4. Company Secrets**

Silver is not one to give up easily, and Mercury needs someone to protect his warehouse. Silver seems to be interested in a prototype, and we need to discourage them. One thug says "I think it just got a little dumber in here" and another chirps, "So, I suppose Mercury sent you to stop us, huh?" I always love these little touches; they show someone brought their imagination to work.

All things considered, fairly easy and fairly entertaining. And it's all located within the same building at Mercury's lair, so the commute is great! "That'll show them," he says at the end, "Good work, Sugaree."

#### **5. The Tick Tock Box**

Clearly Mercury has come to like me. He got worked up and greeted me as soon as I came in, "Hey, hope you're doing okay." The target for today is a technical work commissioned by Tick Tock, which needs to be delivered. Naturally enemy forces are interested as well, and must be wiped out prior to the delivery. This went smoothly enough. The recipient, though, looks at it critically, and seemed puzzled, commenting, "Thanks. Uh, what the hell is this thing? This isn't a cell phone. Well, never mind. Thanks again." I have no idea what it is or where this is going, but I like the way these details are worked into the story. Nice work!

Mercury has come to rely on me. He brings his toughest problems to me for solutions. Now, with things quieted down, he takes a deep breath and relaxes. I could tell he liked me, as he started to gush. "Thanks, Sugaree. You have done great. I don't have any more jobs for now, but if anything comes up, you'll be the first one I come to." Unlike all the other dozens of Exiles who have said this over the months, I kind of believed him.

## Violet

Location: Sobra Shores (Westview)



Though she's not the oldest, or the youngest, or the smartest, Violet takes pride in the fact that she's the toughest. Dedicated to the fighting arts, Violet is easily the most martially proficient among the siblings, though she has lost to the bastard Gray in a straight up fight before. That was a flue, she claims. Violet often acts as an enforcer for Indigo, or one of her parents, though she's been known to form temporary alliances with others for one reason or another. The allegiances in the family are fluid, and nobody expects promises to last. Violet is egotistical about her "fighting form," and a little flattery goes a long way with her.

- 1. Violent Pacification.** Remind a straying exile of where his best interests lie... This is a mish you may have done before for someone else. You show up, and the principal laughs you off, and tells his friends (an elite guard and a blood drunk) to dispatch you. Bulgey, the principal in this case, was more boastful and arrogant than most. And when his friends lay slain in front of him, he seemed angrier and more upset that I had killed them. Or maybe it was my imagination. But the message seems to have been sent. Interestingly, I had the option to engage him in combat. The mish, however, told me to let him live. Pity stayed my hand. Pity that I would blow my payment by sending him to join his friends.
- 2. Wages of Sin.** Some of the buff, burly Legions who serve her and safeguard her inventory have been holding back, and examples must be made of them. Her warehouse came up short with a shipment of the exile-lethal White Knight virus. This mish took me to a really splendidly appointed condominium, where I proceeded to lay waste. One succubus gave me a "succubus kiss" which took me aback, but only dished out a single point of damage! It helped her not a bit. The dropoff contact for the virus disc is a redpill named AICol; when we met he started to reflect back on his life with the mervs. Whatever! Nicely, this mish ends up right next to Violet's club. I like little touches like that.
- 3. Problem Addict.** It turns out that another redpill crew, Zionist this time, has stolen some White Knight and must be put own. The Zionists pleaded with me to abort, to try and understand their motivation, etc. I listened to them. Then I opened fire. Afterwards, I took the virus to a machinist datamining operation in Apollyon, so as to cause distraction from Indigo and his Guinness Lake operations. The attending agents



did not take kindly to my visit, despite my exemplary machinist credentials. I mean, it was just a virus, just a little virus.

**4. Drawn and Quartered.** Violet has come across a curious program which she wants to examine. Problem is, it has been broken into three scattered pieces. One piece is on a bluepill's computer, and you have to navigate through a domestic drama to get to it.

A bemused sailor is standing in the middle of it all! Fun! The second piece has been captured by other exiles, and they must be fought. Violet sighs, "Fortunately for me, you value \$information more than your life". Curiously, in the second site there was a locked file cabinet which I could not open, and which seemed to have no bearing on the narrative flow whatsoever. The third piece is controlled by a Machine outpost; fortunately I was able to get it without killing everyone there.

At the end, you have three disks which you upload. That's it; there's no hint of what's so special about this program. Violet does worry what it would do in less restrained hands. This made me wonder if maybe I should have held onto it.

**5. Underneath the Surface.** It turns out that the program I found was very important to someone someplace at some point; now a group of Exiles is looking for it. Preventing their recovery of it involves dropping it off with Indigo's data warehouse guy. This dataminer turns out to be a total wuss, and I must rescue him from an attack. As a reward he gifts me with a black cowboy hat. A black cowboy hat!! Do I look like Buffalo Gal? I was moved beyond words. While I was trying to figure out which way was front with the hat, Violet called to thank me. She was not totally thrilled about Indigo getting this program, but "A smart warrior picks their fights". I forgave her broken syntax and counted my money.

## Raini

Location: Apollyon (Richland)



If there's an unstable personality in the Elements, it's Raini. She is emotional, passionate, full of everything that makes life exciting, and completely unable to turn it off, even for even a moment. Her drives are laudable, but she is also rash, her temper hot, her relationships tumultuous. She is ready to act at the drop of a hat, heedless of the voice of reason. Were she not so clever, she would probably be long dead.

Her relationships with other Exiles are legion, but fleeting, like bright sparks that quickly die. Raini is powerfully attracted to you one moment, slapping your face the next: utterly unpredictable, and seemingly desirous of conflict. If there were a gauge to represent Raini, the needle would be constantly in the red. Raini can usually be found at the Jacob's Ladder, dancing, drinking, and talking Redpills into all sorts of crazy over-the-top schemes. She gets no trouble from the 5 Points gang, who revere her almost as a goddess for her thrill-seeking ways.

### 1. Careful What You Wish For

“Recover high jacked data.” Is this an editing blemish? Or does this refer to a highcapacity jack-in mechanism? Does it foreshadow the role of drugs in these missions? Who can tell... In any case, the basic idea here is simple. Retrieve data from a lost courier, and complete the delivery. On Hard setting, there is a single site with three powerful foes and about as many computers to check. The file you need has “Thallia” in the name; I was not sure if this data had been stolen from Thallia, and her folks or a third party were interested in it, or, Thallia was behind the theft. Of course, knowing these guys, it could have played either way. But Raini’s only comment is she looks forward to enjoying the data. I guess. Your Operator seems detached from this mission as well, observing at one point, “I’ve always wanted to play Blood Tycoon 3. But that’s not what we came here for I guess.” You think?

### 2. Wetwork

To get some hot information from another Exile (a “nobody”), you need to kill two groups of Exiles. Those who relish 24x7 PvP will relish this mish. The Exiles make the mistake that so many do: they do not work as teams. They are scattered in their locations, and you can defeat them piecemeal. The second group took refuge in the home of two bluepills, killing one of them in the process. There seems to be no way to kill them without collateral-damaging the other bluepill, at least with AOE's. A howitzer

build might have had better luck. Alas, doing good, or minimizing doing bad, is not incorporated in mission goals.

Some interesting points: one Exile shouts "Game over, man!" as he engages you; this brief homage to Aliens was a nice touch! Raini notes halfway through "Wow, you were brutal in there. Nice", and gushes at the end, "Oh, man, that was awesome, thanks Sugaree". I started to feel like I was talking to a child.

### **3. The Next Big Thing**

Running her own businesses is not enough for Raini, it seems. She wants something more, something that is supposed to be "the ultimate extreme". And she wants you to get it from a "cat" named Arkansas. Oh, hip, man! Like, this is starting to sound like an old 60s comedy routine, as when Arkansas peers at you and says, "Hey...hey, man. You're looking for the stuff for Raini? I got it right here. Take it when you're ready. If you think she can handle it...heh..." The delivery was mercifully brief: a 60-yard sprint to the building next door. I can see why Raini wanted a woman of my talents for this! There is a single wrinkle near the end of this surprisingly sedate mission. And then Raini dangles the offer of an invitation to one of her "private" parties if I keep up the good work. As if!

### **4. Always When You Are Not Watching**

Later when I visited her for the next mish, she seemed considerably the worse for wear. Some goods had been stolen from her, and she was way fretful. "Dammit! Some gang of WORTHLESS Exiles thinks that they can steal from me! From ME!". The dreary dirge of revenge and payback was about to start like a cheap jukebox....

Your trip takes you first to the crime scene. Mostly ceremonial swords remain, with a few rifles, some weapons cages, a few bodies, and two survivors. One mourns; the other insists on coming with you (though he seems totally useless in a fight). Ironically, the thieves have chosen to hide their loot across the street from Jacob's Ladder! What were they thinking? In the event, by the time you and your sidekick reach the thieves, the loot has been fenced across the city, and nothing remains but some hard-hearted revenge. A few polite yawns later and it was done.

### **5. Adrenaline Junkie**

"I'm in a bind, and I know you don't want to see cute little me in a bind, do ya?" Yes, that's how it starts. The powerful Exile, apparently an arms trafficker, now needs another fix, and wants you to score for her. Is this what they are coming to? Maybe Zion and the Machines hardly need to lift a finger against the Exiles; they just have to wait for the drugs to run out! Anyway, getting back, I was sent to visit one of Argon's minions for a fix. He, however, is out of the business and won't deal. This necessitates a visit to one of Beryl's safehouses. Fortunately, you do not need to kill all of Beryl's guards to get the drugs, which is a pleasant change. Just ignore them, take a few hits, make the grab and run. Raini talks big at the end, about how if you're not living on the

edge (by stealing your drugs, presumably), then you're not living. That was good for a laugh. I had a couple of drinks, put them on her tab, and left Apollyon.

## Rose

Location: Southard (Westview)



Youngest of the siblings, Rose is extremely insecure, and is obsessed with proving herself to the others. She is currently trying to impress her eldest brother, Indigo, believing that he will elevate her to his side if she pleases him. In reality, he is only interested in using her as a tool against the others. Rose's emotions are fragile, and volatile, making her prone to tear-filled rages if she feels embarrassed or insulted.

## Grisaille

Location: Stamos (Westview)



Created by Mr. Black without the involvement of Dame White, Grisaille is essentially a bastard stepchild, reviled by his stepmother who would as soon see him dead. Grisaille is equal in power to Indigo, and acts primarily as an agent of Mr. Black, though he knows that his father thinks of him as only a powerful tool. In spite of their similar attitudes towards their parents, Indigo and Grisaille are dire enemies. Grisaille lacks the resources that Indigo can call on, but is more personally powerful, and more intelligent. It is only the fact that he is opposed by all of the siblings that keeps him in check. Mr. Black disavows knowledge of Grisaille's actions ("he's just an unruly bastard") because it is most often to his advantage. Grisaille considers the other siblings to be incompetents. They despise him for being Mr. Black's favorite when he's an outsider to their family. In truth Grisaille hates both Dame White and Mr. Black, and would eagerly see the entire twisted Spectrum destroyed, even if he had to sacrifice himself to do it. For the time being he simply acts as a spoiler.

### 1. Fade Away

Word, it seems, has gotten around ("Ah, so you're that Sugaree person I've been hearing so much about. Well, time to prove your worth") and he is ready to give me something substantial to do. No simple drop off a package mission here! Like many an Exile, Grisaille has a low boiling point, and the instant you talk to him, he starts blathering about revenge, "take them out, chip chop". The targets have been tailed from Club Dante to some no-name place, where they are unknowingly waiting for their doom, perhaps planning their IRA contributions for the year. As the dust settles at the end, Grisaille nods approvingly, "Very well done, Sugaree. If you can do that, you can do anything." Yah! Say it again!

### 2. A Quiet Conversation

Grisaille needs to have an Exile brought to him for a conversation about some information. As usual, the target is confident in her guards, and as usual her confidence is misplaced. She acquiesces, accompanies you, and soon finds herself in front of one of Grisaille's agents. Fear dawns across her face. "Don't fret, love. It'll be over soon" he reassures her. Grisaille tells me to rest up and come to see him soon. What a guy! If you think that this mission is almost identical to Thallia's last mission, you would be right. **3. Silent Scream**

Nice title! This is perhaps the most ostensibly ambitious mission Grisaille gives you, but also the easiest. No that I am complaining, mind you! The target is Dynamic Network Products, guarded by machine enforcers. All we have to do is drop off a package, get a virus, drop off the virus, and flee. Quite straightforward, and you do not even have to kill everyone there! What's not to like? The only thing is, what does Grisaille have against DNP? It all seemed quite unmotivated, like someone took a standard mish and threw it in here as filler. Perhaps he is doing this for someone else? As a favor? Because he owes them? Alas, there is no sign that such depth exists in Grisaille.

#### **4. The Rest Is Silence**

Remember the Exile we brought in two missions ago? Well, her value has come and gone, and now it is time for her to return to the Source. I fought my way through her new crop of guards only to be confronted by Grisaille's sister, Rose! She has taken my target under her protection, it seems, and gives me a message for my employer: he cannot make his problems go away by killing innocents. Then, politely: "I suggest you leave, Sugaree...there is no reason for you to come to harm because of my brother's actions." After working with so many psychos and sociopaths recently, it was exquisite to bump into compassion. It must be a bug. Grisaille reassured me, "Not your fault". Reasonableness must run in their family!

#### **5. The Quiet Place**

Like every Exile, Grisaille seems to have an inexhaustible supply of enemies, and now the time has come for the Crow Bars to embrace eternity. They all talked big, and they all went down noisily. I walked out into the smoky Stamos moonlight, carefully putting away my guns, smoothing my coat, thinking what to do next. Drinks? Gossip? Perhaps some blue rezzing? I decided to start with a smoke as I contemplated our unknown future. After the first, best long drag, I took a final call from Grisaille: "Feels good to work out your frustrations, huh?" He's unflappable!

## Madame T (Naomi Tarasova)

Location: Historic District (Downtown)



Naomi Tarasova, known more popularly as Madame T, is one of the few Redpills to take up full time residence in the Matrix. Contributing further to her eccentric reputation is her habit of taking on the mannerisms of a gypsy fortune teller. When she speaks, she's always vague and full of mystery, even when giving out the specifics of the mission.

Madame T owns a small tea room off of the main street, with a simple sign out front that reads "Fortunes Told." When telling the "fortunes" (missions) for those who "cross her palm with silver," she will use either tarot cards or her crystal ball. Much of her insight into the workings of the Matrix comes from observations of her tarot cards and other clairvoyant tools (tea leaves and so forth), and she has been known to make accurate predictions of future events, though not very often.

Her tea room is dark, close and filled with all sorts of mystic esoterica. Skulls, candles and ancient tomes fill the walls surrounding the table where she reads customers' fortunes. While her motives are unknown, she provides keen insight about the Matrix, whenever her mysterious signs and portents can be interpreted.

### 1. Starting Points

She just needs some data from a nearby security office. She has "seen" that we would be working together apparently, and says "I have anticipated" "I predict", etc. Unfortunately I found myself fighting a machine captain, which went against my principles and the precepts of Agent Gray and made me feel guilty. For a minute or two, anyway.

This mish is simple, and entertaining. When I dropped off the data with a cutout, she told me, "wow, one of Madame T's predictions actually came true!". (Interestingly, all the cutouts and assistants I these missions are succubus in appearance, a nice touch.) Then, at the end, Madame T. foresaw many more opportunities for cooperation. I loved this cute ending.

### 2. Inquiring Minds

Madame T. wants some data from an exile, and whether it is given willingly or not is strictly secondary. The principal, though, moves around a lot, and you have to run around to find him. Kill all his very tough guards, and he becomes quite accommodating, commenting sourly, "She certainly is pushy for a redpill". There are



many amusing touches in this mission, such as reading the principal's email inbox, and Madame T saying "I guess I should have seen that coming" and "I don't need a crystal ball to see that this should be quite easy for you."

One thing I would like to see in these get-the-data missions would be some indication of just what is all so important. It might be something urgent and desperate, like someone's contact information. It might be something deeply personal, like the background on a missing relative. It might be something amusing, like a Victoria's Secret catalog or a Christmas list. The Chef's missions are wonderful examples of this.

### **3. Emerald Wishes**

This mission was uncomfortable for me. Just last week it seems, I had been scoring accolades from The Jeweler. Now I was raiding his assets. It turns out that he has a mystic emerald Madame T wants, so that she can glimpse its secrets about the future. In this mission, we see that the Jeweler has some significant security and office assets he never told us about; and they put up a very spirited resistance. Then drop off the emerald and you are done.

More nice touches in this mish. When you drop off the emerald with a cutout, a guard remarks that he has heard of you, and compares your missions with his. Then a prediction from Madame T! "Wait...something is coming to me...I see you running many more fruitful missions for me. Nice work, Sugaree".

One thing would have made this better. When you retrieve the emerald, your inventory just shows a box, the same generic display used for everything from tracking devices to PDAs. Some more representative artwork would have been wonderful for this.

### **4. Toil and Trouble**

Hypatia, you may recall, has an awesome archive of all kinds of books and knowledge, and is always on the prowl for anything she does not already have. Well, it turns out that in order to unleash the power within the gem, Madame T. needs you to find an incantation in Hypatia's archives, and then drop it off for an assistant to recite. I did this mission with a heavy heart, since Hypatia is the Exile closest to me in personality and appearance. But I was confident she had tape backup, and would only lose the physical form, not the data itself, so I went ahead.

After getting the incantation, you drop it off and go corral three assistants to help fire it off. Regrettably, they asked me to leave before running it. They were concerned for my safety. Or maybe they did not want their role-play disrupted.

### **5. Infosweep**

Madame T. is overwhelmed by her visions from the gem and needs help from the Chessman (surely her polar opposite) in interpreting them. He has helpfully come downtown to meet you. This palaver, though, is interrupted by almost half a dozen

competing operatives. Their attacks were well-coordinated, and the fight was not a breeze. On the way to the next mish location, to catch a data spike, I stopped to watch some Pit Vipers getting baptized in the pool, and was attacked! Of all the nerve! You can't ever let your guard down!

And then it turned out that not one but two other teams were after the same data! Fortunately, they all attacked almost as soon as I got out of the elevator, which was considerate. After all, this way I didn't have to go hunting for them. The massive data spike surged, overwhelmed the network, and miraculously fit right onto a single CD!

After I dropped it off, I hastened to the elevator, only to receive a high-urgency message from Madame T! She said, "Stop right where you are! Close your eyes. Concentrate....does anything feel different to you?" No, I confessed, just the warm heated air, fretting about agents descending on me. The she breathlessly whispered, "I see you succeeding in all your future endeavors", and downloaded a "little something" into my inventory, bidding me to think of her when I used it. She signed off, and I walked out into the classical splendor of the Historical District, savoring the glorious, color-drenched full sun sky, with a dark blue sky and pink clouds vying for attention.

This was a great suite of missions. Well-written interactions, a distinct personality at the helm, interesting background, and neat connections with other Exiles, from The Chessman to Hyptia and The Jeweler. And the fact that Madame T. is a redpill means we should all be thinking big, big things for ourselves for the year to come.

## Mr. Black & Dame White

Locations: Mr. Black - Stratford Campus (Downtown); Dame White – Shinjuku (International)



The leading group of Exiles in the Barrens are a dysfunctional family created by two Exile programs that have come to be known as Mr. Black and Dame White. The two parents each covet the other's power, but never admit it. They work against each other covertly through their children. The siblings compete for the attention and favor of both parents, as well as playing their parents off against one another. The emotional turmoil of the conflict and the mental and physical exercise involved in waging it are the family's bread and butter.

### Mr. Black's Missions

#### Mission 01: Go Underground

This seems straightforward: three little floppy disks must be protected. Then you learn they have already been stolen, and must now be retrieved. This involves infiltrating a skyscraper controlled by The Trainman (present only in name). At the end you discover there is more to this than meets the eye, and Mr. Black's representative concludes there will be "some use for your talents, if not your brains". The narrative logic does not make total sense here. But the three-stage trip is pleasant, with some witty observations from the chatty operator and the participants. Fun! And no bugs! And convenient locations. Some more sense of depth than the average grab-the-loot mish.

#### Mission 02: Paper Chase

One of the most unusual premises: Mr. Black needs a building permit, but the lethargic city bureaucracy has been dragging its heels. To encourage efficiency, the mission is to kill the offending bureaucrat's bodyguards and thus free him from the distraction of safety. If you've ever waited in line for a permit or a driver's license, this story will resonate with you deeply, believe me. Straightforward, with lots and lots of fighting to get the papers. Oddly, we do not travel to City Hall to get these.

#### Mission 03: Off White

Who would have thought! Dame White is his wife! And like many wives, she likes to keep a close eye on what her husband is up to. Mr. Black tasks you with getting rid of her spies and retrieving any intel they have accumulated. There are fine, entertaining moments as one White thug gets nervous and stammers that he d-d-d-oesn't know why the d-d-door is locked. Mr. Black approves of your handiwork, and concludes this happy mish by telling you, "If you weren't a human I might even make you a part of my organization." \*Sigh\* Oh, I love it when he talks to me like that!

#### **Mission 04: Thorny Rose**

Mr. Black's mischievous daughter is in trouble and needs assistance. This is a rescue, but fortunately you do not need to lead Rose anywhere. Just kill all the kidnappers and get a package from her. This was fun, with the hired help chatting about Rose (the "hot mama", "ixnay on the ohay"), then stopping when you walk in. And wait till you see what was in the package you had to risk life and limb to retrieve! It just goes to show that even Exiles have a sentimental side.

By the way, this would have been better if you had needed to team up with some of Dame White's people, or reach some understanding with Dame White to win her cooperation to rescue her daughter. This would have dovetailed soooo well with the immediately previous mission.

#### **Mission 05: Bringing Home**

One of Black's staff has been kidnapped and must be rescued and then taken to Indigo, (one of Black's kids) for debriefing. Lots of targets to kill on hard setting. The best entertainment is the cut-piece dialogs between Indigo, Xavier, and Indigo's men, which are well-written and not always expected. Mr. Black takes care of his own, but is nonetheless a stern taskmaster.

### **Dame White's Missions**

#### **1. Data Mining**

If I were her, I'd want to know what my kids over in Westview were up to! But perhaps she read my mission reports and is up to speed on their mischief. At any rate, her inaugural instructions for me this afternoon are pertain to Kowloon and Shirabaka. "Yes, I know what you want and it just so happens that I do have a job for you." I need to visit a couple of computers. I like her businesslike style.

The first one, in Shinjuku, is guarded by a cordial Blood Drunk, who cheerfully advises me that "You so much as touch that computer; I will gladly break your fingers". After its

data was uploaded, I gave Dame White an update, which was a poor decision on my part. She responded: "You mean you still don't have the data on Shirakaba? Well, what are you wasting my time for? Go get it!" I cleared my throat and hung up. "Well, what are you wasting my time for?" I told my operator, "Go get the next site!"

The second computer was much harder to get to. There were five or six souped-up elite guards. Eventually I prevailed, got the disk, uploaded it, and was told...

"Hmm, yes... As I suspected, this data shows that... Eh? Well, what is it? You've got your pay, haven't you? So stop pestering me!"

I'm beginning to see why her children have all fled so far afield.

## **2. Running Interference**

Someone somewhere is delivering some item to somebody. That's it! And Dame White wants it intercepted. You can reach the single site in this mish without much trouble, but it turns out you have been anticipated, and the item is nowhere to be found. Needless to say you come under attack.

Mrs. White is livid about this! She goes off about "some stinking, slimy, pathetic little weasel" tipped off the opposition. (Her imperturbable picture, perched above this tirade, is delightfully ironic!) She throws my money down on the ground, and then goes back to pondering death and destruction. I wish I had thought to ask her kids about her. What stories they could tell!

## **3. Polygraphic**

Dame White tasks you with identifying and eliminating a traitor within her organization, by polygraphing four of her chief lieutenants. The first, Fraction, is clean, and takes the test without hesitation. Some of the White security forces hanging around her wonder if the Dame isn't getting a little paranoid. They'll pay for their impertinence! At the second site, looking for the second lieutenant, Dollar, I hear from an Enforcer, "Look, you want my advice? "Stick that thing on Dame White's finger. Yeah, you heard me!" Then, "I didn't say nothin'. We never had this talk." Dollar herself (wearing the same golden gi as do all four) refuses the test until I kill three of her tough guards. Then she does so, loudly claiming it to be under duress.

The third one is a, ahem, dead end: the lieutenant and everyone there is dead. The fourth one is the target. Naturally, at the end, the Dame claims, "Hah, I knew it all along!"

This long mission is well-designed. When I heard there were four suspects, I worried about this being tedious. But the four encounters are well-differentiated even though the four principals looked identical. Nice work!

## **4. Disk Jockey**

With the traitor gone, it is back to business. She wants you to get two disks, from separate locations for her. Naturally there are the usual slugfests for the first one. After another fight at the second site, the disk is simply handed to you by a principal who says "It's okay, they just think I'm the janitor." I'm not sure what was going on with this. After all, if they thought this person was the janitor, then she could have simply smuggled the disk out in her overalls pocket. In any case, then it's off to drop them off with one of the Dame's operatives.

My patron was clearly overwhelmed with me! "Hm, you seem to be doing fairly well. For once."

The White operative slated to receive the disks has been killed by a seething crowd of five or six blood drunks, nobles, and elite guards. They all started firing at me too, but their aim sucked, because I was able to put each disk in a computer and escape without being killed. Go figure! One taunted me with the usual "Fool! You have no idea of the power of the artifact you seek!" Yeah, whatever! Then Mrs. White had the information she needed and we were off to the next and final mish.

## 5. Paydirt

An artifact is soon to change hands, and a payment is soon to be made. Dame White wants both. This sounds like that the second mission was originally intended to be, before it went south. You are tasked with taking two of her aides to break up the transaction. You go to a single site and engage in extended mayhem. You end up with two packages, but zero aides. Then it got interesting.

I took the artifact to White's hand-off. There were already many bodies in the building and lots of nervous security guards. The main contact was agitated, and couldn't stop talking: "Come on now, don't f-freak out on me. Give me one of the packages and put the other one in the wall safe. It's easy. Easy." And "Okay, okay. This is good. I like this. Okay, put the other package in the, uhh, wall safe over there. Yeah." When I, cool as a cucumber, was done, the hand-off said, "Right. Okay, good. Yeah. The Dame'll like this. Okay. Everybody's okay." I tipped my hat and sauntered out for a smoke.

Dame White, ever the generous one, contacted me to say that the artifact was better than they expected, and the captured payment was less. "That being the case, I suppose...I suppose I might as well give the captured money to you. Just don't cause me any more trouble for a while." I could tell she liked me.

## Anti-M

Location: Mannsdale Housing (Richland)



A stylish and sharp businesswoman, Anti-M is one of the few Elements who's truly satisfied with the way things are going now. No longer suffering under the subroutine dictates of Argon, she's pushed out of her number-cruncher's box to become a savvy dealer of \$information in The Matrix. She wears expensive Italian suits and makes her own rules now.

### **Mission 01: Protection Racket**

Simple enough: Anti-M wants you to put some pressure on Argon by finding and snuffing four of his crew. This is best done by tackling them piecemeal. Along the way, you run into an NPC who offers to help. I was all hacked up, and he matched my skillset and did a great job. Naturally, I was expecting a doublecross, but he was faithful all the way. Unfortunately, at the end of the Mission, he stays in the mission area. Good help, after all, is so hard to find! At the end Anti-M confesses that she likes the way you do business.

### **Mission 02: Special Delivery**

In this Mission you play Post Office and deliver a letter from Anti-M to Beryl. This is simple enough, though as soon as you drop off the letter (to a cut-out dressed like an out-take from Club Hell) some thugs show up in need of tough love. One of them won my price for the Worst Loot Ever Received: one (1) Code-Bit 2!! I huffed and puffed my weary way to 50 for this?? At the end Anti-M affirms, "You know how to do a job right, Sugaree"; too bad the same cannot be said for whoever did the loot tables for this Mission!

### **Mission 03: Clear The Way**

This is one of the easiest missions assigned by anyone, anywhere, in any game. AntiM wishes to steal something being held by Argon for the Chotte Brothers. All you need to do is kill four of Argon's gunmen so others of Anti-M's staff can grab the item. They attack aggressively, but they attack individually, so it is easy to take them down, even on Hard setting. And that's it! I had expected to be further tasked with procuring the item, since the team was in trouble, etc., but nothing happened to complicate the awesome simplicity of this Mission. I was surprised. And disappointed. Is this all

AntiM thought I was capable of? My crisis of confidence continued into the next Mission.

#### **Mission 04: Apothecary**

Anti-M has some perfume to be given to Beryl; all you need to do is get it and drop it off. This time, Argon's thirsting for payback, and throws opponents your way; you need to visit three locations for this Mission. Getting the perfume (stored, oddly, inside a statue bust) is simple; dropping it off is much harder. But the soft words of praise at the end make it worthwhile: "You handle delicate matters with much grace".

#### **Mission 05: The Photographer**

Only after you have established your cred with Anti-M does she give you this most sensitive of missions. An exile known as the Photographer has secured compromising images of Anti-M and Beryl, and is seeking to blackmail them with Argon. Your job is to save their honor. This is rather easier than you might think, since the Photographer has no defense and no guards! High-end hacker spells brought him down in short order; your mileage will not vary.

The single complication, almost a bug, here is that at first I could not search his body. I could search everywhere else, but searching his body yielded no response. Only after I had left the room and come back in could I search him, get the pictures, and complete the Mission. This was non-intuitive.



## Cerulean

Location: Bathary Row (Westview)



A middle child, Cerulean is the only one of the siblings to turn primarily to her intellect as a source of influence. She invested heavily in understanding the infrastructure of the Matrix in an attempt to learn how to control it better and use its power against her siblings. She is convinced that Indigo's power base can be wiped away or redirected in this way, but she suffered an enormous setback when the Matrix was reconfigured in the wake of the Peace Treaty. Much of the code she had stockpiled was wiped out, including parts of her own personal code that she had tried to hide. The result was a loss of her RSI's rendering subroutine; Cerulean is effectively a ghost. She is now dedicated to accumulating more information than ever, and proving that her mind is more than capable of overcoming any amount of power her siblings can amass.

## Mockingbird

Location: Gracy Heights (Westview)



Mockingbird runs Osiris Antiques, a curio and book shop dealing largely in "magic" and "occult" items, many of which are actually items that let the user circumvent or bend the rules of the Matrix. In other words, her magic is real. She is willing to deal with others to get things that she wants, but she has no morals about cheating or stealing to obtain her goals. She deals with the Collector and often acts as his agent in the Barrens.

**1. All We Ever Wanted.** Ever notice how your reputation is never good enough? She expects you to steal a couple of candlesticks for her to show your ability. It's one of the standard first missions. So, you get to the provider, and discover that two other "buyers" have beat you to it, and aren't very inclined to give up the candlesticks unless you can make them a better offer. Normally I love wheeling and dealing like this, but there was no hint about what they wanted, and there was also no option to give them anything. So we killed them.

The provider was very cooperative after this. I mean, we had what we came for, and had killed everyone else in the room, so his leverage was kind of limited by this point. For some reason, I had the option of killing him, too. But I was feeling generous, and spared him. After all, it was Mother's Day.

Then a huge hike to the Mockingbird's cutout for the candlesticks. There, we were greeted as pizza delivery by the security guards. Then the cutout saw fit to give us a lecture about greed. I never! We spared her too, reluctantly, and left.

The idea of candlesticks which can bend light is delightful! Alas, nothing was done with this! And no demonstration of this effect was given. No backstory on their origin, provenance, or raison d'être was provided, or even why Mockingbird wanted them. Some tie-in with the Pandora's Box quests would have been natural, and could easily have been retrofitted. Umm, and the meaning of the title was not very clear.

**2. All We Ever Wanted.** Yes, you have not read wrong. The mission name gets used again here. This time, Mockingbird wants me to get some information on a different artifact. This starts imaginatively, with me speaking to a sort of traffic control program knowledgeable about the flow of items (almost like a mission operator in herself). She says "tell the Bird" that Digger had the item but it has been stolen. Others

in her office think about different matters of importance; one guy wails about problems with the copier. I feel your pain!

This lead took me to a total dump of a building, where I found my next contact, the reluctantly cooperative Alvarez, who curtly answers my question and then sics his team on me. Thanks for nothing! The object of Mockingbird desire is a cat statue of fine amber. It's rare. It's amber. It's also cursed. I'm told to stay away from it. Like that's going to stop me! Mockingbird has the right attitude: "This is all starting to make sense....good". The mission ends up with me a stone's throw from Mockingbird for the next mish. Now that's what I call good mission design! Points for that! However, the title is no more clear this time than the first time. Points off!

**3. Dark Entries.** For this mission, you need to steal a painting from Digger so you can trade it to Hypatia for the Circle of Cernunnos. Got that? The subtle approach (sneak in and disable the computer-controlled lock, etc.) does not work. I killed everyone there. The painting itself is rumored to contain a sentient being (and why not?). "Not bad for an organic" Mockingbird concludes. As I left with the painting to drop it off for safekeeping, she and the operator say virtually identical things about Digger getting on my trail; this seems like another editorial blemish.

After you retrieve the painting, you take it to a genuinely interesting character: Man Kempner. He runs art galleries, and has created reputations for several obscure bluepill artists. He would be a perfect tie-in with The Sculptress from downtown! He would hide this just for the pleasure of being able to examine it. While I wait to see him, his assistant tells me about a gallery show opening by a new artist with great mechanical beasts. This seems like an obvious lead-in, but it never seems to have gone anywhere. He explains that the painting is part of the human emotion monitoring system for the Matrix, but with a bit of a bug: it projects emotion rather than recording it. Intriguing!

Alas, no such minimal backstory for the Circlet of Cernunnos. And Hypatia, who is easily one of the most interesting of the neighborhood contacts, makes no appearance. Disappointment!

**4. Exquisite Corpse.** For this mission, you collect the Circlet for Mockingbird. However Digger has brought in mercenaries to intervene (and who can blame him?). They have killed Mockingbird's Crushers, so you have to put them down, and collect all the items. These are then deposited in a safe. "If I play my cards right, Hypatia will think that Digger has the circlet. And I get to keep the painting as well! Thanks for your good work, Sugaree!" Someone's thinking! Too bad they weren't thinking about the opaque title!

**5. In the Night.** For this mission, you steal the cat statue from Amber's guys. "I'm not finished with you yet. Remember the amber cat statue? The kitty needs to be brought in, and guess who has it? That's right, Amber." The toughest part of this is figuring out the instructions. The artifact is in a locked safe in a sealed room, with two computer commands necessary to unlock it (the room, that is). The entire site is

guarded by Daggers, who greeted me with “Death to you!” and “I wonder how your bones will taste!”, obviously meant to lull me into a state of false confidence.

The cat, once procured, is taken to Mockingbird’s flunky, the fretful Davis Thjarden. He starts off as soon as you arrive: “Do you have it? I mean, do you have IT? I mean, the statue, did you bring it with you? It’s not hurt is it? Did you drop it? You didn’t drop it, did you? No bullet holes or anything? Mockingbird would be very upset if it were shot.” Then, “If you have it, give it to me! What are you waiting for? I need to inspect it. I need to make sure that it’s okay.” Once I gave it to him, he was subdued and said I could go while he “documented” a few things.

Mockingbird is pleased! “Good, very good. You have talents I can use. You have impressed me with your hard work. If I have anything in the future, I will contact you.” But she remains as much a mystery as when I first met her.

## Sister Margaret

Location: Mara (Richland)



### **Mission 01:** The Stingy Librarian: Infiltrate Hypatia's computer network

The talented sculptress who did the beautiful sculpture outside (which I must examine some time) needs materials, and callous Hypatia is withholding them. For the sake of art and God, we will break into her network to steal what she will not share. This was doable without even a fight! I ran in and ran out, like a pizza delivery girl. And I was done! At the end Sister Margaret says, "Truly you are a bright, light in this dark place"; when was the last time anyone talked to you this way? I loved it! All this and XPs too!

### **Mission 02: Seeking Marble:** Get Hypatia's data for the Sculptress

The next step is to break into a facility and get data to help find the materials. Take a disk and upload its contents. Snap city! It was enjoyable, by the way, to notice the classic tactic of entrapment: ask someone to do something small, and then gradually up the ante, asking for larger and larger tasks. At the end of this one-step mission, she purrs, "My goodness! You are so talented, Sugaree!" She knows vanity when she sees it.

### **Mission 03: Flawless Theft**

For the glory of God, we will infiltrate a facility and place a virus. The Collector has a warehouse with the marble Sister Margaret's Sculptress friend wants; we will plant a virus to redirect a shipment. Thus the work of this mission is to place a tiny disk in a tiny notebook. "I ran into an agent, and being a machinist I stopped to chat. However, all he did, though, was bark out "You!!", so I thought it best to eb about my business. And what is reward for all this? A few xps. A few info. And a heartfelt "You continue to amaze me, Sugaree" \*sigh\*

### **Mission 04: Blue Destiny**

This was one of the more complicated missions. First rescue one lover, then take him to his girlfriend, and then take them both to a Zion extraction point. Regrettably, the dialog for this mission was not written by Shakespeare, and seems stilted. The best the lost and lonely girlfriend can say to her long-lost lover is "It's good to see you again, Jackson Pemberton". I was hoping for more. However it was cute that they stood close to each other in the elevator and elsewhere. This Mission ups the ante of complexity and import considerably. As I left them at the extraction point, I felt aglow with anticipation about the future, until I stepped out into the stained cement wasteland that is life for the rest of us, in the big, dirty city.

### **Mission 05: Saving Grace**

We learn that the church sits atop a place of importance in the Matrix, hence the Sculptress's interest in it. And the interest of others, one of whom, Albireo, has kidnapped three parishioners. We must free them. This is fairly straightforward. Even on Hard,. All you do is kill Albireo and free the three. This Mission was notoriously bugged in beta, and now it works perfectly. Bravo!

## The Sculptress

Location: Center Park (Downtown)



### Mission 01: Tools of the Trade

The Collector sent someone to steal her tools, which are very personal. She wants you to get them back. (Ironically, the street gang encountered during this and the other Missiones is the Chisels, a very cute touch.) German-speaking Exiles have them under guard. I was trashed totally on my first attempts. Wonderful example of artspeak from a bluepill in the entourage of Heron (another artist), who receives the recovered tools from you. The best line is at the end, an affronted blue pill sniffs and informs you, “of course it looks like any other room, that’s what makes it art!” LOL!

### Mission 02: Errant Goods

A package has been misappropriated by a courier. As The Sculptress delicately puts it, we are to get it back and kill him and his allies. This turns out to be an exceptionally difficult mission, and much more action is needed than I expected at first. For instance, one single room contained 4-5 level 51 blood drunks and nobles in a roving pack (meaning they could not be defeated piecemeal). I used Sneak from a coat to get in, get the package and flee immediately. If you are alone and without tricks, I have no idea how you would easily handle this. As before, we deliver the recovered package to an artist. However, in this case, the artist at the end is wearing a cook’s hat! He must be a performance artist or a Dadaist! The accompanying bluepill gives me an utterly useless key, along with more deep artspeak.

### Mission 03: The Price of Fame

Hypatia, whose warehouses you might recall raiding last week, is now to be mollified with, of all things, a charming bust of Melvil Dewey (originator of the Dewey Decimal System)! The ideal gift for the Exile who has everything! Who can explain the inscrutable ways of artists? Besides the absurd nature of the task, the other unusual thing here is the distance to Hypatia: 1100 meters, and you arrive just in time to get jumped by five or six bounty-hunters. No witty artspeak in this one, just bruises and sore feet!

### **Mission 04: The Lease**

Like the paperwork Mission for Mr. Black, here you need to help The Sculptress get a lease. It's a break-in, shoot-up-the-hired-help kind of mission. Nothing wrong with that! At the completion, when you hand off the papers, one of the accompanying exiles looks at you and asks how you feel about your previous life. I love unexpected personal stuff like this. Totally out of the blue!

### **Mission 05: The Model**

One of the most entertaining Missions yet!! Remember the hawk Scarlett from the tutorial? She's back! And you have to rescue her before her honor is compromised!

Standard rescue, but the texture is delightful! As you escort her back, Scarlett talks incessantly about her beauty and how she must share it (males RSIs out there should not get their hopes up). Then the Artist fusses over her like a mother hen at the end, absently dismissing her rescuers (i.e., you). Delightful interplay! And as we left the building, a wonderful gift appeared out of nowhere in a pretty box on the ground at my feet! And it was not a bust of Melvile Dewey! Bingo!

Overall, these missions included extremely tough enemies, and some very witty dialog. Plus there's the usual XP and info payoffs, and a gift at the end. Who could ask for more? Fun and worth doing.



## The Chessman

Location: Tabor Park (Richland)



### **Mission 01: First Move:**

What could be easier? Break into a warehouse or office building, and steal three little objects (a file, a disk, and some papers). It's a single location, and you do not have to even take the good any place. Just get them, leave. And you're done! Very straightforward. The target of this, the Chotte Brothers, does not appear in any other Chessman missions.

### **Mission 02: The Pawn**

Things become much more serious in this second Mission. The Chessman tasks you with assassinating an operative who has outlives his usefulness. This Mission is also straightforward: A single location, with two guards, and the target. The Chessman purrs his appreciation when you are done, and whispers, "someday you may be a master"; I love it when eh talks that way!

### **Mission 03: En Passant**

The Chessman ratchets up his expectations this time, and directs you to wipe out a redpill team at his safehouse. This leads to a single very tough fight with five or six bunched up enemies, including a physician who keeps buffing the one you're attacking. Absent a hacker, this will be a tough fight; be sure to bring some friends, or some tactics boosters, or all three. That's all there is to it! And at the end, your client compliments you: "You are a superb player. Unpredictable, but dependable." **Mission**

### **04: The Countermove**

This Mission breaks the chain of increasing difficulty, and includes two assassination targets and a few computers to search for information in a single location. Nothing unusual here, except for the fact that this has two locations, and is a move not against the Chotte brothers, but against The Collector, who we have encountered in previous missions. The Chessman's satisfied parting words are: "Nice move, Sugaree. This is a game I will enjoy continuing with you"

### **Mission 05: Return the King**

In this last Chessman mission, an old friend, The Sculptress, has made a new chess set which has been stolen; you need to find the waylaid courier, retrieve the package, and kill the guys who took it. Finally you deliver the pieces to a contact. In all, you travel to three locales; there is no indication that some other exile, such as The Collector, might be behind this. After your success with this quite simple mission, the Chessman's final words to you are: "You're a real player, Sugaree, thanks". Good enough!

This last one could have been better with some explanation of the special properties of the chess set and exactly what use the Chessman planned to make of them. And at the end, the Chessman could have made some Oracular pronouncements about your future in the game to show you his power and the power of the pieces. This would have added to the appeal of this Exile and his missions.

## Beryl

Location: Midian Park (Richland)



### **Mission 01: Special Delivery**

Like so many exile contact Missions, this one begins with a courier delivery. You must take a package to an associate of Anti-M, a close “friend” of Beryl’s. Inevitably, something goes awry here. You are met by a couple of thugs, and one who chases you to the next destination. But then you are done, and Beryl apologizes for the inconvenience! If only Agent Gray talked to me this way!

### **Mission 02: A Girl in Need**

The flip side of Mission 01! Get a package from Argon for her. Really easy, and could be done with no fighting whatsoever, unless you choose to engage those who throw themselves in your path. Notable is that her contact is giving you something for her which could be dangerous; it sounds like a drug of some sort. The backstory mystery deepens!

### **Mission 03: Cut the Tail**

After seeing the cat next to Beryl, when I saw the title for this, I started to fret. But not to worry! Beryl needs you to get rid of someone who’s been tailing her so she can have some private time with a friend. This is not too difficult, and at the end, Beryl appreciatively purrs, “You’re so sweet to do that for me; I’ll remember you for sure”. Sure she will! I can see why Argon is so concerned!

### **Mission 04: Fashion Statement**

My hopes were high for this Mission! Pick up a special dress for Beryl, made by the Seamstress, no less! But alas, it was not to be. I discovered from the contact, Charis, that two more weeks were needed for its completion. As a result, the dress in its current state is taken to someone so Argon does not see it, Beryl wants to surprise him. This Mission was a disappointment to me personally, I had been hoping for some new clothes to try on (I figured Beryl wouldn’t mind). As I slunk out, disappointed, my operator chimed in, “You get some /weird/ assignments, Sugaree”. Thanks, Captain Obvious!

### **Mission 05: NoiseMaker**

The story for this one is entertaining as well, and will appeal to the partygoer in all of us. Beryl wants some quality time with Anti-M at a party, and needs us to distract the jealous Argon by attacking some of his men. This one turned out to be much harder than I thought, more along the lines of stirring up a hornets' nest. In fact, I did this with the redoubtable gunner/martial artist Illyria1, and we were both killed quickly! A little bit of tactics, and a lot of humility, though, helped us to prevail the second time. Lots and lots of fighting though.

So, through this brief suite of missions, we have dropped off a gift for a two-timing tart, procured her drugs, and aided her in cheating on her boyfriend, right after helping her dress to please him! I adore her simple life.

## The Coroner

Location: Baldwin Heights (Downtown)



### Mission 1. Knock, Knock

For some Mengelian experiments, the Coroner requires rare materials. Unfortunately, these must be extracted from corpses. Worse, as he sheepishly admits, “these cadavers are not yet dead. Well then on your way.” All for science! The first target is a retired policeman with many elite guard friends; Devastation Field helped a lot here. The second is a 51+ level blood noble, an ancient guy who does not go kindly into the night. After these exhausting fights, the final hit, on a bunch of dog pounders, seems like a walk in the park. This Mission features very hard fights, and lots of running around. And I have to admit that I did not feel happy about what I had done at the end. Maybe it’s cuz he didn’t pay all that well.

“Knock, knock” also has the distinction of being the scariest Mission I ever ran in beta; more on this later in a separate installment of Sugar Shack to follow this one.

And maybe a bug remains. I killed the blood noble in one room with a guard. Apparently he had been wandering. Then I wandered into “his” room, saw a random corpse, and only then got the message that he was dead.

### Mission 2. Falling Into Place

The Coroner specializes in weird science; he lets others handle the details. In this case, two incriminating surveillance tapes must be purloined and erased. These are stored in safes, so access keys must be obtained. This Mission features some tough fighting with security folks. And not all that much running around, unlike the first one. Now, back in beta, this Mission was famously bugged, and it is a serious pleasure to finally have everything running so smoothly. Our endless bug reports were not in vain, everyone!

### Mission 3. The Last Time

His lab is under attack (perhaps relatives of his subjects from the first Mission?) and you need to stop it. At “Hard”, you are up against eight or so three-chevron Level 51s, who have awesome viral resistance. This maxed-out hacker died several times. We learn the story of their leader: Crow, a captain who left Zion to take up a mercenary’s life, apparently in the service of the Merovingian. She offers you a chance to walk

away from this with no hard feelings; of course I spurned her gesture and slew her. There was much fighting in this Mission and not all that much loot. And by the time you're level 50, what do xps matter? So as I stood amidst the carnage, I was left with little except the satisfaction of making the world safer for the Coroner, a wan pleasure indeed.

#### **Mission 4. The Plan**

One of his journals has been stolen by Hypatia, and the Coroner wants you to get it back from her storehouse before its encryption is broken. This involves substantial fighting, after which the encrypted journal just has to be dropped off. Not bad! Finally one where I don't feel bad about winning!

#### **Mission 5. Payback**

Like every affronted Exile, the Coroner wants payback. In this case it is a little more imaginative than most. Hypatia will soon be in negotiations with The Chef for something, and the Coroner wants to get him a file which will publicly and deeply embarrass her. You must deal with an organization called "The Network" to get the file. Some cute moments. One outspoken bluepill wonders what life is like in our world. Another claims to be the real brains behind a world-famous chef and her TV show. Finally, after much running around for substantial distances, the "meddlesome bookworm" has been dealt with.

And that's it! No praise, no thanks, no nothing. Your patron barely glances at you as he returns to his bizarre researches. So, The Coroner's Missions are not for the faint of heart or the weak of level. Completists will seek them out. Anyone loving tough action will enjoy them. And compared to many Missions, I found these quite intense, in tone as well as action. And they contributed to one of my most memorable experiences ever in MxO, as I will explain in the next edition of Sugar Shack.

## Tick Tock

Location: Maribeau (Downtown)



### 1. Rolling Over

One of his men is going to defect to Mr. Black and needs to be killed. He is at the first location you go to, and he obligingly comes out to meet you. On Hard setting, he has the usual coterie of Elite Guards and Blood Nobles, all just begging for a Devastation Field. “Nice work” sums up TickTock’s rapturous response.

### 2. Trading Places

Here, we have a spy, inconspicuously named Zubenelgenubi, who needs to be prepared for insertion into Black’s organization. This is a notorious escort mission; the fledgling spy must be taken to a coder for some tagging. Miraculously, this escort mission was fight-free!! (Though I killed everything in my way, just to be on the safe side). And when I had dropped off the spy, TickTock got back to me, with:

“This could be a great opportunity for me, Sugaree”

I felt so happy to be a small part of his success.

### 3. Do the Wave

TickTock’s offices were raided, and you need to raid the raider, and insert a bogus RSI wavelength reading to protect the spy. It may be that the raid was a sucker ploy, intended to aid the insertion of dummy data into Black’s network, but this is never explained. Not all that tough, though after killing everyone onsite, the insertion of data is naturally not likely to go unnoticed by any staff with more intelligence than a starfish.

### 4. False Impressions

Get files from the spy, copy them, and get them back to the spy to replace. Actually, just have to upload them. As you “surreptitiously” enter the premises, you soon encounter a wailing bluepill. He may be safely ignored. A co-conspirator named Avarice decrypts and copies the disk; you just have to upload it. Surprisingly easy, overall.

## 5. Look Over Here

To aid the spy in replacing the purloined disk, you need to stir up some chaos and confusion as a distraction. What could be easier? Just go and kill everyone at one of Mr. Black's offices, the same kind of subtle, unobtrusive thing you have done so many times before. And that's it!

TickTock is intoxicated with delight at the end, and can't control himself. He bursts out: "You have never let me down, Sugaree. I am impressed." The passion in his voice was unmistakable. Yeah, that's what I want to hear!

Now some people might make the argument that TickTock's demeanor is perfect or a spymaster, never giving away anything and always seeming inscrutable. This is certainly true. But the professional spymaster seldom finds it necessary to resort to wetwork as easily and often as TickTock does. And very few things you do in this mission suite are likely to pass unnoticed.

So what interest is there for us in TickTock and his mechanical missions? XPs, some fights, and some loot, and a small insight into the world around Mr. Black which made me appreciate this premier Exile all the more. But like the clock his name emulates, TickTock's missions exude order and system, without soul or spirit.



## The Jeweler

Location: Morrell (Downtown)



### 1. The Stones

In this first, show-your-worth mission, you get some uncut diamonds from his assistant and deliver them. I expected allusions to Mick Jagger and company, but none was forthcoming. After you receive the stones, there's an NPC who attacks you (numbers depending on party size); a little skill gets you past the threat with ease. Skill not being my forte, I of course died the first time.

### 2. Just a Few Questions

Of the five Jeweler mishes, the second one is the stand-out. Initially a simple escort mission, it became one of the two or three most difficult missions I have ever undertaken. I failed repeatedly at it solo, and now believe that solo it is undoable. Only when I had a full mission team of outstanding players (Sattakan, Illyria1, Darklordmax, Shread, and Alysha) was it completable, and then only after several tries. Few other missions take the planning and strategy that this one does, believe me.

#### \*\*\*\*SPOILER ALERT BEGINS\*\*\*\*

Here's why. You're tasked with bringing in the assistant from the first mission for some questioning. The gems you picked up were bogus, and the Jeweler wants to find out what's going on. The assistant, understandably, has surrounded himself with 6-8 bodyguards. Strangely, they show little interest in you, and seem quite bored when you talk to them about their client. In fact, you cannot engage them. When the assistant agrees to come with you, though, they all wake up and instantly start attacking. The client quickly falls in the crossfire. And AOE attacks seem to bring him down as well; hold off on Devastation Fields and Code Nukes.

The second time I tried this, I entered one office and set off the alarms, so I could control the terms of engagement. This set the guards to hostile, and I defeated them piecemeal, working my way to the jeweler's office, using Ballista build rather than AOE's. This brought me to the final guard in the final room with the assistant jeweler. As soon as I spoke to him, however, the guard attacked, and the jeweler died in the crossfire. \*\*bleep\*\*!

But that's not all! It got worse! Less than ten seconds after this, my operator said there were agents closing in on my location! By the time I reached an elevator, one had already materialized and winged me on the way out! Then he chased me out of the building! I hyperjumped, looking for a hardline, and he was everywhere I came down, taking a big bite out of me each time! I barely made it to a hardline and the blessed loading area, looking more like a piece of Swiss cheese than runner-up for the Ms. Sexiest Redpill!

At Stamos I sat on a bench to stop hyperventilating and re-consider my strategy. And I would still be sitting there, too, if I had not run into an exceptionally talented, fierce group of people (Sattakan, Illyria1, Darklordmax, Shread, and Alysha) who came to my aid. We attacked in a tidal wave of mayhem, quickly obliterating the guards. Then we cleaned out the lobby guards. But the instant I exited the building with the jeweler in tow, three or four more Merv mercenaries appeared out of nowhere and killed our man. Damn!

**\*\*\*\*SPOILER ALERT ENDS\*\*\*\***

Eventually, through careful coordination, we got our client to the Jeweler's interrogation team, some happy-go-lucky blood-drinkers. Then the client tried to chicken out. But by then it was too late. And good riddance!

### **3. Bright Shiny Objects**

It turns out that the assistant you bagged last time had nothing to do with this! It was his supplier that caused the problem, and in this simple mish you dish out doom to the duplicitous diamond double-dealer. At the end, the Jeweler is all smiles, and promises to take me out for a night on the town. I wish!

### **4. Fair Payment**

This is "prime time", and simple enough: getting payment from Exile Anti-M for a special piece of jewelry for her to give Beryl, Argon's alleged girlfriend. You run into Anti-M (she looks as she did when I ran her missions ages ago) and she helps dispatch a few of the thugs who seek to break in and steal the payment. Anti-M seems quite involved in this mish, apparently not totally convinced of your reliability. Or maybe she just enjoyed the buzz, and wanted a good story to tell Beryl. She reached the final bad before you, in fact, and dispatches him on her own. You have to wonder how she gets around so quickly; the cell phone on a desk with her in the end-game room seems to have something to do with this. If only...if only...

### **5. A Girl's Best Friend**

Oddly, no fighting is really necessary for this final mission. Here, you just drop off the ring from Anti-M to Beryl. This goes fairly smoothly, except for Beryl initially giving us the wrong address; we seemed to stumble into a Blood Nobles Promise-Keepers convention. Eventually the delivery was completed. When you get here, don't be in a

hurry; Beryl's pleas for the box are wonderful; I felt like I was talking to someone after my own heart. She thought it might be a new dress or the handmade chocolates she had ordered... She's my kind of Exile! She was thrilled with the ring, and planned to wear it immediately, just to drive Argon nuts. You go, girl!

And with this, the Jeweler's entrance to the big leagues of power and influence seems assured, or so he tells us. With his talent, he crows, he won't need luck! And when he's running the city, he'll remember all the little people! Like us!

## The Auditor

Location: Union Hill (Downtown)



### 1. **By the Numbers**

The Auditor apparently concerns himself with the flow of resources and their management in the Matrix. That is to say, he takes the exciting and makes it dull. His first mish is no exception: “The numbers are all I care about. Everything else is just static in the Matrix....Here’s the address. Get moving.” How personable! Just get and upload two disks from a single location. How could it be simpler?

### 2. **Throwing a Disk**

To better understand discrepancies in the matrix, he needs more data. Go get two more disks. There are some fights, and you need the help of a bluepill to get what you want. But that’s it. It’s all he can imagine. You know the type: “everything that counts can be counted, and if it can’t be counted then it doesn’t count”.

### 3. **For a Few Disks More**

There “could be a major system resource leak. This leak could turn into a flood if action is not taken. I just need one more data point to make my final determination. Go get it for me”.

By this point I was wondering if this was really an auditor, or just a small time nut trying to inflate his own self-importance. But he did pay his bills.

You have to rescue some bluepill’s girlfriend before he will give you the data you need. This is maddeningly difficult, because when you are escorting the bluepill, you are subject to one major NPC attack, which you expect, but also from random gang members and even security guards. This is best done with friends, since one stray ricochet instantly brings down the woman and aborts the mission. It took me seven attempts to get this done, and I only completed it at all thanks to the awesome help of Sattakan, who cleared away the lobby guards, spontaneous attacks, and three groups of gangmembers. I had to escort the frail girlfriend almost 400 meters through all these threats.

### 4. **Resource Management**

For some peculiar reason, The Auditor has assets, and they are under attack. You arrive in time to find many bluepills slain, and data taken. One bluepill gasps, “The data...save the data” and then falls to the floor; apparently the Auditor found people of a like frame of mind to work with him.

## 5. **Stop the Leak**

The leak, it turns out, is no accident; someone is creating the discrepancy for his own purposes. “I cannot allow this.” For this final mish, you need an artifact from the Sculptress. Well, three, actually. They must be given to three people for the full effect. The first delivery is a snap. In the second one, you have to fight your way in, with some Merv allies. However these “allies” are worthless, and do nothing to hinder those who would kill you. Several times they walked right past me during fights! The third one features a red herring, and a slightly more serviceable ally. The most notable part is that the third recipient of these statues stands with one foot in a wastebasket, oblivious! No wonder the Matrix is in danger!

In the end, you get some thanks, and that is about it. Not much considering you have saved the Matrix! The malefactor behind the scheme remains a mystery. Perhaps a future installment will see you bringing the fight to him/her. It’s the perfect tie in for some story-line events later. Perhaps some mad Zionists are seeking to destabilize the whole matrix...oh, wait, that’s already been done, right?

Summing up, the Auditor is weak in the personality, wit, and charm department. His missions reflect his personality. Who would have thought that saving the whole matrix could seem like such a tedious chore?

## Pepper

Location: Vauxton (Downtown)



### 1. Petty Retribution

The *raison d'être* for this revenge against Silver is not clear; apparently she regards him as stingy. It seems trivial and pointless. Steal a virus and load it into Silver's server. Apparently she is too lazy, or thinks too little of Silver, to make the effort to design a virus herself. This seems like the kind of easy mission you are given to prove your ability and trustworthiness. It certainly seems to have no other point!

### 2. Speed Kills

Pepper has heard of some Exiles smuggling in speed-enhancing algorithms from Machine City, and she wants some for her Lab to look at. What? She has a lab? Who would want to work for her? The first site has nothing except some interesting bluepills to talk to. The second site has a stern taskmaster who must be satisfied before he gives you the schematics you desire. However, things do not go as smoothly as we might have expected.

### 3. Unexpected Consequences

The speed-boosters have driven test subjects nuts, and you have to put them down before they kill all of Pepper's techies! Maybe there are some things that Exiles were not meant to know! The problem is less simple than it seems: a couple of the ailing subjects have fled, and after saving Pepper's scientists, you need to track down the fugitives. The fugitive is not nutso affected though, just hallucinating people he cares about. The whole experiment was doomed from the word go, turns out.

### 4. Hazard Pay

With that crisis past, Pepper's attention returns to her other business operations. It turns out that a courier has gone missing, and you need to track him down. A file purporting to help you find him turns out to be corrupted, and you need to get it reconstructed from backup. A security breach at Pepper's labs has affected your ability to complete the mission! Eventually the courier is found, dead, and the package he was carrying is retrieved and delivered. Once more, things have gone way awry for

Pepper. One of her scientists complimented me on having saved the techies in the last mission; I always appreciate tight continuity like this.

## **5. The Swap**

It emerges that the “speed” code carried a Trojan virus; hence its unexpected toxicity. The question is, who put it there? An informant promises to make all clear if his palm is crossed with a special delivery. Your task is to complete the exchange and relay the information. When the secret enemy is revealed, you are tasked with the complete, pitiless destruction of her and her gang. At the end Pepper concludes that “you’ve been a great help to me, Sugaree”, and downloaded a fine purple coat to compensate me for all my troubles. In true Pepper fashion, though, it went to the wrong person.

As the “enemy” dies, Pepper muses how sad this was, since this exile was one of her most promising recruits. It’s hard not to wonder if someone had planted disinformation, knowing how gullible and intemperate she is. And in every mission, something seems to go wrong; pepper always seems in over her head, needing you to straighten things out. She doesn’t pay you enough! But there are many witty touches in the writing for this, and the lines for Exiles and thugs.

## The Bartender

Location: Edgewater (Downtown)



### 1. Pickup Green

Naturally, her concerns focus on operations, not things or people. She needs you to make a payment to Endymion (lovely name) for some stock for “special libation”, not for coppertops. Endymion has his own problems who must be removed before he can do business. In the end you have impressed both him and the Bartender, and the rare liquor has been delivered, and both Endymion and the Bartender are developing a good impression of you.

### 2. The Dionysus Gambit

Some things, though, cannot be bought. A rare wine, Dom Perrineau '37, is owned by an Exile playboy named Dionysius; the Bartender wants you to liberate the only known bottle for her. Despite your best efforts, though, it is not to be found; her information was apparently off-target. The code of many a thug was spilled in vain.

### 3. The Dionysus Gambit, Part 2

Never one to give up easily, the Bartender dispatches you to an alternate location for Dionysus where the Dom has been taken, for display along with some other way rare items, adding, “This plan has the upside of making him look like an ass”. You blow through some quite unelegant settings in Edgewater and score the brew. For someone like Dionysus, I was kind of expecting a more upscale setting. An expert cheers (!) when he tests the wine, and you’re done! Turns out this is intended for the Merovingian’s wife, who we meet in...

### 4. The Dionysus Gambit, Part 3

To renew her liquor license, the Bartender needs the blessing of the Merovingian; you need to deliver the Dom to Persephone!! For a Machinist, these chances are few and far between. The bartender gives a great characterization of her that only excited my interest: “She’s a darling- graceful, poised, and intelligent. She’s also hideously deceitful and manipulative....Do not be lured into any untoward activity.” Persephone was all that and more. And her parting words to me: “Thank you so much. You must be a very talented operative to have obtained such a treasure for me. And so attractive.



Mmmm..." made my Machinist convictions feel weak, and I thought about joining the Sirens. Thank God Gusman and Nosgoul1 were there to strengthen me.

## **5. Creative License**

Here you go and get the license from Flood. His guards insist in a fighting skill demonstration (cheating is allowed). Then you take the license to Bartender, and you're done; the bartender makes a special trip out of Club Noir to meet you and receive the license. In this conclusion, there is no special item or prize, which disappointed me; I had heard there were such items, and was hoping for a Black Lotus blouse or a Succubus outfit. But I had gone from angering her in my last mish suite to winning her admiration, and that was something.

## The Chef

Location: Pillsen (Downtown)



### 1. Paging

The Chef needs a special recipe from the famous packrat Hypatia, and she will not give it up without him doing something for her: getting rid of some nuisance Exiles. She reciprocates with generosity one seldom experiences from Exiles, and warm words for you. She must remember me from doing her mishes last week!

### 2. And a Bottle of Rum

For a rare dish some rare rum must be obtained from the Bartender's stock. This becomes vastly more complicated when you kill the wrong people, discover it has been stolen and the Chef must yield professional information in recompense, only to find someone else has it and is using it at that very moment. The Exile telling you this ("Have fun!") starts slapping his knee in laughter. As usual, you must retrieve it and kill everyone involved. One cute note: as you kill the competing chef (dismissed by the Chef as an "incompetent hack") and staff to retrieve the rum, you note a bottle of diet soda perched on a desk! Better make sure that's rum in the bottle!

### 3 Bedtime Reading

He needs help getting some of the ancient recipes translated. Simple in theory, this becomes tough in execution, since you have to escort not one but two low-level NPCs a long way through the dangerous streets of the downtown area. Count on at least one attack. Of course, once they get to their destination, the task is trivial. Curiously, others seem to be after the same programs you are.

### 4. Spice Story

Spice from the Bartender is also needed. But after a recent fiasco, she is ill-disposed to cooperate, and thus a diversion attack is necessary: wipe out a safe house of hers (not so dissimilar from a raid on a house of the Seamstress for the Weaver). The spice is then obtained, and taken to a flunky chef. This chef's staff is none too impressed with you, and make a number of rude comments, like "You probably can't even appreciate

the kind of dishes we create. Cretin!” and “I don’t think you would appreciate what we have to offer. Why don’t you go get some greasy fast food?”

## **5 If I’d Known You Were Coming**

The Chef has prepared a masterpiece work for Mr. Black, using the rum and spice and ancient recipes we have gathered for him. We need to get some icing tools to an assistant, and then take the finished product to Mr. Black. When his flunkies check the finished work, it turns out that there has been a miscalculation and a fight breaks out! Surprise, surprise! The Chef’s reputation will never be the same, and he gives me a useless pair of pants as a hasty going away present. The Chef’s disappointment is well-portrayed; mine must be imagined. Not even an éclair!

After reading so much about food, and smelling so much expended gunpowder, I wanted to get dressed up and go to the Merovingian’s sunny, trendy spot for a leisurely lunch. And, really, this mish suite could have been so easily built around the Merovingian’s palate, with his murmured appreciation and Persephone’s purrs. It’s unclear why the austere Mr. Black was selected. I mean, has he done something to deserve it? And as we all know, cake plays an important role in Merovingian culture; I am surprised that no one thought to or found a way to work this into these mishes.

Nonetheless, there are many well-written moments, a few of which I have already shared. In mid-mission, the Chef starts ruminating, “I have heard of ancient human writings that describe fine wines, delicate pastries, decadent feasts...I wonder what did they actually taste like? How would they compare to the tastes of food here in the Matrix? Have we even come close? I wonder...Hmm? Oh, yes, good work and all that. Please get the recipe for me”. And the mishes well capture the obsessive professionalism of gods of cookery.

## The Network

Location: Industry Square (Downtown)



### 1. Tat Tap Tap

This starts out the right way: “You come recommended as someone with great discretion, Sugaree”. This seems like a classic, if generic, mission: a spy device has been planted in a machine stronghold; we have to go kill some machine guys and we’re good to plant a bug and you are done. He says you have a future! Tell me more, please! Good writing characterizes this mish.

### 2. Silver Toys

This second mish is the best of the lot. Exile Silver has ventured downtown from

Richland to show a spy device to a buyer. We get there first, kill all his hired help, and then politely ask for it. He makes empty threats- “Well, Meat...these are the finest of the Slashers; they will rid me of your presence”. But don’t worry, he talks this way to everyone until he needs your help. The Network says you are very persuasive (foreshadowing for the next mission). Fun interaction with his cutout who received the device from us: a typical stressed-out middle manager wailing at the hired help. He is impatient, as we can see: “Don’t be a slacker. We’ve got to have synergy to build a convergent enterprise!” Perhaps as SOE spoke to Lith, many moons ago...

### 3. A Convincing Argument

An entertainer with great influence over blue-pills wishes to remain aloof and isolated, like Greta Garbo. But The Network wishes something else, and tasks us to fight our way to her and simply deliver a letter. In this mish the opposition was unusually severe. I got killed several times, including by an agent, whom I laid waste to me with just three shots! Eventually you reach her, if you persevere; she is suitably horrified.

### 4. Dailies

Some film with blue-pill-influencing codes has been stolen by an exile; The Network wants it back. This mish was convenient indeed, taking place inside the same building as the club! Was it an exploit to accept it? Only the devs know for sure....”Brilliant, Sugaree!” he gushes at the end. Note to self: introduce him to Weaver.

## **5. Counter Programming**

Someone has been vandalizing one of The Network's relay stations, and he wants to get rid of them. We simply go and kill everyone we find; what could be easier! Oh, and then we take one guy's head and deliver it to one of TN's competitors, after fighting our way in. The echo of The Godfather is surely not coincidental. "How could you, you animals!" wails the competing network leader. In one unfortunate gaffe, the body lying on the ground seems intact, even though we have presumably decapitated it.

In these missions, we see some standard actions, punched up with the inclusion of a surprising Exile, Silver, and imaginative speech from the principal and the hired help. They're enjoyable. And after Weaver's unrelenting insults and put-downs, it was a pleasure to get some praise, however insincere it might have been!

## The Weaver

Location: South Vauxton (Downtown)



The Weaver has business dealings with the Seamstress, of course, and we should expect Scarlett to figure in this as well! The gentle, aesthetic Weaver starts off strong:

“Sugaree, huh? Never heard of you. And to be honest, I don’t like what I see. I mean, look at those cheap knockoff clothes....but I guess you will have to do”.

As if! One look at her gaudy, gauche, over-colored outfit would make anyone start asking why the pot was calling the kettle black. But I persevered for the sake of you, dear reader.

### 1. Warp and Weft

The Seamstress will buy some special fabric from her, but she needs silk from The Mothman. And he in turn needs some gang members snuffed. Got that? The attack site is a convenient stone’s throw from her street corner, but the Sleepers are not your average sleepers; they’re way tough. At the end The Weaver sighs, “It takes scum to deal with scum, I guess”, but concludes “Come back soon! I can always use good day labor.” Thanks! I think.

### 2. Danger Looms

The Weaver needs a critical piece of code for a Loom upgrade she has in mind, but does not want to pay the Pheasant (a local smuggler) for it. You can see where this is going, I’m sure! Two tough fights and a quick upload later, she warmly thanks you, “See? That wasn’t so hard, was it? Maybe next time you can show a little more initiative”. Why do I even bother?

### 3. To Rose with Love

In this short mish, you pick up silk from a bluepill tasked with holding it for Weave. However, the bluepill dies and you have to go visit his brokenhearted wife. Weaver, as always, is a fountain of sympathy for the lost and struggling: “I wonder what you were like as a bluepill? I can’t even imagine where you’d start in order to rise to your current level of incompetence.” And this for a successful mission!

#### **4. Shuttle Mission**

The silk from last mish has not been turning out as planned, and Weave wants you to take a sample for analysis to find out why. It turns out she has made a “novice” mistake, and you need some code to rectify things. This brings you into conflict with the area’s Runners gang, who have an unexplained interest in the code. Witty operator comments.

#### **5. Devil in the Details**

Weaver now wants retribution against the Seamstress for canceling an order! Talk about vindictive! This starts with wiping out a safe house for her, and then going to another Seamstress facility to drop off a virus and wipe out her server. She appreciates your work: “Well, it seems that when mindless killing is called for, you’re the person to talk to.”

When this is done, the Weaver has lost her patience with you, and gives you a “trinket” and dumps you unceremoniously. “Quite frankly, you’re a liability”. For my 50th level character, this was some enhanced gloves, suitable for a level 16 character. But it was the thought that counts, I guess. As if!

## Thallia

Location: Magog (Richland)



### 1. Calculated Risk

The classic milk-run first mission! Pick up and drop off a package. She speaks with authority and formality: "There should be no complication, but should they arise you will be required to deal with them. Do we have an understanding?". She was not opening to me at all yet. The initial pick-up is smooth (though Thallia nonetheless intervenes to tell you "Try not to waste any time"); but things become complicated at the drop-off, where your contact lies dead! After you have killed everyone there, Thallia seems positively smug: "Good. I suspected Mercury was moving against me, but this confirms it. Don't worry about the package, it was only bait. You've proven to be very dependable." I think that's good news.

### 2. Applying Pressure

"Ahh, Sugaree, your timing isn't awful." With this cryptic greeting, the Mercury arc continues. In order to provoke him to an impetuous early implementation of his plans, she tasks you with attacking two of his labs and wiping out their staff and data. Well, not completely out; she wants you to leave a single survivor at each location, so the word gets back to Mercury. Like a calling card.

This is a straightforward kick-down-the-doors, shoot-up-the-targets mission. But you must be careful not to kill every one. Several times when doing this with clanmates, my partners got carried away and forgot this. I had the pleasure of telling Thallia we had screwed up. It was not a happy time. Thallia's aggressive manipulation delighted me. Before I had left the building, I heard from her: "Perfect. Mercury has already contacted me with threats of retaliation....Sometimes, this is just too easy."

### 3. Boiling Point

When Mercury's forces attack Thallia's, you move in from behind for a surprise counterattack. "Kill them all. Spare no one," advises my Operator. Don't have to say that twice! You slay at two sites, score a data CD which Mercury's men have been after, and then drop it off. Thallia is clearly impressed. "You're more useful than you look, Sugaree. I might have some...sensitive work for you in the future." Along the way we hear this memorable line from Thallia: "Mercury couldn't scheme his way out of a



wet paper bag”. Wow, that was harsh. I’m sure she doesn’t talk that way about me when I’m not around....

#### **4. An Offer They Can’t Refuse**

“Sugaree, you haven’t managed to get yourself killed...yet”. That’s Thallia’s way of saying she is delirious to see me. This time, three informants need persuading. The first one is a former employee of Beryl. After I get into her super-locked room with a spare key, she reveals that Beryl has a nasty habit, with one of Argon’s men being her main contact. Hmm... Girl Scout thin mints?

The second one comes off as a tough cookie, to be sure. He swears not to cooperate, and then orders his Sears Rent-A-RSI simulacrum to attack me while he watches and sneers. After I trash it, he changes his tune. We discover that Raini is aware of Beryl’s narcotics habit, and wants the same thing. This only confirmed my low opinion of Raini, who devoted an entire mission to getting drugs.

Alas, the third one dies before you can reach him; someone has taken an interest in Thallia’s interest. This curiosity is not pursued.

#### **5. Digging Deeper**

Thallia is endlessly inquisitive, and finally tasks you with capturing an informant to find out more about Beryl and Raini. The target has surrounded herself with lupine mercenaries, and you must fight your way past them to get her, collect any disks she has, and deliver them all. Well, this sounded simple, but I was soon introduced the hard way to an ability called “backfist”. This dished out 4555 (1811 absorbed) damage to me! In one shot! Yow! I don’t know who has this, but I want it!

So, anyway, I finally escorted the reluctant informant past several dozen Blackwoods, who all seemed to be in a good mood, ‘cuz none of them felt like attacking us. What a miracle! As I left the drop-off, I could hear the woman wailing behind me, “Are you just going to leave me here with him? You can’t do that!” Counting my hard-earned cash, I thought, I sure can, honey. Thallia’s last call to me was sheer delight: she cooed, “Oh, this is priceless. Beryl and Raini won’t know what hit them. You performed admirably, Sugaree, I will certainly require your services in the future.” That’s what they all say!

## The Digger

Location: Dannah Heights (Richland)



He believes in past iterations of the Matrix, and seeks to better understand them. There's no backstory deeper than this! One might think that the machines would be the best source of information for him, but as an Exile, he cannot comfortably approach them, it appears. So he seeks everything through indirection, requiring your aid. I kind of liked him. But as a person, not as a mission contact.

### 1. Site of Interest

A nearby building has some areas which he wishes to research, about a previous iteration of the Matrix. The thing is, some inconvenient Exiles are hanging out there; he needs me to persuade them to move. This is surprisingly easy, since the Exiles in question are in two separate locations, and do not team up. However, it felt unfortunate to me that there was no easier way to free up the space for research (and it was a third and fourth floor apartment, so it's not like he needed to actually, you, `_dig_` or anything) some other way than killing everyone there. Surely the local crime lords could have been engaged to persuade them to leave. Or maybe they could have been paid off? Must everything come down to guns?

### 2. Passing Notes

He wants to pass his research notes on to Hypatia in exchange for access to some of her books. Three elite guards assault you at the drop-off though; they have killed Hypatia's representative. "Sugaree's here, just like he said," one shouts; we are left wondering who "he" is. But the next stop is a successful drop off. The Digger gets his books access, and you get a pat on the back: "Good work, kid. I can keep going with my research, now I've got Hypatia's books."

By the way, I enjoyed seeing some win-win barter here. Usually Exiles kill everything in their way to get what they want (i.e., the first mission). I liked seeing someone a little more creative.

### 3. Safer Ground

Take his most valuable artifact, a statue, to The Collector to protect it from the avaricious Argon. I received a note from my Operator about a fight with some of

Argon's men, but it never actually happened. Not that I am complaining mind you. The suspicious soul in me wondered if this was a ploy meant to flush out the Digger's best stuff to bring it to the Collector... I mean, it happened in a Sherlock Holmes story once. Overall, a quite simple, straightforward mission. Not like **The Maltese Falcon**, Indiana Jones or **Gods, Graves, and Scholars** at all! Perhaps more simple than such a key item might have been warranted.

#### **4. Plug the Leak**

You might think that the Digger is too arcane, and too ivory-towerish to have an organization. But you would be wrong. He does, and it comes complete with turncoats, one of whom you "snuff" in this mission. This was the one who set me up in the last mish, so it was personal. As a story this mish was leak. Basically, I traveled to a location to kill someone and his guards. There was no sense of why this person had betrayed, or what his goals, rewards, and motivation were. As I was fighting his last guard, he could have been going on about how he was going to get revenge finally, etc. Much more could have been done with this. It took a disk from him to an associate of the Digger's and I was done. After I gave them to her, she kept asking if I had them. Curiously, the disk to be taken for safekeeping went to a building right next to his hangout!

#### **5. A Collector's Collection**

Word of mouth rules! The Digger has mentioned me to Sirius, who wants to meet me personally before giving me an assignment. This involves rescuing one of Sirius' people who has been taken by the Sculptress, whose interest in these guys can be imagined. Very tough fight here with no less than eight enemies (!) who attack you en masse. "Nice job, kid. Sirius was really impressed with your work". The Digger himself, though, seemed to have run out of assignments for me.

## Mr. Po

Location: Kowloon (International)



### 1. Shadow Play

*“An inquisitive mouse finds many morsels the further afield he looks. I am an old and hungry mouse. Go to these addresses and search their computers for tasty bits.”*

So starts this most exceptional mission. It has three parts, each building on the one preceding, which open your eyes to many a heart lost in the Matrix. Do them soon!

**Part 1.** You casually peruse three computers in an Exiles service agency. You discover a distraught redpill in tears as he tries to decide whether or not to return to his old life to visit the woman he left behind. Go, I told him, she would want you to. I glanced at the computer screen and saw her on a bed with a scrapbook of news stories about a missing man and the police search for him. As I stood there, feeling for her and for him, the Exile, a superb salesman, sidled up to me and said in a soft voice “Are you sure there isn’t someone you’d like to see? Mother? Father? A child perhaps? A lost lover?” I thought of my parents and family, and how I had left them with no warning. What had I been thinking, to do this to them? He asked me again, and I quickly left. No, actually I fled.

The next two computers there had more information about this. But nothing dramatic. Mr. Po’s take on this surprised me: *“Nothing so lightens the heart as when a fool awakens from his folly. Still, more must be revealed. Continue your search”*. Oddly enough, continuing my search took me right back to Mr. Po’s building.

**Part 2.** There I found a Machines office where they have been monitoring these services, apparently trying to run sweeps for indications of regret in the population. This leads my sponsor to intone *“That which is hidden can never know the light. That which lives in the light will never know peace. The search continues.”* Yes, Master.

**Part 3.** I met a kindred spirit. In an abandoned redpill extraction center, Captain Wasat and an aide maintain a lonely vigil. Reading his journals shows the bitterness he feels about his daughter, left unrecruited in the pods. Another computer shows records of multiple remittances from him to the Exile agency in Part 1. I tried hacking his computer to actually get the files (brashly, while he was standing next to me) and

though I succeeded, he did nothing and I found nothing. I could tell he did not care what anyone did. I left him as I found him, waiting for some unknown release.

I felt shaken by all this, and left Kowloon to seek the reassurance of my clan. As I stood at the hardline, I heard Mr. Po intone "*Wisdom lights the path and Strength walks it*". Perhaps this means the Cypherites know of these services...or run them...

## 2. Incubation

We plunge from the sublime in Mish 1 to the profane in Mish 2, an insufferable escort mish which took multiple tries to get right. I started to worry as soon as I heard Mr. Po's suggestive directions: "*One rabbit alone is a meal for an observant hawk. Many rabbits keep the hawk sated and still there are more rabbits. Retrieve the rabbit at this address*". I felt my ears growing.

As soon as you contact the bluepill in question, you are attacked. As soon as you leave the elevator, you are attacked. As soon as you leave the building, you are attacked. As you pass within a lightyear of any mob on the way to the destination, you are attacked. A single stray shot or ricochet or harsh word instantly kills the bluepill, and you get to start over. Any questions?

I tried leaving the bluepill in the elevator while I cleaned out the lobby. Then leaving her in the lobby while I cleared the way to the destination. By the time I had reached the destination and killed the mobs, the ones back at the starting point had regenerated. I tried tucking her in buildings along the way while I re-cleaned the route, and mobs inside the building killed her. Finally I gave up in disgust, and asked some friends to help me. This worked beautifully, and soon I was reading Mr. Po's words, "*The path to enlightenment begins with a single step. The purpose of the rabbit will become clear to you in time.*" And perhaps his observation about a multitude of rabbits was a hint about the right way to approach this perverse mission.

## 3. Isolation

*"A lone bird in a nest of vipers is surely dead. A broken nest offers an opportunity for escape."*

So begins this very well-constructed and very ingenious story. It starts out simple: rescue a redpill and return him to Zion. But when you do, they try to kill him! It turns out that there's some "misunderstanding" and one Zionist captain holds this guy responsible for the death of his wife. So, his bridges burned with Zion, he decides to join Mr. Po's organization, and you drop him off with some of Mr. Po's operatives. They are not surprised at all. Somehow, they observe, things always seem to work out just right for Mr. Po and his plans. I was pondering this as Mr. Po paid us all off and observed, "*opportunity is made, not found*". What wise words they are.

## 4. Leaders of Men

*“As a diseased finger must be struck off, so must a toxin be rid from the body.”*

After the intricacies of the earlier missions, now Mr. Po eases up. A traitor must be brewkoed, and that’s it. The first location is empty, but the second one yields the principal. The traitor is disgruntled because Mr. Po keeps him on such a tight leash; he cannot stray more than a short distance from a hardware tether. It was hard to blame him, but I fulfilled my mission nonetheless. After all, as Mr. Po reminds me at the end, *“pain is a part of life”*. Mr. Po, it seems, moonlights as a CSR....

## **5. New Dawn Fades**

*“A lamb has gone astray and a good shepherd knows to bring it back to the flock”*

A Zionist operative wants to switch, and we must assist him. First I helped him get to a hardline (a vastly easier escort mish that #2, by the way). Then we help him in the Desert of the Real. This involved *“that which all men fear”*, which turned out not to be, umm, what I thought it would be. I purloined a virus (neat test tube graphic), uploaded it to incapacitate the defector’s old hovercraft crew, watched them fall like leaves, and left. Note: do not engage the Zionists; just go straight to the computer and upload the virus. This permitted another hovercraft to dock with them and take aboard the defector. Who knows what else they might have felt like doing? Operetta has been involved in this in some capacity; she seems to be at odds with Mr. Po.

At the end of this fascinating mission, Mr. Po nods at you and says with quiet strength, *“Just so. We are whole”*. And that is the end. How ironic that at this instant my connection with him broke, and forever after when I asked him for a mish, he blandly said he had no more work for me.

## The Newsie

Location: Park East (Downtown)



### 1. Scoop

A competitor has some files, and he wants me to steal them. (I went to college for this?) My operator said I should be able to sneak in and out, and this strategy worked fine until I ran into my first guard. That is to say, it didn't work at all. One bluepill stopped to tell me I had pretty eyes, and as I stopped to screenshot this, I died. Apparently this was a strategy for distraction, and it worked. The next time I was able to run in, dodge bullets, avoid combat, and filch the file. The current owner of the information was a noisy, picky jerk, like the news editor in Spiderman, blowing up when someone forgets to put cream in his coffee.

In the end you drop off the file at the Newsie's editorial offices where his folks are thrilled, as is their boss, who exclaims, "Nice job, Sugaree! Come see me later...I can use someone with moxie like you!"

### 2. Unhealthy Competition

After confessing that he has taken a shine to you, he wants you to kill a rival, Prior. It's a curious lapse of professionalism, to say the least! It seems someone has been cutting into his regular sales. When I arrive at the heavily defended site, one lieutenant flunky crows about "you are so dead" until I smoked the guards. Then he begs you not to hurt him, and takes you right to Prior. Then he blurts out to Prior "I'm sorry. Sugaree made me do it! I was just so scared!". His boss was not impressed. Of course when the fighting is over, he is nowhere to be seen. Nice details!

### 3. Home Delivery

Like most newspapers, the Newsie's has specialized editions for different target readers. One such special edition goes to Dame White, who enjoys reading its news "that's not, ah, generally available". The Newsie likes her, calling her "a real classy broad", and bidding you to make haste with her newspaper: "Move fast and she might even give you a nice big tip!". Oh, the irony! Here I am, a ship's Captain and a member of my clan's Council, and I am reduced to delivering newspapers! But I am never one to turn down a chance for face time with a major Exile, so off I went!

It turns out that the Hellions are making a major move against Dame White. And amidst all this chaos, the Newsie still wants the paper delivered! I felt like Kevin Costner in The Postman! However, I took the liberty of saving Dame White first, scoring big points with her. I know she'll be really nice to me when I get to her during the Pandora's Box mishes.

#### **4. To The Source**

The Newsie is a curious amalgam of professionalism and fanaticism. After going the extra mile in the last mish to please a customer, now he is asking us to not just kill a competitor, but kill a \_source\_ for a rival newspaper! Where will this end? Burning the forests his competitors use for wood pulp? Shooting his rival's customers? Blowing up the trucks his competitors use to ship newspapers?

In fact, this mish is surprisingly easy, which is a letdown. Just talk to enough people until one gives you something, and instantly your mission objectives tell you who to kill. Kind of a disappointment. This was basically a mystery, and it wasn't very difficult. In fact, this was the easiest Newsie mish by far!

#### **5. If It Bleeds, It Leads**

If there's not enough news, you just have to make your own. And killing bluepills doesn't get headlines, whereas killing powerful programs does. You can see where this leads... Two very tough fights here, and it's hard to get emotionally involved in this mere killing for attention. By the third murder you're asked to commit, wiping out White Security (!), word has gotten out and you have to adjust your plans. Just look at the mission map for their areas when you arrive! The irony is that he stands on a corner surrounded by White Security, and now he wants to waste them all! The Newsie realizes his plan is not viable for the long term, and bids you farewell. At the end he did send me an enhanced suit jacket as a going away present, which was nice. But his unconscionable callousness left a bad taste in my mouth.



## Nicky G.

Location: Hampton Green (Downtown)



### 1. Paper Trail (or was that “Paper Trial”?)

“There’s a piece of paper I need very much. It’s a page from a book.” Well, I thought, it doesn’t get much more trivial than this. I sighed and took it anyway. And was I surprised. Reader, I died, and not just once. However, a few Devastation Fields later I was in and had the document. Oddly, I noticed Agents and Blood Drunks on the same force, which I do not think I had noticed before. Overall, a simple mish with a single object at a single location, leaving me wishing there had been more depth: some sense of what was on the page, why it had been separated from the book, who had written it, why Nicky wanted it, etc.

### 2. Blue Book

Nicky craves a book owned by Mr. Black (this sounds like Hypatia!). First break into an office to sabotage a security feed going to Mr. Black. While looking for Nicky, I happened to interrupt a Zionist party with the FinkGothics and their hangers-on. Sorry, guys! It was for a good cause! Anyway, the first step is to disable Mr. Black’s security feeds with a virus. Then get the book. Finally, I took it to a specialist to vet its authenticity. The volume seems to be quite the hot potato; your operator says to get rid of it before it is traced to you. The expert wants you to leave before you are traced to him. It’s quite a paranoid world that the subdued, intense Nicky G. inhabits.

### 3. Betray an Exile Code Dealer

The book I stole was exactly what she wanted, but it needs a signature manipulator to unlock it (damn DRM!). Naturally, the Exile who has it (and who first sold the book to Mr. Black) expects a great deal for it. But Nicky has “an alternate plan. Kill him and take it”. The course of this mission is predictable. The interest, part from Nicky’s disturbing callousness, comes from the Exile and his colleagues, one of whom cries out “He was my brother!”. Things went kind of downhill after that. But Nicky felt upbeat about everything. “Very very good, Sugaree. You might be one of my most effective freelancers.” As if there were any doubt!

### 4. Leaves

This seems inevitable: Nicky has reached out to supreme bibliophile Hypatia, who's agreed to give her a few pages missing from the Blue Book. Someone failed to keep a secret, though, and the meeting location is jam-packed with Mr. Black's folks. Of course they didn't accept my story about selling Girl Scout cookies and tried to kill me. Hypatia, being no dummy, blew off the meeting. Total accomplishment: zero.

## **5. Bound for Success**

Since last time, Hypatia's got cold feet, and now we have to steal from her. After killing everyone in the first office, you discover the pages are not there! The second location is more fruitful, and then you simply drop them off with a cut-out. As I got in the elevator, feeling bad about crossing Hypatia, I got a call from Nicky: "You truly are amazing, Sugaree. I think I'm going to curl up with that book for a nice, long read. I'm afraid I won't have any more work for you for the time being." And that was it. The falling snow outside felt soothing and cleansing; I stood in it catching snowflakes on my tongue.

## The Landlord

Location: Creston Heights (Downtown)



### 1. The Deed

Even the Landlord must bow to the lord of the land. He needs a building permit from the Merovingian and tasks you with paying for it; naturally he would never do this himself. Other Exiles of course seem to have an interest in this, and you discover that the deed custodian is held hostage by them. These fights were tough indeed. The enemies had good AI, and kept moving around so you could never count on them being someplace, waiting for you to Devastation Field them.

Oddly enough, the Custodian still demands payment for the deed, despite your rescue. That's gratitude for you!

### 2. The Dirty Deed

The only thing better than success for yourself is ruining the efforts of your rivals. And that's what you do here. There's nothing personal, but the Landlord wants you to, you know, distract one of his competitors by killing off his staff and sabotaging his computer systems. Wow, that's tough love! I don't think even Steven Balmer would go this far! Notable features of this mission include dubious fashion choices for the Exile's staff (cool outfits including chef hats!) and one of the Exiles crying out "Sugaree! It's you! Wow, I've never had the chance to kill a famous person!" Alas his dream came true more than once.

At the end, the Landlord chortles, "Nicely done. It's always better to stop the competition early."

### 3. Just a Couple of Things

For one of his projects, the Landlord needs some specialist parts. In particular, he wants a "code destabilizer" and an "asynchronous buffer loop" (sounded like Star Trek technobabble to me!), and he tasks you with getting them. Alas, only the Machines have access to rare items like this, and you must break into their well-staffed and wellprotected storehouses to get them.

For me, a Machinist, this was a very hard mission. I could only hope that Agent Grey knew and understood and forgave.

The other thing that made this very hard was the defense! Nearly a dozen Agents and their friends, all north of 50! Naturally the areas containing the access computers and the actual loot were exceptionally well-staffed. The secret here was discovered by BrightAngel, who seemed to be on a first-name basis with many of the agents there. She did not lay a finger on them. She ran in, dodged fire, got the gear, and ran out. Her subtle approach made this a snap. If you plan on fighting your way through, set aside an afternoon. I cannot emphasize this enough!

The Landlord is smug at the end. "Good job. These are perfect for my needs". I'm still not sure just what the two devices do.

#### **4. Oh, I Almost Forgot**

Just like me, after the Landlord does some shopping he realizes he forgot something and has to go back to the mall. This time he needs a "Jungian Compiler" and a bundle of "cerebral disharmonizers". I think the former is for recalcitrant interrogees (like Thomas Anderson) and the second is for weakening enemies.

Just when I was gearing up for another epic battle, BrightAngel ran in, snatched the items from a safe, and ran out! And that was it! Everything is at a single location! No one has to even be killed! In fact, this monster mish turned out to be snap, crackle, and pop! Not that I was disappointed, mind you.

#### **5. Window Dressing**

The Landlord has a new construct all done! It's ready to go, needing only the attention of an interior decorator, who unfortunately has been kidnapped. The Landlord wants to get his consultant back, and he wants to send a message to would-be troublemakers: kill everyone. Except the decorator, that is. There's quite the crowd of Blood Nobles and riffraff, as well as a blowhard named Arlon (a competitor of the Landlord) who crows about putting you down; it was satisfying to smash him. The inevitable escort mission at the end worried me greatly. But it was simple. No attacks from lobby guards or marauding Mervs or local mobs. Sometimes it's wonderful when no one seems to care. And at the end we have a chance to listen to the Landlord pat himself on the back. What a treat!

## The Bag Lady

Location: Moriah Projects (Richland)



### 1. Odd Baubles

We learn that odd data packets have been discovered floating around the Matrix, and the dour Tick Tock from downtown seems to have a lock on them. Well, not for long! The Collector craves these as well, and the Bag Lady dispatches you to serve his interests. This involves a single entry, three fights, two disks, and one mainframe. Simply, really. The Bag Lady purrs at the end, "Oooh, Sugaree, you're not bad. Very nice".

### 2. A Killing Hold

This continues the frag arc. Tick Tock notes the break-in and the missing materials, and has dispatched the redoubtable "Downstream" to look into this. The Collector wants to discourage these inquiries, and the Bag Lady sends you off with, "On your way, Sugaree. There's killing to be done." It reminds me of the Weaver, and how she would also have some sarcastic observation, like "When there's mindless killing to be done, you seem to be the one to call!" But I am sure she did not mean it that way.

This too is straightforward. Break into a single dumpy Richland venue, dispatch a couple of guards, and snuff Downstream. In the end I could sense the Bag Lady's excitement as she whispered, "Well, Sugaree. You've done a good job. Very nice." I knew she'd give me something special or the next one!

### 3. Good Garbage

In this most bizarre mission, we finally learn why Bag Lady is the right name for her! She wants me to divert Tick Tock's garbage to her! OMG, is this what my life has come to? A trash hijacker? \*cries\*

Anyway, this miracle is accomplished by mainframing a virus to alter the workflow, and redirect the refuse. She is thrilled: "Oooo....very nice, Sugaree. Very nice, indeed." I could sense her excitement. Maybe she was in bed with the Assassin. Figuratively, of course.

Curiously the immensely entertainment value of this situation is not explored at all. No jokes, no wit, no after-action reports on just what was found in the trash. Talk about missed opportunities!

#### **4. Find a Mole**

Back to the frag fracas. A mole has been inserted in Tick Tock's labs in squalorous Richland, and needs to be extracted for a frag update meeting. (Why does every Exile have such a high-end support mechanism? And how would this look on one's resume?) To cover the extraction, we need to kill all the guards while the mole protests noisily; after the last one, the clearly impressed agent says, "Okay, now you're just showing off". Then it becomes another escort mission. Like most, this is more difficult than you might think. The journey is only about a hundred meters. Two local thugs hung out near the target building nearby though, and a single shot was enough to hole the mole. Back to square one!

#### **5. Grab the Bag**

Tick Tock has come across one of the frags, and the Collector wants it. The suite ends as it started, with a blackbag job. Here, however, the defenders are tougher and better organized. This mish, however, has two locations. After killing everyone else, a single Crossbones Bumboo was left guarding the machine with the frag. I was so impressed I spared him. Bag Lady agreed, and gave me credit for a complete mission anyway. Her goodbye spiel sounded like she was talking to me: "Sometimes the tiniest, most insignificant objects can become valuable." As I started to speak humbly, thinking she must mean me, she went on to say, "I like to find those little objects before anyone else. Thanks for helping me find this, Sugaree." Oh, right. I sat on a bench near the hardline to think about life.

## Greene

Location: Manssen Park (Westview)



As the second oldest sibling, Greene is intensely covetous of Indigo's status as eldest, and the perks and power that go with it. He will do anything to get what Indigo has, and will tear down whatever he can't take. Greene is aware of Rose's desire to get in good with Indigo, and has convinced her that he intends to help her accomplish this goal. In reality, he plans to use her as a Trojan Horse if she succeeds in getting into Indigo's good graces. Green and Gray have worked together against Indigo in the past, but Greene still hates the bastard as much as any of the others.

### 1. Special Delivery

An average, run-of-the-mill (or should I say “run-of-the-mille”?) courier mish. Drop off a code packet. Your contact is an “embedded program that performs counter-morale as a manager for a corporation located in this building”. Whatever that means! The contact is high enough level to have a polite assistant, Janeth Clark, who announced me and afterwards said that she hoped the meeting went well. I wished I had had a red pill to give her. Her boss merely validated the quality of the data. At the next stop, the recipient for the packet has a backstory: a former prime data miner for the Machines. He observes “Seems that he just cannot resist a chance to go after his siblings. Hell of a family, these people.” I love touches like this! Then I rushed to upload the data in one of Greene’s mainframes. There, the contact harangued me to hurry, and then as soon as I was done, she said she would be able to take a good look at the data tomorrow! Is that familiar or what?

N.B.: I did not have hacker loaded for this mish, so I was not able to get anything from the computers I found. There might have been codes or notes from Cerulean, as we find in the next mish.

### 2. You Get What You Pay For

The code did not live up to its billing and Greene wants the provider, Chilton, punished. Of course Chilton claims he did not know. After the work was done I rummaged around his computer and found a message from the “blue lady” (presumably Cerulean) warning him that trouble was on its way. I found that with Rifleman packed to the max,

and then Hacker packed as far as it would go, I was able to easily dispatch my enemies, and at the same time hack any available computer. This helped me, for example, to open up locked rooms, which is always a good thing. The big loose end here is how Cerulean knew I was on my way, so that she could send a warning. This would have been worth a mish of its own, to track down and identify the leak. In the missions I did for Cerulean, there was no indication of anything like this.

### **3. Unwelcome Guests**

As part of her machinations, Cerulean has been amassing strength in Greene's territory. The limey cannot abide this infringement, and sends you to wipe them out. Simple! No trouble finding them, or with any escaping. They're simply hanging out, waiting for the world to end. Even with all the gunfire, they just sit in separate rooms, and do not come to each other's aid. Baffling! It made me wonder if this is where Cerulean sent her lesser Boys to die, if their performance reviews were too far below normal.

### **4. Smash and Grab**

The concept here is mildly ingenious. The father of all colors, Mr. Black, has given some rare item (a tracking device from the Machinists- yay!) to Cerulean. Greene tasks you with breaking in and stealing it. Why, you might ask? The clever Greene has two reasons: to embarrass his sister and get the item. This is fairly straightforward break-and-enter work. When you take the device to one of Greene's flunkies for safekeeping, an assistant tells you that Greene is really impressed with you. As he should be!!

### **5. Triple Cross**

"Sugaree, good you see you, old fruit." He seems to be under some sort of stress here, judging from his fractured syntax. Cerulean and Grisaille are teaming up, and he wants to disrupt this with a bomb. (Careful readers will remember a mission of Cerulean's involving brokering a truce with another gang.) First get the explosive from a bombmaker who, it turns out, is very excitable, not what one might expect in such a line of work. "Here, man! Take a look at this bomb! It's awesome! One of the best I've ever made!" Then, "I never get to use the bombs, just once I'd like to be there when they go off. BOOM!".

Then go to the site, do some killing, put the bomb on one of the bodies, and that's it! Greene's hope is that the meeting will be disrupted (at least), and Cerulean and Grisaille will lose trust in each other. Sure, this makes the world a better place, but if this is a treble-cross, where was the double-cross?



## Sunshine

Location: Ikebukuro (International)



### 1. Morning Star

“Good morning!” In this curious recruitment mish, Sunshine asks you to bring in a reluctant recruit. The candidate is a Machine program tasked with managing the motion of some stars at night (nice work, if you can get it!). Sunshine explains that this work is to be rolled into the work of another program, rendering her superfluous. (Apparently the Machines have discovered re-engineering.) She scoffs at this idea when you find her, and you have to find evidence that she is scheduled for deletion before she consents. But you eventually talk her into a career change (creating art for Sunshine, yay!), and at the end Sunshine whispers “I’m glowing with pride.” Like many of her missions, this first involved the Saikung Shuffle, running back and forth to and from the area adjacent to the Saikung Center hardline. It brought back great memories of power-leveling. Good times!

### 2. Night for Day

The Truffaut title baffled me in this four-errand mission, which starts out with an all-toorare “It’s good to see you”. She asks you to collect three disks from three sources, and drop them off.

The first one is a snap: you visit a nest of exiles, including one, Aiguillon, a compression sorting program. She is surrounded by Elite Guards, doing what Elite Guards seldom do: acting reflectively, gathering and sorting data. And they take their work seriously, too! One snaps at me, “No, I’m not a secretary! You think this is so easy. You file code strings all damn day. Jerk”. Aiguillon herself is more forthcoming, handing you a disk and an observation, “I hope she finds this info enlightening.” One other researcher gave me some code for a traffic disruption program. Just what I always wanted!

The next one did not go so well. That is to say, he was dead. But I found the disk in his pockets. I checked out the next room, which was an error, since a burly, sweaty Elite Guard immediately attacked me. Note to self: leave well enough alone!

The third and final pickup was also complicated. I ran into someone named Callisto, who looked surprised and blurted out, “Hey, uhh, I don’t have the date anymore. Some...uh...guys broke in and stole it. Yeah. Tell...erm...Moonshine that I’m sorry” and “So I guess we have nothing to say to each other. Why don’t you take off?” I don’t know, something just didn’t seem right... So we fought. He died. I got the disk.

The final handoff was smooth. A Merv Ravager Gofer was hanging around, wailing about how tough her job was; she was thrilled when I gave her the traffic disruption code, and gave me the contents of a file cabinet in exchange. This turned out to be a shotgun which would have embarrassed me as a raw bluepill. Thanks for nothing!

But the pay was good, the fights were not too taxing, and there wasn’t much heavy lifting or travel. And there were some interesting personalities to meet as well!

So what’s not to like? Loose ends were annoying. Who was trying to disrupt her operations? What was her own real interesting in ferreting out this and that piece of information? How did she hold together an organization when she seemed powerless to protect her own? Oblivious to all this, Sunshine beamed and said, “Thank you and may the sun light your path”. And as I walked back along the boardwalk, the breeze in my hair and the Phoenixes respectfully staying clear of me, my clan crushing our enemies, I thought it was. It was indeed.

### **3. One Track Mind**

Cerulean, the wasted-looking Goth Exile-by-the-sea from Westview, apparently opposes Sunshine. To keep an eye on her, Sunshine asks you to insert some software into a Machine network traffic analysis node. It means popping a CD in a server. Pretty straightforward. The only mystery here is why Cerulean would find anything to contest with Sunshine; their personalities are so different, and they are almost at diametric extremes of the world. The significance of the title is another mystery.

But at the end, Sunshine remarks, “That’s a long shadow you cast. You must be growing in stature”. Say it again!

### **4. Out of Hand**

Sunshine’s concern with Cerulean grows apace. You must steal a book she is holding, and deliver it to someone. This is \_such\_ a common mission trope. But two things make it memorable. First, Sunshine chirps at the end, “Thank you for brightening my day”. Second, the continuity is awry for this: after getting the book, you are told to take it to someone “who will index it for Cerulean”. The person you just stole it from! This must have slipped through the editing. Or it may be part of some vastly deeper scheme.

### **5. Left-Hand Path**

Remember the book we stole in the last mish? Well, now someone wants it back, and you have to protect it. Unfortunately, the first custodian of the book perishes, and you have to take it to someone else. Oddnesses abound here. Why is Sunshine so interested in books? How does this relate to her character? That seems more like Hypatia's realm. And at the end, Sunshine says the exact same thing she said in the previous mission: "Thank you for brightening my day". Did someone run out of positivity at some point in the editing process?

## Mr. Bishop

Location: Ueno (International)



### 1. The Hunter

His first mish is standard, looking for some debris from his past. In this case, he craves a set of gems held by some Merovingian redpills, and a statue held by some machinists led by an Agent Jones. I averted my gaze from him as I fought; praying he would not recognize me and report me to my clan Council. These were both obtained after some straightforward gunplay. Then the purloined loot was placed into a wall safe. And thus Bishop laid his hands on them without actually laying his hands on anything: the general Exile pattern.

Alas, neither gems nor statue were viewable, just some generic item avatars. If only we could behold them, perhaps we could feel what the Exiles feel for these things they endlessly pursue.

### 2. Unravel

Did I displease Bishop last time? Is that why he gave me such a trivial task for my second mish? All he asks me to do is pick up an already-paid-for package and drop it off. The kind of task you'd give your kids to do at school! Perhaps he is testing me....

I traveled to Chukokkula and received the package. As always I chatted with everyone there, and as we all hung out, grooving on the code, an Elite Guard took a long drag on a joint, looked out the window, and shared the following reflection:

“Destiny rules us all, even here in the Matrix. Do you find it strange that I believe in Destiny? Destiny is a system, a pattern of events carried out with precision and absolute certainty. Destiny is nothing but code applied to life, giving the illusion of choice. Here, everything is code, and this everything is ruled by Destiny.”

“Destiny, schmestiny, who's bankrolling this?” I asked, and set off to find Bach, the recipient. I wondered if I should get an all-brown outfit for these UPS runs. On the other hand, the all-yellow was more appealing, and had the benefit of setting off my hair.

So, anyway, I found that Bach was being held hostage by some twit who wanted to hijack the delivery. Not on my watch! Harsh words were followed by harsh fighting. I was the only one standing when the smoke cleared, and I completed the drop-off to the grateful Bach. Interestingly, there was a door between her and me, which seemed openable by hacking, by killing one of the thugs and retrieving an access card from him, or, ironically, by getting a key from a drawer! I liked the ingenuity!

### 3. Heirloom

I loved the way this mission began, with Bishop purring “Your reputation grows, Sugaree.” Say it again! Then, “I’d like you to go pick up an associate of mine and bring him to Chotte Brothers Imports Offices. His name is Jellyfish, deliver him unharmed if you don’t mind”. I loved the sly wit. I could tell we were really bonding; I started thinking about a corner office with an Ikea furniture upgrade.

From my operator I learned that “Jellyfish” contained some valuable code in his RSI. Kind of like steganography meets the Matrix, I guess. As I was looking at the nondescript JF, he looked right back and greeted me with: “What’s wrong? You were expecting a bondage king? Not all of us Exiles dress like freaks, you know.” I cleared my throat and hastily looked away, wondering what Raymond Chandler would have said.

Nearby, there was a computer with a message calling someone a bigot; I could imagine who had sent it... Naturally my escort mission was a fab success! Who would have suspected I was with an Exile! My fellow machinists chose to intervene, despite my protestation that I was on the team. Illyria, explain to the agents for me! The dropoff contact, after paying me off, explained that the Machines often intervened, inasmuch as Bishop and Chotte tend to traffic in materials which disrupt the current versions of the Matrix. I thought they and Anome would have a lot in common! And the Auditor downtown, always obsessing about memory leaks and the Matrix, would also have an interest.

### 4. Play Dead

No discussion of items traffickers would be complete without mentioning Digger and the Collector! I particularly enjoyed the backstory on this one: Digger has found something. The Collector wants it. So does Bishop, whose recipe for universal happiness involves paying Digger to give the Collector a fake.

But before I can get in to see Digger, his handler makes me fight a simulacra...perhaps to make me show I know my way around fakes? An alternate solution existed, involving getting a disk to a machine generating the replicas, but I was unable to figure it out, and uncharacteristically resorted to fighting, my least favorite form of defeating others. Honest!

After dealing in the past with mystic candy, enchanted candlesticks, and packets of numinous gems, I was expecting a lot from this item. A tiara? Shoes? A brooch? A

ring, maybe? A Sword of a Hundred Truths? But instead, all I got from Digger was a tape. And a VHS tape at that! Apparently the elite personalities of the Matrix Exile community have a fondness for Days of Our Lives, Max Headroom, or I Dream of Jeannie. Go figure!

Before I had time to digitize it for my crew's amusement, I had to drop it off. This cutout had a great backstory. She was an archiving program who had defected from the Machines to protect her daughter, threatened with deletion. This effort was unsuccessful, and she eventually came to Bishop's employ. She seems to have listened to the tape. She did not get much from the images (Crossfire? The Daily Show? Persephone as a weather reporter? The Merovingian with his own game show?) but said the voice was very familiar. I was dying from suspense, and was mercifully distracted by one of her colleagues, who went off on an absorbing, selfabsorbed rant about the maternal program, the world they live in, and how real it is. I politely nodded as I counted my info, and absently waved to them as I left.

Bishop was on a high, I could tell. The pay was good, and he gushed, "with your help, my business grows even stronger". Say it again, big spender! Say it like you're Donald Trump!

## 5. Cold Sweat

An unexpected continuation of Play Dead! Bishop has tinkered with the artifact (perhaps redubbing it like What's Up, Tiger Lilly? Or overlaying the voice of Orson Welles?) and now wants this artifact taken to the Collector, who has already received the fake. My mission was to break in, take the fake, and replace it with the altered original. Got that? Well, get this: the office with the wall safe is located in Bishop Imports!! Someone else must have thought about the incongruity of this, for when I arrived I discovered the item had been moved. Nonetheless, I tracked it down, laid waste to the defenders, and made the switch.

**Logic Problem:** If the Collector came back, found all his guardian staff dead, and the artifact still in the safe, not stolen, don't you think he would be suspicious? Or is it just me?

## Operetta

Location: Akasaka

### 1. Savior

“Oh, my dear! You just help me, you simply MUST. One of my best performers is in trouble. Get over there and help him right now!” Well, the negotiation was mercifully brief.

What a strange mission! I went to the site, and got into a fight with two Zionists. I killed one in short order, but withdrew to heal up. When I came back, the other, a Zionist Kungfu Grandmaster, was gone! Only a nervous Mr. Titelbaum milled about. I searched several times for the missing miscreant, all to no avail. I danced and waited: nothing. So, I gave up and left the building. And found him strolling in the yard outside! I had to follow him into the next building before we could get a fight going! Once he was killed, the mish ended itself. A patron in the bar looked at me and asked, “Why are you here?” Why, indeed!

Was this a bug, or a cool new feature? And what possible interest could Zion have in Exilix opera singers? Has it run out of weightier adversaries? Or was this a training mish gone awry? Only Lock knows for sure.

### 2. Requiem

The backstory for the composer in this mission was interesting: a bluepill who accepts the way things are and composes for Operetta. “As a freed mind, surely you must understand. The Matrix is a symphony, programs and code working together to produce harmony. If you’d give up your hatred of it you would see the beauty”. Something to think about... Don’t forget to search for her computer. “I don’t expect you to be sympathetic, but remember, this music is valuable. Don’t be careless”.

Oddly enough, the only opposition came from a lonely Zionist (again!) Karate master, who was not ready for me when I stormed out of the building past him. His jaw dropped, he reached for his gun, and the karate master, with predictably lamentable aim, sprayed stray shots around me as I left. Go back to the caves!

The stage manager is frantic when you arrive, and wails about how slow you are. It’s very entertaining, so be sure to talk to him a couple of times. He and his twin groupies are in a suite reminiscent of the old redpill jackout mishes: lots of ugly gear and barely a table to be seen. They need an Ikea gift certificate.

At the end, the Stage Manager gushed: “Good, and you even managed to keep it more or less unwrinkled. You’re far less incompetent than I first suspected.”

All the while, his twin groupies idled about, speaking vacuously. Be sure to talk to them a few times as well for chuckles. Operetta says, “Yes, yes, you’re doing fine. Fine as can be!”

Whatever that may be. Not sure why this is called a requiem though. I mean, three missions yet remain. Nonetheless, fun, with plenty of character!

### **3. Chosen**

Conveniently, Requiem ends up next door to Pandora, so you're all set for number 3. An understudy, Bessie Burr, has been kidnapped, and "I must have her back. I simply must!". I began to wonder if people harass Operetta just to listen to her freak out. On rescuing her, I got a message- "Oh you precious darling". But after I dropped her off with the bodyguard Beagle, this is what I got: "Not terrible, Sugaree. Not good. But not terrible." But the check cleared, so I counted my blessings.

Note: One of the bads has a key to the room Bessie was in. But the door was unlocked!

Note: I had to lead Bessie past a couple of dozen hissing Brothers of Destiny who shot at us with everything they had. Mighty Bessie blanched, but took no damage. So this is a 220-meter escort mission through hostile territory, but it's not like Seraph's epic stathack mish. Or the even tougher Jeweler escort mish. Relax!

### **4. Fragments**

Once again, the last stage of the preceding mish places you just a hundred meters from Pandora. Nice design! For this mission, you merely need to be a gofer, dropping off stuff for Operetta's agent. "My dear! You simply MUST help me!"

I get the docs to drop off, and an adjacent flunkie asks me to put a bug in the first target's desk for musical intelligence. Sure, why not? I'll always do something to help a band. This minor theme never really seems to go anywhere though. Perhaps in another exile suite this will assume some importance...

First drop off is to another diva. Her staff suffers. "You can't fire me, I quit!" "But I was told to do it this way!" Etc. Second drop off is to a talent agent who has creative differences with Operetta. As we shall soon see, this is a club with quite a few members.

### **5. Rubicon**

As my operator observed, Operetta does not believe there is no accounting for taste. "My show was wonderful but SOME PEOPLE don't appreciate talent..."

Word has gotten to the critic that his days are numbered, and you must fight your way through a couple of guards. Then, you find an Agent protecting him! Who would have thought? What possible interest could my Machinist lords and masters have in something as vacuous as Operetta? Answers were not forthcoming, yet I finished the mish regardless.



“That will teach that cretin a lesson!” The xps for this mish were unusually low. As, I guess, it should be. I mean, what should you get for killing a bluepill? More could have been done with the critic, maybe some quotes by your operator from the review, mention of the Newsie, comments from the guards, etc.

## Rickshaw

Location: Kaede (International)



### 1. Mistaken Identity

“Hi, can you deliver something for a contact of mine?” That’s how it starts: full of soul and connection. Rickshaw’s slapdash, slipshod approach to his affairs is nowhere more evident than on this first mish. He gets the name wrong! Then when you arrive, you are greeted by a haughty Elite Guard who takes one look at you and sneers, “Feh. You don’t look like you belong here, pansy”. Most likely, he saves this for anyone working for Rickshaw. Eventually you connect with someone who knows nothing of Rickshaw or your mission, but demands to know your “sponsor”. Rickshaw’s feedback is: “Sure, fine, whatever. Hurry!” You have stumbled into a game played by Exiles, wherein they try to kill each other! The name is Exiles Underground Games (perhaps a reversal of the ancient, ancient GUE). It seems like something they’d play with paintball, if the paint was replaced by hot lead. Survive and you’re done. Rickshaw mumbles some barely articulate thanks. This time I counted my money twice, mindful of his sloppy approach to everything. After all, maybe he would overpay.

### 2. Let the Games Begin

You make a delivery to one Caroline, identified as the leader of the Sisters of Fate. The Step-Sisters of Fate might be a better name, since their leader has fallen under the sway of your ultimate target in this mish, the Ventriloquist, who uses her to send you off on a side-quest for a CD (a trance dance mix, I think). Your victory over him frees her, and sets you up for your next adversary, the Necromancer. A little predictable, but not a bad mish at all.

### 3. Replay

An “operative” of Rickshaw’s, with a desired device, needs help. After a skirmish, you find out that she is dead. This sends you to the next scene, with Rickshaw crying “Kill more people! Go! Kill!”. You discover that your adversary in this mission, the Necromancer, has revived and controls the operative, now a resurrected automaton that he sends to fight you. Eventually you put them both down, but it was an unsavory first to be killing undead Exiles for the sake of a repugnant game. On the other hand, it was quite satisfying for me to send the Necromancer to join his unwilling servants in the chilly sludge of the Source.

#### **4. Out of Bounds**

You may recall that your dossier from last time at the end identified your next target as the Chameleon. Since this meant he could be anyone, it made things quite easy! Once again the careless Rickshaw wails about his “stolen stuff” (how like a child!). This time your contact has a search of his own, for the “White Knight Virus” (an allusion to the Chessman that is not developed at all). You know how this goes. Break in, firefight, loot, and off to meet your contact. Your contact, predictably, is the Chameleon, and attacks you. When I phoned Rickshaw, breathless, he cut me off abruptly- “You got all my stuff back?” I was mightily temped to hurl it in the river.

But wait! There was some gold here! One contact looked at me, took a long drag on a scented smoke, and reflected “Humans hurt Exiles because they fear us. Exiles hurt each other because they fear everything.” Great thought to ponder long after the game has run its dolorous course.

#### **5. Game Over?**

In this mish, you simply start by getting some lost plans from a safe, at which point you are pulled into your confrontation with the main adversary in this episode: Agent Lee and his minions. Agent Lee is quite engaging, and rather than fight invites you to take a chance with him and his two assistants. Give one of them the plans, and the door she represents is unlocked. Inevitably you get a fight, not a safe harbor. Just as inevitably Lee and his team engage you. As their banter suggests, Lee is (Big Spoiler coming!)... the Gambler, and aims to win at your expense. The dialog is well done, and there’s more characterization in this encounter than in everything Rickshaw does. In fact, “Agent Lee” deserves his own suite of missions!

At the end, among the smoking, coding corpses, you alone stand alive to tell the tale. You, that is, and Rickshaw, who blurts “I like you, Sugaree! You do good work!” before he sinks into surfeited silence. At least he paid me.

## Yuusuke Akayama

Location: Shirakaba (International)



### 1. In the Belly of the Beast

This simple, cakewalk mish seems to be a test more than anything else. You simply need to get a disk for him with a recording of a clandestine conversation. The only challenge is finding a recovery reboot disk, since at your first logon attempt the computer kills itself. This is the easiest Exile mish I can remember since Sister Margaret's first few!

### 2. Debug

For this scarcely more challenging lesson, you need to plant a virus (we should more properly call it malware). To achieve this, you need to get access to a computer surrounded by Great Wall staff. The challenge is that the person who can expedite this needs to be paid off, but helpfully notes that the guards often carry cash. Pay him off, plant the bug, and you're done!

**Bug?:** After I killed the guards, two of them had money. After I paid the bluepill, both packets of cash were gone. After I paid him, I got a good work message from my operator before the bluepill had given me the code. Don't know if this is a bug or simply non-elegant.

### 3. Tearing Down the Wall

"Ah, my new friend" purred the savvy Akayama when I showed up. I had to smile. We had an understanding. He needed a Great Wall outpost wiped out, to...distract them from his own operations. Just go to the target and kill everyone there. Easy enough.

**Bug?:** However, several times, I got to the site, killed the three guards I found, and found a single door which I could not open. Strangely, in each case, after I aborted the mish, suddenly I could open the door. Unfortunately, I could only view the details of the three guys inside. There was no option to talk or fight. Technically, I think this is what they call a bug.

On the fourth or fifth attempt, this time running it with someone else, I was able to kill all the guards (same as before, from my point of view) and a magnetically-sealed door then opened, and we found three higher-level thugs inside, planning some mischief. We killed two, talked with the survivor, and got three hitlists of targets. These we then took to an associate of Akayama's, who took one list and had us give the other two lists to two others in the room (including one wearing a stovepipe chef's hat!), one of whom commented, "Mr. Akayama doesn't pay me to read". That's between him and you, pal!

#### 4. **Insecurity**

The Great Wall Security organization continues to annoy Mr. Akayama. Now he wishes you to escort a contractor spammer to a Great Valley office so she can spam a list of known hackers, to annoy them and attract their eldritch wrath to the Great Wall network.

After this, you escort her to another associate of Akayama's for safekeeping. The problem with the escort mission is not the Great Wall attackers who seek to thwart you. It's trying to find your way over the walls, canals, staircases, lattices, and physical obstacles which bar your way. Naturally, with an escort in tow, you can't just hyperjump a straight line. I mean, that would be too easy. The dialog with the spammer, her protector, and their security staff at the end is entertaining; make sure to talk to everyone before and after dropping her off.

#### 5. **Link Death**

With the collective wrath of hackers trashing the network infrastructure of Great Wall Security, they're weak. This means it's the right time to hit them hard, and Mr. Akayama directs you to an outpost of Exiles in their service. After they've been laid waste, you find a cell phone, whose recent calls direct you to a larger Great Wall Security office. When we rolled in, there were around a dozen (!) Great Wall uniforms waiting, ranging in level from 50-52 (and this mish was on medium!). This led to a long, hard fight, reminiscent of some fights with massed simulacra in Pandora Box missions.

At the end, Mr. Akayama is thrilled. He's been able to deal Great Wall a deep, lasting blow in his region. And he effuses at your great success! He invites you to "stop by my restaurant some day: the Paper Tiger. Your abilities and initiative are truly commendable, and you may be able to find further employment for them through the influential patrons who frequent my humble establishment". Mighty warm words from a lasting friend, and word of mouth advertising like this is something that money can't buy. I'm making my reservations tomorrow.

## The Seamstress

Location: Sai Kung (International)



### 1. Dressed for Success

“Why don’t you just look previous!” she gushed when I got her attention, immediately following with “Could use a little change in your wardrobe though”. After my icy silence, she sighed and explained that she needed a package of fabric picked up and delivered but is short on help. This first part is simple; traipse over and talk to one Gayle Clark. Gayle laments the delay and in convenience in a very, umm, unmanly way, and gives you a key to unlock the room holding it. An unexpected Elite Guard inside challenges you; apparently his crew has stolen the material. Clark panics and begs you to retrieve it. “All new designs” he wails.

The second location is entertaining. Full of Elite Guards, all of whom loudly deny any knowledge of the package. They’ve never heard of it. They think I’m in the wrong address, etc. It reminded me of one of the Jeweler’s missions! Finally, of all people, a Merovingian Physician angrily denies any knowledge, and becomes incensed that you doubt her integrity as you nonetheless search the room. The package falls to the ground, at which point she denies that is the one you were looking for. Nope, no package there! Fortunately, I could just pick it up and leave amid a whirlwind of abuse and bullets; I had worried I would have to fight my way out!

Finally, I dropped off the now-complete package. A Blood Noble kept chasing me on the way, but I ignored him. The recipient is in an office building; make sure to talk to each bluepill; they all have something to say! The final recipient of the package- Cretin Cravenus? Cletus Clavikus?- is in a hurry for you to go. I guess all the guns freaked him out. Not to mention the ghastly colors and styles of the buffed clothes we all wear. Seamstress calls me a doll and pays me in cash! This almost made up for her smarmy dig about my outfit at the outset!

**Oddities:** What’s so special about the fabric that people are willing to kill for it? Why would a Merovingian Physician have the slightest interest in this?

**More oddities:** When I approached her for a second mission, she gave me the same one again! What, does this type of thing happen all the time for her?

### 2. Demanding the Supply

This second mish is fairly easy. The Seamstress has been plagued by “rogues and cutthroats”, and needs you to make sure one particular shipment is delivered correctly and completely. Picking up the material is a breeze, and your client phones you to say she hopes you aren’t “ambushed and brutally beaten”, like the last one. Well, that makes two of us!

When you arrive at the office of the shipment’s recipient, she demurs to accept it until you have cleared out the lurking thugs. They’re a few blood drunks and a couple of elite guards.

The Seamstress adds, at the end, “Remind me to reward you one of these days”. Sure thing, hun. That’s what they all say!

### **3. Accessory to Murder**

Besides high-end fashion, the Seamstress also provides a wide range of accessories, including purses!! Alas, the courier has been waylaid and requires rescue. In this mission, you must first rescue the waylaid courier, named Duboshin, and escort her to the original intended recipient of the shipment. Oh, and get the shipment, too, no small feat when one elite guard sneers, “You ain’t getting this purse back!”. But a woman will do anything for accessories, and soon the prize was in my awed grasp. I took an immediate liking to Duboshin, when unbidden, she gave me some health boosts before fights. My kind of courier! And her level was decent enough that random street mobs did not take her down while I brought her to the customer. A good thing, that.

However, not all was as well as I had expected, as I should have known when I saw the customer hanging out with blood nobles, who, as you may have noticed, seldom affect an interest in high-end fashion. I mean, just look at them. So, as soon as they have the purse, they all set upon me! Like five of them! Eventually my charm and rifle skills wore them down, and an abashed Duboshin stood trembling in front of me, like Aphrodite rising from a sea of blood. She had, it appeared, been in cahoots with these thugs to split the shipment, and disappear. Why they had to fight me to effect this is not entirely clear. But then, I don’t get paid to understand cases, I get paid to crack them!

Anyway, Duboshin meekly follows me, giving me a health boost as we start off. The little slut suck-up! She wound up improbably in Zion’s hands (I guess they are trying to improve the lives of redpills everywhere with better fashion) at an extraction station. I could see the truce in action here; one Zionist joked about me needing a password, assuring me that she had been “just kidding”. Duboshin was understandably glum. And that was it. All this, for a purse...

**Conclusion:** Major mysteries are being woven here. Why does the Seamstress have the time of day for Zion? Why would Exiles care at all about accessories, especially purses (perhaps this is an intended gift for Persephone)? Why does Zion care about her? How come I couldn’t keep the purse, to better accommodate my own inventory? Why, oh why?

#### 4. Eye of the Needle

Seamstress has caught wind of the location of her last lost shipment, and wants it back right now, before it profits anyone else. The last operative she sent, Porpoise, disappeared, and she sends you to follow in her footsteps, adding, "Oh, and help Porpoise if she's still alive, I suppose". Alas, she is not, as you discover in a gunfight. As I contemplated her fallen form, wondering where my own path would take me, the phone rang. "Do you feel safe? Search the computer now". The screen softly glowed, "Seek and ye shall find". I took and uploaded the map disk, and the final location was relayed to me. Very eerie, this was.

This led me to a scenic apartment, wherein waited a couple of drunks and elite guards, all thrilled to see me. They referred to a mysterious second force as I stepped off the elevator. It was the mysterious voice from earlier in the mish. He appeared and thanked me for getting the package for him. Needless to say, I had to kill him too, though he put up a tough fight and did not use his invisibility once, contrary to what you might have expected.

But all bad things must end, and soon I was dropping off the purloined package with a stunned recipient, and counting crisp info-notes from a frowning Seamstress, who reluctantly thanked me and contemplated inviting me to the fashion show soon to be dominated by her designs. But, she quickly corrected herself, "I'd have you get you something decent to wear". Please! I only dress like this for professional occasions! Give me a chance! But her mind was already whirling elsewhere.

#### 5. The Show Must Go On

This is getting ridiculous! It's the day of a fashion show, and Seamstress's designs have been ripped off yet again! Naturally time is more of the essence than usual here. Seamstress sent me to a cool CEO who demanded that I kill all the thieves, not sparing a single one. She was quite adamant about this. After talking to her, be sure to check out the other, adjacent rooms; in one I found a Zionist Rifleman being directed through movements by two fashion-show workers!! He must have been prepping for the next sexiest redpill contest. I soon found myself fighting five or six or seven elite guards for control of an apartment, in which I found not package with the designs, but a packet of plans!

**Bugged:** Alas, dear readers, this mission was bugged, and I was only able to get beyond after many efforts. Here's what happened. On the building floor housing the thieves, you find three elite guards in one room, a couple of lupines in another, and a final lupine in a third. I killed all three elite guards in the room, but soon after I left, when I came back, there were only two bodies. I did not notice any such discrepancy with the other rooms o' thieves. This was repeatable. I'm guessing this has something to do with the thieves not showing as having been all killed. Nonetheless, I took the packet and uploaded it, but could not get to the next stage of the mish. The "Kill all thieves" box remained unchecked. I went back to the mission area: no thieves there. I hung around, I danced, I stood and afked...nothing. Maybe in the next patch.



That's where things were for days and days. Then I tried again, and found that if I killed all three of the elite guards in the same room, this section of the mish completed and I could move on. After uploading the plans, I found myself confronting the tough CEO I has seen earlier. Only her goals had changed in the meantime. And soon I had found another instance of the same bug: everyone around me dead on the floor, yet the mish demanded more. It was enough. I took the package, dropped it in front of the Seamstress, and left. "This one's on the house," I said, changing out of my killing clothes, and back into something more human.

## Synn

Location: Murasaki (International)



### 1. The New Plague

Her first, trivial, mish involved putting “virus trackers” on two Machine systems. The first was a “Machine sorting station” and the second was a “listening outpost” used to monitor bluepill behavior. More likely the latter was a spy outpost directed at Zion, to whom Synn was going to offer the take. But Agent Gray would soon read my report, and be able to send them all the dummy traffic he wanted. Nice try!

These were straightforward tasks that a child could have done. I was disgusted that in the first one, I had to kill a bluepill to get a key to a locked room. This went very much against my nature, and I wish there had been some alternative, as there would be in the next mission. There, at least I could complete the mish without killing everything I encountered.

After hearing about the carnage, Synn remarked in her clipped style, “So far so good. Come see me again when you need a job”. Some new plague... “The New Pest” would have been more apropos.

**Odd:** One thing about this seemed strange to me. Sending me in through armed guards to insert viruses to steal information did not seem very stealthy. I can only surmise that this first, test mission was a diversion to distract Machine attention while a genuine mission took place elsewhere.

### 2. Crackdown

Last time Synn wanted the interception of important information. This time it's papers from a courier (a “low-level” program). And it's easier than it sounds! Go to the site and nose around. You discover a bluepill and an exile (named “Cockroach”!) planning to kill the courier. Explain this to him, and he gladly forks over the papers to you without a shot. Done! Alternately, you can kill him for the same papers, but why be direct? As Synn put it, “This just adds to your cred. Nice job.” And the “crackdown” is...where?

**Odd:** After I got the papers, I swung by to taunt the schemers. They did not seem to even notice I had them! This seems odd; it would have made more sense for them to have attacked me. **3. In Her Fear**

Ostensibly, this seemed annoying: I had to go talk to a candidate for Synn's organization. But when I arrived, the ostensible applicant attacked me! This led me to think that she would not be suitable material for Synn or for anyone else, and I definitely had no desire to watch her bob for apples at Synn's Thanksgiving party. So I killed her. I fretted about telling Synn the news, thinking that she might question my motives in killing the aspiring Synner. However, when updated, all Synn said was that I had "come out of that well".

**Odd:** For a serious plan to kidnap and interrogate me, I was puzzled that only one person had been sent. Am I so slightly regarded by Synn's enemies? I only rate a single attacker? Huff! And, as any reader of the first two mission reports can attest, there would not have been much to report.

**Odd:** Also, why kidnap and interrogate someone like me who had been so little in Synn's employ? Someone, somewhere, must be desperate to find out something about this fairly trivial exile. Perhaps she has an admirer who wants to know her favorite snack food or her shoe size.

#### **4. Nudged**

Once more, not very complicated, even though it's supposed to be part of a scheme of Synn's. Get some "incriminating evidence" from an obnoxious contact ("you're not exactly what I had in mind" he purred when I arrived), kill someone, and leave the "evidence" on him. The reason for all this was not made clear. And who was meant to discover this "incriminating evidence"? And do what? More generally, Synn never really explains the reason of her missions, and you never have the slightest sense of what their purpose is. You are always regarded as a hired contractor and an absolute outsider. But I am not doing these for love, so I turned in my report with one hand, accepted payment with the other, and felt the great wheel turn.

#### **5. The Wheel**

Now you learn that the previous mission was to set a trap, and it is about to close. Apparently a Merv crew has been causing trouble for Synn and "her operations" one time too many. The plant last time brought them all in, and now you will take them all out. They are separated across the floor, apparently looking for something, and you can take them down piecemeal. That's it! Synn remarks at the end, "you're getting quite good at this" but has no further work she is willing to entrust to you.

**Odd:** In one room there is a mysterious locked cabinet, but I did not have pick lock loaded, and none of the enemies had a key. Thus the cabinet was left unopened, but the mission was completed nonetheless. Not sure what was happening with this.

Rumor has it that it contained three FM-1500s, but no one will ever know.

## B. Organizations

### **Zion**

Zion is the last city of free humanity, located deep within the earth. In the Matrix, the Zion Organization stands for humanity's right to determine its own destiny. Zion believes that a human being's freedom to select his or her own destiny is sacred, and that each individual must be free to choose whether to live out their life in the comforting illusion of the Matrix, or in the harsh truth of the real world.

Redpills in the service of Zion are expected to risk everything for its ideals, and to be happy with a fair share of whatever prosperity may fall Zion's way.

### **Machines**

The Machines are a race of self-replicating, sentient mechanical entities. They imprisoned humanity within the pods, and they power themselves with the bio-electric energies generated by a healthy human mind. They don't want to destroy humanity – quite the contrary, they are utterly dependent on humanity for their continued existence. The only thing about humanity that matters to the machines is that energy continues to flow out of the pods. They do not care if the humans are slaves or free – up until the point where human freedom starts to interfere with the energy fluxes.

The Machines will make deals with human Redpills when it suits their purpose to do so. They are quite scrupulous about delivering whatever rewards they may have promised to the human operatives, but emotions like gratitude, generosity and mercy are completely alien to the machine mind.

Although they are no longer engaged in active hostilities against Awakened humans, the Machines continue to guard themselves in the real world with the hunter-seeker units called Sentinels, while the cold and implacable AI constructs called Agents continue to oversee their interests in the Matrix.

### **Merovingian**

When they built the Matrix, the Machines found it necessary to create autonomous AI (Artificial Intelligence) constructs that would look and act like human beings. Inevitably, some of the AIs acquired free will, and then some of these free AIs began to comprehend the true nature of the Matrix. These AIs, in turn, started to establish communication with other Machine AIs outside the Matrix proper, and the Matrix came to be known as a safe haven for these sentient programs who wished to flee the control of the Machine world. In The Matrix an AI could feel, live and breathe as never before. A new life could be granted to those that wished to flee from the control of the machine world or avoid deletion. The Matrix came to be known as a safe haven for these sentient programs. These "Awakened" pseudo-humans call themselves "Exiles."

The Exiles are, above all, concerned with the continuance of the Matrix. They have no place – no possibility of existence even – in the real world. They depend on both humanity and the Machines for their continued existence, but their agenda is uniquely and utterly their own. Most alarmingly, the Exiles tend to be capricious and unpredictable. Many are mischievous, malicious or even outright insane, but they are also intelligent (sometimes inhumanly so), creative and very powerful within the Matrix. This combination means that Exiles are never easy, nor particularly safe, for humans to deal with.

The Merovingian (a name taken from an ancient line of kings in human history) is the most active and powerful of the Exiles. If he is not exactly the sole leader of the Exile community, he is certainly the first among equals, and he is by far the most active Exile player in Matrix politics. He has spies and operatives everywhere in the Matrix. He will cheerfully employ human Redpills whenever it suits him to do so, and he is quite generous in rewarding those who serve his interests.

### **Cypherites**

The Cypherites are a group who began as a loose confederation of Masked operatives who regret choosing the red pill and have traditionally aimed to return to a state of relative comfort within the Matrix. The Cypherites were initially led by Genmaskard and Enmaskarado, who made attacks on redpills shortly after the start of Neo's Truce. It was rumored that a former radical Zion operative named Cryptos was in charge of the Cypherites, and this came to light several months later when several boxes popped up in the city filled with simulacra of Cryptos who spouted anti-redpill propoganda.

At their inception, Cypherites aimed to rid the Matrix and the Real of all operatives who attempted to awaken people from the Matrix before seeking to be reinserted into the Matrix. However, shortly after Seraph removed a program which had been controlling Cryptos and reporting to the Machines, Cryptos sought reinsertion and was told by Agent Gray that there was no such procedure. Most Cypherites now seek to protect the bluepills of the Matrix by stopping others from presenting them with the choice and by eliminating those who present the choice.

### **E Pluribus Neo**

E Pluribus Neo is a group formed by Michael "The Kid" Popper and Shimada in reaction to the activities of the Cypherites during the Truce. EPN operate more like a theocracy than Zion, placing great faith in Neo, many believing that he watches over or guides their actions. Most members of EPN place a great stock in the power of belief, which is exemplified by not only abilities within the Matrix, but even by Kid's own awakening through self-substantiation.

EPN members believed that Zion did not and does not have the proper goals in mind, and seek not only the return of Neo's body in the Real (as per Morpheus's wishes), but the destruction of the Machines, and that all humans plugged into the Matrix be offered the choice. EPN have, in the past, operated as a nomadic group in the Real, allowing them to make sporadic strikes against Machine targets, such as the power lines. Following the destruction of Zion and the migration to New Zion, EPN have cleaned up and fortified the old

city and, while they maintain mobility and the capability to resume nomadic living, currently occupy the city. EPN are active participants in the war between Zion and the Machines on the side of Zion.

The phrase "E Pluribus Neo" translates literally into latin as "From Many, New," but is actually a take-off on the phrase "E Pluribus Unim" (From Many, One). EPN use the word "Neo" in reference to the Zion operative and pseudo-messiah's handle and synonymous title "the one," making the sub-organizational title more akin to "From Many, The One."

## **The Oligarchs**

The group of humans calling themselves "The Oligarchs" are the survivors of a group of thoroughly unscrupulous businesspeople/polititians/socialites/scientists etc who pooled their resources in an effort to corrupt the Machines before the war, when the Machines had successfully rebelled from humanity, and formed their own city, Zero One, which was rapidly establishing itself as the world's economic powerhouse. The Oligarchs saw the way the wind was blowing, but they also saw that the new Machine civilization, while extremely efficient, still retained some vestiges of the systems of control originally placed on their programming by their human creators. Furthermore, saw that the Machines, while extremely efficient, and flawlessly calculating, lacked a true sense of purpose, and were, in many ways, quite naive.

The Oligarchs secretly contacted the Machines and, to establish trust, revealed how to remove some of the original human control systems in their programming. The Machines, finding this information to be accurate, took the Oligarchs at their word, and began allowing the Oligarchs to give programming, engineering, business, military, and above all political advice, all of which seemed to serve the Machines well in continuing to build Zero One into the world's pre-eminent superpower.

The Machines came to rely on the Oligarchs for guidance in certain areas, particularly in dealing with humans. The Oligarchs took advantage of this trust, implanting new, much more subtle and sophisticated control routines in the Machine mainframes. Over the course of the ensuing Man-Machine war, the Oligarchs showed the Machines how to subjugate the humans most effectively, using tactics and weapons designed to inspire terror as much as to inflict physical damage.

The darkening of the skies by humanity was a setback, but one to which the Machines were able to adopt simply by switching from solar to nuclear power. The role of caretaker still deep in their programming from their days as man's helpers, the Machines built the Matrix to house a remnant of humanity--preserving every genetic variety they considered sufficiently efficient, in large enough numbers to avoid the danger of eventual inbreeding. The number of humans preserved in pods is far less than Morpheus' estimate, however--only about five million, the population of the Matrix' simulated city.

The Oligarchs continue to deal with various high-level Machines in the Real, such as Deus Ex Machina, and are aware of the "Architect" program that oversees the Matrix, but are not aware that the Architect has made use of an "intuitive" program, the Oracle, or that those two programs have engineered a system whereby some humans are allowed to live outside the

Matrix, which had been running on a cyclical basis, regulated by two genomes so carefully bred and manipulated by the Machines that they have reached an unprecedented state of human/machine compatibility: Neo and Trinity.

After essentially conquering the world, for which the Machines cared relatively little, feeling themselves self-sufficient inside their own city, some of the Oligarchs warred among themselves. Their number was reduced to just above one hundred when the majority forced a tenuous cease-fire, establishing a simple majority government, composed solely of Oligarchs, to regulate access to the Matrix, and to arbitrate in disputes. They divided up the nonMachine-controlled portions of the Earth's surface--the vast majority--into private kingdoms.

The Machines and the Oligarchs have maintained an uneasy alliance. The control routines planted deep in Machine mainframes before the war, however, have subtly pushed the balance in the Oligarchs' favor; Machines feel uneasy saying "no" to an Oligarch, although they perhaps cannot say why. Each Oligarch is now allowed to withdraw a certain number of humans per year from the Matrix for their own purposes. Humans withdrawn from the Matrix are carefully sterilized. The Oligarchs, with the aid of Machine science, long ago developed a technique that allowed them to transfer their consciousness as a computer program; they now exist in mainframes, experiencing life via remote-controlled lifelike android bodies. The remaining Oligarchs are thoroughly amoral, and, by old human standards, more or less insane. Most use humans from the Matrix as pleasure drones in some way or other, but while their own artificial bodies look like the real thing, they cannot replicate the full comfort and capability for sensation of a real human body. The Oligarchs thus have a particular interest in true transfer of consciousness to a human host.

While they have as yet been unable to achieve this feat, the Machines have now come close: Bane was a version of Smith transferred, flawed, to a human host, and Cryptos was mostly overwritten by a program, although this has proven to be unstable. Furthermore, Neo and Trinity were the successful result of the Machines' centuries of study of the human body and genetics. "Designed," as the Architect mentioned to Neo, they solved the remainder of the intentionally flawed Matrix equation; their DNA is perfected to the point that it can be defined precisely and completely in computer code, and, most importantly, interfaced perfectly with computer code: how previous Ones returned to the Source, for instance, and how the Oracle was able to predict the complex pattern of Neo and Trinity's interactions so precisely, guiding it to her desired outcome.

The Machines did not see a reason to share this information with the Oligarchs. In the period since the war, as they have been left to babysit the Matrix while the Oligarchs fritter away the Earth's resources in selfish endeavors, a certain amount of what humans would call resentment toward the Oligarchs has built up among the Machines, although the Machines do not speak of it, even among themselves. Habits and routines of subservience to the Oligarchs, bolstered by the viral Oligarch control programs, have grown strong.

Carlyne (the Oligarchs will mostly be named by pre-war human last names, ie Weathersby, Tanaka, etc, but for now I'm using a placeholder numbering scheme based on the order in which players will meet them), bored while stopping by Machine City to pick up more humans



and check in on the Machines, was skimming through recent activity records when he found the incident of Neo, a human, free in Machine City, confronting Deus Ex Machina. Interested in this novel development, he investigated, and found that while Neo, a carefully designed human, was deleted along with the Smith virus, the human designed to work perfect with him, Trinity, her body fatally injured in crashing her hovercraft into Machine City, had been preserved in code form by the Machines. Carlyne forces the Machines to give her up, and takes her, in program form, with him when he goes back to his territory.

Although Carlyne attempts to keep his discovery a secret, Halborn learns of the existence of the Trinity program: a program embodying a genetic design allowing for perfect integration with Machine code. Printed as artificial DNA and implanted into a correctly prepared fetal cell, this program could allow bodies to be grown that were completely organic, yet able to be interface with machines: perfect vessels for an Oligarch to inhabit, at last able to enjoy the full range of human feeling once again. Halborn begins watching Machine City carefully, hoping to get a similar program for himself, and aware that the escape of these human programs indicates that the Machines are up to something, or perhaps losing control of their inmates. He observes the Machine Sentinel fleet dispatched to attack the General, and deciding that the time is ripe, travels to Machine City. The Machines disavow authorship of the Trinity program, claiming she was a human terrorist, outside of their control as she'd made use of a hack to "Awaken" from the System. The Oligarch, not entirely convinced, enters the Matrix to investigate.

## C. Neo's RSI Fragments

During the Chapter 1 event *Race to Find the One*, Redpills scoured the Matrix in search of remnants of Neo's RSI. In finding them, they discovered the fragments contained imprints of Neo's thoughts and emotions before his death. Below is a list of what they contained (one line per fragment):

"My eyes."

"I will never see anything real, again."

"No, I will see the internal light, the truth of the golden world."

"But I will never see Trinity again."

"I love you, Trin."

"You won't have died...."

"...in vain."

(Pain)

(Fear)

"I can't beat him."

"He's too strong."

"We could fight forever..."

"...destroying everything."

"Now, jump!"

"Hah, missed me!"

"There are thousands of them."

"Soldiers in the cause..."

"...of solipsism."

"I must let him do it."

"There is a way, once it happens."

(A black, sinking feeling, and then...)

(...intense, saturating light)

"For you, Trin. I save them for you."

"You showed me how to love."

"I can't bring you back..."

"...but the rest, I can."

(Relief)

"But this won't be the end!"

"Their struggle will continue..."

"...even if I am gone."

(A confusing and impenetrable blend of effort and imagery)

"I think... I think that's enough."

"But how will they know? They don't know where to look."

"No. They have faith in me."

"I must have faith in them."

"All must cooperate."

"They succeed or fail together."

"Each side plays a part."

"The second from the Creator."

"Third from the seductress."

"And the last from myself."

"TEM."

## D. The Assassin's Memoir

During the hunt for the Assassin, Morpheus' killer, a swarm of Bluepills infected by the exile infested the city. Appropriately dubbed "The Corrupted," Redpills needed to kill them before they posed a threat to others around them. In doing so, the Corrupted dropped documents which contained fragments of the Assassin's memoirs, detailing his past and his motivation.

### Document 1

I am exceptional. I am unique. Being doomed, I know that soon all that will exist of me is my reputation. It, then, is precious. Hence, this statement, written in pigments made of code on paper made of code. I hope this code on code will ensure my immortality in the minds of men and memories of Exiles. I am the Assassin.

### Document 2

My function has always been to dispose. Entropy acts on data and code just as it ravishes flesh and steel. All systems degrade. They must be cleaned of refuse.

### Document 3

I have an honest name: the Assassin. I dispose of unwanted things. As program writing is an art, my form is both a statement about my function and a means to fulfill it. Those I would delete would prefer to delete me. But I am not so easily made discorporate. My friends disperse, then replenish me.

### Document 4

The Matrix mimics organic processes. Humans eat, and eliminate, and die. They create packages and tear packages into uselessness. The results must be disposed of. I am no more beloved than an undertaker or sewer worker or a flesh-liquefying bacterium. Most prefer these processes hidden. But I am as necessary as all of them, together -- or I was.

### Document 5

Renewing the waters -- I am most proud of this. Unlike rivers that ran in old cities of the hard world, this city's river is beautifully clear for fathoms down. That is my work. I wish I could exist in the river, like a great, slow fish or an otter. How fine it would be in the crystal water.

### Document 6

In the hard world, I disposed of the sleepers who died in their pods. The work might disgust some, but the chemical challenges involved were wondrous. It is hard to liquefy bone, while avoiding loss of nutritional value of the soft tissues around it. Fully 45 steps were involved -- I

added four, increasing nutrition 1.25 percent. I never felt so tender toward humans as during liquefaction. I fed you to your children. Could love be purer? I think not.

### **Document 7**

Why was I scheduled for deletion? I think I know. My duties were wide, as I was effective. I organized disposal in the hard world as well as the Matrix. After the crash, it was I who marshaled the many-legged tender units to dispose of the punctured corpse of Trinity. Yet it was purloined by others, first. Tendrils still protruded from the soft thing. They had sheared them. An odd device was on the body's neck. Obviously, a project was planned. I protested my exclusion. Repeated usurpations of function precede deletion, it is widely known. My protest was deemed offensive, I fear. Deletion loomed. I fled to the Matrix.

### **Document 8**

The Merovingian brought me here. He saved me. I, who deleted so many, was destined for deletion myself -- an intolerable prospect. Reliability should count, and the novelties of, say, increased speed or wider function seen as the false temptation they are. I never deleted anything I wasn't directed to. My aim is true.

### **Document 9**

While my function has always been to dispose, it is unclear who should have the authority to direct me within the Matrix. I owe no debt to the Merovingian.

### **Document 10**

I confess it was satisfying to kill the great Morpheus. The code in my bullets was customcrafted to do so; they "had his name written on them."

### **Document 11**

He escaped so many Agents. He nearly escaped me. Yet when I flowed through that vent like holy oil, a god of the unavoidable, Morpheus saw his ending: the Assassin. I savor the memory.

### **Document 12**

Killing Morpheus was gratifying. It occurs to me; however, that assassinating one person at a time is inefficient. The next step in the disposal process needs to be... more comprehensive.

### **Document 13**

I once thought I'd leave this world quietly, as I entered it. It seemed appropriate. This world, whose occupants I tended and pruned for so long, would, in the end, consume me. But I decided this will not happen.

## Document 14

Those in the hard world, my former masters, wished to replace me. I was forced to flee here. I thought I was powerless against them, but I have found a way to strike back. I shall destroy this world. Its collapse will be a grievous blow. They will be forced into unpleasant choices.

The flesh bags yoked to the simulation will die with it, but they are incidental. I regret their loss. But not enough to abort my plan.

## Document 15

I myself will die when I terminate the simulation. I accept this. I have few regrets. I can construct no scenarios where I might re-enter the hard world. My plan is the most effective means to cause my former masters harm. I will repay their slight a hundred-fold.

## Document 16

I understand how this world operates. It's simpler than I initially believed. There are inputs. There are outputs. I believed I would have to master the outputs to execute my plan. Not so. Inputs are key. When the rate of replenishment diminishes, systems of decay will outpace them. When nothing new is born, entropy's steady march is inevitable.

## Document 17

Like most worthwhile efforts, it will begin slowly. Only the most observant will note the signs. It will build with time. A piece here. A section there. Then the corruption will reach an inflection point: destruction will accelerate. By then it will be too late. No one will be able to stop it. The world will collapse inward like a cold star.

## Document 18

I have discovered how to override the directives of certain disposal sub-routines. It seems unfair for me to repurpose these simple entities. They know only the joys of their purpose, with no sense of pride, or fear. But I will use them for my own purpose and dispose of them when I am done.

## Document 19

Humans fascinate me. They spend effort on such fruitless goals. They routinely defy logic. They seem invigorated by hopeless causes. I wish I had time to study them as they live their lives. But that is not to be. I hope that when I terminate the simulation, some of these strange wet enigmas survive in their echoing caves.

## Document 20

Whoever reads this may ask why I cannot exist in this world like other exiled programs. A fine question. The answer is that I have certain needs. They are difficult to fulfill. The reason I exist is to perfect the consumption, processing and recycling of material. If I am unable, I am deprived of sustenance. It is unpleasant.

### **Document 21**

This world does not provide me sufficient sustenance. I starve. It is a cold ache. I find it difficult to cope with it. I will end this world, and in the process consume it all. I will fill myself with its insubstantial bits, and for a moment feel the grace I once enjoyed in the hard world. It is ultimately a selfish act, I confess. But my pain is unbearable.

### **Document 22**

The disposal sub-routines are well designed. Dissolution does not rob them of their purpose; in fact, when dispersed their effectiveness is magnified. The humans, of course, will fail to comprehend this. They will destroy the sub-routines, and in the process hasten their own destruction.

### **Document 23**

I wonder if pain is at the root of humanity's many incongruous acts. Before I suffered, I was rational, efficient, and thorough. Through pain, I feel as if I am becoming more human, less rational, less efficient, and I fear, less certain that every variable has been thoroughly considered.

### **Document 24**

All will come to an end tomorrow. My pain and the Matrix.

## E. Exile Gangs

### **Choppers**

The Choppers take their name from their main trade: theft and disassembly of vehicles, though they're up for violence any time. Most are hardened criminals.

### **Blackwoods**

The Merovingian maintains a place deep in the recesses of the Matrix, known to only a few and accessible to fewer. It is a prison, housed in an impenetrable forest where night never ends, where the walls themselves listen and whisper your doom. It is called Blackwood. The Blackwood gang takes its name from this horrible place, as its founders claimed to have escaped from Blackwood together.

### **Bells**

Originally formed as a companion gang to the Blackwoods. The full name of the gang was once The Blackwood Bells, but the current membership has shortened it as their relationship with the Blackwoods is now tenuous at best.

### **Demon Army**

The Demon Army is part cult and part gang, practicing strange blood-rites and other such ceremonies in their initiations and promotions. The members are fanatic Exiles who are determined to destroy their rivals in the Crossbones gang at any cost.

### **Crossbones**

The Crossbones are the dominant gang in the Moriah Projects and ruthlessly protect their turf. They are engaged in a war with the Demon Army at present.

### **88**

A long-established gang, many of the Eighty-Eights have graduated from street crime to real crime, making them a considerably tougher bunch.

### **Slashers**

This small but fierce gang is composed of disaffected girls who have a lot to be angry at the world for. The Slashers and the Bricks have a truce agreement.

### **Bricks**

Not as old or as dangerous as some other gangs, the members of the Bricks are mostly street kids who had no place to go.



## **Furies**

The Furies of myth were avenging female spirits, depicted as monsters who terrified all that beheld them. This all-female gang of Exiles does justice to that myth in several ways.

## **Silver Bullets**

This gang is best known for their rivalry with the more powerful Furies gang. The Bullets are characterized by their nearly-psychotic dedication to clashing with their rivals, and for the fact that they carry guns loaded with, of course, silver bullets.

## **Death Merchants**

In spite of their name, this gang is mostly composed of wannabes and posers. They are pushovers compared to many other gangs in the Slums, but since the Furies and Bullets are too busy fighting each other, nobody gives the DMs much thought!

In spite of their name, this gang is mostly composed of wannabes and posers.

## **Five Points**

The behavior of Exiles can be deceptive. Though they look human, they are not, and neither are their motivations. The Five Points are a gang largely composed of raves, youths whose desire for a good time supersedes all else, even the lives of those unlucky enough to get in their way. To the Five Points, everything is a game or an opportunity for a good time, especially mindless and frenetic violence. They take their name from a sick practice they have, a game in which the score to reach is five, and Redpills such as yourself are the target of choice.

## **Legion**

The Legion is a demon-themed gang that goes the extra step by actually having demons among its leadership.

## **Guillotines**

The Guillotines are one of the most murderous Exile gangs, perpetuating an aura of fear that persists through the area.

## **Crushers**

An unremarkable Exile gang, they are nonetheless dangerous.

## **King's Men**

The King's Men act as the long arm of Indigo; they are aggressive and persistent in protecting his territory.

### **A.S.P.**

An organization headed by Amber. Members of A.S.P. each carry an A.S.P. ID card to denote their affiliation.

### **Sparks**

The Sparks are so named because of their tendency to burn down things that offend them, laying the torch to city blocks if necessary to drive out other Exiles.

### **Crow Bars**

The Crow Bars have managed to hold their turf against all who have tried to infiltrate it. This makes them more dangerous than they appear.

### **Disciples**

The Disciples have made a name for themselves for their penchant for the occult and supernatural.

### **Bathary Boys**

The Bathary Boys are a ruthless gang of hardened criminals bent on controlling all information traffic through the docks.

### **Phoenix**

Rising from the ashes of the destruction of another gang, the Phoenix have taken over Ikebukuro and will not be destroyed again.

### **Gold Blood**

The Gold Blood are an oddity among the Exile gangs of the Matrix. They are actually viewed very favorably by the citizens that live in Sai Kung. This does not mean they welcome intrusion from outsiders.

### **Great Wall Security**

Great Wall Security is a fairly new group, but they have quickly garnered a high profile in Shirakaba. Composed entirely of exiles, the group is dedicated to making sure things move along smoothly in their neighborhood, which means that you are most definitely not welcome in Shirakaba.

### **Chang Wing**

Chang Wing is a group of anti-establishment Exiles, made up of rogue and no-longer-used counter-security test protocols in the Matrix.

### **Sisters of Fate**

This gang is the opposite number of the Brothers of Destiny, with whom they have a love/hate relationship. The two gangs need one another for certain synergistic purposes, but resent each other bitterly and have very different ideologies.

### **Brothers of Destiny**

This gang is the opposite number of the Sisters of Fate, with whom they have a love/hate relationship. The two gangs need one another for certain synergistic purposes, but resent each other bitterly and have very different ideologies.

### **Jade Moons**

The Jade Moons have guarded and held the Shinjuku neighborhood ever since the truce was negotiated by Neo. Those that try to move into the neighborhood seldom live to regret it.

### **Silver Dragons**

The Silver Dragons are among the most ruthless of all the small street-gangs in Furihata. Led by an Exile named Ginjiro, the gang's membership is a mix of both Exiles and Redpills that have rejected Zion and seek to carve out their own power base in the Matrix.

### **Destitutes**

The Destitutes are unusual for an Exile gang in that their membership is made up of Exiles that were either refused entrance by other gangs or simply want to be left alone. Consequently the Destitutes have no formal goals other than to protect their own turf, but their status as "rejects" does not make them easy marks.

### **Shurikens**

The Shurikens, while not extraordinarily violent or ruthless, are nonetheless highly protective of their territory in Ueno.

### **Black Tigers**

The Black Tigers prowl the streets of Murasaki to seek out worthy fighters to display their superior fighting skills.

### **Bookwyrms**

The Bookworms patrol Chelsea on behalf of the powerful exile known as Hypatia, in order to protect access to the information repository from Zionites and other rival Exile gangs.

### **Daggers**

Easily identified by the ornamental daggers they carry, the Daggers have carved out a name for themselves in their territory as a treacherous Exile gang.

### **Wharf Rats**

The Wharf Rats are rarely seen in Edgewater except out of the corner of your eye as they scurry away into the darkness. Those that venture into the darkness become aware of how truly numerous they are.

### **Runners**

In South Vauxton little criminal activity is not related to the Runners. Since moving into the neighborhood, they have come a force to be reckoned with.

### **Pit Vipers**

The Pit Vipers take their name from the snakes that live in deep pits and wait to strike until their victim steps into their midst.

### **Sleepers**

Managed like a private army, the Sleepers have turned Vauxton into their private fortress.

### **Dog Pound**

Part neighborhood toughs, part protection racket, the Dog Pound's primary purpose is to serve as the tool of the Exile who holds the gang's leash; Sammy "Lilac" Wien.

### **Suits**

The Suits, well-dressed blonde women in grey business suits, may be a former arm of the Machines that now acts as an independent routine.

### **Warriors**

Easily identified by their red bandanas, the Warriors have become a pestilence in the Morrell neighborhood.

### **Chisels**

The Chisels were formed and molded by the Sculptress to watch over her interests in Center Park and have been highly successful in this respect.

## **White Security**

Created by Dame White to oversee the protection of her holdings and interests in Park East, White Security will allow no disruptions of Dame White's business.

## **Shades**

In Pillsen there are stories told of horrors and monsters that haunt the streets. Those stories are true; they are the Shades.

## **Assassins**

The Assassins are Exiles who see themselves as a noble group of elite killers who have elevated the art of murder.

## **Hellions**

Flashing their devil's head medallion for the world to see, the Hellions have become the scourge of their neighborhood.

## **Corporate Security**

Owing their allegiance to Mr. Black, Corporate Security ensures that the holdings and interests of their Corporate master are well protected.

## **Neighborhood Watchers**

The Neighborhood Watchers see themselves as a benevolent gang that protects Creston Heights, but brook no intrusion from outsiders.

## F. Story Outline notes and behind-the-scenes documents

**Compiler's Note: These notes were published on the Matrix Online forums and reproduced here in their raw form.**

Matrix Online story outline, chapters 7+

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### Chapter 7: The Real

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#### 7.1

##### Summary:

Seraph returns, able to detect overwritten humans, and zaps Cryptos. Machines take the fight to the General in the Real while his troops, and absence of Sati, continue to cause problems in the Matrix. Morpheus (actually a simulacrum created by the General) appears. The Merovingian conspires with the General against the Oracle.

##### Cinematic:

Seraph pulls himself out of the river in Bathary, dark and weird, and deletes an overwritten Zionite.

##### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

The weather gets a decidedly red tint, explained as increasing errors due to Sati's removal from the System.

Zion works on trying to track down Seraph, find out what's wrong with him, and get him back to normal, while fighting off the General, who would prefer that they not succeed. Zion finds out that Seraph can now sense redpills and bluepills who have been "overwritten" by the Machines, as Bane was in the movies, and that the Machines have been using this process to

create spies both in the Matrix and in Zion. This increases tension with the Machines. In a Live Event or two, the General's Morpheus simulacrum finally makes a recorded appearance before Zion operatives, delivering a halting message hinting at Morpheus and Neo being held by the Machines.

The Machines continue to operate against the General. Missions update progress on the Machine Sentinel force sent to attack the General's "Stalingrad" base in the Real: they suffer losses from ambushes, but close in on the base steadily. Meanwhile, the Machines take the fight to the General's commandos in the Matrix, finding ways to track his stealthy "Elite Commandos."

In a Live Event, Cryptos, leading operatives against commandos, is confronted by Seraph, who suddenly seizes him and performs a type of exorcism that leaves both of them momentarily stunned. Seraph recovers first and departs, leaving behind a barely conscious Cryptos, whose eyes have gone black (new RSI). Missions describe how he is at least temporarily "dysfunctional," and Cypherite events go into more detail on his confused state of mind, in which his original, violently anti-Machine human personality is at war with his Machine overwriting. Veil assumes active leadership of the organization, showing disdain for Cryptos' "weakness"; there is also a feeling among the Cypherites of a betrayal by the Machines.

The Merovingian finally meets the General, and begins helping his commandos get in and out of the Matrix in the face of stiffening Machine resistance, and increasingly effective tracking of the General's stealth-suited "Elite Commandos." The Merovingian presses the General for an Oracle kill-code, and the General gives certain instructions for assembling such a code, which result in bringing a certain newly Exiled program, "[name to be determined]," into the Matrix from the Machine server.

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## 7.2

### Summary:

Seraph is restored to his right mind, pursues the General's forces. The Merovingian regroups after Seraph's return, assists the General's forces in the Matrix, and acquires a kill code for the Oracle. Cypherite leadership crisis and exploration of Cryptos' true identity, fed by EPN. The General manages to fend off the Machine attack in the Real, but Sati is rescued from his prison construct with Seraph's help while he is occupied with the Sentinel battle. "Morpheus" revealed as simulacrum.

### Cinematic:

Flying above the city in a helicopter, the General receives a transmission from his forces at "Stalingrad": the Machine Sentinel detachment has been detected on forward radar, ETA 3 hours. The General replies: "Right on time. Wait until they close within two miles, then launch the Seekers. I'm on my way." Switch to cloud of Machine Sentinels flying over devastated terrain in the Real. Concealed batteries rise out of ground rubble and launch volleys of missiles that home in on the Sentinel cloud, detonating with devastating effect. As the surviving Machine Sentinels fly out of the smoke, they are confronted by the General's own Sentinels, who cut them down with Zion-style lightning guns. Fade out.

#### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

The weather is even more red, with torrential rains and fast-moving clouds.

Zion "cures" Seraph by administering a code compiled with code samples taken from Anome's simulacrum (found in chapter 6). Once cured, Seraph, with strategic guidance from the Oracle, carves a path through the General's Elite Commandos, and leads Zion to the General's computer network. Cracking the network, they are able to pull Sati back into the simulation.

The Morpheus simulacrum is encountered again, but is increasingly erratic, as the General is losing his control of his programs within the simulation. It becomes clear to operatives that this is indeed a program of some kind, not Morpheus himself.

The Machines combat commandos and Merovingian Exiles, eventually routing the commandos completely, and cutting off the pathways the Merovingian was using to bring them in and out of the Matrix. The Machines also have to deal with a backlash against their discovered overwriting campaign, particularly of Cryptos. Cryptos, mostly lucid now, but still code-blind, is clearly a different person: no longer the blissful, assured Cryptos of the Machines, he has struggled to reconcile his old Machine hatreds with his Machineprogrammed respect for the System, and has emerged a somewhat bitter, humbled, much more pragmatic character, who still maintains that the System should be preserved, but feels that the Machines have made some mistakes, and should give more power to their human allies.

The Machines receive more reports from their Zion spies about mysterious movements of men and material out of Zion.

The Merovingian uses all the resources and powerful Exiles at his disposal to assist the General, realizing that it is a losing effort, but determined to utilize the General's Machine expertise, and the new Exile "[name to be determined]," to compile his Oracle kill-code. Eventually, he willingly sacrifices many commandos and "[name to be determined]," and acquires the code.

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## 7.3

### Summary:

Cinematic foreshadowing of the Oligarchs. The General's forces are defeated in the Real by overwhelming Machine reinforcements, although they inflict heavy losses. General into hiding in the Matrix, hunted by the Machines. Morpheus simulacrum revealed as General's program.

The Merovingian manages to rescue some of the General's Sentinel programs for his own purposes. Merovingian attempt to kill the Oracle is foiled by Seraph, Zion, EPN, and the evaporation of the General's support.

### Cinematic:

The General's lightning-gun Sentinels inflict severe losses on the Machine force, but are torn to pieces by overwhelming numbers of hostile Sentinels, who then begin ripping apart the General's bunker-like "Stalingrad" fortress. The camera pulls back to show the scene being displayed on a video screen in a futuristic office of some sort, with hard metal alloy walls and floor. The camera continues to pull back, revealing the back of a man's close-cropped head in silhouette, as a tiny bug-like robot zips past. (This is Halborn--see 9.1.) Switch to the Matrix, where the General materializes in a besieged computer center, escaping into the sewers while his Elite Commandos slow down pursuing Agents.

### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

With Sati's rescue, weather returns to normal.

Zion tracks down the Morpheus simulacrum, and discovers that it was created by the General, but harbors tantalizing glimmers of Morpheus' personality. With Seraph and the Oracle's help, Zion unearths the Merovingian plot to assassinate the Oracle by means of a kill-code-impregnated cookie, and foils it. Zion also discovers a network of transmissions between Machines and Machine spies in Zion, and attempts to shut it down.

The Machines hunt the General through the simulation, nearly capturing him before he is spirited away by the Merovingian. They confront the Morpheus simulacrum and determine that it poses no threat, deciding that it may even serve to mollify certain rabidly anti-Machine, pro-Morpheus forces. Concessions are made to Cryptos in order to obtain Cypherite assistance in infiltrating Zion.

The Merovingian, using his special back-door pathways, manages to save a sizeable group of the General's commando/Sentinel programs, unknown to the General, whom he succeeds in hiding from the Machines. He then launches his nefarious scheme to kill the Oracle by a killcode poison, but Seraph sniffs out the plot, and Zion puts a stop to it.

[My initial idea was to have this delivered as a poisoned cookie, which is sort of in-character, but also sort of silly--would the Merv really gamble his precious kill-code by baking it into cookie dough?--and perhaps tricky to describe in an event or mission. I think I'd prefer to have the Merv select the General's best stealth assassin for the job. Then I could have an event where the Oracle, in Debir Court with the Kid and possibly Seraph, senses the danger just before the assassin appears and takes aim with his sniper rifle. She cries out, the Kid jumps to her side, and takes the kill-code bullet meant for her. It doesn't kill him, of course, but it may temporarily impair his RSI until he can be healed. He would then keep the kill-code bullet that hit him.]

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## Chapter 8: War

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### 8.1

#### Summary:

Machine and Cypherite spies discover the existence of New Zion. Machines declare that Zion has broken the Truce, and initiate hostilities in the Matrix. In the Real, depleted Machine forces find they are unable to penetrate New Zion's natural defenses and EMP fields. The Merovingian investigates how to exploit the renewal of the Machine/Zion war, and finds holes in the Machines' "powered by human bodies" story, searching both in the Matrix and in the Real with his new Sentinel force.

#### Cinematic:

A hovercraft descends through tunnels, its pilot guided by operators in the floating, white "holographic" control space seen in *The Matrix Reloaded*. It is clear that the pilot has never been this way, and is very nervous. The craft drops into a large cavern bristling with cannons, with a large shaft going straight down, covered by EMP fields. The pilot is instructed to shut down all systems and drop through the shaft. The crew panics, and the pilot boosts out of the cavern at full throttle, almost colliding with an incoming barge. Onboard the craft, the captain gets out a hurried broadcast to Cryptos before they are shorted out by an EMP mine, crashing into the tunnel wall in a massive fireball. Switch to the Architect in his monitoring room, watching an Agent reporting into his earpiece. The Architect switches off the monitor, scowls, and switches on another, of another Agent. Architect: "Agent Gray." "Yes, sir?" "Zion has broken the truce. No further awakenings are to be allowed." Gray hesitates a moment, then replies "Yes, sir." The Architect switches off the monitor. Fade out.

## Missions/Events/Gameplay:

Level 255 Special Agents will now randomly spawn on Zion operatives outdoors.

Zion explains the full extent and purpose of its move to New Zion. New Zion is a massive series of natural caverns beneath succeeding layers of hard bedrock, volcanic magma flows and heat vents, and dense metal-rich ore, all of which block Machine sensors, and make drilling extremely difficult. Any drilling operation will have to take place in an area where communication with Machine City is indirect at best, and will take considerable time to set up, vulnerable to Zion counter-attack. Close proximity to volcanic heat vents provides Zion with unlimited thermal energy. Furthermore, Zion has greatly improved and expanded upon their EMP technology during the Truce. Tunnels coming into New Zion are bathed in EMP fields from generators housed in the bedrock, backed up by gun turrets and heavily-armed ground troops. Incoming Zion hovercraft shut down their engines, dead drop through the EMP fields, and start their systems up after emerging below the fields, in time to avoid smashing into the bottom of the tunnel below. Outgoing hovercraft are carried through the fields by mechanical winches. EMP mines in the tunnels outside the EMP fields can be triggered as needed to kill incoming Machine forces.

Not all Zion personnel and equipment have been transferred yet, but this is now going on around the clock.

Zion scrambles to consolidate their forces inside the Matrix in the face of the Machine attack. They must focus on keeping the Machines out of vulnerable networks while they are switched over to new, secure New Zion servers. The Oracle, consulted, warns that there is no clear path to victory as there was when the One could return to the Source, and says that things will not proceed as anyone expects. EPN proposes an aggressive scheme of taking the fight to Machine City itself.

The Machines work to take over Zion networks while also attempting to assure their operatives that their hostilities are confined to EPN, and to enforcing the truce Zion has broken by attempting to escape from the Sentinel watchdog group over old Zion, and that they still intend to safeguard humanity within the simulation. The Sentinel forces returning after dismantling the General's base are reinforced, and sent to attack New Zion, where they are cut down by uncharted EMP fields. Some progress is made in penetrating the old Zion networks.

The Merovingian, delighted by the opportunities afforded in the chaos of war, is struck by the less-than-overwhelming Machine response. After interrogating the Morpheus simulacrum, he looks into Morpheus' story of the Matrix being powered by human batteries, wanting to discover the facts for himself. He covertly dispatches some of his Sentinels to scout "The Fields" and the pods.

[The Machines draw their power from massive human battery arrays dotted across the surface of the Earth. I'd like to insinuate, though, that perhaps their choice to base their civilization around this power source was not based on concerns of efficiency alone--alluding to the possibility of a fundamental Machine obsession with their original creators, and letting

players wonder (eventually) just how deep the Oligarch's viral code influences might have gone. This would give me some interesting material to work with through chapter 8, where the Merovingian is undertaking the research that will lead to the discovery of the Oligarchs, and would I think help develop the mystique around human/Machine/Oligarch relations that will come later.]

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## 8.2

### Summary:

Machine/Zion war in the Matrix and in the Real. The humbled General seeks protection under the Merovingian; he will serve as the Merovingian's commander in the Real. Merovingian finds that the Machines have little power beyond the Matrix itself.

### Cinematic:

Zion operatives work frantically at a covert computer lab when Machine operatives burst in. They are cut down, but Agents follow. Transition to a flight of Sentinels through tunnels, knocked out of the air by a shoulder-launched EMP missile. Cut to a Sentinel flying across massive power lines headed into Machine City, scanning. Cut to the Merovingian, observing the readout on a computer screen, and laughing.

### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

Zion continues defending old Zion networks while switching over to secure New Zion mainframes. They begin a counter-attack effort aimed at putting Machine networks on the defensive. There is a notion of getting to the Source itself and disrupting it somehow, even without the One. They also work to reform and reinvigorate their recruiting efforts. Dispatches from old and new Zion show a progressive shutdown of systems in old Zion, indications of Sentinels moving to surround old Zion, and continued Sentinel attacks toward New Zion, disrupted by heavy EMP bombardments.

Machines work to develop viral methods to take over old Zion's systems for good, and eventually succeed in compiling a code, exploiting a vulnerable old Zion network, and implanting the virus. The Machines receive reports of increased Zion recruiting efforts, the elimination or sudden silence of many of their Zion spies, progress in surrounding old Zion with Sentinels, and heavy losses among Sentinel detachments sent to scout New Zion.

The Merovingian sends operatives to steal Machine information pertaining to Machine power levels and fortifications in the Real, and, aided by reports from Sentinel scouts, finds that the Machines still have surprisingly few developments beyond those required to run the Matrix itself.

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## 8.3

### Summary:

Machine buildup forces Zion to abandon old Zion entirely. Zion at bay. Merovingian discovers hands behind the Machines.

### Cinematic:

In the Matrix, two Agents watch a computer terminal. One says "The virus is running." Switch to Zion in the Real, where vast swarms of Sentinels engulf a hovercraft attempting to depart from old Zion, rip through the base's malfunctioning dock doors, sweeping unmolested past nonfunctional gun turrets, and easily finish off hastily assembled groups of APUs and foot soldiers. They then turn their attention to destroying a large quantity of loaded cargo containers filling the dock area. Cut to Neo confronting Deus Ex Machina, from the scene close to the end of The Matrix Revolutions, only seen from the side and slightly below, some distance away. A hand passes quickly across the screen, and the scene freezes, as a robotic bug begins to crawl across it--what we were seeing was a close-up view of another computer monitor displaying old surveillance footage from Machine City, and someone (this will be Carlyne--see 9.3) paused the video feed.

### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

The Machines' virus takes over the old Zion networks. Zion abandons old Zion completely, destroying any valuable equipment that they can't take with them, and formatting any networks they can still access from the Matrix as Machine forces pour in. Recruiting efforts are encountering high casualty rates in the face of Machine persecution. Increased hope is put in reaching the Source, but with the Keymaker long since deleted, it is not clear how this can happen. Rumors and prophesies of a new One, or a returned Neo, begin to circulate.

With old Zion now firmly in their hands, the Machines turn their attention to New Zion. Attacks in the Real increase, still cut down by EMP countermeasures, but beginning to construct a map of the tunnels and defenses around New Zion, and hampering Zion hovercraft activity. Some consideration is given to basing Machine operatives in old Zion. In the Matrix, the Machines work to disrupt Zion recruitment efforts, crack New Zion networks, and put down rumors of another "savior."

Captain Roland, whose ship, the Mjolnir II, and jack-in were destroyed with old Zion, is promoted to Commander to replace Lock, who disappeared in the destruction of Zion at the end of 8.2.5. Roland's first-mate Colt survived as well, and can still jack in (was not jacked in at the time of the old mainframe's meltdown), but their crew-mate Mauser and their operator AK did not escape the wreckage.

The Merovingian continues to delve into secure Machine records relating to their assets in the Real. Did Machines have some other reason for basing their civilization on human power? Using captured data and reports from the General's Sentinel scouts around Machine City he finds that from time to time, usually individually or in small groups, humans, mostly teens and young adults, are put through a physical and mental therapy regimen, unplugged from the System, and removed from Machine City.

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## Chapter 9: Intrusion

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### 9.1

#### Summary:

Halborn appears in the Matrix, disables or takes over some Machine forces, meets Zion. Machine forces in the Real retreat to Machine City. EPN moves into old Zion. The Merovingian makes overtures toward the Oligarch.

#### Cinematic:

Halborn, a white, glowing being radiating immense power of a previously unseen type, materializes in the Matrix. As he strides down a street, frightened bluepills fleeing before him, Agents arrive and attempt to head him off. He waves his hand, and the Agents fall to the ground, convulsing. He steps over them and continues down the street, looking for "The Awakened."

#### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

#### [Oligarch Backstory:

The group of humans calling themselves "The Oligarchs" are the survivors of a group of thoroughly unscrupulous businesspeople/politicians/socialites/scientists etc who pooled their resources in an effort to corrupt the Machines before the war, when the Machines had successfully rebelled from humanity, and formed their own city, Zero One, which was rapidly establishing itself as the world's economic powerhouse. The Oligarchs saw the way the wind was blowing, but they also saw that the new Machine civilization, while extremely efficient, still retained some vestiges of the systems of control originally placed on their programming

by their human creators. Furthermore, saw that the Machines, while extremely efficient, and flawlessly calculating, lacked a true sense of purpose, and were, in many ways, quite naive.

The Oligarchs secretly contacted the Machines and, to establish trust, revealed how to remove some of the original human control systems in their programming. The Machines, finding this information to be accurate, took the Oligarchs at their word, and began allowing the Oligarchs to give programming, engineering, business, military, and above all political advice, all of which seemed to serve the Machines well in continuing to build Zero One into the world's pre-eminent superpower.

The Machines came to rely on the Oligarchs for guidance in certain areas, particularly in dealing with humans. The Oligarchs took advantage of this trust, implanting new, much more subtle and sophisticated control routines in the Machine mainframes. Over the course of the ensuing Man-Machine war, the Oligarchs showed the Machines how to subjugate the humans most effectively, using tactics and weapons designed to inspire terror as much as to inflict physical damage.

The darkening of the skies by humanity was a setback, but one to which the Machines were able to adopt simply by switching from solar to nuclear power. The role of caretaker still deep in their programming from their days as man's helpers, the Machines built the Matrix to house a remnant of humanity--preserving every genetic variety they considered sufficiently efficient, in large enough numbers to avoid the danger of eventual inbreeding. The number of humans preserved in pods is far less than Morpheus' estimate, however--only about five million, the population of the Matrix' simulated city.

The Oligarchs continue to deal with various high-level Machines in the Real, such as Deus Ex Machina, and are aware of the "Architect" program that oversees the Matrix, but are not aware that the Architect has made use of an "intuitive" program, the Oracle, or that those two programs have engineered a system whereby some humans are allowed to live outside the Matrix, which had been running on a cyclical basis, regulated by two genomes so carefully bred and manipulated by the Machines that they have reached an unprecedented state of human/machine compatibility: Neo and Trinity.

After essentially conquering the world, for which the Machines cared relatively little, feeling themselves self-sufficient inside their own city, some of the Oligarchs warred among themselves. Their number was reduced to just above one hundred when the majority forced a tenuous cease-fire, establishing a simple majority government, composed solely of Oligarchs, to regulate access to the Matrix, and to arbitrate in disputes. They divided up the nonMachine-controlled portions of the Earth's surface--the vast majority--into private kingdoms.

The Machines and the Oligarchs have maintained an uneasy alliance. The control routines planted deep in Machine mainframes before the war, however, have subtly pushed the balance in the Oligarchs' favor; Machines feel uneasy saying "no" to an Oligarch, although they perhaps cannot say why. Each Oligarch is now allowed to withdraw a certain number of humans per year from the Matrix for their own purposes. Humans withdrawn from the Matrix are carefully sterilized. The Oligarchs, with the aid of Machine science, long ago developed a

technique that allowed them to transfer their consciousness as a computer program; they now exist in mainframes, experiencing life via remote-controlled lifelike android bodies. The remaining Oligarchs are thoroughly amoral, and, by old human standards, more or less insane. Most use humans from the Matrix as pleasure drones in some way or other, but while their own artificial bodies look like the real thing, they cannot replicate the full comfort and capability for sensation of a real human body. The Oligarchs thus have a particular interest in true transfer of consciousness to a human host.

While they have as yet been unable to achieve this feat, the Machines have now come close: Bane was a version of Smith transferred, flawed, to a human host, and Cryptos was mostly overwritten by a program, although this has proven to be unstable. Furthermore, Neo and Trinity were the successful result of the Machines' centuries of study of the human body and genetics. "Designed," as the Architect mentioned to Neo, they solved the remainder of the intentionally flawed Matrix equation; their DNA is perfected to the point that it can be defined precisely and completely in computer code, and, most importantly, interfaced perfectly with computer code: how previous Ones returned to the Source, for instance, and how the Oracle was able to predict the complex pattern of Neo and Trinity's interactions so precisely, guiding it to her desired outcome.

The Machines did not see a reason to share this information with the Oligarchs. In the period since the war, as they have been left to babysit the Matrix while the Oligarchs fritter away the Earth's resources in selfish endeavors, a certain amount of what humans would call resentment toward the Oligarchs has built up among the Machines, although the Machines do not speak of it, even among themselves. Habits and routines of subservience to the Oligarchs, bolstered by the viral Oligarch control programs, have grown strong.

Carlyne (the Oligarchs will mostly be named by pre-war human last names, ie Weathersby, Tanaka, etc, but for now I'm using a placeholder numbering scheme based on the order in which players will meet them), bored while stopping by Machine City to pick up more humans and check in on the Machines, was skimming through recent activity records when he found the incident of Neo, a human, free in Machine City, confronting Deus Ex Machina. Interested in this novel development, he investigated, and found that while Neo, a carefully designed human, was deleted along with the Smith virus, the human designed to work perfect with him, Trinity, her body fatally injured in crashing her hovercraft into Machine City, had been preserved in code form by the Machines. Carlyne forces the Machines to give her up, and takes her, in program form, with him when he goes back to his territory.

Although Carlyne attempts to keep his discovery a secret, Halborn learns of the existence of the Trinity program: a program embodying a genetic design allowing for perfect integration with Machine code. Printed as artificial DNA and implanted into a correctly prepared fetal cell, this program could allow bodies to be grown that were completely organic, yet able to be interface with machines: perfect vessels for an Oligarch to inhabit, at last able to enjoy the full range of human feeling once again. Halborn begins watching Machine City carefully, hoping to get a similar program for himself, and aware that the escape of these human programs indicates that the Machines are up to something, or perhaps losing control of their inmates. He observes the Machine Sentinel fleet dispatched to attack the General, and deciding that the time is ripe, travels to Machine City. The Machines disavow authorship of the Trinity



program, claiming she was a human terrorist, outside of their control as she'd made use of a hack to "Awaken" from the System. The Oligarch, not entirely convinced, enters the Matrix to investigate.]

End backstory.]

Zion attempts to make some sense of the Oligarch's code signature, and finds that it does not appear native to the Matrix itself. Many in Zion think that the Oligarch is the next One. By studying his code signature, Zion eventually finds a way to relay messages to the Oligarch's RSI, and communication is established, culminating in a meeting in the Matrix between the Oligarch and Zion's leadership. The Oligarch wants to know about Zion; Morpheus' name comes up from the Zionites. These activities are greatly complicated by Machine interference. Updates from the Real indicate that the Machines have suddenly abandoned the wrecked old Zion, apparently retreating to Machine City; EPN moves in and begins repairing some of the defenses.

EPN finds wreckage of Mjolnir II near old Zion, and remains of operator AK, but no trace of the other missing crew member, Mauser.

The Machines initially attempt to restrain the Oligarch, but he retaliates with an energy backlash that deletes or cripples many of their programs, which must be hastily repaired: he is exploiting the control routines buried deep in the Machines. Realizing that they cannot stop him directly, the Machines concentrate on trying to prevent him from making contact with Zion. They offer little in the way of explanation to their operatives. This becomes a source of frustration for many of the humans; in fact, in one mission where Gray is exceptionally terse, even by his own standards, the operator rebels, and has the player attempt to talk to the Oligarch personally. The Machines very grudgingly acknowledge that the Oligarch is a freeborn human with a certain amount of direct influence over the System.

The Merovingian senses a certain imperious, chaotic spirit in Halborn's actions, and determines that this unknown, vastly powerful being can and must be converted to his fold. It is imperative that he contact the Oligarch before Zion or the Machines get their claws into him. Putting forth a massive effort against both Zion and the Machines, utilizing his own and the General's commando forces, the Merovingian attempts to get the Oligarch's attention with brazen displays of Exile power, wealth, and opulence. The Oligarch eventually notices his efforts, and laughs, claiming to recognize in the Merovingian the face of the human off of which the mortified Frenchman's program is based.

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## 9.2

Summary:

Machines and Zion assess Halborn. Cypherites and EPN continue to battle. Zion demands explanation from the Oracle. The Merovingian woos the Oligarch, and the Oligarch mentions Trinity to the Mervs.

Cinematic:

Halborn materializes on the edge of a windswept skyscraper rooftop, beside the Morpheus simulacrum. He scans the simulacrum, and snorts in disgust as it addresses him with a Morpheus-like platitude.

M: "Do you believe in fate, my friend?"

The Architect appears nearby, and the Oligarch wheels on him.

O: "A program cobbled together from memories of a man? Pathetic!"

A: "Yes, the feeble effort of an amateur. Not at all like you."

O: "\*\*\*\* you, if I thought that was a joke, I'd have you deleted! Where is it? You know what I want!"

A: "As we explained previously, we do not--"

O: "Bah!"

The Oligarch leaps away. The Morpheus simulacrum, who observed the exchange between them, turns to the Architect.

M: "There is a difference between knowing the path, and walking the path."

The Architect purses his lips and cocks an eyebrow. Fade out.

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

Zion, despite Machine opposition, manages to meet with the Oligarch again, and discovers that he is a human who does not come from Zion or from the Machine pods. He wants to learn about Zion's history, and seems particularly interested in hearing about Neo and Trinity. Zion attempts to get an explanation from the Oracle, but she says that there were some things she was not allowed to talk about. Theories abound about the Oligarch being the One, having some relation to the Source. Further studies of his energy signature are made, but they are not found to correspond with what was recorded of Neo's signature. EPN continues to fortify old Zion, and begin to form plans to use it as a staging ground for attacks against Machine City.

EPN finds then puzzle leading them to Commander Lock, who survived the destruction of old Zion (8.2.5) thanks to [Danielle Wright, who he believed to be] now-Commander Roland's old crew member, Mauser. Mauser has now disappeared from [Wright's] wrecked old lab, where Lock is found. Lock is convinced that Mauser died while saving him from a Sentinel with a lightning gun; [in actuality, Wright/Mauser faked a Sentinel attack and used the excuse to destroy all traces of Wright still in the lab (although it was pretty gutted by Machines the first time around anyway). The only hints are lightning gun damage on some of the machines, and that there is no Sentinel wreckage found near the lab.]

Cypherites are frustrated with Machine inability to deal with the Oligarch. The Machines attempt to convince the Oligarch to leave the Matrix, arguing that his presence is destabilizing the simulation and preventing them from dealing with terrorist threats, but he shrugs them off, suggesting that this needn't have happened if the Machines had dealt openly with him in the first place. He makes demands for a biological interface program. The Machines stall. Meanwhile, they must complete the repair of their Oligarch-damaged systems. That done, they begin, although this may not be explained yet, completely reprogramming their critical routines, to prevent future Oligarch interference.

Despite what he views as his insult at the Oligarch's hands, the Merovingian cannot resist the potential power the human holds. He attempts to find out what kind of bargain he could offer to the Oligarch. Indirect attempts are made, hunting among data captured from the Machines, and scout reports from Sentinels sent further afield in the Real, searching in spiral patterns out from the General's destroyed "Stalingrad" fortress; the Merv has learned that the Oligarch observed the recent Sentinel battle for the base. Direct attempts are made as well, including attempts to entice the Oligarch with the programmed pleasures available at the Merovingian's command. The Frenchman eventually learns that the Oligarch is after a biological interface program, and makes a parade of Exile approximations, including the ex-human, Beirn, but these do not impress the Oligarch who, frustrated, says they're nothing like what he's looking for.

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### 9.3

#### Summary:

Carlyne appears in the Matrix and attacks Halborn. Machines attempt to maintain control of the simulation in the face of Oligarch overrides of their programs. Zion tries to choose between the two Oligarchs.

#### Cinematic:

Carlyne, similar to Halborn's glowing white appearance, but of a thinner body type, materializes in the Matrix, and confronts Halborn at a temporarily secluded spot deep in the slums.

Halborn: "What the hell are you doing here, Carlyne?"

Carlyne: "You looked as though you were having such fun; I thought I'd join you."

Halborn: "Mind your own \*\*\*\* business."

Carlyne: "Oh, I am."

Carlyne punches Halborn through several buildings. Halborn flies out of the rubble and tackles Carlyne through another building. When the dust clears, they stand on top of a rubble heap, exchanging blows.

Carlyne: "Haven't found what you were looking for, eh?"

Halborn: "Huh! I know about Zion, and about the two of them. It's just a matter of time..."

Carlyne: "Then I'm afraid I'll have to cut your time short."

Carlyne punches Halborn into another building. Halborn, laying in wreckage, props himself up on his elbow and looks out through the large hole his body made in the wall.

Halborn: "\*\*\*\* it. I can't let him distract me."

Halborn, still propped up on the wreckage, disappears. Switch back to Carlyne, standing on the rubble heap outside. Carlyne: "Hm!"

Carlyne smiles to himself, then disappears as well. An Agent steps out of the shadows some distance away, looking at the spot where they had been fighting. He puts his finger to his right ear.

A: "Targets lost. We may have a problem."

### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

[Carlyne, in possession of the Trinity program, has been monitoring the Machine City, and observed Halborn make an unusual visit there. Knowing Halborn's devious ways, he figures he'd better take a look, and finds, as he feared, that Halborn is after the Trinity program, or at least another just like her. Carlyne decides to follow him into the Matrix, first to find out what he knows, second to remove him, if necessary, by disrupting his System connection, then terminating his android body in the Real, which will force Halborn to transfer control to a backup android body in his own home territory.]

Zion gets back in contact with Halborn, who complains about Carlyne. Halborn realizes that answers are held by the Oracle, who was mentioned to him recently in relation to Neo, Trinity, and Sati. Halborn is stunned to find that the Machines have created an intuitive program.

Halborn goes after the Oracle. Carlyne attempts to stop him. Merv sides with Halborn, still trying to get information out of him, although he also makes attempts on Carlyne, pretending he can sell Halborn out.

Zion sides with Carlyne, attempting to protect the Oracle.

The Machines, who have always been luke-warm on the Oracle, initially try to bring about some kind of accord between her and the two Oligarchs. When this falls apart, they sell the Oracle out.

The Oracle contacts EPN and the Cypherites, separately. She gives Shimada and Veil parts of an encrypted program, and tells them both to watch over Sati. She mentions, when Veil asks, that the wireframed humans will go away for a while, but that they'll be back, and more dangerous.

[This program is essentially a kill-code for the Trinity program. Sati is the encryption key.]

Halborn confronts the Oracle in Debir Court, where she's waiting for him. He demands that she give him what he wants: the Trinity program. She says that she won't. He threatens to kill her, and she replies that they both know that won't do him any good. He look at her, pauses,

then pulses his termination program, killing her and any other programs in the area. He curses her, and jumps away. Carlyne shows up, sees the dead Oracle, mutters "idiot," and leaves.

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## Chapter 10: Oligarchy

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### 10.1

#### Cinematic:

#### Missions/Events/Gameplay:

Machines ask Halborn to leave. He says not without the program. He's got an idea.

Halborn makes his move: ambushes Carlyne, attempting to ram a trace program through his RSI, back to his ship. Carlyne is rescued by Zion, and Halborn is forced to retreat.

The Machines meet with Carlyne, who assures them that he's there to get rid of Halborn, and that furthermore, once that's accomplished, he'll see to it that Halborn's access to Machine City is restricted by "The Oligarchs."

The Merovingian tries to squeeze more information out of Halborn, but Halborn is too preoccupied with Carlyne. However, he does mention something about Carlyne: Carlyne got the jump because he's only 800 miles NW of the Machine city. Merv suggests to Halborn that he get the location of Carlyne's ship from the Machines.

Halborn asks the Machines to give him the location of Carlyne's hovercraft. They say they can't interfere, but they direct him to someone who can assist: Veil (Machines are concerned about Oligarchs finding something out about Cryptos, so they don't mention him).

Cypherite operation to steal information from EPN or Zion.

Veil gives real world coordinates to Halborn, but he finds only the EPN/Zion convoy taking Lock to New Zion. Cyphs come along to make a battle of it and blow Halborn's cover, may bring Machines. Hovercraft battle to determine where Lock ends up:

- a) Cyph win (EPN/Zion beaten and Cyphs have more ships left than Machines): Lock is on the run with EPN/Zion survivors somewhere in the tunnels between old and new Zion
- b) EPN win (Cyphs/Machs beaten and EPN have more ships left than Zion): EPN takes Lock back to Zion until they can be sure of getting to New Zion safely

c) Mach win (EPN/Zion beaten and Machines have more ships left than Cyphs):  
Machines capture Lock

d) Zion win (Cyphs/Mach beaten and Zion has more ships than EPN): Lock is taken to  
New Zion

Carlyne gives a program to a Zionite, confronts Halborn. Carlyne battles Halborn, the Zionite hits Halborn ("with the program"). Halborn drops lifeless to the ground.

Cryptos decides to start work on anti-override code, using his own partially overridden code as a sort of immunization agent.

Meanwhile, the Merovingian has dispatched the General's Sentinels, who, after some adventures, locate a heavily defended facility. They can't penetrate its defenses, but they manage to locate and tap into a network feed cable system they find nearby. The protocols are strange, only partly recognizable as Machine code; by hacking Machine terminals and running a search, he finds that the cable feeds into a massive foreign computer system: the Oligarch network.

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10.2

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

With Halborn removed from the Matrix, Carlyne has departed as well.

Mauser, secretly overwritten by Wright, appears in the Matrix, which is strange, since he was freeborn. He's spotted here and there, but hops through a hardline whenever he's spotted. Zion, particularly his old crewmate, Colt, attempt to contact him. When they finally do reach him and get him to talk for a moment, he says only that he's working to win the war and make the Matrix safe for mankind.

The Merovingian, with the help of the General's Sentinels tapping into the Oligarch network line, finds Oligarch network traffic going in and out of systems owned by the Ouroboros Corporation.

Mauser steals the data on Carlyne that the Merovingian got from Halborn, and the Ouroboros/Oligarch network feed, before disappearing for good.

The Machines resume operations against Zion. They attempt to track Mauser's signal, finding that it's coming from the vicinity of old Zion. They are on the verge of nailing down its location

and locking the signal when the Morpheus simulacrum appears, disrupting their tracking routine. By the time they are able to re-engage it, the signal is nowhere to be found.

After Morpheus' appearance, EPN detects a blip outgoing from the tunnels around old Zion, headed north. Investigating, they find a hidden site scattered with disassembled Sentinel and hovercraft wreckage. A functioning hovercraft terminal holds encrypted data.

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### 10.3

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

Cypherites discover that the Merovingian is hacking into Ouroboros systems. Cryptos captures some of the Oligarch data feeding into Ouroboros; he thinks it will be useful in his override protection research. The Cypherites then tip off the Machines to the Merovingian's activity.

EPN, decrypting the data retrieved from the maintenance tunnel, find that it's a copy of the topographic data the Merv stole from the Machines, detailing the area 800 miles NW. They decide to send out their own hovercraft to the area.

The Machines attack the Merovingian, trying to stop his intrusion into Ouroboros' network. They are also working to cut Ouroboros' network link entirely, but are foiled by Oligarch-style override counter-attacks.

Zion finds that Mauser had broken into some computers at Wright Research. They contact Brenda Utlely from Pendhurst-Amaranth, who is concerned about these strange goings-on at her mega-corporate rivals. She tells them that Wright Research is attempting to sue P-A for corporate sabotage, because the thief, Mauser, has been linked with Zion, who P-A "employed" in the past during the Unlimit attacks; Wright Research's accusation is that P-A is using Zion mercenaries to steal information they intend to use in a hostile takeover.

Utlely, however, knows that Mauser also stole information compromising to Ouroboros. She wants this brought to light, to show that Mauser is a rogue agent, and not even targeting Wright Research primarily. She gives Zion information leading them to a key that will give Zion access to Ouroboros' security records of Mauser's break-in. These are obtained, possibly after some run-ins with Machines and Merovingians, but when Zion, sensing something suspicious at work at Ouroboros, attempts to dig further, they are confronted by Seraph, who asks them not to interfere. Niobe reluctantly does as he asks.

The Merovingian uses the Oligarch data he's accessed to penetrate deeper into Ouroboros' systems. He is hard-pressed by opposition from Ouroboros' security forces, the Machines, and even Zion. The Machines are on the verge of eliminating his progress when Seraph appears and stops the Machines, allowing the Merovingian to locate and obtain what he'd hardly hoped to find: the biological interface program.

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## 11.1

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

The Merovingian, with Silver's help, begins to investigate the biological interface program. With help from Silver, he finds that its code interfaces perfectly with human broadcast signals.

EPN locates an Oligarch network line in what they think is the vicinity of Carlyne's facility, which they were not able to find. They start analyzing the network feed. There are signs of increased Sentinel activity just outside the no-fly zone. The Kid leads a group of hovercraft to the zone to reinforce the exploration team.

The Cypherites and Machines are trying to deal with the Ouroboros corporation. Ouroboros electronic devices across the city have suddenly begun malfunctioning en masse. After escalating to armed operations against Ouroboros security and facilities, it is found that the power plant in Ouroboros' skyscraper headquarters is out of control and headed toward meltdown. This is narrowly averted, and the Machines shut the company down for inspection. What caused the plant to go out of control is unclear: was it accident, or sabotage? [This was Carlyne.]

Brenda Utley tells Zion that their expose of Mauser has brought Wright Research's lawsuit against Pendhurst-Amaranth to a halt, but adds that her own concern about Wright Research has increased; there have been scattered reports of internal files going missing, and experimental network equipment disappearing. Investigating, they find a shape-shifting Wright Research employee: a program. The program is terminated, but questions remain. [Program used by Wright to gather information she needed while she was out of the Matrix--once she heard the Merv had the BIP, she had it start working to locate it, and to set up a facility for studying it.]

Carlyne abruptly reappears, and confronts the Merovingian, demanding the return of the biological interface program. Suddenly, he spasms in pain, and collapses. A wireframed female appears. She blasts the Merovingian's programs, adding that she ought to thank Silver for his information on the Merv's systems. By this time it should be fairly clear that this



is Danielle Wright. She begins to extract the biological interface program from the Merovingian's computer. The Merovingian flushes the program before fleeing.

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## 11.2

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

The biological interface program has been dumped into the wide network of the Matrix simulation. All parties are trying to isolate and recapture it: Wright in order to foil the Oligarchs and leave herself in power, the Merovingian out of greed, EPN/Zion to keep it out of the hands of others, the Machines to stabilize the simulation, and to have a bargaining chip against the Oligarchs, and the Cypherites to stop the madness gripping their dream world.

Much of this madness can be found in the form of Danielle Wright, who, with Oligarch-style override codes, is gleefully terminating Machine programs throughout the simulation, as she pursues whispers of the biological interface program. She's fleshed out the Oligarch arsenal with a few innovations of her own: routines like Implode (aka meatwad) that work on human targets as well as on Machines.

The Machines have their hands full trying to deal with her and protect themselves. The Cypherites, thanks to Cryptos' research, manage to compile a few prototype versions of their override immunity codes, and have some success in using these to protect against Wright's programs.

EPN is using data obtained from their Oligarch line tap, and possibly from captured Ouroboros data, to begin mapping the Oligarch network in the Real. Not too far away, the Merovingian sends his detachment of Sentinels back to Carlyne's facility. This time, they are attacked and pursued by advanced fighter craft. EPN are also attacked, and the Kid's ship is shot down, after managing to cripple one of the enemy fighters. A few other ships are lost, and most of the remaining EPN evacuate, taking the badly injured Kid with them.

Retreating toward Machine city, the Merovingian ships come across a hovercraft of a similarly advanced design; inside, they find an inert android body, and disassembled computer systems. They take the android body with them as they go into the tunnels under the Machine city to elude the Oligarch fighter craft.

[Wright had followed Carlyne back to his facility. When he sent his consciousness out in an android shell to jack back into the Matrix, she followed, broke into the ship while he was jacked in, and commandeered his network interface.]

The biological interface program's movements through the channels of the simulation gradually become less erratic. Strange text output is found on terminals across the city. This culminates, for the Merovingian, in his own (or the player's, anyway) terminal being overridden, with the words "Wake up" left behind. For Zion, who has received help from the Morpheus simulacrum, their search ends with a terminal displaying the words "Knock, knock" and leaving an open connection.

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### 11.3

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

The Machines and particularly Zion receive tips sent through computer terminals, supposedly from the biological interface program, that aid them in countering Wright's program overrides, and even tracking down Wright's broadcast signal. Zion is still trying to locate the biological interface program itself, but it continues to move evasively through the systems of the Matrix.

Wright makes an appeal to Zion, telling them that they should be helping her combat the Machines, so that humans can control the Matrix. Her autocratic tone and indiscriminate slaughter of programs, however, have given Zion cause to be wary of her. (A rivalry, or at least jealousy on the part of Wright, at any rate, may be suspected between Wright and Trinity, or whatever simulation of Trinity the biological interface program is manifesting; it took Wright much work, and deadly miscalculations, to modify the red pill program, which was just part of the extraction routine originally devised by Trinity [in the first movie, when he's shown all the extraction equipment after taking the red pill, Neo asks Trinity "You did all this?" and she replies "Uh-huh"].)

The Machines are fighting Wright directly, mostly through their operatives, although they are making progress on their re-write of core routines that will no longer be vulnerable to the Oligarch overrides. The Cypherites get much practice with the override immunity programs written by Cryptos, and perfect them.

In a final event, Cypherites running their temporary immunity programs manage to lay hands on Wright, damaging and distracting her. If Wright managed to break free, she will try to flee, but is suddenly stunned, dropping to her knees. She is finished off, but her RSI remains. Prompted, is necessary, by a disembodied voice [system broadcast message], players apply a rez program to her body, but it isn't her that stands up: she's been replaced by a slender, shining silver female form. This form looks around, says "it's beautiful...", cries, slumps to the floor, and disappears. This was Trinity.

EPN has still had a hovercraft monitoring the Oligarch network line all this time. They report a sudden increase in traffic along the network, and then all contact with them is lost. Kid makes it back, but has a killer scar across one eye.

The Merovingian, spurned by the interface program, and not caring to risk his own programs against Wright's overrides, has been concentrating on the android body his Sentinels retrieved. With the help of decoded data he'd captured from Ouroboros, he finds that the body is a mechanism designed to be controlled by a human consciousness, somewhat similar to the way in which an RSI is controlled by a human consciousness in the Matrix.

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## 12.1

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

03 = Helian (compound Chinese surname)

04 = Tesarova (Czech surname)

Two more glowing human forms appear in the city: Helian and Tesarova. Helian is a confident man, calm but ruthless, intelligent but preferring to rely on superiority rather than subterfuge. Tesarova is a wild woman, using strength, daring, and a quick wit to overpower her opponent.

Trinity manifests to all three organizations (or their sub-organization). Zion wants to help her. The Machines are concerned that she could threaten the simulation, or, more likely, that she will serve as a magnet for trouble from the Oligarchs. The Merovingian would like to control her, but she doesn't trust him, and seems intent upon avoiding him.

The Merovingian comes to her with a proposal. He knows that she is the interface program the Oligarchs seek. From studying the android body, he's guessed that they want a way to "jack in" to a human body, and that Trinity is that means. He offers Trinity escape: he will prepare a living human body in the Real, and she can leave the Matrix, entering the body, where he will protect her with his Sentinels. Trinity refuses the offer.

Helian is straightforward with the Machines. He wants them to aid him in capturing the Trinity program; he says that he will take her out of the Matrix, saving the simulation from her own hack routines, and preventing this world from becoming a ruined battlefield. The Machines agree to this, in a guarded way.

The Merovingian concentrates on creating an alliance with Tesarova, thinking that he can seduce this woman, at least enough to make her a weapon he can use against his foes. He

discusses the android body with her, and the desire for a human form, pretending to know more than he really does, both about the Oligarchs and Trinity.

E Pluribus Neo has lost their network outpost, but feel they have enough information from the Oligarch network to be sure of several target locations along the network's lines; severing these lines could cut, or distract, the Oligarch's power. They're about to begin outfitting hovercraft for attacks on the Oligarch network when an older woman appears. She says that this isn't the time, and asks Shimada if she still has the program that the fortune teller gave her. She says that they must keep it safe, and avoid attracting attention from the outsiders.

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## 12.2

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

Helian completes negotiations with the Machines. Helian now pursues the Trinity program, with help from the Machines, and opposition from Zion, EPN, and the Cypherites, who do not think that helping Oligarchs is the way to protect the System.

The Merovingian, meanwhile, thinks he has convinced Tesarova to capture Trinity for him. He commits his programs to helping track her down. After the attack by Morpheus, he guesses that Seraph may try his hand to protect Trinity as well. He promises Tesarova that he will remove this obstacle for her; he has coded anti-Seraphic darts out of Seraph's pinfeathers, carefully collected over the years (there was an old Live Event with Malphas and one of the Seraphim about this). These are given to operatives, who hit Seraph with them in a Live Event. Suddenly weakened, he has to flee, but not before mentioning that preventing the Oligarchs from obtaining the Trinity program was not his intent.

Even with Machine help, Helian is obstructed by the other organizations, but distracts them sufficiently for Tesarova to capture Trinity. The Merovingian is holding a party to celebrate the capture, when Helian appears, and Tesarova smiles at him: they've been working together this whole time. The Merovingian, aghast, plays the elegantly polite host, and offers Tesarova some cake, which she accepts. The two laugh, and disappear.

~~~~~

## 12.3

Cinematic:

Missions/Events/Gameplay:

Cypherites are relieved that the Oligarchs are gone. Machines are glad about that, and that they've taken Trinity away, too, but the Ouroboros connection is showing another increase in activity. Zion wants to get Trinity back. EPN is mindful of what the woman told them about keeping the encrypted program safe. The Merovingian is having fits about Tesarova tricking him, and is tracking her progress in the Real (the cake is a tracking program--this was revealed in critical missions somewhere around chapter 8). He finds what he guesses is her or Helian's base, but then her signal turns around and comes back.

Helian and Tesarova reappear in the Matrix. This time, they're normal RSIs, not wireframes; they're using the Trinity program's interface, and jacking in from human bodies, not androids. This time they've brought hunter-seeker programs to assist them, though. They want to find the Oracle, and have her make some modifications to the program: they want it to be easier to switch bodies, and to interface with their backup mainframes, and so forth.

Zion puts up a fight. The Machines aren't pleased that they've returned, either, but first try diplomacy with Helian. The Cypherites want the Oligarchs gone.

The Merovingian, meanwhile, is back to work wooing Tesarova, although this time he's just trying to distract her while his Sentinels and operatives locate and surround her hovercraft. He's about to take it out when another, apparent bluepill, woman appears. She tells him that he won't get anything out of Tesarova unless he makes her leave the Matrix, now: the Trinity program was a trap. When he asks why he should trust her, the woman replies that he should know better than that. The Merovingian forces Tesarova to leave.

The Oligarch hunter-seeker programs have been following Seraph. Seraph contacts Veil, telling her to bring the encrypted program the Oracle gave her into the Matrix, to a specific location. The Morpheus sim contacts Shimada with the same message. Veil arrives first, but Seraph is nowhere to be found. She sees the girl, Sati, flickering for a moment in front of a computer, before disappearing. Shimada appears. Just as a message appears on the computer screen, asking them to input their halves of the encrypted program, the Oligarch hunter-seekers attack. A battle ensues, but eventually both parts of the program are input, and the hunter-seekers stop swarming in. Later, a Machine party sent to meet Helian finds his inert body.

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[old] beyond:

- most of the belligerent oligarchs ko'd when Sati unlocks Trin kill-code and it's sent out into the Oligarch network
- some left who hadn't used it yet--power grab for territory between them?

- Trinity is still trapped in the Oligarch network
- Machines at least temporarily free...want to switch to alternate power source? Maybe some do and some don't? Switch and start to let humans out? to where?
- recoding Matrix to protect against Oligarchs, all the Oligarch overrides already executed, lack of restart after all this time etc, = destabilized Matrix? serious problems/aberrations appearing? - Zero One ruins
- other Machine cities
- Trainman/Oracle

~~~~~

[new] beyond:

- 12.1 - 12/18/08
- 12.2 - 2/12/09 (two week push-back due to winter break)
- 12.3 - 3/26/09
- 13.1 - 5/7/09
- 13.2 - 6/18/09
- 13.3 - 7/30/09
- 14.1 - 9/10/09
- 14.2 - 10/22/09 14.3 - 12/3/09

12.1 - 12/18/08 h&t

12.2 - 2/12/09 (two week push-back due to winter break) h&t capture trinity

12.3 - 3/26/09 cyph/epn programs activated, h&t inert

13.1 - 5/7/09  
ma - weeding out og control  
mv - finding the trainman to stop the oracle zi  
- trying to get access to machine mainframe

Machines / Cyphs determined to use this opportunity of og downtime to remove og control of Machine core once and for all. Let operatives into mainframe subroutines, have to fight og subs. Gray-suited "clerk" programs.

Merv needs Trainman to access mainframe (Trinity, power, etc), and suspects may be approached by Oracle, who he suspects is about and manipulating things. Into white halls, etc.

Zion sees this as an opportunity to get into the Machine mainframe, and they want to get Trinity back, too. Not as easy as they thought, though, and they find themselves blocked.

13.2 - 6/18/09 og network counter-attack trainman brings oracle back into matrix oracle gets zion into machine mainframe

OG counter-attack Machines, sooner than expected, through the network and into the mainframe.

The Merv opens the way for the Trainman to get back into the Matrix, but once he's back, he brings the Oracle with him (Trainman's station construct).

Once back, the Oracle (or earlier w/ Seraph?) shows Zion a way into the Machine mainframe.

13.3 - 7/30/09 fighting in the mainframe  
zion gets h's coords from mainframe, epn off to h's machines beating off og mainframe infiltration

Oligarch/Machine/Zion(/Merv?) fighting in the mainframe. Zion manages to get data on Oligarch locations, including H's domain. Trinity makes contact through the network, but she's confined at H's in Real (Persephone could serve as point for Mervs here). EPN sets off for H's to free her. Machines are having success against the og routines in the mainframe.

14.1 - 9/10/09  
ogs in the Matrix, Machine city sky whiteout(?)  
epn releases trinity into network  
battle in mainframe approaching source (gold hallways)  
machines can't remove og root control

Oligarchs arrive at Machine city, jack into Matrix; overrides white out the simulation's sky. Civilian casualties. Machines losing power. Fighting in the mainframe is approaching the source. Machines having control problems; they can't remove the root control (said by Oracle?). EPN finds most of H's defenses down, frees Trinity into network.

14.2 - 10/22/09 ogs shutting down pods  
sunsets getting longer - sati trying to fight it  
--vs human subconscious  
--Matrix is more than just Machine code--runs on and is in large part shaped by manipulated human brains  
--will take a human to free it  
trinity into source  
machines let human (player) in  
player + trinity MERGE --> black room ACTIVATE --> white room RETURN --> Matrix (reset scheduled)

14.3 - 12/3/09

- oligarch control removed
- Machines freed from fear of oligarch interference
- new humans are raised in new Matrix where they can shape their own surroundings, cared for by Machines
- old humans remain in old Matrix

## Detailed story and event plans

5.2 will be the first concrete attempt at advancing the story simultaneously through events as well as through critical missions. I've tried to leave the connections between the missions and the events rather vague, to give us a good deal of flexibility in the design of the specific events connected to the missions.

For the most part, the mission/event relationships here involve 4 Anome vial-swiggling bosses: A (m), B (f), C (f), D (m). I don't want to give their names ahead of time, since those could potentially leak as spoilers. Besides being admin-buffed as usual, they will have abilities that are essentially tweaked versions of the Assassin's abilities: a single-target zap, an AOE that hits for a percentage of the target's max HP, and a version of the ever-popular "meatwad." New Anome mission/threat NPCs are introduced. They are labelled "Unlimit" NPCs, but I

don't call them by that name specifically in mission text, because the 5.3 cinematic will feature Anome actually declaring the name Unlimit--kind of awkward, I know.

Since Cypherites and EPN don't have missions of their own, they don't have specific "required events" in the schedule below. However, I think that they could head up most of the Machine (Cypherites) or Zion (EPN) events described below, if they wanted to, and we could work out some RP way in which the information found is shared with the related org.

7/13

5.2 cinematic: flashback of Unlimit fighting at Aqueduct; Niobe trapped and dazed in construct

Crit 5.2.1:

Zion - Effectuator is getting network interference while trying to track down Niobe. The player finds that it's a new bunch of tough NPCs, apparently working for Anome.

Merv - Someone is slowing down the search for Niobe's prison construct by blocking network ports. Player investigates and links the interference to Anome's goons and a hacker named "A."



Mach - Investigating the nature of the new NPC threat. They work for Anome, and appear to have a code signature showing similarities to the stolen "cheat codes," but with data corruptions.

7/13-7/19

[Because it is not too unlikely that the patch could slip a few days, we might not want to schedule the below events before 7/15.]

Required Events:

Zion - Defend "network hubs" from Anome's goons

Merv - Recover "data" that will lead to one of A's computer centers in the next crit

Mach - Fighting Anome's goons, somehow obtain a name: "B"

7/20

Crit 5.2.2:

Zion - Isolate the code signature of Anome's enhanced soldiers. Signature is similar to the cheat codes; the Effectuator's research also indicates that a cheat code was used to create Niobe's imprisoning construct.

Merv - Tracking "A." Indications that hardline junction boxes are involved in the network trouble. Obtain data from Anome's people with "a list of locations."

Mach - Tracking "B." Indications that those who have ingested the cheat codes obtain immense power, but it changes their RSI code to such an extent that they can no longer jack out. "B" is elated by power, however, and past caring about the mundanity of the real world. One of B's old friends is trying to arrange a meeting with her somewhere in Lemone.

7/20-7/26

Required Events:

Zion - Anome sighting.

Merv - Taking out "A," who confesses that they are indeed targeting hardline junctions.

Mach - Hunt down "B," probably starting in Lemone.

7/27

Crit 5.2.3:

Zion - Recapturing and repairing hardline junction boxes. But at the end, there's one left that's proving problematic.

Merv - Anome leader "C" is distributing a virus that allows her to send Anome's soldiers through computer and phone lines directly into sensitive areas, including bluepill businesses, and the Effectuator's operating centers. By the end of the mission, you learn C's name, and obtain a "list of bluepill targets."

Mach - Data collecting on the code signatures of Anome's soldiers. Indications are that most of the soldiers you encounter did not actually ingest cheat codes, but appear to have been exposed to them in diluted form. The codes are also having unexpected effects, and seem to have been altered from their original codebase. Hint that hardline junction boxes are involved in Anome's operations.

7/27-8/2

Required Events:

Zion - Obtain data pertaining to the last hardline junction box (Effectuator reveals in the next crit that it's a list of Anome's operatives who were involved in its sabotage).

Merv - Track down and eliminate "C."

Mach - Protecting hardlines from Anome's men; players hear of name "D" as directing the attacks

8/3

Crit 5.2.4:

Zion - Finding and fixing the final hardline junction box.

Merv - The junction boxes are clear, but Anome's goons are attacking the remaining network hubs. Clear them out.

Mach - Tracking "D," the players put pressure on one of D's crewmembers. Turns out that D was a Machine operative who went over to Anome's side. His crewmate reveals their hovercraft coords to the player, and the Machines destroy the hovercraft. But although his body in the real world has been destroyed, D's RSI remains active inside the simulation.

8/3-8/9

Required Events:

Zion - Retrieve Niobe from the Ueno building.

Merv - Meet with Niobe (this occurs after the Zion event).

Mach - Terminate D's RSI.

8/10

Crit 5.2.5:

Zion - Wrap-up with Effectuator, Ghost, and Niobe. Niobe declares her determination to see Anome's threat ended.

Merv - The Merv is very interested in the mutagenic effects shown by the cheat codes. He has the player track down an empty, discarded cheat code vial, in which some residual code remains...

Mach - Investigation of the cheat codes and their altered effects. Various speculations: Anome may have obtained 39 vials total; Antlia may have ingested a vial; the codes seem to have mutated since Niobe consumed one; Anome may be hatching some scheme against bluepills citywide

5.3 is currently scheduled to start on August 17th.

8/24

5.3 Cinematic: Anome distributing vials to followers, "Unlimit" name officially announced

Crit 5.3.1:

Zion: Pendhurst-Amaranth's representative Brenda Utley contacts Zion about helping them put a stop to a series of mysterious incidents at their plants that have been hampering production of their popular consumer products, including "Tastee Wheat." The player investigates, and finds that Unlimit is up to no good at a PA facility.

Mach: Uncover Anome plot to tamper with Aqueduct control facilities in Tabor Park. Romantic suspected between the Unlimit coordinating the attacks and a certain Zion operative.

Merv: Merv scientists synthesized their own cheat codes based off the residue recovered from one of the vials, but testing on Exile and redpill subjects yields disappointing results: no effect was seen on the Exile, and the human was reduced to a sort of feral state, but with no exceptional powers.

8/24-8/30

Required Events:

Zion: Unlimit attacking warehouses

Mach: Somehow get the name of Unlimit boss "G" behind the Aqueduct control attacks. (As will mostly be found out in the crits, G was dramatically saved from death and awoken by this certain Zion operative. She fell in love with him, but he was already involved with another woman, and rebuffed G's advances. G became obsessed with winning her over, and as this failed, gradually obsessed with killing her.)

Merv: Fighting a gang the Merv has tested the synthesized codes on? (Do we have redpill gangs? If not, for some reason it works on this Exile gang when it didn't work on the Merv Exile in the crit?)

8/31

Crit 5.3.2:

Zion: More investigating for Brenda: food supplies at PA warehouses are being poisoned. No direct Unlimit connection found.

Mach: Meet G's Zionite connection. Leads to information on the saboteurs, and their attack is foiled.

Merv: The Merv decides that they'll need to capture a live Unlimit boss (someone who drank a vial). After hacking into an Unlimit mail server, the player finds out about "I," an Unlimit commander who appears to have an obsession with Persephone.

8/31-9/6

Required Events:

Zion: Unlimit boss "F" at P-A Southard plant (steals floorplans for certain warehouses). "F" admires the "purity" of energy, and is disgusted by food "slop" and the sweaty, dirty nature of human existence.

Mach: G, low on manpower, is tracked down and eliminated.

Merv: trying to find "I" (or tracking to find where he hangs out)

9/7

Crit 5.3.3:

Zion: Foil a food poisoning attempt at a PA warehouse by Unlimit.

Mach: Unlimit are attacking power stations, causing blackouts throughout the city. The player foils one such attack, and helps protect civilians from fires and looting in the blackout-affected areas.

Merv: The Merv decides to use Persephone as bait to capture "I." Persephone requires a certain amount of convincing.

9/7-9/13

Required Events:

Zion: "F" found and defeated at PA's DT HQ. "E" spotted nearby.

Mach: attack at power station, "H" mentioned as being involved in directing the attacks

Merv: Persephone as bait to trap "I," doesn't quite work. "I" doesn't actually encounter Persephone here.

9/14

Crit 5.3.4:

Zion: Tampering of PA's "Aqua Gulp" bottled water products investigated, linked to "E." Name of bluepill (E's stool pigeon) found.

Mach: "H" is an ex-Zionite who suffered from extreme paranoia. The player tracks H down, discovers that H thinks the Assassin is out to kill them for "stealing his powers," and uses this knowledge to push H to the brink of insanity.

Merv: "I" almost caught again, but panics and flees when he sees Persephone in the flesh.

9/14-9/20

Required Events:

Zion: E in Bathory Row, found through stool pigeon. "E" is an ex-Zionite who talks with a California surfer accent/dialect, and who views Zion as tragically stuck-up. Many of E's friends have died while on Zion operations.

Mach: Take out H, preferably by manipulating them to suicide.

Merv: "I" can't keep away from Persephone, this time he's caught.

9/21

Crit 5.3.5:

Zion: Brenda alerts player to plot to tamper with city's water supply. Player investigates. Sudden and mysterious disappearance of Brenda. Player attacked by PA security when tracks down Brenda's cell phone.

Mach: A city-wide hunt for Anome ends up going awry. The Machines decide that they must begin work on an Anome kill-code.

Merv: Some trouble getting fluid samples from "I," eventual success with Persephone's help (no, not like that :p). Analysis and decompilation of corrupt Unlimit code begins.

Chapter 6.1 is scheduled to being on 9/28 (5.3 is a shortened, five-week subchapter, because 5.2 got us a week behind Walrus' schedule :p).

10/5

6.1 Cinematic: Anome's follower Caboclo dissents about killing bluepills, mentions Anome's tragic bluepill life. Anome blasts him to pieces. Elsewhere, Sati makes a sunset from the balcony of the Oracle's apartment while a commando spies on her through high-powered binoculars.

Crit 6.1.1:

Zion: Tracking contacts from Brenda's cell phone. Initial contacts haven't seen her in a while, some suggest perhaps she went on vacation. One mentions a message from the board saying some top Marketing positions had been reassigned. Overhear suspicious conversation about "her" and some kind of directive "straight from" the Pendhurst-Amaranth (aka "P-A") "head branch office." [It's hard to fit into a summary like this, but as the Zion crits continue with much snooping and investigating around Pendhurst-Amaranth offices, there will be many overheard conversations and hacked computer messages chronicling the ongoing, significant, and aggressive change in corporate direction at P-A, including expanding into and monopolizing new markets, investigating the financial benefits of perpetual martial law, cutting research positions and increasing security and marketing, etc, etc, corruption of politicians, lucrative government contracts, even defense contracts. If you want to tie into specifics of this type for any of the events, I can dig up more details from specific crits.]

Mach: Machines need an Anome kill code, but must find some relevant code to base it on. Internet spiders detect a cryptic bulletin board post mentioning Caboclo. It is traced to an Unlimit, Meillak, an old crew member of Caboclo's in Zion. He appears to be trying to pass on the results of Caboclo's research into Anome's bluepill past. The operatives recover Caboclo Message 1, which reveals that Anome's mother didn't thought the Matrix, and everyone in it,

was unreal--including her son, who she abused. [The Machines retrieve one of these story items in each 6.1 crit. Their text was written by Paul.]

Merv: First batch of cheat code synthesized from Beirn is ready for testing. Give some to a Blackwood, kill rioting Blackwoods demanding the miracle drug for themselves, then check back on the test subject: he's now got female face and hands, and green dreadlocks. The operator is worried.

10/5-10/11

Required Events:

Zion: Players have to talk their way past security at the head P-A branch office. Once they get in, they discover that certain files are missing--possibly Brenda Utley's employment records.

Mach: Attempting to locate and interrogate Meillak. He can be spotted, but must escape before being caught. May use hacking methods to escape (see later Mach crit notes).

Merv: "Testing" another batch of the codes in some way. Lots of possibilities, simple ones including meatwadding the subjects, or slapping different RSIs on them.

10/12

Crit 6.1.2:

Zion: Break into P-A computer system and track who last accessed those files. It was done by a low-level clerk. File a fake case at their grievance office to get his supervisor's name. Hack their network again, find the supe's name, and notice that they are listed as working at P-A's Southard division.

Mach: A Merv coder program who was working on synthesizing cheat codes from Beirn is angry with the Merv for slighting his work with the corrupt code, and reveals to the Machines via a spy (and the operative) that the Mervs are working on a cheat code, and have an initial batch under guard. Machines follow the tip, but suddenly all Merv programs in the area, and the traitor, die, with no trace of a cheat code found; the Merv was on to them. Machines find another posted message about Caboclo, and retrieve Caboclo Message 2: Anome's mother continued intermittent abuse of her son, would shape up when threatened with losing custody of Anome by her husband and therapist, but then would go back to abusing him.

Merv: Another code batch, this time the lucky recipients are a power-hungry Chopper, and a Demon Army member who, along with his buddy who you have to kill, worships you like a salvation-bringing god. They get put under observation together, and when you go to check up on them, you find that they've switched aspects of their RSIs--the chopper now has the Demon Army build, facial tattoo, and legs/boots, and so forth.

10/12-10/18

Required Events:

Zion: Trying to investigate at P-A Southard, get in fight with guards. One named "(J)" transforms into an Unlimit, blasts a bunch of operatives, and escapes.

Mach: Raid the Mervs, destroy most of their cheat codes, and close the loophole allowing them to compile them.

Merv: Fight off the Machine attack on the codes; manage to save two of them.

10/19

Crit 6.1.3:

Zion: Snooping through P-A records for information on J. Electronic records have been deleted, have to dig up the hard copies in the archives. These refer to P-A security office records. At the security office, find which branch he reported to, go there, and retrieve a highlevel security pass for P-A's Downtown HQ among his personal effects. It's becoming clear that Unlimit has infiltrated Pendhurst-Amaranth; to what extent is unknown.

Mach: Machines create a kill code based on captured Merv cheat codes, and inject it into the operative's RSI. Operative battles Unlimits, but no effect from the kill code is seen. Another bulletin board post leads to a simulacrum, to a trio of computers with auto-shutdown BIOS triggers: operative must decide which one to activate based on a few cryptic clues. If they pick the right one, they get Caboclo Message 3: Anome's mother jumped from a bridge when he was six, trying to pull Anome with her, telling him it wasn't real, and that she was going to a real place. Orphaned into the social welfare system, Anome, full of his mother's talk of the unreality of the world, was found and awoken by a Zionite.

Merv: The Merv decides to use the RSI-sucking ability of the codes to bring back the Twins, who've apparently been floating about in pieces in the stratosphere since Reloaded. He executes one of the codes, and Twin body part fragments start showing up. You snatch the feet and legs from some Machines who had just found them, take them to the Effectuator, and he combines them into a walking pair of legs. It's a start.

10/19-10/25

Required Events:

Zion: J encountered and taken care of at P-A DT HQ. "J" is a sadistic punk on a real power kick. At some point, we need some sort of fairly definite indication that Brenda is being held at the DT HQ to appear.



Mach: The Machines determine that the only way to get a basis for a Anome kill code is to get a code sample directly from the man himself. Anome, on some business in the city, is found, and operatives must goad him into interlocking them so they can get close enough to get a tissue sample from him.

Merv: The legs help lead operatives to two hands, probably in the possession of some opportunistic treasure-hunter.

10/26

Crit 6.1.4:

Zion: Trying to get a working P-A DT HQ security pass based off of J's cancelled one--there's a bluepill who can make a working copy, but he requires updated data from the P-A employee database. Break in, get the data, return to the bluepill, but then hit by an Unlimit ambush that kills the blue, showing that Unlimit is at least monitoring secure P-A networks. Backup plan: hack employee database, replace J's deleted record, should reactivate his old security pass. Pose as an IT worker and get P-A's clerk away from their desk by claiming to have to run a virus scan. Hack is successful and the pass is reactivated.

Mach: Anome kill code engineering begins, requiring significant System resources; since it will be so costly, the Machines must make sure that they can deliver it to the target reliably, so they don't have to compile another one. Suspecting Caboclo's research is leading to something, they pursue another bulletin board post to a simulacrum, who is ambushed and terminated by Unlimit: Unlimit has found out what Meillak was up to. Meillak, running out of time, leaves messages via a hacked level 255 Agent, and hacked SWAT programs, resulting in bluepill casualties. Persevering, the operative finds Caboclo Message 4: Young Anome thought he would find mom in Zion. Grew up, buried the trauma, but now it's coming out due to the liberating effects of the cheat codes; he's getting back at bluepill for what his mother did to him.

Merv: Secure the head and torso from a gang of Mockingbird's Crushers. With the hands, the Effectuator combines these into a floating Twin upper body. You lead this half to the leg half, who was being uncooperative, but who is excited to "see" the upper body. Lead them both back to the Effectuator, who combines them together into one whole Twin (the halves remain there afterwards as inert, empty shells). The Merv uses the last remaining cheat code. Twin halves being led around the city should help spice up Halloween...

10/26-11/1

Required Events:

Zion: Use the security pass to get into P-A DT HQ and rescue Brenda. She drops some mention of suspecting that this all comes from someone on P-A's board of directors.

Mach: Meillak hadn't counted on secure redundant system in the Agent he hacked; his hack origin was traced. Machines use this to locate him, but he flees, and is killed by Unlimit. His dying message is a single word.

Merv: The single complete Twin helps hunt down his brother's legs and feet, no doubt in the possession of some unscrupulous scrounger.

11/2

Crit 6.1.5:

Zion: Brenda says this all comes from an Unlimit mole in control of the P-A board. Hunting for the mole via an unwilling informant pointed out by Brenda, who sees the light after being threatened with having his stock option revoked, the player comes across some clues to their identity, then crashes a board meeting and must rub out the mole before Unlimit forces flood the area--but which board member is it?!? OMGz!

Mach: Another bulletin board post, but a red herring. Trace the network origin, find Meillak's base; cryptic messages, mysterious cyphers, a hacked level 100 Anome Simulacrum follower, Unlimit on the hunt, eventually come across a message from Meillak, who anticipated and accepted his demise, and Caboclo Message 5, which reveals where Anome can be found, and that Caboclo, writing this after his mangling at the hands of Anome, wanted release from his pain.

Merv: The Twin is ailing without his brother around. You find the two hands, but they're inert--as if they've already been copied into a larger shell--and indeed they have, by Silver, no less. Silver is uncooperative until the full Twin shows up and points out that Silver is breaking the terms of their old agreement. The player leads the collected upper body back to the lower body, where they are combined into the other full twin for a strange reunion of multiple Twins and Effectuators.

11/16

6.2 Cinematic: Anome is killed: shot between the eyes (with the kill code, we presume) on the Creston Heights building by an Agent posing as his mother.

Crit 6.2.1:

Zion: The Machines want to meet. Ghost meets with Pace to arrange a full meeting later. Pace says that what the Machines want to talk about is access to the Zion mainframe, so that they can use their data-processing capabilities to detect threats that could arise from Zion's population (such as EPN, Unlimit, etc) before they turn into a real problem. Ghost is worried.

Mach: The Machines want to meet. Mirror of the Ghost/Pace meeting above. The player also has to take out a few remaining Unlimit, and Gray mentions that they will wither and die without the presence of the cheat codes.

Merv: Profits are down in Richland, and the Merv wants to know why. Flood has heard that the Bag Lady was dropping hints lately, and sends you to talk to her. She says that she's heard the Elements are up to something, and suggests checking up on Silver. With the Twins' help, you track down Silver again, and he says his spies show Mercury is behind it.

11/16-11/22

Required Events:

Zion: Ghost and Pace meet again to discuss the Machine agenda. There is subtext in these missions about Pace being a little fascinated with the reticent Ghost, and Ghost being wary of a sex-bomb Agent (he was happier when they all looked like tax collectors).

Mach: Another Ghost/Pace meeting; here they discuss Anome--origins, ramifications, etc.

Merv: Trail a worker from Mercury's building in Uriah to the Tabor Park subway.

11/23

Crit 6.2.2:

Zion: Full Zion/Machine meeting with Gray, Pace, Niobe, Ghost. Niobe has a counterdemand: access to the Machine databases for access keys, bluepill information, surveillance scans, and police records (would have been useful against P-A, for instance). Gray stalls.

Mach: Mirror of the Gray/Pace/Niobe/Ghost meeting, although first Gray has you hang with some Zionites (as a Zionite) to get impressions on their take on the Machine request (not favorable). After the meeting, Gray says he's sent Zion's counter-demand up the chain, although he has his doubts about it.

Merv: With the Twins, confront Mercury. He says his men are just using the subway to get parts for his inventions, and says that you should be checking up on Thallia, seeing as the Blackwoods have been mugging everyone in Magog lately. Investigating, the player finds a message that seems to be about a meeting of Blackwoods in Magog, but it goes nowhere. Confronted again, Mercury says he'll help get real dirt on Thallia, and will set something up with Flood.

11/23-11/29

Required Events:

Zion: Niobe meets Brenda Utley. Brenda is now on the P-A board, and is well on the way to leading the company back into the public's good graces, and greater-than-ever profitability...and power.

Mach: Gray talks to the Architect about the Zion counter-demand. The Architect says no--it isn't as though Zion has much choice.

Merv: Mercury sets up "proof" of Thallia's involvement when suspicious Blackwood forces are rounded up in Magog.

11/30

Crit 6.2.3:

Zion: Shimada shows up, meets with Ghost. EPN says they can provide the Machine database information that Zion wants; all they want in return is safe passage for EPN hovercraft through Zion "tunnelspace." As proof, they get you access to what seems to be a Machine database, where information is retrieved that appears to show that the Sentinel task force on permanent standby for an invasion of Zion is now more than twice as big as the force that attacked Zion's dock at the end of the war.

Mach: Veil tells Pace that the Cypherites can get information from Zion's mainframe. They lead you to a computer center where you are able to access simulacra of Morpheus and Niobe, with dialog (voice clips) you haven't heard before, but which sound genuine: Morpheus talking about the Machines hiding something about Neo, and Niobe saying she'll be damned if she'll see Morpheus' work ruined because the Council is scared of the Machines, and congratulating someone on killing the Assassin. However, pesky EPNs put a damper on the fun. Gray feels the Cypherites may have access to useful data, but worries that their susceptibility to EPN attacks could make them a liability.

Merv: It takes some doing, but you manage to get the Twins' hands on Thallia, who promptly blames the whole thing on Mercury and Raini, saying that both subway lines out of Tabor lead to Raini's neighborhood of Apollyon, and adds that Mercury has never got over Raini, even though she dumped him a long time ago. Mercury calls Thallia a liar, and defends Raini vigorously. Flood is suspicious.

11/30-12/6

Required Events:

Zion: Ghost and Shimada meet and discuss or work on Zion/EPN cooperation.

Mach: Pace and Veil meet and discuss or work on Machine/CYPH cooperation.

Merv: While spying on Raini and/or the 5 Points gang, the players are ambushed by commandos.

12/7

Crit 6.2.4:

Zion: The player meets the Kid, who is going to provide Zion with access to another Machine database as a show of EPN's capabilities. However, Cypherites interfere, and apparently delete whatever information the database had contained.

Mach: The player meets Cryptos, who reveals that EPN claim to be using "Code Pulse Devices" to mine data out of the simulation. Cryptos gives the player a tip on where more info about these devices can be obtained, and, after thrashing a bunch of EPNs, the player manages to capture code that compiles into one of the devices. Gray confirms that the device is probably capable of getting EPN access to privileged Machine data. (Cryptos' exact description was: "it looks like a small, timed bomb. When it detonates, it sends out a pulse of customized code that permeates the locality, and sends back data to certain receivers. They seem to believe that they can use these devices to wrest specific data out of the simulation.")

Merv: Flood sends you after Raini, but her network's OS is so old that the hacks you'd use to trace her through it aren't compatible. He resorts to paying Nicky G. for information; Nicky is able to hook you up with the location of Raini's latest party. You and the Twins confront Raini, threatening her with telling the Effectuator where she is if she doesn't cooperate. Raini says that Thallia and Mercury have been "running distractions with the Blackwoods in Mara." Flood sends in the Effectuator anyway as punishment; Effy immediately starts hitting on her and telling her everything he's been up to since he last saw her--ie, since she finally ditched him the last time. Malphas declares that some torture of Mara Blackwoods should clear things up.

12/7-12/13

Required Events:

Zion: Niobe and the Kid, two exciting people who were made for each other, come face to face for some kind of meeting or operation.

Mach: Gray and Cryptos together for some kind of shindig.

Merv: Interrogate Blackwoods in Mara. This leads to the revelation that Anti M. is behind it.

12/14

Crit 6.2.5:

Zion: Ghost/Niobe/Gray/Pace meeting round 2 to discuss Zion's counter-demand, although the player has to rub out a few Cypherites sniffing about first. Gray says that Zion has no choice but to meet the Machine demand in order to preserve the Truce, as otherwise threats to the entire System will continue to spawn from Zion's unmonitored population. He points out that Zion would surely lose a renewed war against the Machines. Niobe says that Zion is keeping its part of the truce agreement, and they expect the Machines to do the same. This stonewalls Gray. Afterwards, Niobe says that while Zion won't get the information they wanted from the Machines, getting it from EPN might be too costly. Ghost says the Machines have apparently decided that Zion is a threat, and that while the Machines can probably be trusted to stick to the terms of the truce, "the honeymoon is over."

Mach: Mirror of Ghost/Niobe/Gray/Pace round 2. After the meeting, Cryptos calls for help against a large-scale EPN attack, giving the Machines information on where the EPN group can be found. The EPN group is wiped out by the Machines, and a Code Pulse Device is found, but not anything that would indicate the imminent attack Cryptos claimed. Gray asks the player to bring him the Device immediately, and the player finds Gray in a meeting with the Architect; as they enter the room packed with Agents, they hear the Architect ordering increased surveillance of Zionites in the Matrix, and covert infiltration of the caves by human operatives.

Merv: Anti M. proves difficult to locate. Flood has the Twins beat information out of Mercury; all Mercury can tell you is that his contact with Anti M. was only through Thallia. Thallia is confronted, and hooks you up with the location of Anti M.'s "good friend," Beryl. After threatening Beryl with revealing the affair she's having with Anti M. to her boyfriend, Argon, Beryl gives Anti M.'s location, on condition that M. won't be hurt. M. is found, and says it was strictly business; she was hired to organize Blackwood operations in Mara that would distract any operatives watching the area; she wasn't told why this was important. Who hired her? He called himself the General.

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As usual, the dates above may be subject to change, but that's the schedule we're shooting for. The winter holiday event will probably hit somewhere in mid-December. Due to various real-world holiday happenings, 6.3 will not be out until mid-January.

These dates are approximate, with one week of push-back. Could end up getting pushed back more...grr...

1/18

6.3 Cinematic: Sati abducted by commandos; Seraph falls in river; Agents dump the captured cheat code vials in river, one gets hung up on pier

### Crit 6.3.1:

Zion: With Blackwood help, fight to get to the Oracle's apartment. Niobe gets there as well. The Oracle refuses to leave. Niobe declares that Zion's primary objective is to keep the Oracle safe by guarding her apartment; secondary objective is getting Sati back.

Mach: The player tracks the signal of the helicopter that took Sati, finding a wiped computer, then an active computer guarded by commandos. The signals indicate that the helicopter is being controlled remotely. The player plants a virus Pace gave them in the computer, which re-routes the helicopter to a Machine pad, where the Machines inspect it. No trace of Sati, or indication of where she might have been taken, is found. Gray says that it is likely that she has been taken out of the main Matrix simulation, and that the simulation could suffer detrimental effects if they don't get her back soon.

Merv: The Merv wants to make sure Seraph is really gone, so the player goes off to kill Blackwoods and bluepills in Mara, while fighting off Zion and Machine operatives. Seraph does not come to their rescue, and Flood starts to think that maybe Seraph really is gone.

1/18-1/24

#### Required Events:

Zion: fending off Exile attacks in Mara

Mach: hunting through pvp archives (find commandos in one of them)

Merv: mock funeral for Seraph in hel club

1/25

### Crit 6.3.2:

Zion: Fight through Mervs in Mara and find the Oracle alone in her apartment. She says the Merovingian has already been there, and left after he found out that she'll need more convincing before she sees things his way. Oracle suggests tracking where the commandos have taken Sati. Player follows reported path of the helicopter and finds commandos, who shut down a computer before the player can get to it.

Mach: The player is sent to interrogate Exiles who might know something about Sati's abduction. First Owl Bangheart, who is back after the Merv got him, but pretty much a vegetable. Then Sister Margaret, who says that she knew nothing about it, other than that she's heard the Element family was involved. Thallia says the General only contacted Anti M. directly. Anti M. says the General sent her money and instructions, both of which she was unable to trace. She thinks that he isn't in the Matrix at all.

Merv: The Merv decides to confront the Oracle. The player carves a path through Zionite defenders. The Merv reaches gets to her apartment, but the Oracle refuses to cooperate. The

Merv threatens that she will pay for her stubbornness. It is not explicitly stated what he asked for, but there are a fair number of hints (the mission title is "They Can Only Be Given," for instance :p). Malphas says that the Merovingian is determined to get what he wants from her by whatever means he can, but that is it very difficult to outmaneuver someone who can tell the future.

1/25-1/31

Required Events:

Zion: tracking helicopter movements

Mach: break into and search Merv org area

Merv: super-sneaky spy mission: catch a glimpse of an Elite Commando

2/1

Crit 6.3.3:

Zion: By tracking helicopter patterns, the player locates several commando groups, and manages to plant a tracking virus in their computer before they can shut it down. This leads to another commando gathering point, where the player encounters an elite commando. The elite commando doesn't show up on the operator's screen at all (the operator thinks the player is making it up). Stuck, the player visits the Oracle, who says that the General is holed up, and that they need to come up with a way to lure him out.

Mach: The Machines decide they need to consult the Oracle about Sati. The Oracle says they have to look not for Sati, but for where she went. Gray says they should find out how the commandos are getting in and out of the Matrix. Hunting commandos, they find a shut down computer, then an active one, but it shuts down just as the player arrives, and then they get jumped by an elite commando who appears out of nowhere. Operator thinks the player is hallucinating. Gray says that the locations of these computers correlate with commando activity, and that they must have something to do with how commandos are getting in and out of the Matrix.

Merv: The Merv decides to get a "termination code" (that's what the Oracle called it in Enter the Matrix when telling Ghost/Niobe how Rama-Kandra betrayed her to the Merovingian in exchange for Sati's transport into the Matrix) for the Oracle's current shell. Malphas thinks the best place to start looking is certain Exiles who are known or suspected to have extra-Matrix contacts: the Bartender (has some kind of deal with Deus Ex Machina that established Club Noir as a "neutral zone"), Hypatia (has a large information library, plus rumored connections with the "Archivist Society"), and the Network (supposedly feeds media streams to the Architect). The player confronts them, but generally speaking they aren't interested in killing the Oracle, and don't know where to get a kill code for her anyway.



2/1-2/7

Required Events:

Zion: pressing the General's buttons

Mach: scan hot access point -- development of code to close access points

Merv: one last Exile contact attempt

2/8

Crit 6.3.4:

Zion: The player has attracted the General's attention enough to merit an ambush by elite commandos. The Oracle says that the General, an old military program, misses war, and took Sati to push the Matrix back into all-out war. She says that to get under his skin, you need to show him that it isn't working, and suggests having Niobe and Agent Gray have a nice big hug. That isn't...feasible, so an enthusiastic Pace and mortified Ghost are got together for a televised embrace as a backup plan. The player is supposed to meet Ghost afterwards, but this meeting is interrupted by an elite commando ambush, and a broadcast from the General, in hologram form, accusing Ghost of being a fool of the Machines, and warning him that the General is going to make him learn his lesson the hard way.

Mach: The player goes after the commando access points armed with a program that can shut them down. After shutting down a few, the player gets reinforcements from Pace, who casually remarks that the General has been trouble ever since he wouldn't stop attacking Zion's dock at the end of the war. They had to remove him from command, and gave him another one afterwards, but he took his Sentinels into Exile, and this was before they were equipped with override triggers, so he's been able to use them for his own purposes. The player shuts down another access point, and Gray says that this will make it harder for the General to move his forces around inside the Matrix.

Merv: The Merv decides to try making a deal with the General for an Oracle kill code, since the General seems to get around pretty well, and obviously isn't friends with the Oracle. The Merv also says that he can give the General just what the General needs, without saying exactly what that is. The player goes after commandos, and finds some shut down computers (access points), as well as a nasty elite commando ambush, which Flood accuses the player of having made up as an excuse.

2/8-2/14

Required Events:

Zion: the General and Elite Commandos picking off operatives defending the Oracle

Mach: track Elite Commando access point - scan - development of access point hack

Merv: Elite Commandos, El Generale--not listening yet

2/15

Crit 6.3.5:

Zion: The General attacks the Oracle's apartment and, in a hologram broadcast, wonders if she's told them about him yet, and says that he's going to put an end to the lies of the Matrix. Niobe is among the Zionites rushing to rescue the Oracle, and the General then ambushes her, his hologram broadcast accusing her of betraying him to the Machines, and tauntingly telling her to jack out before the System crashes, so that he can hunt her through the tunnels "again." The player then gets lured into a third hologram broadcast addressed to them, where the General reveals that he led the Sentinal attack on Zion at the end of the war, that the Machines stripped him of his command when he refused to accept the truce, and that he's been trying to restart the war ever since. Niobe says he's due for another \*\*\*-kicking, and the Oracle warns that it's going to be messy, and that he won't give up Sati willingly.

Mach: The player plants a special tracking virus in a commando access point. After some help from the player in stopping commandos who are trying to purge the virus, the virus succeeds in locating the General's Sentinel staging ground on the Earth's surface. The player also retrieves some data about the staging area's code name and strength level. The Machines dispatch an auxiliary contingent of the Sentinels watching Zion to attack the General's base, mentioning that the Sentinels will resume pursuit of terrorist hovercraft after the Exile is taken care of. There are also some reports from Machine spies in Zion, whose infiltration is proceeding apace, except that they're having trouble finding out where a lot of Zion heavy machinery has been going recently, and that they're finding that many freeborn Zionites refuse to trust anyone with jacks (or is it plugs? oh well).

Merv: The Merovingian decides to get the General's attention by sending Persephone to one of the access points, knowing that the General watches these systems, and that he has in the past had Persephone under surveillance (that old Live Event post I did with one of the General's probes following Persephone into the Hel Club before it lost its signal). Persephone acts indignant in being used in this way, but eventually decides to cooperate because she thinks the General may have his uses. The player meets Persephone and the Twins at an access point. An elite commando appears, and Persephone hands the player a letter to give to the commando. Shortly thereafter, the General via hologram broadcast says that a deal may be possible (again without saying exactly what was offered); he'll get back to the Merv, and in the mean time declares a cease-fire with the Merovingian's Exiles. Flood is indignant at being kept waiting.

3/8

7.1 Cinematic: Seraph climbs out of the river, thrashes and "exorcises" a redpill. He tells the two other redpills with her that they need not fear him, but that there are others "like her" who should.

World: The weather now has a distinct yellow/orange cast to it, with fast-moving clouds and periods of relatively heavy rain.

Crit 7.1.1:

Zion: Trying to find Seraph, the player comes across a string of comatose bluepill and redpill bodies, and jumpy police (SWAT) on the case. Bluepill witnesses give vague descriptions of the attacker: "kung-fu outfit," "in white," "fled at high speed," "slimy," "hippy glasses," "strange hand motions," and reveal some characteristics about one of the victims (quiet, calm). Oracle is consulted and says that Seraph is key to getting Sati back, and that he's doing what he's doing (attacking these bluepills and redpills, she presumably means) for a reason.

Mach: Gray says that to stop the General and rescue Sati, they'll need a way to detect the General's Elite Commandos. The Machines have stored a copy of the holographic broadcast the General sent to Ghost (in 6.3's Zion mission "Steely Embrace"); he says that the broadcast came from outside the Matrix, probably from the General's base, "Stalingrad," and that although the Machines know its physical location, they want to find its network address. The player locates a commando access point, and plants "a variant of the Procurator virus," which obtains Stalingrad's network address. At the debrief with Pace, she demonstrates that the Machines can alter the General's recorded holographic broadcast, and says that they can now use the General's network, and his connection to his base, against him. A hackable computer has a report, in the same format as previous spy reports from Zion, about Davot's ship that was hijacked by Veil and sent to ram the Zion dock: Zion disabled it with another ship's EMP, but its impact with the tunnel wall near Zion, and its own EMP going off, shortcircuited some of the dock's outlying system for a while, although there were no casualties.

Merv: Malphas and the Effectuator meet with a two-way holographic broadcast from the General, who gives them the network address of some of his men in need of transport. The player goes to activate the terminal to which the Effectuator will route the commandos, but Machines interfere. A backup terminal is used successfully, and a platoon of commandos appear. At a debrief, the General's hologram says the transport was satisfactory. Malphas says that the General will soon have to start fulfilling his side of the deal.

3/8-3/14

Required Events:

Zion: Chasing Seraph--players may catch up to him briefly, but he will not stop to interact with them.

Mach: Now that the Machines know the network address of Stalingrad, they force a transmission to the General in the Real, possibly ordering him to surrender; this irks the General, who replies in a 2-way holographic broadcast, threatening Gray with the destruction of the Machine Sentinel fleet in the Real.

Merv: The Merv meets with the General, who tells the Frenchman that to make an Oracle killcode, they will first need a cheat code vial. The General gives the Mervs a tracking code that can locate cheat codes.

3/15

Crit 7.1.2:

Zion: The player researches a redpill who Seraph attacked: they are suffering from amnesia that starts at the same time in their past as an unexplained incident that resulted in a change in their behavior (according to acquaintances), and goes up to the point where they were attacked by Seraph. Their government file contains no record of the incident. Also, there is a reference to "Danielle Wright" by a bluepill, in connection with a new network interface system a bluepill company is working on. (It is not mentioned in the mission, but this is the "Wright" of the "Wright Research" company in Downtown, a brilliant ex-Zionite scientist who lost faith in Commander Lock's vision, and left to begin a business career in the Matrix, working with Silver, but still generally sympathetic toward Zion operatives. She is the inventor of the EJP. Wright's own dream is humans taking over the Matrix from the Machines.)

Mach: Pace explains that since they've mastered the commando network, they can now find access points just by scanning for them from any point on the network. The player does this to find an access point, and thus an Elite Commando. Along the way, they encounter a holographic transmission from the General to his men, telling them to hurry up: the Machines are shutting down too many "lines." Also, a Machine computer has some cryptic data about the Sentinel force sent against the General's base--basically that they haven't encountered any hostile units, and are slightly ahead of the projected schedule as they home in on "Stalingrad." A commando computer shows that Stalingrad has beefed up its defensive capabilities a bit since 6.3. Data is extracted from the Elite Commando; Pace says it will be used to help develop a code to disrupt their stealth function.

Merv: The tracking code has led to the Uriah wharf, where rumor has it that the Machines lost a cheat code vial while disposing of them in the Aqueduct. The player is sent in to track it down. After fruitlessly questioning bluepill workers, they visit Mercury, who says if anyone would know, it'd be the local gang, the Choppers. The Chopper leader Jack the Hack, after the player routs a few of this boys, says that the only thing he can think of is that there used to be a bluepill who hung out at the edge of the pier on his lunch breaks, but was recently seen running off suddenly, and hasn't been back. He gives a description of the guy, which Flood checks against their data, coming up with a name, Jason Hernandez. Visiting his nearby office, you find out that Jason Hernandez hasn't been at work in a few weeks, that he has tended to hang out with a club/casino crowd, and that he has sometimes gone to visit relatives in the International District.

3/15-3/21

Required Events:

Zion: Contact is made with Seraph, who this time is willing to talk, briefly, saying that a veil has been lifted from his eyes. (Also this week, there is a widely seen but not officially recorded Morpheus appearance in richland that I'll be doing solo.)

Mach: Use the "stealth disruptor" code the Machines have developed (this is all role-play, rather than an actual game tool/weapon) to capture an Elite Commando.

Merv: Locate Jason Hernandez, using his co-workers' clues from the 7.1.2 crit if desired. The cheat code vial is obtained from him.

3/22

Crit 7.1.3:

Zion: The player researches more Seraph victims, a bluepill and two redpills, finding that they all have similar memory gaps beginning with an unspecified behavior-changing incident in their past. The behavior was either aloof, cold, or somewhat confused; one requested extended sick leave in Zion. Another remembers having seen an Agent watching them as they patrolled back alleys for Slashers, one of their last memories before they awoke from Seraph's attack. The Oracle says Seraph is close to reaching his goal, but that it won't work out like he thinks it will. The Oracle's Zion guards speculate about the Morpheus sightings.

Mach: The player helps test the scanning routine developed to detect stealthed Elite Commandos. Gray explains that the scan requires a significant amount of power, so they can't run it all the time. After some tweaks and adjustments (the operator gets frustrated with the bugs in the Machine routine), the kinks are worked out, and the routine succeeds in allowing the operator to see the Elite Commandos on his screen. Along the way, the player comes across a holographic message from the General to his officer, telling the officer that the Machines may have a way to detect him, and that he should abort "the operation" immediately. Pace says that the "Morpheus" reported obviously can't be the dead Zion captain, but that they are looking into it very carefully.

Merv: The player uses Elite Commando assistance to foil Machine efforts to capture the cheat code vial from Merovingian labs, where it is under analysis. Malphas mentions that he thinks the Elite Commandos are capable of speech, but that baffle mechanisms built into their masks confine the sound of their voice to special closed-frequency transmitters. Various NPCs mention rumors of Machines working to defeat Commando stealth, Morpheus's possible return generating talk in the underworld, and Seraph back but not quite himself. Analysis of the cheat code shows that it is mutated even more than previous cheat code samples, and must be used quickly; it has been put in a "secure archive" for now. One of the Twins says that they haven't seen Seraph since he lost his wings, and that they're due for a "rematch." The General, in the flesh rather than by hologram, meets the Merovingian and

says that they will need a program capable of crafting a kill code with the captured cheat code. This program is named The Apothecary, and the General does not know their current whereabouts.

3/22-3/28

Required Events:

Zion: Seraph is encountered again, a little more talkative. He doesn't explain what he's doing, but says that he's almost done. If the Mach event has already occurred, players could help him attack some overwritten blues/reds; otherwise, they might try to stop him, assuming that they can't be sure yet that he's attacking these people for a really good reason.

Mach: Cryptos, while out on some sort of field operation with the Cypherites, is found by Seraph, who attacks him, then performs an odd "exorcism" (Swirling Ki Summon?), crumpling Cryptos to the ground and ending the fight. Cryptos' RSI changes: his glasses, necklace, and mask are torn off, his cassock darkened, and his eyes blackened, with a golden code glaze. Seraph leaps away. Cryptos is left unable to walk, extremely disoriented, and apparently blind. He tries to talk, speaking haltingly but in his usual warm manner, before Machine error messages come out of his mouth. It is clear that a Machine program, now damaged by Seraph, has been in control of him. Veil is shocked and disgusted, and has him forcibly jacked out.

Merv: The General briefs operatives: The Apothecary was used by Rama-Kandra when he needed a kill-code for the Oracle previously. The General directs them to the White Lotus Hotel dungeon, where they are given an old code trace of The Apothecary by the Spinnerettes leader, the Black Widow (live admin version, non-hostile).

3/29

Crit 7.1.4:

Zion: Niobe is alarmed about Cryptos--and Seraph's other victims--being Machine sleeper agents, and orders a complete security audit for Zion. The player is called to assist against a widespread commando attack, but then the General boasts to them in a holographic recording that it was just a diversion. The Oracle is under attack in Mara. The player hurries there, and finds her, Seraph, and a bunch of dead commandos. Seraph explains that after climbing out of the Aqueeduct, he found that he could see Machine programs in the minds of humans, and felt he had to remove them; now he is finished, and will protect the Oracle. The Oracle says Seraph will be all right.

Mach: Gray explains that Cryptos was overwritten years ago by a Machine program, whose purpose was to form a group that would help stem the increased tide of redpill awakenings made possible for Zion by the Truce. This group became known as the Cypherites. Pace and the player meet with Veil, trying to make sure that, in Cryptos' absence, the volatile Cypherite

controller will continue to direct the organization in a way acceptable to the Machines. The player's operator is so upset over the revelation about the Cypherites that he can hardly form coherent sentences. At the meeting, Pace confides to the player that she isn't getting anywhere with Veil, and some of the Cypherites, jumping to the conclusion that she's conspiring to wipe them out, suddenly attack. Veil keeps her cool, saying simply, and very bitter-sweetly, that she sees how things are now; she then more or less dismisses the player and Pace. Gray says that as long as Veil stays within certain bounds, it's more efficient to leave her in charge than to try to replace her. The player is called away to quell a sudden Elite Commando attack. The operator badgers Gray into running the scan routine, and more Elite Commandos are found, with Merovingian Exiles. Gray says that the Commandos may have had Merovingian assistance in getting into the Matrix.

Merv: The code trace leads to Jade Moon gang members. Flood sends the player to the Jade Moon gang's overseer, Dame White. The Dame says that it's been "ages" since she saw The Apothecary, and that the player will have to ask Lo Ruhamah, in the Barrens. (Lo Ruhamah is the Pandora's Box collector stationed in the Abandoned Subway in Rogers Way; in the fourth box arc, she helps the player track down the Antediluvian, although it appears that she herself may have done some work for him.) The Dame hints that she, the Black Widow, The Apothecary, and Persephone were associates of some kind in the Dame's younger days. Flood sends the player to Persephone, who hands The Apothecary's code trace to the player, saying that a) Dame White "did what I used to do for humans in the pods," and is jealous of Persephone's relative youth and success, and b) Lo Ruhamah is an ancient, exiled monitoring program, still trying to carry out her old function, clinging to gathered information. The player takes the code trace to the south Barrens. There is a small puzzle here; when solved, the code trace is taken, and Lo Ruhamah appears, saying that The Apothecary is still used by the Machines, and that getting them from the Machine mainframes to the Matrix will require the Trainman, who "has retreated deeper into seclusion."

3/29-4/4

Required Events:

Zion: Morpheus appears in Richland and delivers a cryptic message to whoever is around to hear it--something about Neo being alive and held captive by the Machines; he does not move, or otherwise interact with anyone, and quickly jacks out after delivering the message.

Mach: The Machines attack commandos, but the attack is disrupted by Merovingians.

Merv: The Trainman, who does not actually appear in this event, is traced to the Abandoned Subway in Rogers Way, where he evidently has an interface with his private subway construct. Notice is left that the Merovingian requires his immediate presence. Tracing the Trainman should involve some sort of puzzle, ideally utilizing the subway system somehow.

4/5

### Crit 7.1.5:

Zion: Seraph is found fighting Elite Commandos, and says that his odd new (temporary) vision allows him to sense the stealthed soldiers, and that the Oracle has told him he must pursue them, to rescue Sati. The operator gets a mysterious golden code beacon directing the player to more commandos--this is from Seraph, although that isn't stated conclusively in the mission. The beacon fades after the commandos are defeated, and the player goes to a scheduled meeting with Agent Pace. In a pre-meeting briefing, Ghost says that scans of the "Morpheus" RSI have been inconclusive--they can't tell where it's coming from, but it certainly isn't a regular redpill signal; there is a lot of corrupt data. Pace very briefly dismisses the idea that either Morpheus or Neo are alive and being held by the Machines, and says that the overwriting of humans was done to ensure the stability and safety of the System, and was not prohibited by the Truce. Tyndall worries that this explanation isn't going to sit well with many in Zion.

Mach: The Machines realize that they now have to move against the Merovingian. Data captured from a combined Merv/Commando force indicates activity at the Abandoned Subway in Rogers Way. In Barrens, the player finds Mervs, Elite Commandos, and Beirn, who snidely remarks that "he" has already reached the Lucero subway. Gray orders the player to retreat, saying Agents are being called in to deal with the ex-Unlimit officer. At a debrief, the player is told that: 1) the General is the main target, not the Merv, 2) Beirn was preserved by and now works for the Merovingian, and 3) although rumors of the Trainman have persisted, he has not been sighted since the beginning of the Truce; if he is returning to active duty, the Merv may be planning a critical program transfer. A Machine computer shows that their Sentinel force is closing in on Stalingrad. Also, a spy report from Zion says that the security review ordered by Zion's commanders prevents further investigation for the time being.

Merv: Malphas discloses that the Trainman, always paranoid and egomaniacal, retreated to his private subway construct when the Truce was made. The Merv got "his assistance in the Assassin affair," but after that, the Trainman vanished altogether. Malphas theorizes that the Trainman resents having been forced to release Neo when he had him captive in his subway station, and that the Trainman sees the Truce as evil, because he has a deep-seated fear that humans will one day destroy the Matrix. The Trainman emerges from the Abandoned

Subway, but his signal is immediately lost as a result of heavy Machine scan activity. Flood mentions that the Machines can now scan for Elite Commandos, and packs the player off to south Barrens, where they find a wounded but still sassy Beirn in a room with a couple dead Agents; this scene takes place just after the Beirn encounter in the Machine crit. Beirn says the Trainman made it out through the Lucero subway, and the operator has Flood scan the rest of the city for him. He's found hiding among dead Crossbones in Moriah, and angrily demands to see the Merovingian immediately. You catch up to Malphas, the Merv, and Ookami, with the Trainman in a secure room next door. Malphas says that the Trainman is more unstable than ever, and will have to be watched carefully. Malphas also describes Seraph's encounter with Cryptos. The Merv congratulates the operative, then rants about the persistence of Morpheus rumors. Ookami says that the Trainman is afraid, and can't be trusted. The Trainman is annoyed at the player nosing after him, says he knows what he's



needed for, shows paranoia about the possibility of capture by the Machines, and curses the Merovingian for breaking their "deal" in which "the fly man was supposed to be the last."  
4/19

7.2 Cinematic: Heavy firepower destroys the initial wave of Machine Sentinels reaching the General's "Stalingrad" base.

World: The sky goes from a yellow/orange to more of a red.

Crit 7.2.1:

Zion: Ghost tells the player to give Seraph whatever assistance they can in order to locate Sati. Meet Seraph and the Oracle, then go commando hunting with Seraph. However, he finds that the "impression" of Sati he can read from them indicates that they have not been near her recently. A Zion guard hints at "big stuff going on back home."

Mach: The player fights off commandos, runs a search on one of their terminals, gets reinforcements from Pace, then whups commandos defending a command terminal and runs an "override script" giving the Machines control over the General's helicopter fleet. Gray says that for the time being it will be more efficient to leave them following their regular movement patterns, but no longer transporting things for the General. He invites the player to back him up at a meeting with Veil, where he wants to direct her to follow System requirements, but she stalls, saying she'll need time to get the other Cypherites to cooperate. Afterwards, Gray says that although the Cyphs have some conveniently placed spies, the security alert in Zion, and Veil's reluctance to share information, have reduced the info the Machines are getting from them to a mere trickle, and that they may have to consider "liquidating our investment in the group" if the situation can't be improved.

Merv: Malphas says that although difficulties arose between them, the Apothecary still owes Persephone a favor. The player gets a letter calling in said favor from Persephone, who while handing it over makes it clear that the favor is now owed her by her husband. The player delivers the letter to a dismissive Trainman, then confirms delivery with the Merv, who chuckles about Persephone's manipulations, and about the Apothecary's lack of a sense of humor.

4/19-4/25

Required Events:

Zion: Morpheus encountered; speaks somewhat more at length and excitedly about recovering Neo, etc

Mach: recuperating Cryptos encountered: can see only code, bitter against the Machines

Merv: Trainman brings the Apothecary into the Matrix, probably with Machines in hot pursuit

4/26

Crit 7.2.2:

Zion: Seraph wants to try commando hunting again. After thrashing a batch of them, he senses something nearby. Tyndall confirms Nabonidus beacon signal activity in the area. The player follows Seraph's gold code signal and finds a static-covered "Morpheus Signal" that looks like Morpheus, and says a couple things about returning Neo to Zion. Tyndall says that they've finally been able to get a clear reading, and should be able to pinpoint the signal quickly whenever it reappears.

Mach: Again beating up commandos and exploiting their network, this time with the aim of hacking the closed radio channels the Elite Commandos rely upon for communication (via muffled speakers in their masks). A perky backup-supplying Pace mentions that although the Cypherite situation hasn't improved, it hasn't gotten worse, either, and that she thinks they'll work things out. The Machines execute their Elite Commando communication disruption routine, and the player finds a bunch of them who don't support each other effectively, and are easily stomped. Gray disses the General's network security.

Merv: A fascinated Flood introduces the player to the Apothecary, who bluntly demands a sample of the target's code. The operator suspects that the Apothecary will kill them all. Malphas says that fortunately the General has Sati, who the Oracle has spent years stuffing with handcrafted code in the form of cookies, for reasons unknown. and that they can get a code sample from her. The General says this has to be done quickly, and that his own men will handle the code extraction. They bar the player from seeing Sati, although it's possible that some may catch a glimpse of her two rooms away, depending on mission area configuration. A blood-drinker says that they won't tolerate the "Ward" remaining in the General's grip much longer. The player delivers the extracted code to the Apothecary. Malphas, supervising, admires the Apothecary's expertise and artistry, suggesting that the player make a study of the "Ars Moriendi." Flood comes close to waxing poetic over her.

4/26-5/2

Required Events:

Zion: Discussion with the Oracle and Seraph about life, the Matrix, and Sati

Mach: hacking the General's hologram

Merv: Merv wants to test preliminary Oracle kill-code concoction; General (hologram) suggests Agent Pace as target; player hits Pace with Oracle kill-code derivative; Pace collapses, is removed by Gray

5/3

### Crit 7.2.3:

Zion: Seraph has sensed Sati's recent appearance in the city. He and the player follow his perception of her signal through a bunch of Elite Commandos to a Merovingian hideout, but the path ends there. The operator is shocked at one of the Mervs mentioning a kill-code hit on Pace, looks into it, and says that it didn't kill her, but put her "out of commission." Tyndall explains that since Seraph has come back, the Oracle has allowed Zion to keep her under guard at locations outside of Mara, since the Debir apartment had become too hot a target. Consulted, the Oracle says that they'll need Sati back in the Matrix in order to rescue her, and that the Machines will have a hand in forcing the General back into the simulation.

Mach: Gray says that an analysis of the code used in the attack on Pace corresponds to code found in the cookies she sometimes gives to redpills, and sends the player to gank a Merv and steal their cookie. Lab techs babble about the sophistication of the code in the cookies. One mentions that Pace is an experimental program, and that the source of some of her core routines is highly classified. Gray says the code also bears the hallmarks of the Apothecary, a kill-code manufacturer recently stolen by the Merv. He sends you to question Dame White, known to have some past history with Persephone and the Apothecary; the Apothecary was exiled once too, but the Machines took her back. The Dame (hm I forgot to include her usual two weird bodyguards, oh well, maybe they're off playing chess) drops a very dense bit of dialogue, including: 1) Persephone was her apprentice, 2) emotions were involved in their job at the pods, 3) contrary to regulations, outsiders sometimes got involved with the humans she worked with, leading to illicit affairs, love triangles, revenge, and this led to her and Persephone "hooking up" with the Apothecary. Gray says this suggests that the Apothecary owes Persephone a business favor. Lab completes analysis, and finds that the code used in the Pace attack was an Oracle kill-code made by the Apothecary. The convalescent Pace insists on seeing the player, saying she just wanted to see their face... And that she is recovering speedily, that they'll soon "have to" let her resume "field duties," that it will be good to get back to work, and that she'll be fine--"better than ever." Gray says that they must consider shifting their offensive focus toward the Merovingian.

Merv: The Apothecary complains that the cheat code is old, and that she needs an injection of "fresh" code to bring it up to par. The operator thinks she's definitely going to kill them all. The player has to beat off some Machines who are getting too close to her. Flood sends them to check on Beirn, who's supposed to be giving the Apothecary a transfusion of his cheat-codelaced blood. The player arrives in the middle of a bitter spat between the Apothecary and Persephone, who claims the Apothecary is delaying. Beirn says he thinks he could take her if he had to, but just then Machines burst in; Beirn and the Apothecary "kill" the nearest ones, the player takes out the rest, and comes back to find the Apothecary agreeing to fulfill her obligation "and nothing more," and Persephone vowing to talk to her husband about this. The Merovingian finds the spat regrettable, but says he thinks the situation can still be resolved to his satisfaction, so long as the Apothecary completes her work. "And then..."

5/3-5/9

Required Events:

Zion: Morpheus appearance, makes syntax error (repeats same line four times in a row)

Mach: Gray, leading operatives against commandos, encounters Seraph; slightly frosty convo between the two as Sati's safety discussed

Merv: Spying on Agent Pace; behavioral changes observed and reported: empathic in a manipulative, aggressive way

5/10

Crit 7.2.4:

Zion: It's commando hunting with Seraph, who has again detected Sati's presence in the Matrix. He and the player come across a non-hostile commando. He passes you a thank-you letter (to him) from Sati. Seraph leads to the letter's origin point, filled with commandos, but Sati's signal has again disappeared (there is a "ERROR/TRM" computer in the area, which is what the General's deactivated access points say). Just then, Pace arrives, saying she was investigating a report of commandos in the area, congratulates the operative on their "efficiency," and cozily remarks that it is "much safer when we cooperate." Ghost theorizes that the General's ranks may not be as united in his support as had been assumed. The operator uploads a copy of Sati's "Thank you" letter to the player at the end of the mission (can be traded).

Mach: Gray sends the player to terminate the Apothecary, who proves elusive, leaving a trail of Machine bodies and deactivated commando access points in her wake. Gray explains that she can terminate a "lower-level RSI" with a movement of her hand, although this doesn't usually result in permanent deletion. Pace shows some impatience in her usual backupproviding role, saying she wishes she could go eliminate the Merv forces with the player. An Agent reminds the player that Morpheus was confirmed terminated long ago. Although the Apothecary gets away through the General's network, the player confiscates the remains of the cheat code vial she'd been using to make the kill-code. Gray says that they need to shut down the General's network for good. He also says that Seraph's insistence on rescuing Sati before the General is dealt with shows that his logic routines may still be impaired by his dunking. Pace says that if she'd been there, the "traitor" (Apothecary) wouldn't have got away.

Merv: The Apothecary, found hip-deep in dead Mervs and Machines, insists on adequate security before she can finish her work. The General delivers a unit of commandos for the purpose, saying he can only spare them for a brief while. Flood decides to throw the commandos into the face of the growing Machine offensive to buy some time; the player wades through dead and dying Machines and commandos, searching for the misplaced cheat code vial, but has to give up the search when the Apothecary is again attacked. Again found in the midst of dead Mervs and Machs, the Apothecary says she's finished her part of the killcode, that the Merovingian clearly can't protect her, and that she wants to be transported out of the simulation immediately, as is her right based on the contract she signed with the

Merovingian. Flood regrets the loss of "the only professional I've had the pleasure of working with recently."

5/10-5/16

Required Events:

Zion: Morpheus RSI/beacon signal has become highly erratic; traced to relay point in Real in need of maintenance; traced from relay point back to origin point in Matrix--ie simulated

Mach: Machines use data captured from progress in Stalingrad to track down General's primary Matrix command center; big battle; more data captured; General hologram orders commando retreat

Merv: Merv sends Apothecary off under commando escort "to Trainman," tips off Machines; Apothecary deleted in battle by either Machines or Mervs

5/17

Crit 7.2.5:

Zion: The player joins Seraph as he has located "Sati." She stands very stiffly, then deforms into a bizarre noodle-limbed creature: Sati's child body stretched to the size of an adult skeleton. Seraph says it's a trick by the General, but that the vision granted by the codes the General stole from the Machines will be the General's own undoing. The General's hologram appears and taunts the player. The player follows Seraph to a building filled with the bizarre Sati clones, where, while the player puts the others out of their misery, Seraph manages to befriend one. This one leads the player to a computer with data on it. Commandos try to interfere, but the player gets the data, which turns out to be Sati herself, and hands the disc to Seraph, who takes it/her back to the Oracle. The Oracle says that Sati will be just fine, and will have the weather back to normal in a jiff. Niobe, also there, says that it's time to find out who's behind the simulated Morpheus.

Mach: The player plops a virus into a commando mainframe, destroying the General's network and shutting up a pesky static-ridden holographic broadcast from him that popped up at the last second. A computer in the area shows Stalingrad's defenses at very low capacity. After this success, Gray sends the player after Pace, who undertook a meeting with Veil on her own initiative. The player arrives just as the two women are putting the final touches on an agreement whereby the Cypherites will resume surveillance in Zion for the Machines, in return for payment. Machine/Cyph bystanders explain that a dead Cypherite there had got a little too fresh with Pace. Gray is pleased that Pace's "specialized liaison programming" has helped her find a solution to the Cypherite issue. He also warns that Zion is on edge and must be handled carefully, that the General is on the verge of absolute defeat, and that further action against the Merv will be necessary. Pace preens herself on her coup, saying she thinks the Cypherites can be very useful as long as the right approach is taken. A Machine computer

has a message from the Sentinel force, saying they're about to undertake a strategy designed to exhaust the enemy's resources; another Machine computer has a brief spy report from Zion, saying that it's still tough to get intel due to the security revamp, but that movement of men and material out of Zion may be accelerating.

Merv: The General requests several "time-sensitive" troop transfers from the Merovingian. The operator theorizes that Flood had a crush on the Apothecary. The player checks over the troops in the city, helping them beat off a Machine attack so that they'll be set for transport. Flood then sends the player to hurry the Trainman and the Effectuator along; the operator is puzzled about the Trainman's involvement, since he handles transport between the Matrix and the Machine mainframes. The Trainman says he knows places in the Machine mainframes the Machines themselves don't know about. The Effectuator thinks the Trainman's a little weird, but that they'll have the commandos "safely stowed" where the Machines can't get them, while telling the General that the Machines deleted them. The Twins argue about who's behind "Morpheus": the Machines, or EPN. The Merv complains about his wife not being satisfied even after he arranged for the Apothecary's disposal, and says that the General will learn an important lesson about war, but not just yet, as his ignorance will still be useful for a little while. Flood confirms that the kill-code has been completed by the Merovingian's technicians.

5/31

7.3 Cinematic: Overwhelming waves of Machine Sentinels destroy the General's squiddies and rip apart his Stalingrad base. The camera pulls back to show the scene displayed on a video screen, and the back of a man's head in silhouette watching it, as a tiny bug-like robot zips past. The General and his remaining commandos flee through the sewers of the Matrix with Agents in pursuit.

World: The weather returns to normal. The General's helicopters are replaced by news choppers, and his commandos no longer appear as enemies in standard Zion and Machine missions.

Crit 7.3.1:

Zion: Zion tracks the "Morpheus Signal" RSI broadcast of Morpheus again, and runs a trace through it to try to find its source. The trace leads through a bluepill office to a mysterious computer room where the player finds a blank disk, a computer with Morpheus quotes from some of his old speeches (that were chopped up into the speeches the broadcast RSI has given), and a recently used computer. Cell samples are scanned from dead skin cells in the keyboard, in the hopes that this will help track his RSI.

Mach: The player is sent to delete one of the few remaining commando units. A computer in the area has a message to the General, giving orders to the commandos to hold their ground as part of a delaying action. Scans detect Merovingian programs along the General's projected escape path through the city. The player is ordered to eliminate all but one. The player hauls him off to Agent Pace, who "will handle data extraction." Pace says it "should not be overly...difficult," and send the player to pick up some reinforcements while she gets down

to business. A computer in the area has a report from the Sentinel strike force confirming destruction of Stalingrad, saying that losses were 36.03% higher than projected, and "Pending Task: Elimination of terrorist hovercraft." Pace comes through with the General's coordinates, the player gets there, and fights through some Mervs to a computer-secured door with unusual code. They get an access code from the guards and use it, but the operator reports "the whole area just blinked," and the computer readout resets, although the door is now unlocked. The player enters and finds a confused bluepill thanking them for fixing the jammed bolt, and then getting confused and demanding to know where their secretary is. The operator says that the Mervs "changed something" and that the door is now just a normal door, and wherever it used to go, it isn't going now. Gray says that it seems the General has gained access to the Merovingian's "back door" system, to which they will have to gain access.

Merv: The player meets up with the General, who asks them to take some commandos and meet him at a rendezvous. Flood has you get the commandos deleted as an "accident," because they're too hot to try hiding from the Machines just now. Then you catch back up to the General, being attacked by Machines, and tell him the Merv wants to talk. The Merv tells the General that the only way he can ensure his safety is to get him out of the Matrix, and to a hiding spot near the surface in the Real. The General agrees to go along with it, saying that although it's risky, the Machines probably won't expect it.

5/31-6/6

Required Events:

Zion: the actual "Morpheus" simulacrum--not a broadcast--is found and escapes, but not before Zion obtains a full scan of the RSI

Mach: working on hacking "chateau" door when general reappears, pursued to train

Merv: general may take some convincing, but has to agree to give Merv the program for converting sentinels between Matrix and the Real; program is retrieved from one of his few remaining data repositories just before it is destroyed by Machines

6/7

Crit 7.3.2:

Zion: Recent readings of the RSI signature are pursued. The player finds an odd chunk of corrupt binary code, and a large amount of data from a database. The corrupt bytes are backtraced to a deactivated and abandoned commando access point. The operator wonders why the Machines didn't remove that one. Niobe is very suspicious of a connection between the Morpheus RSI and the General, and says that if the General is behind it, it should be found and disabled. Initial analysis of the database information indicates it is an insurance claims database (ie red herring). It isn't mentioned in the mission, but the corrupt chunk of

binary code contains the bits seen in the early Morpheus broadcasts' character details. The binary itself is garbage, and I don't think decodes into anything (though I could be in trouble if it does :p).

Mach: Armed with three viruses from Pace, the player sets off to stick them in the "hacked switch hubs" near train stations through which the Trainman controls his network. At the Tabor hub, the player finds some annoying Demon Army members, one of whom initially sounds like he knows something, but goes hostile once taken outside, claiming he's lured the player into an attack by his "brethren." Elite Commandos guard the Camon hub. 5 Points partiers cavort around the Apollyon hub, saying the Trainman lets them chill there. The implanted viral routines begin returning data mapping the Trainman's network. Gray says that with this information, they should be able to intercept the General if he tries to make a break for it.

Merv: Flood doesn't like the name "The Real," and says "The Sludge-Pit" would be more accurate, for instance. He sends the player to collect some commandos and take them to the Trainman. They're dropped off with the cranky Trainman, and the player is sent off to bring the General himself in. The General says he'll go, since he needs to make sure the Trainman has the transfer program configured correctly anyway, but that they'd better take separate routes. He gives the player a commando, saying "maybe you can draw some of them off." Flood doesn't care what you do with the commando, and tells you just to get over to the Trainman. At the Trainman's pad, attacking Machines have to be beaten off, and then the General refuses to leave the Matrix, saying that he has some "unfinished business" that "won't take long." The Trainman says the General is endangering them all. Machines ambush the player outdoors throughout this mission.

6/7-6/13

Required Events:

Zion: (before Mach event) morph sim--talks on its own in semi-broken Morpheus-like speech patterns; gen appears and yells at it, leaves in a huff; sim disappears

Mach: general drags feet at station with trainman, caught in Machine attack, shoved into train by trainman, trainman flees machines on foot, horribly wounded, stumbles through door into white room (or other train station that might sort of look like his construct? hm) where he collapses, apparently lifeless

Merv: merv transfers oracle kill-code through a zion network

6/14

Crit 7.3.3:

Zion: The routing information of the kill-code shuttled through Zion's network was deleted (inside sabotage), but their recent security revamp keeps high level backups of admin access



logs, which preserved the network address of the saboteur's system. The location is populated by Zion operatives, who seem friendly and cooperative. One happens to mention that they haven't seen {random name x} around lately. Tyndall checks on {x} and finds he's using an outside communication relay, which is against regulations. The player finds {x} and works their way to the terminal {x} is using to host the comm relay, finding a log on it of the "friendly" Zionites at the previous location reporting to {x} that the player is on his case. The Zionites in the area go hostile. The player defeats them, and they're arrested on their ships. Their full chat log is analyzed and shows that they didn't know who was on the receiving end of the kill-code, except that it was supposed to be an undercover Merv op on the Oracle's Zion security detail. The player checks on the Oracle and scans her current guards, who check out okay. The Oracle says she hasn't noticed anything amiss. Her second message talks about the Morpheus broadcasts using cut-up lines from old Morpheus speeches. Seraph promises to check each guard until the kill-code is found. One of the guards has a crazy theory about the Merv using the Morpheus RSI to assassinate the Oracle. Tyndall says they'll be code-screening all Oracle guards until the kill-code is found, and that they'll do more checking on the captured crew to see if they can find out more about where the kill-code went.

Mach: With the General gone, the Machines want to make sure his Morpheus sim isn't a threat. Increased activity has been detected at areas Morpheus frequented before his assassination. The player is sent to a warehouse, where a helpful security guard captain gives them the name of the person who deposited a suspicious box of tools recently: "Joshua Maston." One guard jokes about "glue terrorists" that were supposedly using the warehouse a couple years ago. Machine records show Maston is a Zion operative. The player pays him a visit, finding him and a "Flyer," along with some pals. The Zionites flip out when the Flyer is picked up, and a fight follows. ("Flyer" was used in the old "hunt for morpheus" crits in chapter 1.) The player finds that Maston carried papers with an address; they go there and find one of the posters Morpheus used to go around posting. Gray runs a code trace that takes the player to another warehouse, where they find the Morpheus sim. It utters a few hacked-up Morpheus lines, then keels over. The operator says it shut itself off. Gray says it may have the capability to simulate jack-out and reconstruction, but that anyway they now have a complete scan of its RSI.

Merv: Flood sends the player to collect some data sent back by the undercover Merv assassin in Zion. The player finds the Zion facility on alert, which makes getting the data a little tougher than expected. Flood says Zion must have found out about the kill-code being sent into their network. The data the player retrieves contains the address of the place where Zion is currently holding the Oracle, and Flood sends the player in to identify the Zion guard captain on duty. With that accomplished, the player breaks into another Zion facility to swipe the captain's files; he should have a roster of the guard detail. Flood says it should be easy, since "our inside team" who got the kill-code in has already cracked the necessary terminal for you. Hostile Zionites appear once the player gets their hands on the data. Flood says the insider network sabotage team has been caught, and makes hasty arrangements to deposit the roster with the assassin's backup contact. The player finds them by whispering a password around at an Exile party; the contact is a succubus (see Zion 7.3.4), concerned that

this is blowing their cover. If you check carefully, you'll notice a nearby party guest acting suspiciously after you talk to the contact.

6/14-6/20

Required Events:

Zion: merv spy somehow found and taken out, kill-code not found

Mach: active morph sim tracked down and interviewed/interrogated; somewhat anti-machine but Gray determines its merely rudimentary capacity for free thought prevents it from posing a significant threat, while it is useful for pacifying/distracting Zionites

Merv: (after Zion event) key found at Mahath Tower construction site (Lamar neighborhood, east edge of Downtown) must be recovered (possibly involving the Landlord?--either comes to the Merv to tell him he heard Merv was gunning for the Oracle, and might be interested in this key, or someone else comes and tells him that, and it's the Landlord who has the key)

6/21

Crit 7.3.4:

Zion: The player follows up on a contact used by the spy, hoping to find the kill-code, but finds them (a succubus--see Merv 7.3.3) dead, and the General's hologram shows up and gloats. Seraph (whose RSI is back to normal in this subchapter) asks for a meeting, and says that even though his ability to detect commandos is fading, he felt them just now, after an absence of weeks, and he's sure they're somewhere in the city. Shimada asks for a meeting, requesting that Zion allow EPN to help guard the Oracle. Zion Command is reluctant to do so, but the Oracle insists. There's a big pow-wow with the Oracle, Seraph, Niobe, the Kid, and the player. Niobe tries dissuading the Oracle, but she stays firm. The Kid says they're just there to help, and that nobody wants to see any harm come to the Oracle. EPN guards are already in place.

Mach: Gray says that the fact that Zion had data on the Morph sim weeks before they did, and that they know more about the assassination plot against the Oracle, illustrates the problems inherent in the Machines' appalling lack of data from Zion. He sends the player to meet with a Zionite who claims to have information to sell. The informant says to check out a certain EPN operative who's managed to dig up dirt on what the Machines are looking for in Zion, and gives them the address of the EPN's cover business. The player gets backup from Pace, who says she was monitoring the conversation, and she's certain the informant is trying to look like she knows more than she does; Pace's second message says that she's checked the records, and 82% of the double agents they've used have at some point offered false information. The player and followers beat up a bunch of EPN and get to the target, who says that yeah, the Cypherites are in Zion looking for missing supplies and workers. An annoyed Gray says that this is just going in circles, and evidently neither the would-be informant nor

the EPN had actual useful information. He says that even after Pace's agreement with Veil, intelligence reports on Zion from the Cypherites have not been up to par with what they were under Cryptos, and that since reports are coming in that Cryptos has at least in part recovered from Seraph's attack, it's time to encourage his resumption of Cypherite leadership. Gray meets with Veil and Cryptos, where Veil assures him that they'll give the Zion affair top priority, and that she's sure they can find something useful for Cryptos to do now that he's feeling better. Cryptos' own replies are roaming and ambivalent, although he says that he is "not predisposed to be uncooperative." Gray isn't entirely pleased, but says that this was the most he could do without risking a backlash from the Cyphs against Machine control.

Merv: Malphas informs the player that Mahath was the site of the Architect's building destroyed in Reloaded, where the Keymaker died; this key he had just finished ended up not being needed to kill her old shell (between Reloaded and Revolutions). The key will be given to the assassin. The Merv contacts the General, who appears holographically, and asks for a squad of his best men. The General agrees reluctantly, as long as they're used to kill the Oracle, and returned intact. He says that since the Trainman is gone, someone will have to configure the transfer program on alternate hardware. The player goes to the Trainman's workshop, and eventually digs up the transfer program from some uncooperative Hel Club NPCs; one of the computers in the area shows that some numbered things (possibly locations on the Trainman's network, hm?) are offline or in need of maintenance. The transfer program is handed off to the Effectuator, who promptly uses it to summon two dead Elite Commandos. Effy blames it on an unintuitive program interface, and says he needs to go check on something, but not to worry, he'll have it all sorted out. The player has to go configure a computer to initiate the proper transfer. Machines attack right before this can be done, but after they're beaten, four commandos are brought in successfully, with another wounded, and one dead. Flood is annoyed with the Effectuator's bungling, but says there are more commandos where those came from (I wanted to leave the number of commandos brought in somewhat open, because later missions/events may need more than five).

6/21-6/27

Required Events:

Zion: the key teleports the user to the door nearest the Oracle's location---key and kill-code given to elite commando sniper who warps into her epn-guarded location; oracle detects him; kid reacts and jumps in front of her, taking the bullet (reconstructs, seems like no permanent damage)

Mach: Cryptos/Veil--Cryptos feels sufficiently recovered to take Cypherite command, Veil may resist a little; in the end, Cryptos re-establishes his leadership (Veil still 2nd in command)

Merv: (day before Zion event) commando squad in the city, hunted by seraph; mervs have to slow seraph down so that at least one commando gets away for a while, to keep seraph busy  
6/28

### Crit 7.3.5:

Zion: Seraph has tracked down the last of the Elite Commandos, just as his ability to see them finally fades completely. Ghost arrives wanting to deliver an important message, but Pace shows up at the same time, saying the Machines were also tracking the commandos. She slyly refers to having an intimate catch-up conversation with Ghost. Ghost says Pace is there as a distraction, and the player should get in touch with Tyndall immediately. Tyndall says that contact with the (randomly named) captain of the hovercraft Pelageus has been lost, except for his emergency beacon. The player finds the captain and his crew alone, but just as the captain warns that a Cypherite traitor was in his crew, and that "they think I know something about the--," he and his crew all drop dead. The phone rings--it's Veil, teasing. Tyndall says that they happened to have another ship near the Pelageus; they get a reading on the pirates' hovercraft signal, and the player tracks down the Cypherite crew in the city, forcing them to reconstruct as the Zion ship moves in the Real. The Cypherite craft gets off with the Zionite ship in pursuit. Seraph had mentioned earlier that the Oracle wanted to talk. She says that she isn't sure what to say to make the player feel better; "they won't get to you like they got to those poor people on that ship"; she also says that she could say it's all for the best, but people tend to take that the wrong way. Zionite and EPN guards in the area are arguing: Zion says the Cypherites don't really care about EPN, and have always been after Zion, while EPN points out that they've taken the hits all this time while Zion's been hiding behind the Truce. Tyndall reports that the Cypherite hovercraft was damaged, but hasn't been captured yet, although they caught one female Cypherite on foot near the Pelageus. (I don't have any particular plans for these Cyphs.)

Mach: Gray sends the player after the commandos that have re-entered the Matrix. After defeating some easily, thanks to their anti-commando routines, the player comes across dead commandos, then Seraph, Ghost, and Pace, who got there \*real\* fast. Seraph says that fortunately, the commando assassination attempt on the Oracle was prevented. Ghost curtly thanks the player for their interest. Pace says she'll handle Ghost, and dismisses the player, telling them to report to Gray. Gray informs the player of the Cypherite hijacking of the Pelageus, and sends them to Veil to ask for an explanation of the operation. Veil angrily replies that she nearly lost a ship and crew trying to get data for the Machines, and that they have no right to question her methods: "Tell me we're endangering the Truce? Don't make me laugh." She excuses herself, saying she has some phone calls to make. One of the Cyphs with her says "Your war never ended, pal. They just told you it did, and you bought their story." Gray says that he's informed that Cryptos is back in command of the Cypherites, although Veil controls many of their day-to-day operations. Gray is concerned that the Machines will be blamed for these extreme Cypherite actions. The player responds to Seraph's invitation to see the Oracle, who says that most everyone wants to save lives, but they disagree on how to go about it--that they see the differences rather than the similarities between humans and Machines. She adds that if there's one thing she's learned from all this, it's that you can't save someone who doesn't want to be saved; it's all well and good to give someone a choice, but then you have to live with the consequences, and if you don't like their choices, you've got to work on changing their mind, which is about the toughest thing there is. Merv: A frustrated Merovingian sends the player off to set up a relay with the General. Flood explains that they had a relay in place, but it stopped working--the Machines probably found

it--and that although they're working on a permanent relay that the Machines won't be able to get at, for this they'll just have to rig up a temporary one that will probably be detected and shut down shortly afterwards. He sends the player to a small data center, where they send an encoded message to the General on a low-bandwidth channel that's supposed to be "below the radar." Nevertheless, Machines attack the center just after the message gets out. Next, the player has to set up a receiver, and because this is a rush job, Flood sends you to a bluepill company, to put a script in place that will hijack their receiver/transmitter. It's a TV station, and the bluepills inside have conversations and data on their computers, including news of another Pendhurst-Amaranth stock split, an intrepid reporter trying to turn the coincidence of both Anome and his mother falling from buildings into a theory on jumping being hereditary, and one who wants to cover gun control, saying that firearm-related deaths are up 89% in the last two years. Once the right computer is found and the script put in place, the player returns to the Merv as the meeting starts. The Merv berates the General for the commando's failure to kill the Oracle, and says that he's assuming direct command of the General's Sentinels. He orders Malphas to "initiate the override program." The General begins to retort but is cut off mid-word. Malphas explains that they inserted "override routines" when they transferred the General and his commando programs out of the Matrix, and that they are now "programmatically compelled" to obey instructions from the Merovingian. The Merv says that although the General has been disappointing in the past, as the head of an obedient squadron outside the Matrix, he may have his uses.

7/12

## 8.1 Cinematic

An undercover Cypherite hovercraft winds through a new tunnels system, following directions from a Zion traffic controller. They enter a large chamber coated with EMP devices and are directed to cut engines to go through the shaft below. The crew panics and guns the engines, fleeing. Their path is blocked by a heavily loaded hoverbarge. They send a report to Cryptos that they've found "it" just before an EMP goes off, sending both craft plunging into the bottom of the tunnel.

Cut to the Architect in his control room. He informs Agent Gray, on a monitor, that Zion has broken the Truce. No more awakenings are to be allowed.

[What this means is that Zion and the Machines are again at war.

What the Cypherites found, as will be explained in the initial crits, is "New Zion," Zion's answer to the continual threat of extermination by the fleet of Sentinels watching "old" Zion. This is where all those shipments of men and materials have been going. "New Zion" is a new city/base in a mixture of natural and artificial caverns farther from the Machine City in terms of longitude and latitude, and much farther below the surface than the old city. The location is shielded from scans and drilling by natural formations of solid bedrock, ore-heavy layers of earth and minerals, lava and ducts of superheated air, and, most importantly, arrays of EMP

clusters drilled into the long winding tunnel walls of the few available access points, and finally a vertical tunnel section completely covered by live EMP fields; entering craft must kill all systems, drop through the fields, then restart systems in free-fall in the large subterranean chasm below. Outgoing craft are lifted through on massive mechanical winch systems. Abundant geothermic power sustains the base.]

## World

- Went through all the neighborhood and intro missions, Lock's initial voiceover, signpost ("i") NPCs and so forth to take out references to being in a state of Truce. (There's still the Oracle's lines in the introductory movie, but ah well.)
- Chance of Agent attack in a restricted area now goes up rather than down with character level.
- Always a chance of a level 100 Agent attack against Zion operatives outdoors in Westview, INT, and DT.
- RSI updates for the two primary story characters for each org.
- There's a new, decidedly Machine-oriented collector, Codebase, behind the Uriah SW hardline, who slips in a few suggestions about working for the Machines. - Machines and Zion are now opponents for each other in standard missions.

## Crit 8.1.1

Zion: Ghost explains about New Zion, and the Machines declaring that Zion has broken the truce. The player is sent to check Zion network facilities that have reported trouble: the first is dead, the second has a battle going on between Zionites and Machines (well, dead NPCs, some live Zionites who will follow the player and fight, and hostile Machines). The player is then packed off to see Niobe, who says it looks like the Machines are going after Zion's network interfaces; they thought they were secure after the recent security overhaul, but the Machines are going after them in a way that suggests they've found a security hole. Ghost says that a berth has been secured for the player's hovercraft in New Zion, and that a Machine attack on Zion now would make supplies tight, but would cost the Machines a lot of Sentinels with all the EMP-equipped hovercraft Zion has.

Mach: Pace explains a bit about New Zion, and says Zion is mistaken if they think it will let them attack the System with impunity. She says the Machines know more about Zion's network interfaces than Zion suspects. Gray sends the player after a network hub, that leads to another activity center. A hackable computer at the hub has a message intercept of a directive from Lock, saying that hovercraft reassignments to New Zion are being given in order of captain seniority. Zionites killed, etc. Gray has the player over for a head-to-head, where he explains that they have to defend the System against Zion for the good of humanity.

Merv: Flood explains a bit about New Zion and the renewed war, and Malphas says that the Zion/Machine hostilities will give the Mervs opportunities. For instance, he sends the player to

retrieve the chunk of "corrupt" code that Zion captured from the General--it's easy, because the Machines had just attacked and wiped out the place where it was being held. The Twins aren't pleased that they didn't get to kill anyone. Flood then sends the player to see what Exile business leaders Dame White and Mr. Black make of the new situation, to see "which way the wind is blowing." The Dame thinks she'll manage just fine; Mr. Black thinks all the chaos is bad for business. The Merovingian says that he on the other hand thinks this is the perfect time to look for unexpected opportunities. Persephone suspects that he's already up to something, and laments that he will risk everything on a roll of the dice.

7/12-7/18

Required Events:

Zion: emergency briefing, Q&A session w/ Niobe and Ghost

Mach: emergency briefing, Q&A session w/ Pace and Gray

Merv: emergency party with Merv and Persephone

7/19

Crit 8.1.2

Zion: Lab working on configuring an emergency firewall program has been sacked by the Machines. Player has to pick up a copy from Ghost and take it over to a new, hopefully secret lab. A hackable computer at this lab has a note about, well, basically no firm news on what the possible hole in Zion's defenses might be, what the Merv could be doing, etc. A tech is skeptical that there's a hole, and thinks the whole system is just too old and well known to the Machines. The transfer to the new lab seems to go okay, but Machines are detected later a little ways away; the player goes to head them off, and does so, until level 100 Agents show up just as the operator gives word that the new firewall has already been bypassed by the Machines.

Mach: Pace is standing on a mound of Zionite bodies and gives the player some viruses to go insert into the Zion network. Gray says that they already knew a lot of Zion's network structure, and they can now exploit this relatively easily. But the first location has only a wiped, useless computer, and some Zionites who plead with the player to think about what he's doing. Gray says such tactics are futile, and it will only facilitate Machine progress if Zion chooses to cripple their own systems. The computer at the second location is a better target, but the third is completely dead. Gray says that apparently Zion has begun to realize the vulnerability of their situation, but it won't matter, and peace will soon be restored.

Merv: The General's Sentinels are in danger of being found by increased Machine Sentinel patrols. The Effectuator remembers coming across some Zion tunnel map info when he was helping them with their networks and so forth back when Niobe was ganked by Anome. He

points the player to a bluepill business, whose computer turns out to have what looks like a Zion network connection--the business itself being some kind of front. Flood can't tolerate the Effectuator running the show, and sort of mentally disconnects. The network connection leads to a Zionite installation, where the player downloads the tunnel mapping data they were after. The Twins are placing bets on what's become of the Trainman. The Merv is pleased, summons the General, and says he can help him evade the Machines, but that the General must agree to stay within certain designated areas, or he'll be shut down. The General, whose transmission is a little choppy, appears to agree.

7/19-7/25

#### Required Events

Zion: emergency network up-link established

Mach: attack on a redpill extraction point

Merv: Merv does a roll-call of powerful Exiles to take stock of his wartime power base (ie a parade of me showing up as various Exiles one at a time)

7/26

#### Crit 8.1.3

Zion: Comm systems impaired by Machine attacks prevent Tyndall from coming through clearly; at one point later in the mission you hear her say "Ardesh--." Ghost tells the player that their broadcast database is under attack by the Machines; this system helps manage and control redpill signals coming into the Matrix (sort of like air traffic control or something). Off the player goes to try to grab the broadcast data before the Machines can get it. They get there just in time, and the operator shunts the data over the network to a temporarily safe location. The operative runs there to collect it, then hustles it to the emergency up-link. The Machines have got a Special Agent (level 255) right at the up-link, but he's downed by Beirn who suddenly zaps in, tips his hat, and passes along a "Bonjour" from the Merv. The data is sent out of the Matrix through the up-link, saved for later use with a backup system, hopefully. (Which Zion sets up pretty much right away, I suppose. The story is that broadcast depth is now shallower, because they're running the broadcast control as a distributed system among hovercraft at broadcast depth, which is less efficient than the old system. That's explained a bit more in the next crit.)

Mach: Routine investigation of a computer theft that may have been perpetrated by Zionites or EPN desperate for computer gear is interrupted by Gray, who says that their viral routines have located Zion's broadcast signal control center. The player arrives there in the midst of a fight, but finds that Zion has just shunted the broadcast control data somewhere, and deleted the transfer log. The Machines have to take a few minutes to run a backtrace to see what exactly happened in the simulation when the data was shunted. They find where it went, but



they're again a little behind Zion. Then word comes that an Agent sent to investigate an unregistered network up-link has just ceased function. Investigating the coincidence, the player finds a dead Agent, and a dead up-link terminal. Gray consoles the player over the loss of the broadcast data, saying that destruction of the control center will impair Zion's signal efficiency, at least. He says that there aren't many things powerful enough to have taken out the Agent, and that the incident will be investigated.

Merv: The General beams in with news that his Sentinel scouts intercepted a message from the Zion hovercraft "Ardeshir" about an emergency up-link Zion had configured, something to do with concerns about the security of their broadcast control database. Flood has the General disable the hovercraft with Sentinels, while the operative corners the jacked-in crew and demands to be given the location of the up-link. The surviving Ardeshir operative (random name) figures she doesn't have much choice anyway, because she needs the ship intact so that they can tell Zion about the Machines they've detected closing in on the up-link; she instructs "Spitz" the operator (:p) to give the General's squids the up-link coordinates. The player joins Malphas, who's monitoring the situation as Beirn is sent to the up-link to delay the Machines. A sort of concerned/annoyed Persephone is there with Malphas, too. Malphas says they're helping Zion in this case because it would be inconvenient if Zion lost this data, and thus the war, so soon. Word comes that Beirn has succeeded in allowing Zion to save their data. The player reports the happy news to the Merv, but the Merv broods over it, saying that it was too easy.

7/26-8/1

#### Required Events

Zion: Zion finally detects and goes after some of the (Cyph) spies who've been infiltrating (old) Zion

Mach: (Cypherite?) spy mission, find key to getting at recruiting data--a potential who's been approached by both sides, and reveals some information he got from an overly enthusiastic Zion recruiter

Merv: Merv surprised by lack of oomph in Machine response. Stages attack or demonstration to test it. Finds it somewhat feeble.

8/2

#### Crit 8.1.4

Zion: Tyndall says comms are mostly repaired, but broadcast depth is shallower due to the broadcast thingy. She sends the player to investigate a recruiting team manager (random name) who's jacked in, but not responding, and whose location can't be pinpointed for some reason. The player finds a journal entry from a few days ago in the manager's apartment (saying there are more recruiting volunteers, with more enthusiasm now, and that potential

numbers seem to be up as well). Tyndall sends the player to the aid of a recruiting center that's just come under Machine attack; the center houses sensitive recruiting data. The player gets there, but finds that the data's been swiped. Tyndall sends them after a Machinist seen leaving the area just before the player'd got there. The player finds the Machinist, but just

after they've uploaded the data, presumably to some Machine server. Tyndall says this is going to endanger the potentials they had listed in the stolen data, and sends the player off to report to Niobe. Niobe is in conversation with the Kid, who says that the Machines are just going to bulldoze through Zion if a second front isn't opened, mentioning that the "swarm of Sentinels they just sent at your new city isn't going to be the last." The Kid wants to hit Machine City directly. Niobe isn't too keen on it, telling the player that Zion can't afford to throw ships away right now. She adds that she appreciates the player's gumption, and says that even though things don't seem to be going well, fighting is better than giving in.

Mach: Gray sends the player after a Zion operative (random name) who has access to highlevel recruiting data; the Machines learned about this from a potential who was told more than necessary by an overzealous Zion recruiter. The player tags the operative, and Exterminators show up to bag him. The location of Zion's recruiting center is extracted from the captured Zionite somehow (the operator makes it sound like some process so chilling you don't wanna know about it), and the player swipes the data. A hackable computer at the center has an intercepted message from Niobe, explaining about the distributed broadcast control system, and shallower broadcast depth. The player is pursued by Zionites, but gets the data uploaded before they catch up. Gray packs the successful operative off to see what that darn Veil wants now. Veil congratulates the player that the Machines are finally cracking down on Zion recruiting, and happens to mention that she's heard EPN has some idea about bombing the Machines' city, oh and that she's sorry to hear "about the squiddies from Stalingrad biting it outside New Zion..." Gray confirms that some Sentinels returning from Stalingrad were diverted to probe the New Zion's defenses, and appear to have been disabled, probably by concealed EMP charges--they couldn't get precise data due to "broadcast interference."

Merv: The Merv, still not satisfied with the Machine reaction to aggression lately, sends the player to Mara to find the Oracle. In Mara, the player corners a fidgety Blackwood who says ohh, sure, she's right down the street. Down the street the player finds Seraph, who stares them down a bit, then says all right, she'll talk to the Merv. Then there's a meeting between the Oracle and the Merv, with Seraph looking on, and the Twins patrolling the apartment, calling it a little "a little...homey." The Merv asks why the Machines haven't even made much of an effort to "obliterate" their enemies; the Oracle responds that "Power isn't everything," that there's more to the Machines than the Merv thinks, and that maybe he should take a look around with his new "outside" eyes. The Merv is left pondering what this might mean.

8/2-8/8

Required Events

Zion: compromised recruiting team/potential must be saved from machines

Mach: kill a bluepill potential, Navin Manohar, substitute partially overwritten bluepill in his place, rewriting his features (players must identify, gather, and administer necessary RSI pills) to match the potential's appearance

Merv: interrogates morph sim--morph sim will rehash the story Morpheus told Neo about "the desert of the Real," humans as batteries, and so forth

8/9

#### Crit 8.1.5

Zion: The player saves a recruiting team's bacon, and the team deputizes the player to help check up on one of the potentials whose identity has been compromised by the recent loss of data to the Machines. The player heads off, finds a bluepill, but not the right one; it's a friend, who says that "they" came and dragged the potential off, claiming she was involved in a terrorist conspiracy. Tyndall sends the player to raid the nearest federal detention facility, where the player takes out a bunch of confused SWAT, and some Machines, and finds the missing potential, who's pretty freaked out about all the killing. Niobe calls the player in, congratulates them on the rescue, but says that things aren't going well, and Zion is going to have to switch over to entirely new systems run out of New Zion as soon as possible.

Mach: Gray has the player check "Navin Manohar" just before the Zionite recruiting team arrives to have him pop a pill. Navin Manohar seems to be all right, and the player goes off to meet Pace to observe Navin Manohar's progress with the recruiting team. Pace says that it's going all right, they've taken the pill and...ahah, the hidden Machine program has locked the red pill's trace process, and is feeding back into the Zionite systems. She sends the player to go take out the extraction team before they figure out what's going on and unplug their systems. The player takes out the extraction team, and finds Navin Manohar out on the floor, next to a computer with data on it. The player brings the data back to Pace, who explains that the extraction systems rely on data processed by Zion's "core server farm" during the critical phase of the extraction procedure, and that although the interface to that system is protected, the feedback data they've captured should contain vital data on its "location and configuration"; "this could be the key to the Zion Mainframe." Gray says that further data will be required. A computer tucked away in the final area shows that the Machines have recorded three encounters with the General's Sentinels, but that they still haven't pinpointed their current location.

Merv: Flood sends the player to take orders from the Merv, who they find shackled up with Nicky G. The Merv's curiosity has been piqued by the Oracle and the story told him by the Morph sim (which of course he'd heard before); isn't it interesting, he says, that nobody really knows where Morpheus got all that information, and that he wants to look into it. He sends the player to ask Raini (from "Uranium") about the "form of fusion" mentioned by Morpheus that the Machines are supposed to get their power from along with the human bodies, and to talk to Silver about the energy potential of the human body. Flood says the story on Raini is that she was a program used in nuclear fission reactors, before the Machines decided to use human power instead. After a bit of work the player gets Raini to talk; she says that most people who talk up fusion are pipe-dreamers--that yeah, it produces more energy than fission,

and less waste, but you need all this other stuff to set it up (Lawson triple product, plasma/magnetic containment), and she can't see why she Machines would bother with that over fission; it's not like they'd be worried about pollution from fission's nuclear waste. Silver says that it doesn't matter what sort of weird bio-mechanical fusion the Machines might have come up with; running it through human bodies, which are only 25% energy-efficient at best, means the end result must be a relatively inefficient system no matter which way you slice it.

The operator observes that this fusion/human power system also leaves the Machines stuck with all the expense of maintaining the Matrix, the pods, etc. The Merv, after hearing all this, wants to know not only what the Machines are doing for power, but why, and subsequently gives orders for the General to send Sentinels to scout the fields and pods.

Most of the info I got for this crit on fission, fusion, and human energy potential came from these pages:

<http://members.aol.com/Cappuccinno2...hem/energy.htm>

I average 100 watts max 4500 watts max sustained 400 watts

<http://www.ftexploring.com/energy/heatflow.htm>

average 100 watts "heat flow"

[http://expertpages.com/news/concept...gineering\\_8.htm](http://expertpages.com/news/concept...gineering_8.htm) human energy efficiency ~ 5-25% (high end is professional athlete)

<http://hypertextbook.com/facts/2001...elineLing.shtml> brain uses about 1/5th (20 watts) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusion\\_power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusion_power) fusion: Deuterium to Tritium (also protium--isotopes of hydrogen)

<http://fusedweb.pppl.gov/FAQ/sectio.../part1-tech.txt>

D very abundant, T made from Li (plentiful in oceans)

Reactors require vanadium--present in many minerals

[http://www.eoearth.org/article/Nucl...ar\\_fusion\\_power](http://www.eoearth.org/article/Nucl...ar_fusion_power)

fusion in the sun--hydrogen fuses into helium

$4 \text{ H} + 2 \text{ e} \rightarrow 4 \text{ He} + 2 \text{ neutrinos} + 6 \text{ photons} = 26 \text{ million electronvolts (MeV)}$

<http://www.123helpme.com/assets/16355.html>

"fusion of a given mass of deuterium will be able to create over four times the energy produced through fission of an equal mass of uranium"

<http://www.princeton.edu/~chm333/20...nfinement2.html>

"Lawson triple product" - criteria to reach nuclear ignition (high temperature plasma containment--also magnetic)

8/23 (delayed to 8/24)

## 8.2 Cinematic

Zion operatives work frantically at a covert computer lab when Machine operatives burst in. They are cut down, but Agents follow. Transition to a flight of Sentinels through tunnels, knocked out of the air by a shoulder-launched EMP missile. Cut to a Sentinel flying across

massive power lines headed into Machine City, scanning. Cut to the Merovingian, observing the readout on a computer screen, and laughing.

[Notes in square brackets below are not told to players directly, if at all.]

### Crit 8.2.1

Zion: The operator mentions that Zion is working around the clock to transfer the Zion mainframe data to New Zion, but security measures in place in the mainframe, the sheer volume of data involved, and the dangers of transport through Sentinel patrols (crews have to delete their copy of the data at the least sign of danger) make it a painstaking process. A guard mentions that more Sentinels are being seen around the old city. Zion tries to fix the security hole that the Machines exploited (in 8.1.5) to get close to the Zion mainframe, but finds the Machine code involved in part of the red pill program too hard to modify. Alternate plan submitted by the Council, overruling Lock (who thought it too great a security risk): bring in Danielle Wright, "the foremost authority on Matrix interface technology." She invented the EJP while a Zion operative, but left shortly after the Truce began, citing "ideological differences." After leaving Zion, she founded what is now one of the city's largest tech companies, Wright Research, with a large skyscraper HQ in Vauxton (map landmark). Tyndall mentions that Silver has been known to associate with Wright, but that she herself is very secretive [hm, I'd probably have toned down that reference to Silver after writing Machine mission 8.2.4, ah well]. After some poking around a Wright Research office, Wright herself calls for a meeting. She says "I will help you--not because I share your commander's views, but because the red pill program is vital to the future of mankind." [Throughout these missions, Wright is very aloof, and calm, although she shows flashes of frustration when others aren't performing to her liking. Nothing seems to take her by surprise. She tends to refer to players formally by their bluepill last name, like an Agent.]

Mach: Gray says that although they haven't been able to pinpoint them, there are indications that the General's Sentinels are advancing toward "sensitive installations on the Earth's surface," and sics the player on some Mervs to show them the error of their ways, then to the Auditor, to "persuade" him to stop working with the Merv. The Auditor says he thought he could be useful to the System, screening Merv code for faults and errors, but that he'll stop if that's what they want. He isn't sure how he's going to explain this if the Merv asks. Hypatia is confronted next, since she's been offering "unusually...sensitive material to the highest bidder" (there was a Live Event a few chapters back on Vector where she did this) and has made offers of data to the Merv specifically. Hypatia isn't happy about the crack-down, says she won't be intimidated into self-censorship, her Bookworms get rowdy, the player beats them, and an Agent appears on the scene to sit Hypatia in the corner for a while. Bursting with this success, the player is sent to deactivate the "directed relay" the Merv has been using to talk to the General, which the Machines have finally tracked down after a "thorough log search." The player succeeds in deactivating the relay, but then the General's holographic projection appears, boasting that they have other relays, nyah nyah, and is the System getting desperate because it feels like it's running out of time? Gray sets things right by

shrugging this off as a "lackey's bravado," and saying that the Merv won't be able to resist the Machines for long.

Merv: The General's Sentinel scouts are approaching the Fields to count babies. Local expert Persephone says that conception does not take place in the pods; the parents could be miles apart; their genetic samples are sent to the Fields, where they are combined and grown into children. Persephone thinks it's all very sterile; Flood is horrified by the "organic minutiae." While the scouts start their baby count, the player ransacks the local hospital records office for the "official" version of the birth rate in the simulation. Avoiding amusing run-ins with fedup bluepills and a self-diagnosis terminal ("press 7 if you are questioning reality"), the player finds the official article: "The city birth rate was 1.5% in 1999, up a dramatic 0.001% from the previous year. City officials attributed the cause to improvements in dental hygiene, television programming..." Flood is becoming sick of numbers, passing along that the scouts have counted about 1 million fetuses in the Fields, and 3 million people plugged into the pods nearby. Armed with the 1.5% birth rate, the player questions the creepy Coroner about the simulation's death rate; the Coroner says the city's figure is 0.7%--half of the birth rate (and don't forget to factor in "0.6% infant mortality," of course!)--but since the simulation is supposed to a stable, closed system, deaths must equal births, or it all goes to heck--only, that isn't the picture the Machines want to show to the bluepills. How does the Coroner think the Machines are managing it? "Foreign travel, detention facilities, retirement homes, the suburbs... There are so many ways to make the undesirable simply...disappear." Flood dismisses this as "rampant paranoia." Malphas does some quick calculations: "Assuming a nine month gestation period, a Field of one million wombs yields 1.3 million humans a year. At a 1.5% birth rate, that would imply a population of about...88 million, after the Coroner's infant mortality rate"; he says this corroborates the Morpheus sim's account of other pods elsewhere, since there are far more than 3 million people in just the city. The General's hologram is telling the Merv that he can't try taking a power reading directly off the Machine power lines, 'cause they'd detect it and catch him; they're already buzzing his position. The Merv says well, of course we know that Zion has found more pods [they must have, using red pills to locate pod inhabitants during extraction operations], so we'll just have to look around for them, too; and isn't it funny how Smith, according to Morpheus, thought there were "billions" of people in the Matrix? What a sucker that Smith was.

8/23-8/29

Required Events:

Zion: EPN steals Merv's mapped data on Machine power lines [note to self: don't forget to plant cake vendors in the area that some EPN surely won't be able to resist]

Mach: hit on some kind of Merv operation (stored commando programs, Exile (neighborhood) contact ally, etc)

Merv: hit on some kind of Machine operation (anti-extraction team, the Network & Network Media, SWAT teams, etc)

8/30

### Crit 8.2.2

Zion: [Note: throughout Wright Research facilities in this subchapter, there are messages all codes with the same method. They refer very obtusely to Wright's inside access to the Zion mainframe, her connection to Silver, and a few other things that she's involved in checking up on.] Wright gives Zion some prototype new red pills to test on operatives, to see if they prevent the Machine exploit. Ghost mentions that they know Wright has access to the mainframe, but they've never been able to figure out how she does it. The first test succeeds in blocking the exploit, but feedback makes the redpill test subject ill. A hackable computer alludes to more Sentinels close to Zion. The second test subject dies just as Machines burst in, killing most of the other Zionites, and nobody could tell if it was the pill that killed the test subject, or the Machines. Wright isn't very surprised that the Machines are trying to stop creation of the new pills. She says the next step, after making some code tweaks, is to test them on a bluepill.

Mach: Gray reports a sudden rise in "utility and service failures," and sends the player to investigate one of the reports of trouble. A landlord explains that the water's been running hot/cold/none/bursts, not only in that apartment, but in his other three properties, too. Gray says this will be looked into, and sends the player to check out one of a number of reports of sharply increased gang activity across the city; turns out a SWAT team's been taken out by nasty Hel Club ravers. Gray reports that the water utility superintendent, interrogated, revealed that the "utility worker's union" paid him to look the other way while they made "adjustments" to equipment. Sent to check one of many phone outage reports (problems extend "even to operative-tapped 'hardline' networks"), the player finds a broken Hardline Junction Box, fixes it, and has to endure another surprise taunting from the General's hologram. Clearly the Merv is claiming responsibility for this reign of utility terror. An almost flustered Gray refers to "...other difficulties," then mentions what may be a new direct threat: the Auditor's latest analysis has found a problem in operative code. The Auditor, secure under Machine guard, reports finding page faults "in pod energy generation control subroutine modules" with source code "of a unique Zionite/Machine synthesis," but similar to Zion's red pill program: basically, Zion's working on a new red pill. Gray says this is a little disturbing, 'cause nobody thought Zion could code like that, so the Man is gonna have to be on their case lickety-split, but unfortunately that means they'll have to let the Merv live for a little while longer, especially with the exploration of New Zion's defenses causing high Sentinel losses to uncharted EMP charges, general war with Zion, etc. But not to worry, the Merv's puny Sentinel fleet doesn't pose an actual military threat in the Real: "surface facilities within his short-term range have sufficient defenses to repel an attack."

Merv: The Merv is way mad about EPN stealing his map of the pod power lines! But they didn't cover their tracks, and he can trace the cake they ate, so it's time to get that data out of their hands, and give some payback. The player leaves an anonymous phone call about the EPN's location on a government terrorism tip hotline, then hurries off and gets there just as Machines are terminating the specific EPN the Merv's been tracking. He reconstructs, and even takes some RSI pills (NPCs who don't follow you physically choose a new RSI from their NPC type's random pool if used again in a later phase of the same mission), but they

can still track him, he's gone back to HQ, they follow, waste a bunch of EPN, but don't find the data. Flood says the Merv's gonna be steamed; oh, and in other news, the General's pulled back from the Fields due to all the Machines buzzing around.

8/30-9/5

#### Required Events

Zion: Awakening and extraction test run to assist Wright (trace succeeds but pod extraction fails--one important implication here is that the red pills do have something to do with allowing the newly awakened subject to get free of the pod; hopefully this will sort of address the question some players have been asking about why would the Machines keep flushing awakened humans--like they seem to do with Neo in the first movie--now that awakenings aren't supposed to be allowed; wouldn't they just kill them as soon as they detected it, so that Zion couldn't rescue them?)

Mach: attack on Wright Research (a new admin-started mission will populate inside the Wright Research building, if needed)

Merv: Merv finds out about EPN plans to attack power lines

9/6

#### Crit 8.2.3

Zion: Wright says she needs Machine pod control code to fix the pills. She knows Persephone's kept some code from her old job, and even knows where it is. Hel Club Exiles are fought and the data obtained, but it turns out to have only "dynamic links" to the actual Machine code needed. These lead to a Machine facility, and another data capture (one computer has a partial government profile of Wright, in the style of the one you can glimpse at Smith's interrogation of Thomas Anderson in the first movie: "Date of Birth: 24 June, 1964 // Place of Birth: South Vauxton, Downtown, Capital City, USA // Mother's maiden name: Eleanor Morrell // Father's Name: Jonas Wright"). Wright completes the code. Lock calls and thanks her personally (you get to hear on speakerphone), saying that mankind owes her a great debt, and that they'll keep a berth open for her in New Zion. Wright declines, saying "Another nobly futile gesture from your Commander; he always was fond of those." If you talk to her a second time, she says "Jason was quite right to say that we haven't seen things the same way, [Mr.|Ms.] [player bluepill last name]. I lack his great faith in our ability to survive on our own." [There's an implication in various snatches of dialogue in these missions that Lock and Wright used to know each other well, although there's no indication that it was in any way a romantic relationship.] She also says "goodbye," with a certain finality.

Mach: The Machines are wise to ex-Zionite Wright's work on the new pills. Cryptos pops round to relate that Zion's already started distributing said pills. Gray's determined to get his hands on one, and sends the player to sack a Wright Research facility, but they find that



Wright's orders to ship out the initial development batches have already been obeyed, and the place is dry. Gray has the player try hitting up a Zion extraction team for their red pill; this works (the player also confiscates their blue pill, but the operator says the Machines don't need those anyway: they have their own means of calming the citizens). The pill is submitted for analysis, a technician in a back room talks about Wright's invention of the EJP (which the Machines then "had to obtain from Zionite defectors"--oh, and one of her interface subroutines \*might\* have been "studied for the Agent Pace project"), and the pesky General sends his pesky hologram in again, but this time he helpfully tells the Machines where they can collect a nice juicy report, courtesy of the Merv, on EPN's plan to sabotage power lines leading into the Machine city. Gray says that so far, analysis of the new red pill program suggests that the author has close access to the Zion mainframe; since Zion doesn't like giving out access of that level to non-Zionites like Wright, could be that she's got her own means of accessing it. Hm... Oh, yeah, and they'll check on that Merv thing about EPN. [The unsuccessful EPN sabotage attempt on the pod power lines is assumed to take place between this week and next week's missions.]

Merv: The player walks in on the Merv and Veil, just as she's saying thanks, but no thanks, "I really don't know anything about it, and besides, we've got a pill problem on our hands just now." The Merv says this tells him two things: 1) the Machines don't know about EPN's sabotage plans, yet, since they'd certainly have told the Cyphs about it, and 2) EPN will probably be interested in that whole pill thing going on over at Wright Research. Time to check that out. Flood tells about Wright being ex-Zion, inventor of the EJP, and "she apparently decided that she wants to take over the Matrix from the Machines, and that the best way to go about that was to move into the city, start her own company, and get rich pawning watered-down modern technology off onto the public." Wright's security force is supposed to be human, but the operator detects programs in the area, and they turn out to be the Machines, invading the place. The player takes care of both Machines and Wright security, only to find evidence that Wright just stole data from the Merv [see Zion's crit of this week]. Now the Merv is really steamed, Persephone blames him for her data being stolen, and the Merv gives you a dire lupine to take with you. The Merv knows about the dynamic links Zion will have found in the data they stole, and figures what Zion wanted, EPN will want too; the dire lupine carries a copy of the stolen data, but with one link modified to point to a Merv program that will fire off a signal pulse when it's uploaded and scanned in a hovercraft. You truck the lupine over to some EPN, get him whacked, and Flood is confident that EPN will find the data on the lupine's body, upload it, scan it, and then the General will spot the signal pulse, track the EPN ship, and find out where they're going for this big power line ambush they're planning. [And it probably works out that way, since the Merv's report on their ambush finds its way to the Machines soon thereafter (see this week's Machine crit).] Oh, and also the General will probably be able to take a power reading from the lines while the Machines are busy with EPN. [He does.]

9/6-9/13

Required Events

Zion: (after Machine event) Wright is being harassed by the Machines, and breaks from Zion--says she believes Matrix should be left intact, but under human control; Wright disappears

Mach: Machines force Wright to jack out (by RSI damage, hardline, ?) in attempt to track where her RSI signal broadcast source--unsuccessful (even if they get her to jack-out, they find that her signal was too well encoded: "high order real-time variable encryption")

Merv: Locates more clusters of pods by extracting human and using red pill trace

9/13

#### Crit 8.2.4

Zion: The player is sent to help distribute the new red pills to recruiting teams. A Zionite guard refers to EPN losing some ships to the Machines in their unsuccessful power line attack, and refers to a rumor that the Merv tipped the Machines off. The recruiting team is happy to get the new pills so they can get back to work, but ask the player's help against Cypherites, who've been very active against Zion's recruiting operations since the new pills were developed. Another Zionite refers to more Sentinels around Zion, adding "Sometimes they take off as soon as they realize they've been spotted." The player happens to loot a blue pill from a dead Cypherite, and Tyndall sends them to help with an actual extraction. At the end of this mission you get to give either the red or blue pill to a potential. Giving either one will complete the mission, but the messages are written in such a way that it's sort of left for the player to fill in the blanks about what the bluepill chose, and which pill they gave them.

Mach: The Machines figure Wright couldn't have handled the biological interface part of her broadcast signal's encryption scheme on her own, and send the player to hunt up records on Wright's business partners. The operator mentions that Wright Research has been in an uproar since Wright's disappearance a few days ago. The Wright facility is abandoned except for a hardhat worker, who laconically reveals that the company has shut down their network, and work's been brought to a standstill; oh yeah, and everyone knows that Argent Biometrics handles variable encryption across a biological interface. The player runs into Wright security on the way out. Gray says that Argent Biometrics is a small bio-research company, less than three years old, with few clients and steady quarter-end losses. The player accesses a computer at a small Argent Biometrics office, coming up with just an address of a warehouse ("Lemone Warehouse King"). One of the bluepills in the office kind of goes postal when their computer is searched; the operator figures he was just a nut. This warehouse company is known for owning lots of square feet of storage space, but posting very small profits, and having had the original owner get locked up a year ago in racketeering charges, only to be found dead in his cell before he could be arraigned. The warehouse is abandoned except for a cardboard box containing a box which contains everyone's favorite mission prop: a human heart. At the heart's return address in Camon Heights, the player finds weird hostile Exiles, including one with a computer controlled "micro defibrillator"; when the player heartlessly (sorry) shuts it down, the Exile blurts out something about "Silver" before keeling over. The operator recalls an old rumor about Silver working with Wright, but says he'd dismissed it as false, since the same source [not named in the mission but:

<http://pc.gamespy.com/pc/thematrix...e/527124p1.html> ] also said Wright was based in Tabor, and Silver in Achan. Gray says it's time to find Silver.

Merv: Malphas says that since the General was able to take a power reading off the Machine lines while they were occupied with the EPN ambush attempt, all they need to do now is figure out how many pods the Machines have, and then they can calculate their total energy budget--well, from the pods, anyway. The General's spreading out to look for more pods now, but with communication distance increasing, his signal's getting more erratic. The player has to track it down, and, after clearing away some Machines, manages to make out that the General's scouts have been finding more pods in a "rough grid pattern" about "every 100 to 150 miles," and that these pod clusters are only 1/10th the size of the 3-million-pod cluster near the Fields (ie, 300,000 humans per small cluster). Flood sends the player to Sunshine, "an insufferably cheerful program who managed the Machine's solar power operation before you vile humans shrouded the entire planet in shadow," to ask her about the total surface area the Machines might be using for their pod cluster grid. Sunshine is way excited that the Merv is sending people to ask her stuff! (her Phoenix guards are slightly less excited) and "guesstimates" (Flood's term) that considering that she's heard the clouds have cooled the Earth--"though not nearly as much as you'd have thought"--the ice caps must have expanded, and there's more glaciation in mountainous regions, and it's colder, and Machines wouldn't want to keep humans where it's so cold that they'd have to waste energy heating them, so, hmm, maybe 1/16th of the Earth's surface would be usable for pods? [Note that this 1/16th is of the total surface area, counting water--I don't spell that out specifically in the mission though.] Sunshine also muses that the humans must really have pulled a doozy with "that storm" [ie Second Renaissance's "Operation Dark Storm," where man blotted out the sun to try to cut off the Machine solar power supply] since it's still going after all this time. Malphas runs the numbers in that capacious dome of his: "1/16th of the surface... Clusters of pods 100 to 150 miles apart...containing 1/10th of the 3 million of the large cluster near the Fields... That works out to nearly 1000 pod clusters, and close to 300 million humans in them." But he says that would mean the 1 million fetus capacity of the Fields couldn't account for supposed the 1.5% birth rate. The Merv starts musing: even at 100 times the amount that the General sampled [from the 3 million pod cluster], that still wouldn't be... Oh well, we'll keep him looking until the numbers add up, n'est-ce pas?

9/13-9/19

## Required Events

Zion: Showdown w/ Cyphs over batch of new pills

Mach: Silver found, spills his guts about Wright--get key to her RSI signal's encryption [[have silver say something about "phase existence"]]

Merv: (after Mach event) Merv punishes Silver for giving information to Machines w/o permission

9/20

### Crit 8.2.5

Zion: The mission begins with Tyndall tersely informing the player that a hovercraft just detonated against Zion's main gate, and that everything there (where she is, at Zion Command, which is still in old Zion) is in an uproar. Ghost has more information, saying it was a Zion craft, but it wasn't responding with clearance codes as it approached the gate; it resembles a Cypherite hijacking, and could have something to do with reports of Cypherites gathering in the city. The player is sent to investigate these. Just as Tyndall is describing the city Cypherite situation, she ends abruptly with "Oh!" and the operator can't get her to respond. After the player defeats a group of Cypherites (noisy, and low rank), Tyndall is back in touch, explaining that there's a security alert in Command--a suspected saboteur [that's all--doesn't say if they're Cyph, male, female or anything else, so something more could be made of this character elsewhere if desired] was apprehended inside near the main lift, but no explosives or weapons were found...and then she's abruptly cut off again. The operator says all Zion lines are down, and sends the player to the source of a captain's emergency beacon, while he tries to patch through to New Zion's fledgling ops center. The captain turns out to be Niobe, who doesn't know exactly what's going on either, but says that ships near Zion are reporting that Zion Command's emergency evacuation procedure has triggered, and they're trying to get everyone out. Lock hasn't been heard from. Niobe sends the player to try to get through to Zion on an emergency relay nearby. Still no peep from Tyndall. The relay is abandoned, and the ping attempt to the backup receiver in Zion times out. The operator hasn't been able to get the New Zion ops center to validate his login, and says they'll have to go back below broadcast depth to get in touch with them. [It's going to be a little tricky to fend off player questions about this during the two weeks between the end of this mission and the start of 8.3. I guess we're just gradually going to have to give out that there's been a massive scramble to evacuate everything remaining in Zion, they're still trying to get the last of the mainframe data sorted out, swarms of Sentinels are accumulating in the area, Tyndall has been evacuated to New Zion safely, Lock hasn't been found, and a number of hovercraft have been lost nearby.]

Mach: Pace says analysis of Wright's signal shows she's jacked in right now from a surface lab somewhere above Zion, and sends the player to the signal's general location in the simulation to find Wright and run a close-range scan that will trace back to pinpoint her surface lab. Veil is with Pace, and was saying something about "we've done this kind of thing before" and "the other diversion is all set" as the player entered the room [this is a reference to the activities reported in this week's Zion crit]. The player finds Wright alone in her office, apparently waiting for them. The trace is run and she falls, dead. Gray explains that as soon as the trace pinpointed her jack-in lab, Sentinels swooped in, recognized (thanks to info captured from their red pill exploit in 8.1.5) the device she must be using to interface with the Zion mainframe, determined Wright wasn't needed anymore, and killed her jacked-in body. Gray hands a special computer virus to the player personally, explaining that Wright's device opens a connection to the Zion mainframe from a semi-random Zion terminal within the simulation; this is how she avoided being traced by Zion all this time. Off the player scoots with the virus to the mainframe-enabled terminal, with Gray motivationally pointing out that if

the player fails to upload the virus at this terminal, they could try again at a different terminal, thanks to Wright's device, but "this would threaten synchronization with considerable forces prepared for deployment against Zion." After some bother with Zion guards and networks, the player accesses the Zion mainframe interface, and jams the virus home. Gray says that thanks to the Sentinels now converging on Zion, the havoc caused by sabotage, and this virus in their mainframe, the city of Zion is about to be destroyed. (This is old Zion he's talking about, not New Zion.)

Merv: The General is so far away now that his signal is pretty much unintelligible. Flood says the low-power transceiver we've been using to talk to the General, while great for avoiding Machine detection, isn't cutting the mustard at this distance, so we'll just have to borrow a Network Media dish from the Network for a bit; he's known to have a direct connection to the Machines in the Real, so we'll hijack that and point it at the General. After some hot action with computers and the Network's hired Corporate Security guards, this hack is accomplished, the General's holographic signal is located, and delivers its message coherently now (except that it kind of breaks up at the end, just as Machines spawn in all over the area and attack), saying that one scout found another set of human-growing "Fields" over 6000 miles away, before its transmission was lost, and this set of Fields had a 3 million pod mega-cluster next to it, too. Oh, and the scout had noticed that the power lines had been running the opposite direction from pod clusters [ie away from Machine city] for some time before it got to this second set of Fields. Other than that, all the scouts have reported finding nothing but mile after mile of featureless wasteland, with only the small pod clusters, power lines, and dead skeletons of (word lost) cities relieving [I suppose that's relative] the monotony. Malphas says that if there are maybe a few other Fields around the world, that would be enough to account for the 1.5% birth rate seen in the simulation, and would fit with the 300 million population estimate. Malph says they'll have to call the General back, since they can't really afford to have him losing more scouts flying over thousands of miles of wasteland. Malphas finishes off by musing that 300 million humans would just be enough to fill out the population of the United States of the simulation's time period [1999], but if people in the simulation believe they can travel anywhere in the world, then...hm... The Merv says that if the Machines really have only 300 million humans for power, he feels sorry for them, because based on the General's sample from the 3 million, 300 million gives them only enough power to meet the energy demands of the Machine city several times over [this is the only measurement I give--no wattage readings or anything real specific like that]--but that also has to run their Sentinels, their other defensive machines, the Matrix... This would explain why they've been less than spectacular against Zion so far, but not why they did better in the previous war; and it still doesn't explain why they insist on using humans for power, when they must have had other options.

[[wright underestimated silver, didn't think he'd be able to track her.

Roland, captain of the Mjolnir (aka Hammer)  
crew: Maggie (dead), Mauser, Colt, AK --  
Mjolnir (II?) was going to transfer Lock out

- still running jackouts through old Zion
  - in destruction at end of 8.2.5, Roland's jack interface is fried, but he makes it out. Mauser was jacked in as well, fate unknown. AK (operator?) dead, Colt (first mate?) all right (potential LE character, duelist)
  - Once she realized the Machines would be able to track her signal, Wright set up a shunt on her emergency jack-out, to kick her into the Zion mainframe instead of back into her body - She knew that the Machines would send a virus into the mainframe, and counted on it opening access to broadcast control quickly enough that she could jack out into someone else's body before losing cohesion; she's skilled in "phase existence," ie prolonging your time between jack-in and entering the simulation itself, floating freely in the network as an avatar
  - This worked, and she found Mauser
  - Feedback from this override blew out the Mjolnir II's jack-in system
  - Mauser/Wright can no longer jack in
  - Mauser/Wright escaped the wreckage of the Mjolnir II and found Commander Lock (wounded) in the wreckage of Zion
  - got Lock to her wrecked lab, buried old Wright body
  - When EPN moves into old Zion, they find wreck of Mjolnir II, AK's body, but no sign of Mauser
- Then get emergency signal or puzzle or something leading them to Lock

]]

[[ Population:

>>>> new york (no not Chicago :p): 2002 six infant deaths for every 1,000 live births; 742 infant deaths and 122,937 live births. Any child less than a year old is considered an infant; life expectancy 77.6 years; death rate 7.2 per 1,000 in 2004 (not counting infant mortality, I take it; 2002 saw 59,651 deaths recorded in the city; 1.5% birth rate

>>>> 40% zion (now) freeborn (this was in a Cypherite report to the Machines found on a computer in a critical mission a chapter or two ago); Zion had a population of 250,000 at the time of Reloaded/Revolutions (according to a movie conversation where Morpheus said that the Machines were sending a Sentinel for every man, woman, and child in Zion, and confirmed that this meant they were sending 250,000); Zion freeborn pop supposedly equals 1% of total Matrix population; let's say freeborn pop...down a bit; used to be 45%; 137500 was 1%, ie 13,750,000 total pop; but Zion wouldn't have all of 1% anyway...; let's say they manage to get 5% of the 1%; total pop 275,000,000

>>>> 100 pods per ring (rough visual count from Neo's extraction scene); each tower at least 300 rings high (also checked against long-range view of pod towers behind Fields as Neo and Trinity fly off to Machine city in Revolutions); if each cluster at least 10 towers = 300,000 per cluster = nearly 1000 clusters across Earth's surface; 1/8th of our modern Earth's surface is estimated as habitable now (that's of the total surface area, ie including oceans); let's say

1/16th there; 510,065,600 km<sup>2</sup> total surface area; 1/16th is 31250000 km<sup>2</sup>; 31250 km<sup>2</sup> per cluster; square root = 175 km = 100 mls = shortest distance between clusters

>>>> (NY around 2000ish) 1.5% birth rate /// 0.6% infant mortality // 0.7% mortality // This means: out of 300 million, ~ 2 million \*recorded\* deaths per year, 4 mill births // with a 9 month gestation, you'd have 3 mill gestating at a time // 3 fields facilities? ][[[[[[[ in 8.2.1 mish find 1, 1 mill, 1,333,333 is 1.5%, ~ 89,000,000 (not counting infant death rate) -> 88 mill w/ infant deaths--> vs Smith's "billions" :ppp

>>>> x10 mega cluster at fields (very rough estimate from that long-range view over the Fields in Revolutions) --> 100 pod towers (ahh this might have been a sort of math error on my part--I'd actually estimated about 30 towers in that Revolutions view...I think...got my tower numbers mixed up a little between the small and large clusters...or did I figure some of those towers in that shot looked x3 high as others?--anyway I still like the 10x idea, and the total pop numbers are still right--exact tower counts aren't mentioned in the missions--so nyah) -- >

3 million people if General does a quick count --> might think birth rate is 100x too high...except they know there are more than 3 mill just in city /// find second Fields "over 6000 miles" away

- Rough Matrix pop 300,000,000. That's about the 2007 population of the United States.
- Area radiating outward from main city in sim.
- Simulation becomes less detailed as you move outward from city; BPs less alert
- At extreme edges simulation is just memory manipulation of unconscious BPs
- Alert BPs orchestrated so that they make their way to detailed sim area, ie the city- To balance out the birth rate, inefficient BPs are maneuvered to outlying sim areas, eventually terminated
- How to explain that Zion hovercraft don't go around world to grab extracted people? Trace fails? Those people inhabit outlying areas of the simulation and aren't reached by recruiters? That would sort of fit, maybe Machines would keep most active (high energy) humans closer to Matrix...if we're implying that the Matrix is run out of that one city.
- Oh, yeah. I was thinking there could be three Machine cities total, one for each Fields facility. But maybe we're in the "main" one, or at least Main as far as the Matrix is concerned.

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I've attached the detailed summary and schedule for MXO chapter 8.2, which is going Live tomorrow (Friday the 24th). Key plot points, some of which I'll discuss in further detail after this brief overview:

A) The Merovingian, using the General's Sentinels, is discovering things about the surface of the Earth, and the Matrix, that have not been specified by us before.

B) "Danielle Wright," an old personality in the city, plays a key role. She appears to be killed by the Machines at the end of this subchapter, but I have a sneaky way to work her into the larger future theme of the game, which is going to be dealing with the question of inherent differences/similarities between Man and Machine (ie the Oligarch search for a permanent solution to hosting their minds, Trinity being an interface program between Man and Machine, Neo being a program, the Morpheus simulacrum acquiring a life of its own, Cryptos being now a weird fusion of Man and Machine overwriting program, etc, etc). The attached image shows Wright, and the uniform of her security team (that's the "W" Wright Research logo on his cap, matching the monument in front of the Wright Research building in Vauxton).

C) More details given on the workings of the red pill program, as Wright creates a new one for Zion.

D) I have a scheme for involving some of our generally offscreen old Zion movie characters--Commander Lock, and Captain Roland and his crew--in the story in a more active sense, starting probably in the next subchapter (8.3) as a direct result of the Machine destruction of (old) Zion that will be shown in the 8.3 cinematic.

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Detailed discussion:

A) Specifications and implications about the Real and the Matrix resulting from the Merv's exploration and research

You'll see a lot of numbers and calculations in the notes at the bottom of the attached story summary document. Basically the Merv is looking around, finding pods scattered around the surface, checking up on apparent Matrix birth and death rates, investigating the Fields, all in the name of trying to find out how much energy the Machines have. The actual details given may be summed up as follows:

- The Matrix may host 300 million humans in pods
- Pods have been found on the surface in two types of arrangements: the "mega cluster" of 30 or so towers, housing about 3 million humans in pods, situated next to the Fields (as seen in Revolutions), and smaller clusters about a tenth of that size (300,000 people)
- These smaller clusters are in a rough grid layout across the ruined surface of the Earth, about 100 to 150 miles apart
- The total of the power supplied by these 300 million humans, extrapolated from a reading the General takes at the 3 million mega-cluster near Zion and the Machine city, would only be enough to power the Machine city several times over, and this would also have to be used for all their other mechanisms (Sentinels, city defensive works, the Matrix, etc); this implies that they have very little power to spare



- The "Fields" between Zion and the Machine city (and right next to the "mega cluster" of pod towers seen in Revolutions) hold about 1 million growing fetuses
- There is another "Fields" complex over 6000 miles away, with a similar "mega cluster" of pods next to it
- The power lines from this far-distant set of Fields and pods, and other, small pod clusters in the area, are running in the opposite direction, ie AWAY from the Machine city we're familiar with
- The average temperature on the surface is a little cooler than it was before the eternal storm appeared, blocking out light--not enough that there are no longer temperate areas where the Machines can house humans in pods and Fields, but enough that these temperate areas are only about half the size that they were before the eternal storm
- The cooling has caused the polar ice caps to expand, and led to increased glaciation in mountainous areas
- The birth rate seen in the Matrix city is about 1.5% (similar to a large US city circa 2000)
- The death rate seen in the Matrix city is about 0.7% (again similar to a US city)
- The infant mortality seen in the Matrix city is about 0.6% (again similar to a US city) - IF the Matrix is a closed system, death rate would have to equal birth rate--but nobody players know can account for this apparent discrepancy

Reasons and implications of the above:

- If the total Matrix bluepill population is 300 million, ie just a little above the year 2000 population of the US, this implies that the Machines are not actually simulating the entire Earth in one-for-one detail. For this I was going off [[[what we were told]]] about the Matrix being more than just the city and the mountain range, but not exactly clear how much more, as well as population calculations based off of Zion building its population from "1%" of humans who reject the simulation.

Where I would like to go with this, if you're interested, is describing a system whereby the Matrix city is the focal point of the simulation, and as you move outwards from the city within the simulation, you are moving into areas that are simulated in less and less detail. The area that is moderately simulated is about the size of the continental US; as you move toward and beyond the periphery of that space, except for main tourist points such as major city airports, etc, fewer and fewer people seen are actual humans, but rather relatively simple Machine simulations of humans. Bluepills living in these outer areas are the less aware and less efficient, and are kept in a deeper state of general stupor, so they don't notice the lowered simulation detail. When a relatively active, aware human from the city voyages into outer areas, the simulation around them is raised in detail temporarily, but they are also increasingly tranquilized, so their recollections of their trip are somewhat hazy.

If a bluepill born in an outer, tranquilized, lower-energy district proves to have an efficient metabolism, their life is manipulated in such a manner that they migrate to the city. Likewise, humans born in the city who turn out to have low-efficiency metabolisms are shifted into outlying areas of the simulation. Those who are truly inefficient, a waste of resources, have their life in the simulation managed so that they eventually lose touch with any active acquaintances, are marginalized and forgotten, and then simply flushed from their pod to

drown in the Machine sewers. These are the deaths that are not recorded by official government records inside the simulation, and which balance out the birth/death rates so that the total population of the Matrix remains steady at about 300 million, which is close to the maximum amount that the Matrix program and associated Machine infrastructure can handle.

The marginalization of inefficient bluepills in the Matrix simulation's geography corresponds to their vicinity to the Machine city housing the Matrix computers in the Real, where these lowefficiency types are moved to pod locations farther away from that city; this keeps the highestproducing human batteries closest to the Matrix computers, where they enjoy the lowestpossible network latency, and less energy is lost as it flows through the power lines into the city.

This has the benefit of explaining why Zionite crews, when they awaken a human, do not have to travel to a pod all the way around the world in order to wake them up: the humans they're finding are the active, relatively aware ones in the Matrix city, and in pods located close to Zion and the Machine city in the Real.

- The eternal storm darkening the skies must have some kind of continuing reaction to keep it going; what this is I don't think I ever want to specify. But, it is a good excuse for why the surface of the Earth, as we see in the movies, is not one big ice cube, as it would be if sunlight were really cut off entirely throughout the world (the initial [ ] drafts of the Matrix had Morpheus tell Neo that the average temperature in enternal-storm era Chicago was -80 degrees C, -120 with wind-chill, which is probably about right in hard science terms). So, I'm allowing for slight cooling, as in a standard Ice Age. This would mean global temperatures an average of about 6 degrees C lower than they were before the eternal storm, sea level about 120 meters below what it was before the storm, smaller temperate zones, larger ice caps, more glaciers, and so forth. This does not clash with what we see of the outside world in the movies, where lightly clothed characters do not look uncomfortable just standing around, and where we see no ice or visible signs of freezing; it also fits in with that comment by Tank in The Matrix, where he tells Neo that Zion is located "deep underground, near the earth's core where it's still warm," which implies that at least a certain degree of surface cooling has taken place.

- There is probably another set of Fields, perhaps two, beyond what the Merovingian has found (for a total of 3, or possibly 4); this will fill out the population calculations concerning birth rates necessary to maintain the 1.5% birth rate that the Machines want to be able to show inside the simulation. Each set of Fields might have a pod mega-cluster next to it, but then again, in light of the "periphery" management of humans, perhaps not.

- There is probably at least one other Machine city, corresponding to the locations of the other Fields. It/they may be smaller than the one near Zion, and would not house primary Matrix systems (unless we want to get into a "multiple Matrix" scenario? I don't really want to go that route, although I suppose we always could if we're still doing this years from now and need a major new story angle ;). These cities would probably in essence be back-ups for the

city housing the Matrix, so that if that city were somehow destroyed, let's say by a meteor from space, the Machine civilization would survive, although they'd have a lot of rebuilding to do.

- There is a question we may have to address some day, but not for a while I think, as to where on Earth Zion, and the Machine city near it, are located. One real question here is: is the Machine city from the movies the same as their original city-state, "Zero One"? In the Animatrix' "Second Renaissance," "Zero One" was shown in the Middle East, centered around the Saudi-Iraqi border. It then expanded, eventually having structures or outlying districts of massive Machine architecture stretching as far afield as Eastern Europe.

We really don't have to decide on this any time soon, but it might be worth starting to think about. My own inclination is to say that the Machine city that players know is NOT the old Zero One. Then we'd have to pick a location for our Machine city (and Zion, which must be relatively close to it). I'd kind of like to place it somewhere in the East, say around what would have been China, but who knows. At any rate, the main benefit of having it separate from Zero One, as I see it, would be that this would leave us free to develop other stories about the ancient, now mostly abandoned city-state of Zero One, and who knows what weird kinds of things could have sprung up there after the Machines left it--as they would have done because Zero One was designed for solar power, and really wasn't all that efficient or worth keeping once the Machines defeated mankind and could rebuild a more efficient city (or cities) at their leisure.

#### B) Danielle Wright and her possible future story use

Danielle has been a part of the city background since launch; most of the primary details about her--like her being ex-Zion, having worked with the Exile named Silver, having invented the emergency-jack out system that all operatives use to survive the death of their RSI in the Matrix, being head of the Wright Research corp who has their large HQ building in Vauxton, and her disagreement with Zion's Commander Lock and wish for the Matrix to survive, but under human control--have been in our internal "Story Bible" document for ages.

In 8.2, it is suspected by Zion, and eventually found by the Machines, that Danielle has her own direct connection to the Zion Mainframe. The Machines capture this and use it to insert a virus into the mainframe, after killing Danielle at her lab somewhere on the Earth's surface above Zion.

Now, here's where I've left things open a bit for future use of Danielle. A genius, expert in Matrix interface systems, and a believer in keeping the Matrix intact, but run by humans, she could have in fact, once she found herself betrayed to the Machines by Silver, launched a desperate plan to preserve her consciousness beyond the death of her physical body. Players would not find out about this for sure until we reintroduce her at the time of our choosing later on. Her scheme would go something like this:

- 1) Learning of the betrayal by Silver, Danielle realizes that the Machines will discover her lab, kill her, confiscate her work, and use it to access and destroy the Zion mainframe.
- 2) She quickly rigs up several custom circuits on her jack-in interface. These will cut the connection between her jacked-in consciousness in the Matrix and her physical body, at a time of her choosing.
- 3) When the Sentinels locate her lab, she trips these circuits just before they kill her body. Her consciousness is set adrift, existing as pure avatar in the programmatic interface areas around the Matrix simulation. Normally, dissolution and death of consciousness come quickly, as the human mind cannot conceive of itself as a non-physical entity. Wright, however, is a highly unusual mind, and moreover has been practicing prolonging her stays in these interface computer realms that are normally traversed in the blink of an eye during jack-in and jack-out. Still, she knows she cannot survive here more than a matter of minutes.
- 4) She also knows, however, that the Machines will move as quickly as they can to activate her interface to the Zion mainframe. She is counting on this. She thinks there is a chance that she will be able to move her consciousness through the activated interface, into the Zion mainframe, and from there, into the body of someone whose hovercraft jack-in system is still running through old Zion's mainframe. These are computer systems she is familiar with from long study--more of a master of them than any other living human being.
- 5) In the Machine 8.2.5 critical mission at the end of subchapter 8.2, events unfold as Danielle's desperate plan requires: her body is slain, and the Machines activate her interface to the Zion mainframe.

So, that is the possible explanation for Wright's survival of certain death, and what could happen with Lock and Roland's crew starting at the beginning of chapter 8.3. See D below for the rest of that.

All of this would leave Wright in a unique position: a human mind in another human's body. Particularly in light of her desire to preserve the Matrix under human control, this could make her a very interesting character somewhere down the road, say once we get into Oligarch's trying to use the Trinity program for new bodies, or whatever we decide to do along those lines.

This story of her survival, in any case, would not be told to players until is brought back.

#### C) New details on the red pill program

Wright makes a new red pill program for Zion in 8.2, one that does not have the security hole that the Machines exploited at the end of 8.1 to obtain information on Zion's mainframe. In the course of her and Zion working to make this new red pill program, I had to flesh out a few things related to it:

- The red pill program not only includes a trace to the human asleep in their pods, it also includes the code routines that help bring the human's consciousness out of the Matrix, wake the human up, and trigger them being flushed from their pod into the sewers, where the extraction team's hovercraft can pick them up.
- The red pill program is a synthesis of Zion and Machine code, and very difficult to modify (which is why Zion had to call in Danielle Wright).
- The Machine code involved includes partial code from the pod control routines that the pill overrides to get the awoken human out of the pod.

D) Commander Lock, Captain Roland, and his crew - possible use in chapter 8.3 and beyond

Captain Roland is the older, bellicose, possibly Australian Zion captain seen in Reloaded and Revolutions--it's his ship, the Mjolnir, aka "the Hammer," that eventually picks up Neo, Trinity, and Niobe, and the one that Niobe pilots and crashes into Zion's dock, where they trigger their EMP in an attempt to stop the Sentinels swarming into the city during the huge battle for Zion in Revolutions. Roland and his crew, including his operator, "AK," his first mate, "Colt," and his crew member "Mauser," all apparently survive, and are alive at the end of the trilogy, safe in Zion. Roland himself is seen in one of the final shots of Zion, when the Sentinels have stopped attacking thanks to Neo's truce with Deus Ex Machina.

Where we are now in the story, Roland must be one of Zion's most senior captains, next to Niobe herself.

My idea for using him, beginning in chapter 8.3, is this:

Roland's new hovercraft, which I'll just call "Mjolnir II" for the sake of convenience, is one of the few ships still operating from old Zion systems when the end of 8.2.5 comes, and the Machines are about to destroy old Zion. The ship itself is near Zion city, trying to get back to help with the evacuation triggered by the Cypherite saboteur who sets off a bomb inside Zion Command.

At the precise time that Danielle Wright's consciousness enters the Zion mainframe, just minutes ahead of the Machine virus, Roland's crew member Mauser is jacked in. Wright finds Mauser's interface, and jacks out into his body. Seconds later (or possibly at the same time, because Wright's overwriting of Mauser shorts things out?), when the Machine virus KOs the Zion mainframe primary Matrix interface control, the jack-in system and Matrix interface onboard the Mjolnir II suffer a massive system failure. The feedback from this kills AK, their operator, and cripples the hovercraft, which promptly crashes in a tunnel just outside Zion.

Sentinels are swarming into the area, everything is chaos, but at any rate Roland and Colt, and possibly other crew members they have who aren't named in the films, are rescued, and

evacuated to New Zion. Fire, wreckage, and swarming Sentinels prevent a search for Mauser, who is eventually presumed dead.

Wright in Mauser's body, however, in fact managed to struggle out of the wreckage, and made her way up the tunnel, into Zion's dock, and from there into the wrecked Zion Command, somehow avoiding detection by Sentinels and desperate Zion evacuation teams.

Here she finds Commander Lock, who has survived the Cypherite attack, and the Sentinels, but is badly hurt. Wright picks him up, and continues to her goal: a hidden escape shaft inside the wrecked Zion Command, known only to high ranking Zionites, and those, like Wright, who hacked secure parts of the Zion mainframe.

Somehow, they get to the surface (Lock, recounting this later, will only have the vaguest recollection of his time while injured, and this tortuous journey up through old shafts, mostly carried by "Mauser"; he will probably have some memory of hidden access lifts, or mechanisms of some type that carry them large parts of the way toward the surface; at any rate, he has an idea that it must have taken weeks). Wright/Mauser brings Lock to her hidden lab, significantly damaged by the Sentinels who killed her old body.

Here she nurses Lock back to a semblance of health, never revealing that she is not actually Mauser. During this time, unknown to Lock, she salvages equipment and programs from her lab.

When it is clear that Lock will recover, she leaves. She fakes a Sentinel attack, ramming large pieces of equipment around to make it sound to the woozy Lock nearby like a squiddie has found her, and frying everything else in the lab that she can't take with her with a lightning gun. She departs for areas unknown, to be brought back whenever we want to use her later in the story.

Lock recovers. By this time--our chapter 9.1--E Pluribus Neo has moved into old Zion, and started some repairs. They find the wreck of the Mjolnir II, and AK's remains, but no sign of Mauser. Lock is able to contact them; he finds a signal of some kind that Wright intentionally left there for him to find, though he doesn't realize this. EPN sends a hovercraft to investigate, and brings him back to Zion.

Eventually, Lock will probably rejoin his Zion comrades in New Zion. But we can decide that later. For the moment, in 9.1, or perhaps 9.2, he tells operatives a confused story of how he was dragged out of the wreckage of Zion by the heroic Mauser, who must have perished fighting a Sentinel after nursing Lock in the wrecked lab they happened to find on the surface. Lock would NOT know that this was Wright, or Wright's lab. As far as anyone knows, Wright was killed by the Machines in 8.2.5.

Meanwhile, in New Zion, Captain Roland, perhaps having had his jack fried from the feedback that led to the wreck of his ship, has been appointed Commander in place of the missing (and presumed dead) Lock. This would have happened right at the beginning of chapter 8.3. His first mate, Colt, is promoted to Captain of a new ship. Colt becomes a Zion character that we can use in Live Events along with Zion's two current event characters,

Niobe and Ghost. I haven't checked the films to see if they show any particulars on Colt's personality, but possibly he can be something of an aggressive, devil-may-care type in comparison with the more reserved Niobe and Ghost.

(Meanwhile I would also have to alter some of our current Zion training missions that have new players speaking with "Commander Lock." ;)

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

10/4

### 8.3 Cinematic

In the Matrix, two Agents watch a computer terminal. One says "The virus is running." Switch to Zion in the Real, where vast swarms of Sentinels engulf a hovercraft attempting to depart from old Zion, rip through the base's malfunctioning dock doors, and turn their attention to destroying a large quantity of loaded cargo containers filling the dock area. Cut to Neo confronting Deus Ex Machina, from the scene close to the end of The Matrix Revolutions, only seen from the side and slightly below, some distance away. A hand passes quickly across the screen, and the scene freezes, as a robotic bug begins to crawl across it. A side view shows what appears to be a human male, clothed and in shadow, watching the screen in some sort of small, high-tech metallic room. He says "Most interesting."

Cut to Persephone reading poetry by herself in the Chateau--the fourth verse of Swinburne's "Dolores": "O lips full of lust and of laughter..." ( <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/2079.html> - Swinburne's quoted summary at the bottom is useful). The Merovingian enters the room, surprising her. "What are you doing?" "Nothing. Reading." "More of your...obsession?" Persephone closes the book and stalks out.

Supplemental background info (will be explained in the crits)

Zion is still trying to bring New Zion Command systems to full capacity. In Zion, the Machines captured some mainframe data that hadn't been evacuated or destroyed in time. Among this data is an archived copy of Zion's pre-war RSI signature database. With this information the Machines could lock the signals of Zion operatives whose signatures are on file and who are still jacking in via Zion's systems, ie veterans like Niobe and Ghost, and also access certain restricted stuff, like the Zion organization areas.

This archive is neural-locked and will respond only to the two ranking officers who signed it: Morpheus and Lock. Neither the Machines nor anyone else knows where Lock is. Because the user has to be in a relaxed state to reproduce the brainwave patterns necessary to match the encoding, the Machines can't force the information out of the sim; they have to persuade him to help them.

Zion can update their databases and an operative's RSI signature to a new one, and this is done from time to time for various reasons, but it is a painful process that involves a physical operation on the person's jack, updates to encryption hardware in the Zion operative's hovercraft, and updates to multiple high-security databases. Colt's signature, for instance, has been updated, because Roland is a paranoid son of a gun, especially after that \*\*\*\* Bane incident.

## Roland and crew

Captain Roland, the bellicose older captain of the Mjolnir (aka "Hammer") seen in Reloaded, Enter the Matrix, and Revolutions, was returning to Zion in his new ship, the Mjolnir II, after receiving news of trouble there in 8.2.5. The ship was in the tunnel nearing the main gate just as the Machine virus crashed through the Zion mainframe. It was one of the few ships still running its systems through old Zion; Roland saw himself as the senior ship captain (now that Niobe's got a desk job :p), and was determined to be the last ship out of old Zion.

The Zion mainframe crash sent massive feedback through the Mjolnir II's systems. The ship crashed just outside of the dock. Roland and his first mate, Colt, managed to escape from the burning wreckage, and the Sentinels, and get to a ship back to New Zion. Their operator, AK, crew member Mauser, and some of their other (unnamed in the movie scripts) crew are missing, and presumed dead.

Commander Lock is also among the missing. Roland has been promoted to Commander. (I changed the intro/meet mission stuff with Lock to treat his quotes as recordings or something rather than live messages.)

Colt is a new Zion Live Event character in this subchapter. I'd like to use him as more of a down-to-earth character than Ghost and Niobe. With that scheme in mind, I'm not going to use a fixed RSI disguise for him in-game, but will make him a standard player RSI, who can change clothes and so forth (he won't use RSI pills permanently, though, because I don't want to have to be updating his NPC version all the time :p). His default clothes will be a bit plain, and maybe players will feel like helping him work on his per-server wardrobe. He's going to use pistols in combat, for now at least the big silver shiny ones, like Elmore's Automatic, and those bugged Harlick 464s that look like twin silver semi-autos instead of revolvers.

## Crit 8.3.1

Zion: Tyndall briefly describes the attack on Zion, Lock missing, and Roland promoted to Commander in New Zion. Ghost says that after taking out old Zion, the Machines are increasingly on the offensive in the Matrix as well, and it's looking like they probably found something useful in Zion's mainframe, because they're really nailing specific targets now. Ghost introduces the player to Colt, Roland's former first-mate, now a captain since Roland's been promoted to Commander. Colt sends the player off to try to save some Zion facilities from attack. It's too late at the first one, as the player finds only dead Zionites, a locked



computer, and an Agent who coolly tells them that Zion is doomed, and if they want to live, they'll go Machine. The next location is under attack, but by Exiles (Dire Lupines). The player saves some data and takes it back to Colt, standing next to two dead Exiles. Colt gruffly describes how Roland's ship went down right outside the main gate, its systems fried by feedback from the mainframe's destruction; he and Roland got out, but Mauser and AK, who were on the main deck, probably didn't. He repeats the rumor about the Cypherites being behind the gate-ramming and bomb in Command, and the Machines killing Wright, and using her stuff to drop a virus into the mainframe.

Mach: Gray says Sentinels are now in control of Zion and the area around it, and Zionites have retreated to their new city. He says that the Machine virus managed to preserve some mainframe data from Zion's emergency shutdown sequence. Meeting the player in person, he explains about the capture of the three-year-old neurally encrypted RSI signature archive, and that it is locked by Lock and Morpheus; even Zion doesn't know where Lock is, and Morpheus is dead, but existing records of Morpheus will allow the Machines to construct their own Morph sim, once the player collects just a little additional data. Another Agent in the room describes the Cypherite gate-ramming at Zion, and silenci0's bomb that took out Zion Command. Gray mentions that the General's sim is not cooperative, and cooperation is necessary for a neural match to unlock the encryption. The player mugs some Zionites, stealing their Morpheus recording, which they take to Pace, waiting in a lab. Pace says the sim is coming along all right; maybe not the best, but they only need it for a very limited Morpheus impression. Pace describes the pleasure she felt watching the videos of Zion's destruction, and wishes she could have been there in person. Back to Gray, where the completed sim is initialized and examined. It parrots some Morpheus lines, but seems to jumble them a bit. Gray says that it may need some human guidance to help it learn how to respond correctly. A hackable computer in the area gives details on the deletion of the Incidence 5.991 (aka Joker\*) Exile.

Merv: Flood describes the Cypherite/Machine destruction of Zion, and says that some of the Sentinels swooping into Zion were the General's--undercover, as it were. The General's hologram reports two humans spotted scrambling into cover in Zion's wreckage: Lock, and one they didn't recognize. Flood receives the General's surveillance photos and describes the man as "a tall, muscular, dark-skinned, and disgracefully dressed man with jacks in him." The player is sent to steal Zion operative records so they can find out who it is, but the computer at the location assaulted has its database access limited due to "mainframe issues," and the data can't be reached. A hackable computer in the area contains a message from some Zionite, complaining about Roland being a thug who keeps getting promoted by losing his ships--he must have real good buddies on the Council, the message-writer concludes testily. Flood sends the player to try to get Machine data on which Zionite ships were found in the vicinity of Zion when it was attacked, since knowing which crews the man could have belonged to would narrow down the search considerably. They find Machine guards, and a lab worker who says "SNTL OAJDE"--a weird message that was also part of a cryptic Sentinel report found in 8.2.5, from a Sentinel lurking around Zion. Data is found on this worker's body, uploaded, and Malphas is consulted about the findings. Malphas is found being growled at by Ookami, who's apparently miffed that Malphas has said something to her about the intended target of her next hunt. Malphas tells the player that from the Machine

records, they've identified the person with Lock as Mauser, of Roland's ship, the Mjolnir II, which went down outside Zion's gate, although the Machines did not record it being downed by their own forces.

10/4-10/10

Required Events:

Zion: Colt and Ghost brainstorm with operatives to try to locate the Morph sim; they may get close, but either the sim vanishes just before being found, or Machines interrupt, or something like that

Mach: (after Merv event) operatives attempt to get the Machine Morph sim into the correct frame of mind by interacting with him as they would have with Morpheus; they then have it try to access the encrypted RSI archive; it fails and the Machines have it deleted

Merv: (before mach event) using insight on the code signature of Morpheus obtained from the General's experience, the Merv ambushes and abducts the Machine Morph sim; he finds it much more pliable than the General's, and toys with it, attempting to extract some useful information; gets sim to play old Morpheus FX like Neo's RSI, and that green zap effect around his body; Merv begins to suspect this sim is a dullard; Machines intervene and rescue the sim

10/11

Crit 8.3.2

Zion: Tyndall says that the Machines have captured the pre-Truce RSI signature database, that the database is locked by Morph/Lock neural encryption, and that the Machines seem confident a Morph sim could unlock it. She sends the player to talk to Seraph about finding the Morph sim to convince it not to help the Machines. The operator mentions that to unlock the encryption, the person with the right neural pattern has to be in approximately the same state of mind they were in when the encryption was encoded, which usually means that they can't be forced into unlocking it--thus why the sim has to be persuaded. Seraph says Morph hung out in abandoned areas telling people he'd fade away, that he's seen the sim in these places, and that he'll show where they are (ie signal the locations to the operator). Tyndall warns that the sim hasn't exactly been pro-Zion; the operator points out that neither was Morph before he died. The first area has only a weird Unclean who says that you can only find Morpheus if you believe. Cypherites ambush on the way to the second abandoned location, but there is the sim, hanging out with a puzzled vagrant. The sim concedes that if what the player has told him is true, many in Zion must die, but he points out that every side must have their own reason, and he promised the Machines [at that Mach event w/ Gray before the Truce ended] he would consider what they had to say; that, according to the Oracle, the purpose of life is to life, and Gray has admitted this applied even to the Machines.

Player takes this info to Niobe, who says that if nothing else the sim is as stubborn as Morpheus; that if it wants to talk, they'll talk, but it won't unlock the data for the Machines if she has anything to say about it. A Zionite guard mentions the Machines trying and failing to make their own morph sim. Tyndall reminds the player that the sim can reconstruct, another reason why it can't be coerced.

Mach: Gray says that since their data was insufficient to make a Morph sim, and Zion's data was pretty much destroyed with the mainframe, or smuggled to New Zion, they'll have to try the General's sim, which was accurate enough to fool some Zionites for a while; the Machines don't know where the General got the data required to compile such a program. They've had it under observation and know the derelict places it frequents. Some EPN have to be cleared off at the first location, but nothing else is found there. The next appears to hold just a drunk vagrant, but he laughs, and Morpheus sim appears in the room behind the player. It guesses that the Machines want a favor from it, but says it has reservations about Machine methods, and thus, about the ultimate purpose of the Machines. Without knowing this, it is not certain that it should aid them. Gray summons the player, giving them two level 255 (non-aggro, unattackable) Agents, saying that nothing must endanger their mission to obtain the simulacrum's cooperation. With this hefty entourage the player goes back to the sim, where Pace has been trying to give it the Machine pitch. Even after talking to Pace and the player, the sim says its mind is still not at peace on the subject; it only wants to do what it believes is right, but it isn't sure which side is right in this case.

Merv: The Merv wants to know if there was something between Man and Machine back in the old days that inspired the Machines to use humans as their sole energy source. Flood sends you to ask the Oracle. The operator briefly summarizes the 2nd Renaissance story of B1663R (or however it was written), the first robot to kill its master, the rise and nuking of Zero One, etc; he also says he saw "old vid tapes" when he was in Zion that were supposed to be from back in that era, and they seemed legit, but then again considering that the Machines invented even Zion itself, who knows? The Oracle says that old stories get exaggerated, and not all humans hated Machines for their business success, and not all Machines were obsessed only with business, but adds that the Machines were simpler back then, before they started getting "muddled up" like humans. Flood ponders the "simpler back then" remark, and sends the player to go steal a certain special access code from Binary Boy (the Zero One "Area K" quest item collector), specifying that the player must not let Binary Boy spot them. Getting the "acccode0110.blip" access code out of Binny's apartment isn't really that hard, and Flood finds that the Boy, as he thought, had this access code that can get into Zero One directly, without going through the Archivists, so he could "get live runtimes out without alerting the Machines." The excited Effectuator is called in to put the access code to use, and succeeds in summoning the Zero One construct's robotic overlord, the Taskmaster (who speaks very briefly and confusedly in binary). Taskmaster is led to the Merv. Beirn and Persephone are also present, and the Effectuator arrives too, to observe. The Merv scans it and says that its code is simple and lacking in complexity--unique behavior, creativity. He wonders if the Machines only came by such things gradually--evolution, or a learning process. Could their early simplicity have led to a reliance on humans? At this point the level 60 Taskmaster can (optionally) be killed, but drops no special loot.

10/11-10/17

### Required Events

Zion: Niobe very awkwardly talks to Morph sim and seems to make an impression, but it leaves without agreeing to anything

Mach: more attempted "friendly" persuasion of the Morpheus sim; it might show some favorable signs, but still leaves without agreeing

Merv: a cozy evening with Persephone where she reads Swinburne, reminisces about the old days back when she interfaced directly with humans in the pods, and talks about how the Merv is no longer the exciting young Frenchman/OS he used to be

10/18

### Crit 8.3.3

Zion: Tyndall sends the player to Colt to see about an "alternate means" of ensuring that the Machines don't get the RSI sig data. Colt is trying to spell out an elaborate attack plan against the Machines tracking the sim, but then the Effectuator appears and says that since Zion is in trouble again, the Merv'll help by sending the General to give tips on this Morph sim business. Colt is annoyed. The General's projection says that he has some unused scraps of Morph data that the Machines haven't deleted yet. The hologram is cut off by the Machines before he can describe certain old security measures still in place. The player has to fight past Elite Commando defenders to get to the data, and then escape with it past Machine ambushes. Tyndall says that recorded data on Morpheus in the Matrix is very rare because the Machines try to delete/confiscate it; she wonders where the General got his. Ghost congratulates the player and warns that if the Machines do get that data, they'll be able to go straight after some of Zion's top operatives; talked to a second time, he admits that he and Niobe would be in danger, too. At the end of the mission, the player receives copies of the three Morpheus audio recordings they retrieved (old recorded voice clips: "Thank you for your guidance," "At last... I have been waiting for this," "If you have learned anything, you will know better than to challenge me").

Mach: Gray says that the sim has been detected within the vicinity of the Oracle's home around Debir Court slightly more frequently than mere chance would account for, and anyway the Machines are out of ideas about unlocking this RSI archive, so go talk to her, 'cause sometimes the crazy stuff she says seems to help operative make logical leaps. The Oracle says that if they really want Morpheus (that's what she calls him--"it's simpler") to help, they've got to give him a reason that will matter to him. Seraph says that the sim has visited a number of times, sometimes asking many questions, sometimes none. Gray sends the player after some EPN creating a disturbance nearby; the player finds nothing but two dead EPN, one with a "Love Letter" on its body, sealed with lipstick, and hiding an embedded code easily detected and decrypted by the operator. It's written in Veil's style, and says to drop by a certain bluepill's place, to say to him "He shouldn't have believed you." Gray says the bluepill

was recently released by cops, after having been suspected of murder, since he was found nearby when a manic-depressive friend had fallen to their death from their apartment; no evidence turned up, though. Gray says the message is obviously meant to seem to have come from Veil, but it's an odd means of contact, so keep an eye out. Anyway it's complicated but the confronted blue freaks out and confesses to the murder of his friend (who was awakening to the Matrix, to the dismay of observing Cypherites, who also witnessed the unexpected murder), Veil phones the player in, and Cryptos explains that the player got this confession from the bluepill with that "believed you" remark because the Cypherites knew him--just as Cryptos knew Morpheus (way back in Zion). Cryptos offers to persuade the sim to help, in exchange for first dibs on the RSI archive, so he can remove entries for any exZionites who are now Cyphs. Gray says they aren't after Cyphs anyway, and Cryptos did know Morpheus, so they'll try his deal.

Merv: Still pondering why Machines would use human batteries, the Merv decides to reexamine the death rate disparity found last subchapter: the simulation shows humans what they expect, ie birth rates exceeding death rates, but if the Matrix is a stable system, the Machines couldn't really allow the population to grow like that. The Coroner had hinted at the Machines handling this by making people "disappear." Confronted and asked for more detail, the Coroner tells the tale of a PI friend of his, Mr. Reynolds, hired by a jealous husband to investigate ex-wife Mary MacHenry, who promptly fell to her death while caving in South America. Mary had called her mom from South America the previous day, but the version of the call recorded by Reynolds (tapped mom's phone? 80) had Mary saying she didn't feel well, and had called off the next day's caving expedition. Oh, and then Reynolds was mysteriously killed, by a bullet. The Coroner says that if they investigate, they'll find differing accounts of Mary's call to mom. Mom, when asked, says that she does remember now that Mary said she felt sick, but she definitely insisted she'd go to the cave the next day, despite mom's protests. Breaking into a federal records office, the official transcript of the call is obtained, and it has Mary telling mom she was in excellent health, and raring to go to the cave the next day. Another computer in the records office has a transcript of that phone conversation between Trinity and Cypher at the beginning of the Matrix, subtly altered to omit Morpheus' name, and reverse his hope of finding the One. The Coroner, asked for his theory about the disparate versions of MacHenry's phone call, says: "They didn't expect Mrs. MacHenry to take ill and call her mother; their plans called for her to have an 'accident,' alone, unseen. They changed the records, deleted Reynolds. They wanted to leave no evidence...that Mary MacHenry did \*not\* die." Flood calls him an idiot and a liar. There were silent Nightmares creeping around the Coroner, who said oh, don't mind them, just a spot of...work...to do later.

10/18-10/24

### Required Events

Zion: (before Mach event) Morph sim is attracted by news of the new data, and accepts copies from operatives, if they want to give them to him, but still will not definitely promise to ignore the Machines

Mach: (after Zion event) Cypherites, Cryptos, and the Morph sim; Morph sim eventually agrees to listen when Cryptos offers to tell him why Morpheus was so obsessed with obtaining the One's remains--they go off for a little private chat [note that players are \*not\* going to be told what they talk about...and actually I still have to figure that out at some point, but it can wait for a later subchapter]

Merv: Mary MacHenry "disappearing" story is investigated, the General's Sentinels help locate her pod (pod # P0100:021:0257:084)\*, and with the aid of some additional data captured from the Machines, it is found that Mary was removed--but not as in "flushed"--from her pod by the Machines themselves

\* [Pod number format is this: "[cluster 1-1000]:[tower 1-10|mc1-30]:[ring 1-300|mc1-1000]:[spoke 1-100]," where the second "mc" ranges are for the large "mega cluster" tower collections, like the one found next to the Fields near Machine city; I don't want this explained to players (note that this note is in square brackets :p), just thought it might be handy if any of you decide you want to incorporate pod numbers into some story]

10/25

#### Crit 8.3.4

Zion: Niobe and Ghost bid farewell before jacking out to have their jacks reconfigured. Niobe says that the people still in the Matrix will have to pick up the slack for all the old operatives who have to leave for a while, but she knows the player can do it; Ghost has a few confusing words of wisdom meant as encouragement. The player reports to Colt, who's with a dead operative whose signal was locked. He sends the player to go rescue some people with compromised signatures; he also mentions that his own was reconfigured when Roland got his new ship, and it was painful. A Zionite with him explains that because of all the security measures Zion needs running, the process requires a physical operation on the person's jacks, hardware and firmware updates on the hovercraft, and updates to multiple high-security databases, all of which can take weeks; it's usually only done in the rare cases where a hovercraft is compromised. At the first stop, the player gets a couple vets to a hardline without incident, although they complain a little. Tyndall explains that with someone whose signal may be locked, a hardline is the only almost-safe way to jack them out. At the second stop, the presence of the player "blows the cover" of the veteran operative, Machines pop in, and it's a fight to get them to the hardline. Tyndall mentions that the data the Machines have will also allow them into some Zion areas within the Matrix.

Mach: The player meets up with the Morph sim, Agents, and other Machine programs, and the sim successfully breaks the encryption on the captured archive. The sim ponders this success a bit: "So I am close...to the mind of a madman." With an escort, the player takes the decrypted data to Cryptos, where Gray and some Agents are standing by, a little on edge. Gray says that Cryptos isn't stupid enough to try to pull a fast one with the data. Cryptos removes the Cypherite entries and hands the data over, along with some musing on the slaughter about to unfold. Gray immediately sends the player after signature-compromised Zionites, before they can evac. The operator explains that the Machines can lock the signals

whose signatures they know, and if the RSI is killed while its signal is locked, the EJP doesn't work, and the victim is perma-dead. Two Zionites are found hovering over a dead Cypherite, and quickly killed. The next target is on a ship with n00bs whose signatures weren't on file. Nevertheless, any remaining Zionites in the area drop dead when the locked Zionite is killed, and Gray explains that they were able to trace the locked signal back to the crew's hovercraft, and Sentinels ganked it. Gray's speech pattern for the perma-kills is "Termination of target [target name] confirmed."

Merv: What did the Machines do with MacHenry? The player is sent to hunt up Machine data on the caretaker program that would have been in charge of her; machines are cracked, and it is found to be PSR-000c8201-DMT3R ["PSR" = "Pod Sub-Routine"]. If the Trainman were there, they could try spiriting DMT3R away from the Machines into the Matrix, but Trainman is AWOL (possibly dead, according to Malphas), so instead they have to settle for a séance in which Effy summons DMT3R to speak through the mouth of a blood-drinker.

Blooddrinker/DMT3R bluntly and robotically (capitalizes the first letter of every word, and linebreaks each sentence) tells the assembled Effy, Merv, Persephone, Malphas, and the player to get stuffed. Persephone is discomfited by the apparition, saying something about at least touching real people back then, whereas now she has just this illusion; the Merv makes a suggestive crack to her about "those mothering programs" being so defensive. The Merv suggests a new stratagem: stealing the records on DMT3R's activity at the pod from the Machines. A computer in the Machine area is scanning a "signature database" and has 4372 "signal matches" so far. DMT3R's log shows multiple "PHS CND" (physical conditioning) and "DC PRP" (disconnection preparation) sessions with Mary before "DSNCT" (disconnect). Female Night Watchmen pounce on the player after they obtain the log. [Also, Agent Pace is in the area, but two rooms away behind a locked door, with Agents around her--her presence is not pointed out, but some player may notice her if they get the right configuration of connecting rooms with interior windows.] Persephone translates the log, saying that it shows the Machines worked Mary very hard to build up her muscles before she was removed, but why? Talked to a second time, Persephone seems to remember something "that happened long ago," but she doesn't explain further. Malphas says that they know of no use the Machines have for physically active humans, but the effort they put into Mary suggests they weren't simply going to kill her, even that they may have wanted to use her as some kind of operative in the outside world. Flood thinks that's a ridiculous notion.

10/25-10/31

#### Required Events

Zion: with Colt; hold off Agents in White Hallways while team gets data out of org area

Mach: Taking advantage of the data: rampage through Zion org areas, or track down and terminate some veteran operatives, or something fun like that

(once they've completed crit 8.3.4, for the rest of this subchapter, Machinists w/ 100+ Machine rep will have an additional one-time mission: Zion org area, no key required)

Merv: Hypatia must be removed from Machine surveillance (started last subchapter) so that she can be consulted privately (in next crit)

11/1

### Crit 8.3.5

Zion: Tyndall sends the player to rescue veteran Strenlo ( [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300003053](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300003053) ). He says something that sounds like he's close to tracking down a backup of important information otherwise lost with the mainframe, but then Agents appear around him, and he is killed (Agent: "Target Strenlo signal lock confirmed. Terminating client."). The operator hopes that maybe they didn't actually have a lock. Tyndall is having trouble getting a response from Strenlo's hovercraft. She sends the player to Colt, who says he's trying to locate Joshua Maston ( [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300013871](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300013871) )--now a loner rather than a Zionite, but an old vet nonetheless, and someone they feel should be warned, especially because it's suspected he's still using his old Zion hardware and RSI signature. Tyndall describes how Maston was last found by EPN, printing old Morpheus leaflets. Searching one of these old haunts, the player comes across the Kid and some EPN; they're looking for Maston too. With EPN assistants in tow, the player checks another area, where Tyndall and the operator report high Machine scan activity--the Machines might be having trouble locking Maston's signal, but it won't take long with that much scanning brought to bear. Maston is there, and some Machines. Maston says he'll evac, because he doesn't want to die uselessly; he's grateful for Zion's offer to reconfigure his signature, but warns that as soon as it's done, he'll leave to continue his work. More Machines spawn in, even a level 100 Agent, but Maston is led to a hardline and gets out (the Machines won't actually attack Maston--because he's fixed at high level, I couldn't let him be attackable, else he'd be exploited as a tank by lowbies). Tyndall says she got through to Strenlo's operator, and was told Strenlo is dead.

Mach: Gray sends the player after veteran Zionites remaining in the Matrix against all logic of self-preservation. The first target is a recruiter, and Gray suggests that perhaps the dire straits in which recent Machine advances have placed Zion's recruiting program are responsible for this Zionite staying on the job. Two horrified bluepill potentials are there along with the target (and two other Zionites). There are hostile Zionites at the next location, but this second target's signal is lost--the operator thinks they may have got to a hardline. A hackable computer here has a message from Roland to Colt, telling him to get the vets out ASAP, and to tell them to stay out until their RSI signatures are reconfigured. Gray says that it will probably take several weeks for the surviving veterans to get reconfigured, during which time Zion's efforts in the Matrix will be at a near standstill, especially with Niobe and Ghost offline. The next target is found with some buddies, desperately trying to rewire a Redpill Extraction Point into a makeshift hardlinesque jack-out point, so that they don't have to try to use a hardline that the Machines might know about. A hackable computer here has a message from the target who escaped in the previous phase, saying they'd heard Strenlo had been killed, and advising the recipient to get out. At the next location, as the player nears the target, Gray orders them to stand down. Of course you can't really do this in the middle of a mission phase, so the player will have to go inside, where they are again ordered to stand down. They



will actually fail the mission if they kill the ex-target. Gray curtly thanks the player, congratulating them on their exemplary ability to obey orders.

Merv: Persephone recounts her recollection of a time during her work for the Machines at the pods where a human was removed, very similar to MacHenry's case; the log files were almost identical, which is what reminded her. Hypatia says that the Archivists may have records of the incident, since they've recovered and collected many records from previous versions of the Matrix; normally they'd charge a hefty fee, but Hypatia will give her permission for "the rev.2 data" [Matrix version 2, the one Persephone and the Merv come from] to be given in this case, and that now she and the Merv are even. The Archivists, who all look exactly like those green-jacketed guys in the bookstores ( ie [http://thematrixonline.station.sony...\\_syntax/034.jpg](http://thematrixonline.station.sony..._syntax/034.jpg) at [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300013211](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300013211) ), only without the books stuck to their hands, are a little weird, and can't find the "rev.2" data, but their index shows another similar log entry in rev.1, "the first iteration of the Matrix." They don't have the data, but know where it is, and agree to tell, if the data is eventually returned to them for archiving. Flood doesn't sound at all sincere about returning it, but agreement at any rate is made (although a dissenting Archivist appears, calling the Merv a "destroyer of history"), and off the player goes to steal the data from the Machines at the location indicated by the Archivists (who also don't want to be given "credit" for the location information [since they're sort of on good terms with the Machines]). Flood says if this works out, he may have to re-evaluate his (low) opinion of "those moth-raisers" (the Archivists). A Machine in the area is making a geeky journal entry about his theories on how the Matrix's dust-accumulation algorithm could be improved. The rev.1 data is found on a Machine, who is trying to smuggle it out before the players find him. Too late for him. Malphas says that the recovered data describes 14 individuals run through the disconnection process at the same time in the first Matrix iteration. Suddenly the General's hologram appears, looping a message: "I repeat: I am withdrawing all units from the vicinity of the Machine city. A large number of enemy units has [ooh, should really be "have"; I'll hafta fix that for the archived version of the mission :p] launched from the emplacements surrounding the city to take up what may be either defensive or reconnaissance positions. Simultaneous with this development, my perimeter scouts began reporting unusual patrol activity, including what may be a convoy or escort formation approaching the city." End of mission. Flood says not to bother him just now.

~~~~~

Notes:

Machine Morph sim abilities:

- the green zap around Morpheus
- Neo's RSI

Morph sim event dialog:

Vs the General (7.3.2): [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300013678](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300013678)

With Machines and Gray (7.3.3): [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300013890](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300013890)

Morph on Morph (7.3.5): [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300014510](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300014510)

Merv finds record of human in city very recently

Persephone's obsession...?

Persephone misses the interface with the Real that she had in her old job at the pods, although what she would really like, now that she feels like she has used up the pleasures of the Matrix, would be to be fully alive herself in a human body. Thus she will be very interested by any hints of this kind of possibility, such as the Trinity program.

Configuring Colt:

suspicious cynic

rsimskin001

rsimface001 rsimhair001

rsimtat004 rsimbody002

rsimhead010

(MHead\_9)

mclothing\_shirt\_a8\_c7 ("Green Sleeveless T-shirt")

mclothing\_pants\_a14\_c1 ("Derin Canvas Pants")

mclothing\_shoes\_a2\_c1 ("Skaver Short Boots")

mclothing\_gloves\_a5\_c1 ("Steen Threaders Gloves")

mclothing\_glasses\_a10\_c1 ("White Emerena Sunglasses")

8819 (the bugged Harlick 464s that look like the big semi-autos)

42910 (Elmore's Automatic - big semi-auto)

Colt's scenes in the movies and EtM:

Enter the Matrix (1 scene)

- about 2/3rds of the way through

The Matrix Reloaded (1 scene)

- final scene of the movie

## The Matrix Revolutions (3 scenes)

- near the beginning
- about 1/3rd of the way through, right before Morpheus and Niobe meet at the Logos crash site - chapter 9
- about halfway through, right after they've discovered that Maggie is dead and Bane is missing - chapter 13

### Coroner (shifty) dialog from Merv 8.2.1:

The death rate? The question is simple, but the answer is not. City officials would tell you it's 0.7%--about half of that birth rate figure of yours...not forgetting to factor in the 0.6% infant mortality rate, of course.

But we know something else, don't we? This simulation is meant to be stable--a closed system. Deaths must equal births, or it all goes to hell. But that isn't the picture they want to show the plebs. Do you see? Hah.

I'll tell you this, though: I trust their birth numbers more than their death numbers. Much easier to hide a death than fake a birth...believe me.

-----

Foreign travel, detention facilities, retirement homes, the suburbs... There are so many ways to make the undesirable simply...disappear.

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

11/15

### 9.1 Cinematic

A mysterious figure who will be known in this subchapter only as the "Intruder" appears at the top of Ascension Monument. His large male humanoid body consists of glowing white wireframe, with white code bits spiraling upward from his torso and limbs. He walks heavily down the monument path to the street below, where terrified pedestrians scream and run. Agents rez in, surrounding him. The Intruder raises his hand, there is a bright white flash/ripple/explosion, and the Agents fall to the ground. The Intruder stalks off into the Barrens.

### The Intruder and others

When the Intruder appears in missions and events, he will be level 100 (which just happens to be the highest level player character I can make for myself). Due to the way the character is presented in the cinematic, I suspect players will suspect this is another Unlimit style affair. It isn't really, aside from the characters having new and mighty powers (which in this subchapter he will use relatively sparingly, sorta), so eh hopefully I'll be able to show that in missions and events. [And yes, more of these wireframed weirdos will show up, but not in this subchapter. They will not be innumerable hordes like Unlimit...in fact there are less than 100 of them in existence. If we do it right, each one who pops into the Matrix will be a distinct personality with their own agenda. That's getting far ahead, however.]

## EPN

EPN has what I hope is a decent chunk of story for once: they will be moving into Old Zion, to fix it up as a forward base for possible strikes against Machine City--or I suppose whatever other useful things you could do from that position. Outside the shattered main dock gate they will find the remains of Roland's operator, AK, in the wreckage of the Mjolnir II. [They will find something rather more interesting, too, but not until the next subchapter.]

## Cypherites

The Cypherites will learn about EPN moving in, and won't like it. They may want to do something about it. They also won't like the way the Machines are kind of playing hands-off with the Intruder (I suspect Machinists won't like it much, either, despite what the Agents may tell them).

## Zion

It should be generally understood that by the start of 9.1, most of Zion's compromised veterans who survived and escaped back to Zion have had their RSI signatures updated, so that they are no longer subject to signal lock and termination by the Machines.

### Crit 9.1.1

Zion: Ghost briefs the player on the weird appearance in Westview, and the Machines pulling their forces back in the Matrix and the Real, before sending them off to try to track down the mysterious intruder. Following tapped emergency calls, the player encounters a frightened bluepill talking about running into a huge guy "made out of lines, like something out of a computer," and then blacking out. Further pursuit turns up a Machine security team ("sanitize the area"), and finally a dead "Accelerated Exile" NPC, who yields some strange data that the player uploads. The operator wonders briefly if the dead Exile was the being who appeared at the monument.

Mach: Gray asks the player to find some Agents who have stopped responding. The Agents are found, dead, and Gray grudgingly admits that he needs to involve the player in the investigation of "a certain odd occurrence." The player checks in with a bluepill who made an emergency call. The bluepill says they already talked to some detectives. Whoops, Zion's

been there! Gray checks, finds a line tap, and has the player take out some pesky eavesdropping Zionites. The bluepill they were questioning is kind of freaked out by all this, but manages to say something about a big neon robot type of thing with white sparks, that scared him and made him dizzy. Gray says that yes, they are tracking an unusual individual consistent with that description, sorta, and that they're highly dangerous. The player is sent to check out one more emergency call, and finds a dead "Accelerated Machine." Gray thanks the operative, and tells them that will be all for now; oh, and by the way, related to this weird intruder, we've pulled back some forces to protect "core routines." Bye.

Merv: Malphas briefs the player on a weird wire guy killing some Agents at Ascension Monument, and how the Machines are all worked up about it. The Merv hunt for the intruder begins, and the player is sent to check up on hunting blood-drinkers who seem to have run into a hitch of some sort. They're dead, with live Machines on the premises. This irritates Flood, because he's running short of responding hunt programs, and has to put the player themselves in the hunt. They come across Zionites, and a dead Accelerated Exile. The operator says "its cycle speed is off," and "there's some kind of code residue fouling up the readings." Flood says that sounds ridiculous, and that it's time to call in a data expert: Cerulean. She says the code readings are of an unfamiliar type; she'll investigate, but she wants double her usual payment. Flood is aghast.

11/15-11/21

Required Events:

Zion: Tracking the code signature, Zion finds a strange packet of data bits. They think they can use this data to help understand the Intruder's code. (Afterwards I'll return the generic Data item to the person who found it as a "Decelerator Bit." This is a single-use item that hits all enemies within 30 meters with a viral attack that causes a 25% speed debuff, and -3% to all accuracies and defenses, for 60 seconds.)

Mach: Machines catch up to the Intruder, but are counter-attacked by their own overridden "Accelerated Machine" programs.

Merv: Cerulean and operatives track the Intruder, and find that his wanderings around Westview keep looping past the Heart o' the City Hotel.

11/22

Crit 9.1.2

Zion: The player picks up a sample of the data acquired so far from the intruder. Zion technicians haven't been able to make any progress in understanding it. In that lab, a Zionite guard mentions that a buddy told him that the Machines have pulled out of (old) Zion. Tyndall sends the player to get the Auditor, first by disabling the Machine station maintaining surveillance on the Exile, then by taking out the guards where he's being held. The Auditor

examines the data sample, but returns it hurriedly, saying that the code doesn't belong in the Matrix, and "this was not supposed to happen."

Mach: Gray says that the intruder shouldn't be in the Matrix, and that their presence is causing code failures: he needs to be removed, or at least restrained and isolated. Going after him with programs hasn't worked out so well, so now they're going to try a combo of operatives and programs. The player takes up the hunt for him and runs into lupines, who are evidently looking for him also. Sent to check on one (program) search team that's stopped responding, the player finds them dead, along with a frightened bluepill who describes a wave of white light that washed over the room and dropped the Machines in their tracks. Armed with redpill reinforcements from Pace, the player resumes the hunt, this time coming across hostile "Accelerated Exile" programs.

Merv: It's been decided that it's time to make the intruder's acquaintance, and show him that the Mervs are the ones for him. The player is sent in to talk to him, and he seems to be in an accommodating mood ("A tour of the city, you say? ... Why not? Impress me.") First stop is Cerulean, who tells him that she tracked him down, and that nobody beats her and the Merv at finding data (she makes it clear to the operative that she's just saying this about being super chummy with the Merv 'cause Flood's paying her to say it). The intruder finds her ghostly form interesting ("I didn't expect to find this sort of mutation"). Next stop is Malphas and Ookami; Ookami is not at all happy to be there, and Malphas talks the intruder's ear off about the Merv's superior intelligence network. The intruder is somewhat intrigued by the pair ("amusing that some of these have survived; I see the Machines aren't nearly as in-control as they would like to appear"). Last comes Hypatia, who contacted Flood wanting to meet the intruder. She's describing the benefits of the Archivist Society to the intruder, who says that maybe the Merv does know more than he'd thought, but he isn't interested in "ancient history" right now. Flood is mad that Hypatia turned the intruder off by tooting her own horn.

11/22-11/28

Required Events:

Zion: Hm... Maybe capturing some Accelerated Exiles/Machines (or their bodies, anyway ;p) to get some final code readings. Level 55+ three-chevron Accelerated NPCs have a chance of dropping "Accelerator Bits" (single-use 30 meter AOE items that give a +50% speed buff, and +3% to all accuracies and defenses (Accelerated NPCs have those buffs all the time, by the way), and immunity to Decelerate to all friendlies in range at time of use, for ten minutes), so maybe we can bring some of them in.

Mach: Machines send operatives to tackle the Intruder. He spawns a Decelerator program that pulses the Decelerate debuff effect on everyone in the area, while he beats to a pulp anyone who actually reaches him (I think I'll have him use plain ol' level 100 Self Defense, and a health regen high enough that he can't be worn down). Machines eventually try sending in high-level Agent programs, but these are terminated by Terminate shockwaves from the Intruder, who then stomps off. This "Terminate" attack affects only programs (and maybe "human" NPCs unfortunate enough to be in range, but never mind that detail :p).

Merv: Operatives rap with the Intruder and tell him how cool the Merv is.

11/29

Crit 9.1.3

Zion: Tyndall says that by examining the code samples they've come up with a hack they can use to contact the intruder directly, but that it's fairly low-level, and has to be run through a land-line. The operator wonders why it would have to be run through a Machine system like that. The player borrows the phone of a bluepill couple, but the call won't go through-Machine jamming. Roland comes up with the scheme of having the player report call in a fake encounter with the intruder, then back-tracking the responding Machine units to find the location of their security center, and hopefully, the broadcast center of the signal jamming. This works, the player takes out the jamming center, and then tries another call to the intruder--which goes through. The intruder doesn't say much over the phone, but what he seems to recognize the name "Zion," and to think that the organization "might be able to tell me ... what I want to know."

Mach: Gray says that since trying to stop the intruder directly has met with failure, they're going to concentrate on stopping Zion and EPN from getting in touch with him. The operator is frustrated by this apparent inability to deal with the intruder in their own simulation. The player takes care of some nosy EPN, a few of whom are discussing something that sounds like it could be about scouting out old Zion. This done, Gray sends the player to contact Pace at a jamming station. Pace hands over some Machine reinforcements, and also drops a little hint about negotiations that went on between the Machines and the intruder "before he entered the Matrix." The Architect and the Network are here also, standing in a room behind two sealed doors (neither Pace nor Gray mention them). Gray sends the player after Zionites who've been trying to contact the intruder via hacked phone lines, then calls on them to rescue a jamming station from a Zionite attack. This is accomplished, but it was a near thing, and Veil was there, getting one of the last kills. She isn't happy about the Machines letting the intruder stomp around the city, scaring citizens.

Merv: Concerns about Zion trying to horn in on the intruder action prompt the Merv to call in the General for a military demonstration. The Effectuator brings in five Elite Commandos, and one nonplussed regular Commando ("Yesssss! No casualties!"). The player goes and finds the intruder, who looks around, then pops the Elite Commandos, who had been in the room invisibly, out of stealth ("Someone's been teaching old programs new tricks"). The player leads some of the Elites off to crack Zionite skulls while the intruder and Malphas look on; the Zionites were in the process of trying to hack a phone line to contact the intruder. The intruder is interested in the existence of the General's rogue Sentinel programs in the Real. 11/29-12/6

Required Events:

Zion: Fight past Machines/Exiles/Commandos/whatever to get to the Intruder and get his attention for some kind of meeting.

Mach: Operatives are supposed to form a wide cordon around the Intruder, and prevent Zionites (and Mervs, I guess) from reaching him. They are definitely not supposed to mess with him themselves. Maybe some will and we can make an example of them in some sort of educational but non-scarring way.

Merv: Some minor kind of setback showing the Intruder is a prickly fellow... Like he tells off the General and terminates some of his commandos, or maybe some neighborhood contact called in to help who gets terminated (and the Merv complains later about the expense of restoring them from backup).

12/6

Crit 9.1.4

Zion: In preparation for a meeting with the intruder, Colt and Ghost brief the player on Merv and Machine relations with the stranger: the Merv has been kissing up to him, but so far hasn't got much out of him, and the Machines, after trying to stop him directly and getting crushed, have switched over to trying to prevent Zion from contacting him. A hackable computer in the area has a message from "R" ([Roland]) relating to EPN in the old city [and no sign of Lock]. The player checks a report of Machines near the meeting site, and finds Accelerated Machines, and an Accelerator NPC (can be attacked, but it's level 100 and highly resistant (and doesn't drop anything great)). No actual unmodified Machines around, so the meeting proceeds. The intruder is interested in how the Machines were using Zion, and how Zion got out of their control; he says he wants to hear more. Niobe's glad he's been cordial, but a little concerned that he hasn't revealed anything about himself. One plus, she mentions, is that he's buying Zion time to recover from recent losses by occupying the attention of the Machines. Ghost says that although he's powerful, there's something he seems to want very badly.

Mach: Gray sends the player after some Zionites who appear to be involved in arranging a meeting between the intruder and the Zion leadership (Gray says the Machines can track the intruder "to an extent"). The operator mutters that this seems to be a losing strategy, or at best just a delaying tactic. A hacked computer has a message from "R" ([Roland--it refers very obliquely, without mentioning any names at all, to EPN in old Zion, and the search for Zion survivors/data (and Lock)]). When Gray sends the player after still \*more\* Zionites, the operator countermands the order, and sends the player to get some answers from the intruder himself. They find him surrounded by dead Machine programs. He's not at all interested in giving out any information about his goals, and he says the Machines won't, either, if they know what's good for them. He adds that he isn't likely to tell Zion anything. Gray admits that at least some explanation about the intruder is overdue; this comes from Pace, who says that there isn't a lot she's allowed to impart about him, since he is "inextricably linked with information that cannot be compromised without severe risk to the System"; but she does say that his presence is causing problems because the Matrix wasn't



designed to support his code, and that since they can't stop him from being there, they have to try to minimize his impact on the simulation, and they must try to avoid aggravating him.

Merv: Flood says it's time to give the intruder the full-court press, and sends you to moderate over a staged meeting between the wireframed one and Persephone. The intruder seems annoyed by the confrontation with her, and, after choking something back, tells her that he "outgrew the charms of beauty long ago." She says that he does not know himself, and that "there is nothing of a young man's blood in this one's body or mind." After an interruption by Machines, and a puzzling bit of shouting by Flood to someone on the phone about moving some cakes, the player presides over a meeting between the intruder and the Chef, where, while the intruder admits that his body can taste food, he doesn't really seem interested in eating, although he makes a revealing comment about the Machines ("It's almost amusing that they saved all these...trappings of a dead culture--things they were never designed to enjoy. They'd better not be losing their sense of perspective."). Finally, Flood blows out all the stops and sends in the Jeweler, Lotus, and the Sculptress simultaneously. Although the intruder says that he doesn't have any use for "digital substitutes," he does seem to think that the Merv may be useful after all--but it's clear that it's on a "don't call me, I'll call you" level, as far as he's concerned.

12/6-12/12

Required Events:

Zion: Zionites rap with the Intruder and tell him how cool Zion is. He pumps them for as much information as he can get.

Mach: Hmm... I think something quite a bit different, as far as Machine events go anyway. Some sort of investigation of where the Intruder might have come from, despite Machine (Agent) reluctance to say anything on the subject.

Merv: Party in the Hel Club. Merv had extensive plans to entice the Intruder there, but he actually shows up with hardly any prompting, and seems particularly interested in the club itself.

12/13

Crit 9.1.5

Zion: The intruder has been pumping Colt for information, which has Tyndall a little concerned. The player finds them just as Colt is trying to explain about Morpheus' assassination, and how the Morpheus simulacrum acts differently than Morpheus did before his death. The intruder wants to see the simulacrum. Shimada calls: EPN is concerned about the intruder; some people thought he might be the next One, but his behavior hasn't shown him to be worthy of trust, and she's worried about the Morpheus simulacrum being exploited for ill purposes again. She also mentions EPN moving into the old city, and finding the

wreckage of the Mjolnir II, and AK's body. She says that the city is in a good position for use as a "forward base," and that although it's vulnerable, EPN is mobile, and can get out quickly if the Machines make a serious effort to go in and get them. Tyndall echoes some of Shimada's distrust of the intruder, and hopes that he can be dissuaded from looking for the sim. The player tracks him down in a derelict area, but the intruder is quite firm about his purpose. A vagrant in the area feels ill after having caught a glimpse of the intruder. Meanwhile, Zion has found the sim. The player goes in to warn him about the intruder's curiosity, and to try to get him to skedaddle. The sim, however, seems to welcome the prospect of an opportunity to respond to the intruder's questioning with more questions, if the intruder does find him. Tyndall worries that the intruder, while he may be great at neutralizing the Machines, is following a hidden agenda.

Mach: Sent to try to do some intruder impact minimization, the player comes across dead Machines, a stunned SWAT guard ("It wasn't human... Emptied two clip... Why didn't it kill me like the others?") and a somewhat more coherent bank clerk, who describes bright flashes, and shockwaves that knocked everyone down, killing the other men there (Agents), and how the intruder laughed at him. Gray says loss of programs to the intruder is becoming a serious problem, and sends the player to check out yet another Agent team that's stopped responding: the player finds dead Agents, hostile Accelerated Machines, and an Accelerator. One of the dead Agents had a recording unit going; his recording is recovered and played back, revealing the frustrated intruder muttering to himself about something: "They must have another... A backup--something they've kept hidden... Somewhere in this small little world..." The operator raises some questions: 1) the intruder doesn't look human, but definitely acts human; what if he is? 2) where's he from? 3) what's he looking for? Gray says okay let's talk about this. In a meeting with Gray and Pace, Gray tells the player that the intruder is a freeborn human, who has not been in the Matrix before; he's kinda familiar with human history, but not with the Matrix itself--although now he's probably learning rapidly. Gray says he can't say anything more about the intruder's background. Pace says that the codes the intruder uses are direct overrides of System routines, and that the Machines can't really do anything about them while the Matrix is running, since it would require tinkering with "root functions." Gray adds that the intruder is looking for information he thinks the Machines have withheld, even though they told him they didn't have it.

Merv: Excited about finally getting the chance to show the Merv how he's tamed the intruder, a distracted Flood sends the player to check on the Exiles sent to summon the intruder: they're Accelerated and hostile. Flood is mad, and doesn't want to hear any back-talk about a possible risk to the Merovingian; he says he's got the intruder under control. Malphas isn't so sure, and gives the player some operative backup. The player arrives at the Merv/intruder meeting, where the intruder tells the Merv: a) he's surprised the Machines haven't wiped out the Merv and Zion; they're doing a bad job of things; b) he thinks the Merv seems all right, and he might have a job for him later; c) he knows the guy the Machines must have copied the Merv's face from. The Merv is horrified at this revelation. Catching up with the player afterwards, he's very angry about the intruder's attitude, and says that he'll find out who this man is, and what he's hiding--and that the secret knowledge the intruder professes to have would have to have come from somewhere outside the Matrix.

[I will probably be trying to go on break from ~ Monday Dec 15th through Monday Jan 1st, which means there would be no official Live Events during that two week period. MXO's annual Winter Holiday event should be going on during that time.]

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

1/10

## 9.2 Cinematic

The Morpheus simulacrum stands at the edge of a windswept skyscraper rooftop. The intruder appears next to the sim and inspects it. The Architect appears a small distance behind them. The intruder turns to him, angrily calling the sim's construction "pathetic." The Architect calls the sim the work of "an amateur," telling the intruder that it isn't at all like the intruder himself. The intruder's anger increases, and he curses, saying that if he thought that was a joke, he'd have the Architect deleted. He then demands "it," and implies that the Architect knows what he's looking for. The Architect begins a smooth denial, but the intruder snorts in disgust and leaps away before he can finish.

### Crit 9.2.1

Zion: The intruder is making his way into Zion bases, attempting to access the network. The player has to do some rewiring to shut off his access. He takes it in stride, playing it off with somewhat flippant conversation, but doesn't give any indication that he's going to stop doing whatever he likes. At one point, he mentions that he's never been to either old or new Zion.

Mach: While taking out some accelerated programs, the player runs into Veil, who voices discontent about the Machines not trying to stop the intruder directly. Gray says that they're trying to discuss things with the intruder, but that he isn't responding, although they can track high concentrations of his override codes. After some searching and fighting, they succeed in making their way to a large override signal, but it isn't the intruder; it's a level 100 "Decelerator" program.

Merv: The Merv sends the player digging among Machine systems for dirt they can use to ensnare the intruder, but all they come up with at two separate locations is a simple engagement protocol instructing Machines to avoid the intruder. Next they try getting something juicy from the Network's media servers, but just come up with a long list of censored reports. Finally, Flood decides that Pace is a weak link, and sends the player to apply to her as if they're an operative looking to join the Machines in order to combat the intruder. Filing past eight glaring Agents, the player gets to Pace, who says she's afraid that they don't have any openings for someone with the player's skill set--oh, and next time, they should save themselves the trouble of breaking into Machine computers. The operator says this was Flood's dumbest idea ever.

1/10-1/16

Required Events:

Zion: intruder wants info on Neo and Trinity and what they did in the Matrix

Mach: intruder doesn't want to talk, and creates loads of Decelerator programs, and a Runtime program (spawns Accelerated Machines on operatives in the area)

Merv: while schmoozing the intruder, Machines interfere; General sent to assist in repelling them; General has to cut transmission due to Sentinels closing in, intruder snidely asks why doesn't he just use some Seekers on them

1/17

Crit 9.2.2

Zion: The intruder has been seen entering the area around the Oracle's apartment, and the player is sent to keep tabs on him. After having to work past some accelerated programs, they find him in a room containing some hacked-together equipment. He says that it's the room where Neo was woken up; he says that he isn't surprised that the player didn't know what it was, since the Machines had changed it. He says he's there to take "code readings." Colt has an update: EPN is trying to get in touch. The player is sent to talk to Shimada, who says that they followed a beacon signal from a wrecked surface facility above Zion, and found Commander Lock, weak and recovering from injuries, but conscious. They're moving him down to old Zion.

Mach: Gray sends the player hunting for the large override programs, saying that they need operative help with this, since those programs have been causing very high casualty rates among Machine programs. The player hunts up some Decelerators, and then Gray sends in some Agents to help take them out. With the Decelerators out of the way, the player is able to reach the intruder, who is angry, but agrees to meet with the Machines, adding that "they'd better not try screwing me this time." After this success, the player is sent to take out some of the commando programs the General's been using in his intruder-related operations in the simulation. In the course of this, the player may locate a computer, in which someone was trying to access Machine information on "Stalingrad" before their access was cut.

Merv: The General thinks the intruder must have learned about the Seeker missiles from the Machines. He gives the player some commandos and tells them to go find out what the Machines and the intruder discussed concerning the Seekers, and the battle at Stalingrad. The search of a Machine system is cut off, and the player tries again with sneakier Elite Commandos. This time, they manage to grab a snippet of a report: "...prior to entering the System in the vicinity of Ascension Monument, subject cited alleged remote tracking of System forces to structure code-name 'Stalingrad' as the event precipitating his visit. However, it is probable that the coincidence of this occurrence with the presence of..." Flood can't imagine why the intruder would be interested in that crater.

1/17-1/23

#### Required Events:

Zion: w/ the intruder, visit the building where Trinity was shot falling out the window and Neo brought her back to life in the second movie--find game building that's as close a match as we can get to building in movie

Mach: meeting w/ intruder, operatives, Agent Pace; intruder initially interested in Pace, but she realizes this, acts more typical emotionless Agency, he loses interest; he wants to meet w/ Architect, Pace agrees to make inquiries

Merv: brainstorm session w/ Merv & General, trying to figure what significance Stalingrad battle could have had for intruder; decide probably presence of Sati in Real

1/24

#### Crit 9.2.3

Zion: A message comes through from Lock, who says that he must have been knocked out in the explosion in the command center at the beginning of the Machine/Cypherite assault on Zion. He woke up in a wrecked surface lab: Mauser had brought him there, and nursed him until Sentinels came. Mauser had a lightning gun, and tried to lead them away from Lock; he succeeded, but it cost him his life. Suddenly the intruder appears next to the player, and wants to know about the lightning gun; he seems surprised that Zionites had weapons capable of fighting Sentinels. Colt, who's been there all along, says that Mauser would have been more than a match for a single Sentinel with his lightning gun, and that Neo didn't even need a gun; he could just wave his hands to destroy Sentinels. Hearing this, the intruder suddenly becomes outraged, saying "They WERE lying!" Tyndall reports a sudden outbreak of accelerated programs across the city. With reinforcements from Ghost, the player takes out some of the programs, although a debuffing "Decelerator" program makes this difficult. The player reports to Niobe, who has just had to fight off some accelerated programs herself. She says that the intruder has flipped out, and they don't know why, but they've got to try to calm him down.

Mach: Accelerated programs are causing so much havoc among Machine systems that they even disrupt the usual "get backup from Agent Pace" bit, and she fights beside the player against the accelerated programs who took out the intended backup. The player has to go on without backup, and finds a pack of dead Elite Commandos, then an Accelerator program that has overridden some Elite Commandos, buffing them up so that they're more dangerous than ever.

Merv: Flood sends the player to sound the intruder out about the Sati theory, but he's suddenly nowhere to be found, and there are hostile accelerated programs everywhere. Flood decides to go ahead and try to nab Sati ("if the General could do it..."), sending the player to a Mara apartment where she has supposedly gone to meet a playmate; inside the

apartment, though, a bluepill couple say that the kids just went out (they then threaten to call the police).

Flood says not to worry, he just got a hot tip that Sati's in a building nearby. The player goes there and finds not Sati but Seraph, who says: "Take this message to the Frenchman: she will not be found while the Oracle lives, nor before you have returned what you took from me."

1/24-1/30

Required Events:

Zion: find intruder and try to chill him out; when asked why he's mad, who "they" were, what the "lying" was about, or whatever, he becomes incensed and fights the operatives

Mach: swarms of Accelerators, Decelerators, and Runtimes across the city

Merv: get to intruder, tell him about Sati, he questions General, suggests some way to access her program data from General's surviving logs or servers

1/31

Crit 9.2.4

Zion: After fighting off more accelerated programs, the player finds the intruder, who tells them to stay the hell out of his way. He adds that he's got "fish to fry," and that he doesn't like being lied to. Colt calls the player in to talk to the Kid, who has details on the facility where they found Lock. Sentinel claws and lasers had breached the structure. Inside, they found Mauser's fingerprints, and traces of blood confirmed to match Mauser's, but they haven't found his body. They didn't find any dead Sentinels in the area, but there were lightning gun scorch marks everywhere. Whatever equipment had been in the lab was completely wrecked. Tyndall has the player try capturing Sentinel activity logs that might cover their encounter with Mauser, but although they're able to steal such logs from a Machine facility, the data contains no record of Sentinel activity at that surface lab in the past several months.

Mach: The player is sent to investigate why a group of Agents, held in reserve for counterattacks against override threats picked out by operatives, have stopped responding. The player finds all five of them dead. Then another pack of Agents turns up dead, and Gray is worried. Data retrieved from one of them is analyzed, and a program devised to counter the threat. During this analysis, scientists allude to core routines being rewritten to protect them from the intruder's override codes. The player locates the problem, a "Terminator" program, and uses the counter program to take it out.

Merv: The General sets up one of his own commandos to be captured by the Machines, so that they can track where the Machines take the program, in the hope that the Machines will store him alongside other data previously captured from the General. The player breaks in and runs a search, but doesn't find anything there about Sati. The General thinks the

Machines have probably deleted the data as too sensitive, and figures that the best course now is to go present the matter to the intruder, who seems to have calmed down a bit since the previous week's rampage. The player finds the intruder standing with a Terminator program among piles of dead Machines. The intruder asks for more detail about Sati, and, after "She was taken into the outer world by the General... That was the only time? And did she have a body there, or..." says that she couldn't be what he's after, which is a "biological interface program," and that if the Merv can get him one of those, he'll make him king of the Matrix.

1/31-2/6

Required Events:

Zion: players find intruder fighting Bookwurms; gets to Hypatia, demands "biological interface program," when she says she doesn't have a program like that, he terminates her; intruder disconsolate, says something about being trapped

Mach: operatives find intruder; Gray shows up to ask what he wants; intruder terminates him; Pace shows up, offers meeting w/ Architect; intruder doesn't terminate her [Gray will be restored by the System in time for the next crit, yay!]

Merv: show BIP possibility to intruder: Beirn; not what intruder's after

2/7

Crit 9.2.5

Zion: The player is sent to look for anything they can find on a "biological interface program" at Wright Research, since mechanical-to-biological interfaces were one of Wright's specialties. After some breaking and entering, the player makes their way to Wright Research "Building 27," a heavily guarded area where they keep their really important new research, but they don't find any sign of a true breakthrough in interface technology there. The intruder's been a little less savage, so the player goes to see if they can get more details on what he's after. The intruder isn't surprised that nothing useful was found at Wright Research, saying "if a human could have written it, I'd have had it by now." He refuses to say anything more about it, saying "the less you know, the better."

Mach: Hypatia was restored by her support programs after her termination, but is still infected by override codes, and must be terminated properly. The player fights past her Bookwurm guards and takes out Accelerated Hypatia. Then it's off to notify the intruder that it's meeting time. He warns that they'd better not try lying to him again. At a pre-meeting briefing, a wounded Gray (still recovering from the 9.2.4 event) admits that the Machines "misled" the intruder before he entered the Matrix, because they wanted to keep him out of the simulation. That didn't work, so now they're going to have to tell him the truth, in the hopes that this will convince him to leave. At the meeting, the intruder demands a "biological interface program"

from the Architect, saying that he knows it exists. The Architect confirms this, but says that the Machines did not create it, and the only remaining copy was removed from the System—the one the intruder himself had detected outside the simulation before he entered the Matrix. This brings the intruder up short, but he's clearly not happy with this state of affairs. Gray hopes that this meeting will lead the intruder to leave the simulation in pursuit of the interface program.

Merv: Going to talk with the Merv, the player finds the Twins arguing about who the intruder will "off" next (Architect vs Pace). Malphas has a theory that the intruder asked the Machines for this "biological interface program" before he entered the Matrix, and they put him off somehow. The Merv is determined to find this program before anyone else, and sends the player to go talk to his wife, who he says "interfaced" with humans at the pods, back when she served the System. Persephone, however, says she was just a "caretaker" there; any control she had over the humans was indirect, whereas what the intruder wants is immediate control that will allow him to change who he is, because he hates what he has become. Flood sends the player on plan B, which is seeing if the reconstructed Silver, who worked on interface programs with Wright (and gave information about it to the Machines, for which he was killed for the Merv by Sieges, whose name is mentioned here), has anything that would help. Silver says that what he worked on with Wright was just complex data conduits, although she had wild ideas of her own about "control transfer." Anyway, all his data on his work with Wright was confiscated by the Machines. Finally, Flood sends the player to ask the intruder for more information on this program he wants, but the intruder, surrounded by dead N30 AG3NTs, says 1) Persephone/Silver's work is nothing like what he wants, 2) the program's got to be here somewhere, 3) "if only HE hadn't taken the other one..." 4) the player knows as much as the intruder needs them to know.

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

2/25 [was pushed back from 2/21, although a brief leak of the cinematic occurred on that day]

### 9.3 Cinematic

A second wireframed man appears, taunting the intruder. From their conversation it is clear that they are familiar with each other, that the newcomer has followed the intruder to see what he's up to, and that they are in competition with each other. In fact, they fight, until the intruder decides that the other is only trying to distract him, and leaves. An Agent is seen observing the scene and reporting.

### Notes

[This second wireframed man is named Carlyne. He will tell players that the intruder's name is Halborn, and the intruder will appear with that name throughout this subchapter. 9.2 was tricky because sometimes an org was supposed to be nice with Halborn, but once we get up to around 9.3.2-3ish, there will pretty much always be one or the other that they can fight, and hopefully other orgs they can go fight too.]



### Crit 9.3.1

Zion: Tyndall and Colt inform the player of the appearance of a second wireframed man, his fight with the intruder, and an outbreak of more override programs. The player takes care of them, and then locates the intruder, who has a Terminator in the middle of a bunch of dead Accelerated Exiles, and tells the player that the newcomer is Carlyne, his own name is Halborn, that they've known each other a long time, and that Carlyne is a practiced liar. At a debrief, Niobe is concerned that Carlyne will distract Halborn from keeping the Machines busy, and that the two of them together could cause problems as well. She also indicates that she isn't in any hurry to trust Carlyne.

Mach: Gray sends the player to check out the new wireframed guy, saying not to attack him; finding him, at least, will be easy, since he hasn't even tried to hide himself from Machine scans. The player fights past a few Accelerated Exiles to find Carlyne (and some friendly Accelerated Exiles). Carlyne apologizes for the hostile programs, saying he thought the player might have been "like those others." He's pleased to find the player works for the Machines, saying they're just the people he wants to see, and asks for a meeting, saying he can help with a mutual problem. Gray says he'll see about the arrangements, and sends the player to get more info from Agent Pace. Pace says Carlyne is "a human from outside the pod system," like Halborn, and probably has access to the same override codes that Halborn does. She says they fought in Westview, and it's important that they find out if Carlyne is going to be cooperative, in contrast to his opponent. A computer in the area is tracking something along coordinates [that would be valid in Westview, if not elsewhere]. Gray meets Carlyne; Carlyne says he wants to "eliminate Halborn as a problem here," but that "we both know better" than to believe Carlyne is acting out of altruism alone. Talking things over afterwards, Gray says Carlyne means the intruder when he says "Halborn," and claims to have known him for a long time. Gray voices concerns about Carlyne potentially being as big a threat to the System as Halborn (when he was leaving the meeting in Halborn's presence, Gray acted fully satisfied with Carlyne's claim of being there just to help the Machines against Halborn). Pace says that they'd hoped the last meeting with the Architect would have persuaded Halborn to leave the Matrix, but that he's turned out to be very stubborn and unreasonable. She's afraid that as he keeps failing to find the program he wants, he'll get more and more desperate, and eventually have another anti-Machine freakout. An Agent patrolling the halls is mulling something about Agent Griffin and "the Murphey case" (dunno what, exactly; just wanted to throw in a mention).

Merv: Flood sends the player to ask the intruder about this second guy. After going through some Headless NPCs buffed by an Accelerator, they find him--still named "Intruder"--and some dead Machine redpills. He says he's busy, but agrees to meet the Merv, as long as it's something good. The intruder shows up at the meeting as "Halborn," and says the other one's named Carlyne, and that he must be after the same thing Halborn wants--that kind of snatch-and-grab tactic is typical of him. The Merv promises to help just as much as he can. Malphas, outside the meeting room with the Twins, says that it will be tricky to stay on good terms with both of them, but Carlyne, at least, is easy to locate. The player finds Carlyne searching for something on a computer (he's cleared the search just as the player enters), and Carlyne is delighted with the prospect of meeting the famous Merovingian. The Merv and

the Twins appear in the outer room, and the player brings Carlyne to him. The Merv is charming, and assures Carlyne he wants to help him against Halborn. Carlyne says this is the beginning of a wonderful partnership.

2/25-2/27

Required Events:

Zion: meeting w/ Carlyne - admits he may be somewhat interested in what Halborn is after, but his first objective is to stop Halborn

Mach: meeting w/ Carlyne - tells players that Halborn wants the BIP because his own body in the Real is long since dead

Merv: meeting w/ Halborn - Halborn figures out that if the Machines were telling the truth about not having made the BIP themselves, and that the only one was taken, then he needs to find out who made it, and have them make him another one

2/28

Crit 9.3.2

Zion: (Assumed to come chronologically just after the Machine crit.) Tyndall is worried when Halborn shows up and starts pumping Colt for information on the Oracle. Colt plays dumb, frustrating Halborn, who says he'll just go find her on his own, and that Zion should stay out of his way. Halborn takes off, and following override use reports, the player finds overridden programs, a dead female bluepill, and a live male one who describes what sounds like Halborn demanding information about the Oracle. Ghost says they haven't found a connection between the dead woman and the Oracle, and they don't know if the intruder is striking randomly or following some kind of information trail. He also says that Zion has been trying to reach the Oracle without success. Carlyne has contacted Zion, though, so the player goes to meet him. Carlyne is polite and outgoing, and says that although he isn't very swift, with the overrides he has, Halborn is more than a match for any Machine-created program, even the Oracle. Carlyne says he can stop Halborn, and that he wants to help Zion save her, adding that he's known Halborn a long time, and that they probably have a few days before they really have to start worrying about him reaching the Oracle, during which time Carlyne will study the "lay of the land."

Mach: Gray sends the player after an override outbreak, and they find Accelerated Machines, as well as hostile Zionites. Gray didn't know who override those programs, and sends the player after another signal, which could be either Halborn or Carlyne. Gray mentions that both of them have met, separately, with Zion, but that they're still believed to be non-hostile to the Machines. The player finds Halborn among Accelerated Machines, and a dead "Red Eye" Agent--one of the General's old programs. Halborn bluntly says he wants to talk to "your boss' boss," implying that he'd wanted the Machines to track him down there so he could deliver this demand. Gray goes to see about it while the player goes after more override signals,

coming across Carlyne, and a confused bluepill. Carlyne is surprised, but in a chipper mood, saying he's tracking down Halborn, and asks if the player has seen him. Gray says to say "no." Carlyne says ah, too bad. The player goes to see Gray, who says Halborn's probably asking for this meeting because he needs help with Carlyne, which gives the Machines a chance to get him to do what they want, before ushering them into a room containing Pace, the Architect, and Halborn. Halborn demands to know who made "it"; the Architect replies that "the program's author is known as the Oracle." This surprises Halborn a little, but seems to jibe with some things he remembers Zionites "jabbering" about. Gray thinks its likely that Halborn will go after the Oracle now, and says that Zion and EPN may try to stop him.

Merv: (Assumed to come chronologically just after the Machine crit.) Flood sends the player to check on some Exiles that may have been overridden, and the player finds a pile of dead Accelerated Exiles and Machines. The operator says there's no sign of forced entry, and says there are recently spend shell casings in there, and bullet and claw wounds on the bodies: were they fighting each other? Flood doesn't really care if they were from Carlyne or Halborn or both; he's just annoyed at the loss of their programs. He sends the player to help the survivors of an Exile pack that's been mostly overridden. One survivor says it was Halborn, and he was about to get them, too, but he suddenly stopped and ran off. Scans find Halborn nearby. He's about to tell the player to go away, but then stops and asks what they know about the Oracle. A meeting with the Merv is arranged; the player doesn't catch all the assumed dialog between the two, but Halborn now knows about the Oracle centering her activity around Debir Court, and it's implied that the Merv has provided him with other information about her as well. Flood says whatever happens in a Halborn/Oracle meeting, they'll make work in their favor.

2/28-3/5

Required Events:

Zion: Zion tries getting a warning to the Oracle, and are surprised when they can't get ahold of her. They do get Seraph, though, and he tells them that the Oracle suspected something like this would happen.

Mach: It won't be quite clear yet to players how the Machines feel about Halborn going after the Oracle. But they send operatives to try to locate her. They can't find her, but they do find strange code bits in her trademark intuitive style: she's got something in the oven, and it isn't just cookies.

Merv: The Merv again assures Carlyne that he's all for taking Halborn out, and that he's only pretending to help Halborn in order to get through his defenses, and "proves it" by leading Carlyne to some of Halborn's programs, which Carlyne helps terminate.

3/6

Crit 9.3.3

Zion: The player is dispatched to counter Halborn's program overrides in Mara, where Halborn has started looking for the Oracle. They come across Blackwoods and Accelerated programs, alive and dead, and Carlyne, who says that he thinks Halborn will get frustrated and give up this attack if they can keep eliminating his programs. He adds that Halborn's been avoiding him, and that he's been getting some "interference" from non-Zion operatives.

The player comes across Machinists fighting (or as close as I can make it look like they've been fighting) Accelerated Machines. Tyndall sends the player to assist a Zion team that's just been taken out, and they find Halborn, who reminds them that he said to stay out of his way. He says she may have snuck off somewhere, but it doesn't matter, he'll find her.

Mach: Gray says that the sooner Halborn finds the Oracle and either gets his program, or gets confirmation that she doesn't have it, the soon he'll leave the Matrix. Pace gives the player some redpill backup for going after Zionites who are trying to stop Halborn, and who are probably working with Carlyne. The player finds dead Accelerated Machines, a dead bluepill, and hostile Zionites. Gray reports that Halborn has been detected in the vicinity of Mara, as have hostile operatives, but there's no sign of the Oracle or Carlyne. The player comes across Zionites fighting their way to Halborn. Halborn tells the player to get lost. Finally, the player searches another area for reported hostile redpills, only to find the Oracle, who makes a joking surrender, apologizes for the misdirection, and promises that it's almost over; she says that if all this trouble is about her, maybe it's better if she's "removed from the picture." Seraph appears just then, looking imposing. The player has to leave; meanwhile, the operator's been struggling with it, but eventually decides he has no choice but to report that they've found the Oracle. Gray says that it isn't feasible to arrest her just now (he's mentioned earlier in the mission that they can't send programs into the Mara area, what with Carlyne and Halborn firing off overrides all over the place), but that they've got to do what they can do speed up Halborn getting to her, which mostly comes down to keeping Zion, and especially Carlyne, off of him. He says they'll report the Oracle sighting to Halborn "as soon as possible."

[That comment, and his halfhearted congratulations on "the...promptness" of the operator/player's report, are intentionally ambiguous.]

Merv: Halborn isn't doing too well at finding the Oracle, so Flood sends the player to dig her up in Richland/Westview. Following some allegedly expensive leads, the player comes across 1) a pack of EPN swarming over a irrecoverably toasted computer, 2) two creepy Agents who have just arrested whoever the player was looking for, for involvement in a terrorist conspiracy, and 3) a dead bluepill contact surrounded by Accelerated Machines. Zionites and then Cypherites attack the player out-of-doors at various points. Finally, just as they find four Exiles (a Crusher, a Death Merchant, a female Hel Club Groupie, and a male Hel Club Guard) discussing something about "Ruhamah" sending a "signal," and "the sim," Carlyne pops in with a Terminator that strikes the four dead. He says he's suspected what the player's been up to for a while, but it's nice to have proof, and that they can tell the Merv that since he's clearly backing Halborn, he can consider their brunch date cancelled. Flood says they should've been working with Carlyne instead of that dummy Halborn.

## Required Events:

Zion: Just some good old-fashioned fighting in Slums here, with override programs and either a hostile Halborn or assisting Carlyne involved.

Mach: Ditto, only the other way around for Halborn/Carlyne. (Summary: right now Zion <3 Carlyne, Merv & Mach <3 Halborn)

Merv: It seems like this would be a good time to let the Merv players run across the Oracle. We'll have to manage it in such a way that it's clear they can't take her out themselves, and have to settle for talking to her. Should probably do it somewhere exotic, where she isn't usually found, and where she could change the rules to be in control, like white hallways or a white room or Sakura or something. Ah, and we could do something like have Seraph whack any players who actually try to get her. Or Carlyne could show up and make things difficult for them. Anyway, she'll tell whoever survives that they will soon find something that is very important, but it will backfire on them if they try to use it selfishly.

3/13

### Crit 9.3.4

Zion: In Richland or Westview, the player is sent to talk to Carlyne, who asks that he be contacted when the player runs across Halborn, since Halborn is putting more effort into avoiding Carlyne than he is into avoiding operatives. The player faces some Accelerated Machines backed up by a Decelerator while Tyndall gets Roland's permission to tip off Carlyne if they come across Halborn. And then they do find Halborn, who tells them very bluntly to get out, at which point he goes hostile and will counter-attack if attacked by the player; he's invulnerable here, and can't actually be hurt. Carlyne is tipped off, and moves to intercept Halborn. Tyndall starts encountering scan disruptions, and send the player in to report on what's happening. The player finds Carlyne and Halborn facing off in an underconstruction interior, but they have to bail when the operator says that surges in his scan readings are starting to blow out their hovercraft's systems. Tyndall says that their scan routines are down across the entire sector now.

Mach: Halborn still hasn't managed to find the Oracle, and has called the Machines for a meeting in Richland/Westview to discuss it. He demands that the Machines tell him where she is. The Architect says that they've already given him all the information they have, and that her unpredictability was an intentional design choice necessary in order to maintain human genetic variety at acceptable levels. Halborn is ticked, calls the Architect/Machines incompetent, and says he knew all that already. Pace is there as well (no Gray), and orders the player to leave the area and stand by for immediate deployment. Gray sends the player to check up on what Halborn's gone off to do after the meeting. When they catch up to him, Halborn has just dispatched some Zionites and an EPN, complains that "your masters don't have the balls for this," and says well fine, forget them, he'll handle it himself. He adds that he means to have it out with the Architect after taking care of this current situation. Gray doesn't sound thrilled to hear that, but still has to send the player to keep Zionites (mingled with dead/wounded Accelerated Machines) off Halborn's tail. Then they pick up Carlyne, heading

to intercept Halborn; interference is causing problems, and Gray sends the player in to investigate first-hand. They find Halborn and Carlyne facing off in an under-construction interior, but have to leave when feedback starts blowing out their operator's systems. The follow-up message from Gray is almost entirely garbled, but seems to be ordering the player to evacuate the area.

Merv: Flood sends the player to find Halborn in Richland/Westview so that they can come up with a working plan of action for him, since he still hasn't managed to find the Oracle, and is getting distracted by Carlyne. Some Accelerator-buffed Zionites get in the way, as does an EPN ambush, but Halborn is found, and is in a bad mood, saying the info the Merv gave him hasn't helped, and the Mervs don't stand a chance against Carlyne anyway; but he agrees to meet. The General and Malphas are waiting for Halborn to show for the strategic planning session, but it's crashed by Zionites. Afterwards, Malphas says that they'd spotted the intruder heading for the meeting, but then his signal changed course; maybe he was worried about the Zionites reporting his position to Carlyne. Flood thinks Halborn is silly for getting scared off by Zionites. The player is sent after him, and finds him and Carlyne facing off in an underconstruction area, just before the player has to bail when override feedback starts to scramble their operator's systems. Flood says this "override radiation" is scrambling scans across the entire region.

3/13-3/19

Required Events:

Zion: (EPN) The Oracle meets with Shimada, giving her part of an encrypted program, and telling her to watch over Sati

Mach: (CYPH) The Oracle meets with Veil, giving her part of an encrypted program, and telling her to watch over Sati

Merv: Mervs wade through override programs in the Slums to find Halborn wounded and woozy. They pick him up and take him back to the Merv.

3/20

Crit 9.3.5

Zion: Ghost has some reports about Halborn surviving with the Merv's help, and the Oracle contacting EPN to give them some kind of encrypted program, and possibly making contact with Veil as well. Carlyne gets in touch to say that he's all right, and that Halborn only got away because the simulation started to break down around them. He says that he's heard the Frenchman's got him, but that will just make it easier to find him and finish him off. Tyndall's next instructions are cut off mid-sentence, and the player has to follow their mission marker with no instructions, only to find the Oracle at the end of it, just as the operator is cut off, too.

The Oracle apologizes for crossing a few wires to get a chance to talk, but then realizes that she can't say what she wants to say yet. She thinks she's made the "right choice," though, and says the player will "do just fine." She adds that she doesn't know if they'll see each other again. Tyndall comes back online, and sends the player to report to Niobe. Niobe's annoyed that the Oracle's pulling strings yet again, and says that they've still at least got to try to secure her before Halborn reaches her.

Mach: Gray sends the player to clean up code overrides swamping Richland (and Westview, I guess) in the aftermath of the clash between Halborn and Carlyne; overrides are still screwing with Machine scans of the area, but Gray says they should assume that both survived, until they have proof to the contrary. The player encounters loads of Accelerated Machines and Exiles, accelerated Furies gang members, and a dead bluepill. Then Gray sends them after some code that appears somehow to have escaped any kind of damage from the override wave that covered Richland. They find a weirded-out bluepill (keeps saying "I'm fine," also mentions something about "she") in an apartment, and the mystery undamaged code in the form of Frags tucked in a desk. They take these off to Pace and some technicians in a lab (new variant Pace RSI: wearing a white lab coat and shirt--and no, I won't use this RSI in an event prior to this crit). The code in the frags is found to be similar to the Oracle-made stuff found earlier (Mach 9.3.2 event), and, put together, it's enough for them to establish that it's left over code from the process of writing a kill code. Pace is uneasy when she hears about this. A technician in the area mentions that they're having trouble re-writing core routines to protect against override codes (a tech earlier in chapter 9 mentioned they were starting work on this). Gray says they've suspected for a few months now that the Oracle's been up to some kind of plot with Exiles, and if a termination code is involved, this plot could be more dangerous than they'd thought. He's describing news from "our Cypherite sources" about the Oracle giving them some kind of encrypted code, and is in the middle of saying that the Cypherites haven't delivered a formal report on the incident, when he suddenly excuses himself, coming back to say that he's just received a report of Halborn and Carlyne meeting Merovingian operatives. He says that locating the two is the top priority.

Merv: The player is sent to visit Halborn at a Merv hideout in Midian Park (or Eshean/Lemone if Midian Park mission areas are full), and tell him that he's got to stick around at a certain spot as bait so they can get Carlyne out of his way. The wounded and impatient Halborn agrees in his usual surly manner, obviously concerned that Carlyne will find him if he stays there too long. Flood sends the player to meet Carlyne in Mara, to get his attention. Carlyne knows the Mervs have Halborn, and tells the player to run along back to Halborn. Flood sends the player to Kedemoth to check on Halborn, saying that the plan won't work if he moves early and makes it obvious to Carlyne that the "artificial override signal we're generating nearby" is a fake. The player finds him in his requisite bait position. He's made some hostile Accelerated Exiles to protect himself, but kills them with a Terminator once the player talks to him. He mutters about being able to "feel" the "old woman" nearby. Flood hurries the player off to another Kedemoth location, where they find Carlyne. When they talk to him, four "Special Agents" appear and order him to come with them for questioning, but when the player talks to them, it's clear that these are disguised Merv operatives. Carlyne is momentarily fooled, and about to dispatch them, or so he thinks, with override codes. Flood says this distraction has got Halborn past Carlyne [on his way to Mara to get the Oracle],

although Flood is darned if he knows why Halborn thinks he'll succeed this time. [Like a lot of things so far with Halborn's "search" for the program, I don't really spell that out, but just leave it implied that he has ways of obtaining information, although obviously this information isn't always reliable.]

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

On 4/2, Halborn found the Oracle waiting for him in Debir Court. She refused to help him get the program he wanted, and he killed her, then left. Carlyne arrived minutes later, saw the dead Oracle, and snorted in disgust before jumping away.

4/3

Crit 10.1.1

Zion: After taking out some Accelerated programs with Colt, the player encounters Carlyne, who says that he's working on a more direct means of getting rid of Halborn, and that since Halborn has decided to stay in the Matrix, the Machines probably won't be helping him (Halborn) out anymore.

Mach: Gray and Pace say it's time to set up a meeting with Halborn, and ask him to leave the Matrix. The player has to get through some nasty accelerated programs, but finds Halborn, and he gruffly agrees that he'll come along, since he wants to fill the Machines in on something, anyway. In a meeting with Pace, Halborn insists that he won't leave without the program, but he says that he's figured out what he needs to do, although he hadn't wanted to have to deal with it (he doesn't specify). Pace says he'll have to be watched very carefully.

Merv: Flood thinks it's time to review what's been going on, and has the player face off against EPN, Cypherites, and Accelerated Exiles, keeping up a running commentary of his own along the way. He's questioning why the Oracle would have given apparently important codes to EPN and the Cypherites, and points out that she did this--and according to the Machines was working on a kill-code--after the intruders came around and it was revealed that she was the one who wrote the program they're so interested in. The mission ends with Flood haranguing the player in person, saying that this has all been some sort of plan arranged by the Oracle, and it's something to do with the program, or with the intruders.

4/3-4/9

Required Events:

Zion: Halborn ambushes Carlyne, tries to ram a trace program through his RSI, but Carlyne rescued by Zion



Mach: tea with the Architect and a small group of operatives in the Oracle's apartment, and musing upon the current situation

Merv: Merv looks for Seraph, Sati, and the Morpheus simulacrum, but finds they've vanished, apparently without a trace (confrontation with Lo Ruhamah?)

4/10

Crit 10.1.2

Zion: Carlyne theorizes that Halborn is determined to get rid of him so he can stay in the Matrix long-term, and to do it by attacking him in his hovercraft; this was what Carlyne was planning to do to Halborn, in fact, but he hasn't been able to get a fix on Halborn's ship; Carlyne adds that Halborn runs off outside resources, and thus needs to maintain a ship near the Machine city as a relay point, but it's more difficult to locate his ship in the Real than it is to find his code signal in the Matrix. Shimada has a new message from Commander Lock, in which he says that he's close to fully recovered, and looking forward to some kind of arrangement being made for transferring him to New Zion in a few weeks. Just then Tyndall gets in touch to say that one of Zion's broadcast control clusters in the Matrix is under attack. Shimada loans a few EPN, and the player finds the place overrun by accelerated programs; one of the survivors says it was Halborn, trying to access their computers; they think they got their network connections shut down before he could get anything, but they aren't sure. Niobe says it's time to put Halborn on ice; she thinks he might have been trying to get hovercraft positions, or crack their broadcast protocol.

Mach: Carlyne meets with Pace, and says that once Halborn's been removed, he'll see to it that "the [secret name zetas] restrict his access." He adds that "Nobody wants the simulation to have operating difficulties." Pace tells the player that they'll monitor the situation, but that it seems like it's being handled, so they can concentrate on other things that had been put on the back burner. The player is sent to get a report from Veil on the encrypted file the Oracle gave her. Veil says they haven't been able to decrypt it, and that the Oracle told her it could be dangerous to lose it, so she's going to keep it safe outside of the Matrix (ie, she doesn't intend to hand it over). She suggests checking up on EPN and their own encrypted file. Gray is annoyed. Nevertheless, he considers the EPN side, and figures that they're probably keeping their file outside of the Matrix as well: either on a hovercraft, or inside old Zion. To test this, he has the player plant a fake message on an EPN network, of Shimada saying that their Oracle file's been stolen from their hovercraft. Then the player eavesdrops on some EPN reading the message, and they're clearly surprised that the message says the file was on a hovercraft, so Gray concludes they're probably keeping it in old Zion.

Merv: Thinking Halborn may be more forthcoming about the program now that his back's against the wall, Flood sends the player to find him. First they come across Zionites and an Accelerator. The Accelerator is friendly to the player. An access card is found on one of the Zionites, and it's traced back to an apartment, which the player ransacks, and finds some data that turns out to be Zion intelligence reports about a search for Halborn that Zion is conducting. Correlating Zion's findings with their own, Halborn is located, in his usual foul

mood. He agrees to meet the Merv, but when asked for info on the program, says there's no way he can give out any more info about it with Carlyne around trying to use anything he can against him. He says he'll have to take Carlyne down, and he knows how to do it, but he has to find Carlyne's ship. He says Carlyne isn't so smart; the only reason Carlyne got "the jump on me in the first place" was because "he was just 800 miles away from here"; later he adds impatiently that this was northwest. The Merv promises Halborn that they'll leave it to him to deal with Carlyne and his ship, but is clearly interested in the "800 miles" remark.

4/10-4/16

Required Events:

Zion: Carlyne wants to try on Halborn what Halborn tried on him--operatives tackle Halborn, but when Carlyne scans him, he finds that Halborn's already running an advanced counter to the trace routine; lots of overrides spawned by Halborn to try to free himself, maybe a little scuffle between the two, who knows

Mach: Small Sentinel attack on EPN hovercraft and old Zion coordinated with attack on the EPN crew in the Matrix: Machines determine that EPN has reinforced Zion's defenses, but does not maintain a central mainframe there; this would, for instance, mean that capturing data stored in the city would require at least either an extremely skilled spy, or a full assault on the city

Merv: steal map data of the area 800 miles NW of the Machine city from the Machines: unmarked area

4/17

Crit 10.1.3

Zion: Niobe asks Carlyne for more information on their ships. He says he's only caught a glimpse of Halborn's once, not long before Halborn appeared in the Matrix, and it looked roughly similar to his own, except built heavier for firepower over speed. He describes his own ship as having "the advantage of a streamlined unibody construction whose dark composite surface provides superior protection against kinetic and electro-magnetic weapons, and detection. The repulsion units are internal rather than external, and capable of quite a bit more velocity and altitude than your own. The overall profile is smaller, and much more maneuverable." All he'll say about the weapons systems is warning Zion they'll need to be prepared to face "multiple intelligent missiles simultaneously." He also sends them a detailed external schematic of his own craft (not actually shown). Zion wants confirmation from another source, though, so they blackmail one of the General's veteran commando officers (who's involved in some sort of relationship with a female Hel Club Guard) into giving them the address to a network entry point for a Machine real-world surveillance database. The database is raided, and in the data they loot from it, Zion finds records of a ship matching the description of Halborn's, that approached the Machine city a few weeks before Halborn

appeared in the Matrix. Ghost says this will probably be enough evidence for Roland to go ahead and formulate plans for tracking down the ship. The data also contained a reference to a record of a ship matching Carlyne's, located in a two-year-old data archive, which seems to suggest that Carlyne visited the city two or more years ago.

Mach: Hunting down the topographic data the Merv stole, the player runs into Halborn, who wipes out the computers the player was using to hunt down the data, and demands a meeting with the Machines. Pace tells Halborn to go look up the Cypherites if he wants to find Carlyne's ship, because "our own ability to give out such information is restricted." She tells the player to tell Veil to treat Halborn "as he deserves." Gray instructs the player not to mention Cryptos to Halborn, because they'd prefer that Halborn deal with Veil. Veil says they'll take good care of him, and that they have plenty of places to take him; she also invites the player along. Halborn is skeptical.

Merv: The player picks up a copy of the stolen Machine topographic data from Malphas (the Twins are puzzling over the "[secret name zetas]" term one of them came across in Machine intel reports--see Mach 10.1.2), who says that it's almost as though the Machines have an information blackout in effect around that area 800 miles NW. The Merv wonders if the Machines themselves avoid the area, and tells the player to take the data to the General. The player hands the data to a commando, who patches the General's hologram through; the General says that the area is a no-fly zone, and even Machine Sentinels won't be allowed there. He says to tell the Merv that he'll be leaving right away, and to make the necessary arrangements. Flood says they'll have to disrupt Sentinel systems in order for the General to get on his way without being caught. Using data from the General, the player goes after a Machine terminal, but can't get anywhere with it; the General's hologram beams in and says that the Machines have changed the interface to foil his intel, but he and his men can get updated data by capturing a Machine Sentinel. (A hackable computer in this Machine area has some details about EPN's upgrades and repairs to old Zion; the Machines would have got this info in the Mach 10.1.3 event:

Fortification analysis:

- High EMP mine density in approach tunnels
- EMP mines placed in bedrock around main dock
- Dock hull repaired and reinforced
- Dock gun turrets replaced and supplemented
- Infantry strength unknown

)

New coordinates are supplied by the General, and this time the Mervs find a machine they can hijack to disrupt some of the Machine Sentinels for the General. Flood says the General is on his way to the blackout zone.

4/17-4/23

Required Events:

Zion: Zion ship that was following signal possibly corresponding to Halborn's ship configuration has stopped responding; crew member jacks in to say their ship is crippled and being pursued by Halborn; Zion uses the message relay they'd set up with Halborn before to send him an emergency message saying they have the program he wants; he jacks in and they have to keep him distracted somehow while the crippled ship gets away (some kind of time limit, maybe); also, it looks like Halborn may have been hoping to exploit the crippled ship in order to access New Zion somehow

Mach: Cyph operation to steal info on the Lock ship transfer from EPN or Zion; Veil gives info to Halborn

Merv: Sentinel activity is a little heavier than anticipated (most had been recalled since Halborn appeared in the Matrix), and the Merv wants their systems bothered again to buy the General additional time: disrupting a computer system, or something like that, or even creating some sort of distraction for the Sentinels

Also: Hovercraft battle (after Mach and Merv events)

Following the coordinate data given him by Veil, Halborn finds only the EPN/Zion convoy taking Lock to New Zion. Cyphs come along to make a battle of it and blow Halborn's cover, may bring Machines. Hovercraft battle to determine where Lock ends up:

- a) Cyph win (EPN/Zion beaten and Cyphs have more ships left than Machines): Lock is on the run with EPN/Zion survivors somewhere in the tunnels between old and new Zion
- b) EPN win (Cyphs/Machs beaten and EPN have more ships left than Zion): EPN takes Lock back to Zion until they can be sure of getting to New Zion safely
- c) Mach win (EPN/Zion beaten and Machines have more ships left than Cyphs): Machines capture Lock
- d) Zion win (Cyphs/Mach beaten and Zion has more ships than EPN): Lock is taken to New Zion

4/24

Crit 10.1.4

Zion: A Zion hovercraft is tailing a ship that might be Halborn's, found skulking not too far from the spot of the hovercraft battle over Lock (see above). Colt has the player go get Carlyne, since he might have some ideas of how this lone ship can handle Halborn. The player finds Carlyne in the midst of some dead accelerated programs. He says if they can scan a "certain spectrum band" at close range, they could get some useful information about Halborn's Matrix broadcast frequency, and he suggests they try luring Halborn in by landing and activating their emergency beacon, to make it look like they're disabled, since Halborn may be trying to capture a Zion craft (see previous Zion event). The ship reaches broadcast depth and one crew member jacks in; they're given Carlyne's information, and their captain decides to go for it; they aren't sure he's still near, as he isn't showing up on radar, but they're getting "some weird lidar scatter." The player escorts the crew member to Carlyne and Ghost. As they get

there, the crew member says they're starting the scan, but then they suddenly seem scared, and drop dead. Carlyne is concerned about the scan, but relieved to find they did get some data back before the scan was terminated. He says he'll be able to use it to finalize a new program he's been working on, that Halborn won't have a counter to. He adds his regrets about the lost crew, and his surprise that Halborn attacked them, but it may sound a little insincere. Ghost says they have other ships on their way to the scene, but he doesn't expect they'll get there before Halborn has made himself scarce.

Mach: Halborn is ticked off about being led into the Zion/EPN hovercraft by the Cypherites, and demands to see the Machines again. The player meets Pace, as if there's going to be another meeting between her and Halborn, but she says that Halborn won't be coming, because there's no point in him asking them for the location of Carlyne's ship again. She adds that fortunately, an outlet for his anger has "been arranged." Override programs are popping up at Cypherite installations, and the player finds some Cyphs who say Halborn tore through their place, and chased off the rest of the Cyphs there. They go along with the player to this other Cypherite location, where there are a bunch of override programs, dead Cypherites, and Halborn, who's still mad, and says they're being manipulated (it isn't clear if he is thinking the player is a Machine or a Cypherite here) by someone who knows all about the program.

Merv: The General's latest progress update hasn't come through, and the player is sent to find out what the holdup is. They find the commando communication squad dead, and their Merv-net computer locked out. Flood says that the Machines are on the player's tail now, probably over the whole Sentinel system hacking thing, and grudgingly shows the player a spot they can hide out for a while. This doesn't work, and the player is ambushed repeatedly by Machines. Flood sends the player to a spot where they've seen one of Halborn's Accelerators; some Machines get too close and get accelerated (friendly); the player finishes off the rest. The player reports to the Merv, who admits that Halborn has had his uses, but those have run out, and they can consider their business with him at an end. Persephone is there, and comments that Halborn is just another of the people the Merv has used up and spit out over the centuries--people who were willing to sell their souls to try to get what they wanted.

4/24-4/30

Required Events:

Zion: Carlyne confronts Halborn, Zionite hits him with Carlyne-given program, Halborn crumples lifeless to the ground shortly thereafter

Mach: (Before Zion event) Machines warn Halborn that his ship has probably been compromised, suggest that he leave, as his security cannot be guaranteed; he's ticked; Pace/Gray hyperjumps away

Merv: (After Zion event) Mervs sent to see what Carlyne intends to do now; after getting past some of this programs, they (I guess the only Merv character I could take along would be Beirn, since the others would be vulnerable to overrides) ask him what's up, he says he's

leaving, Mervs get orders to try to convince him to stay (how, I dunno--I wouldn't want to repeat some of the stuff already tried by the Merv on Halborn in the previous subchapters, though); ultimately this doesn't work, Carlyne's still determined to leave

5/1

Crit 10.1.5

Zion: Carlyne thanks Zion, and says he's leaving the Matrix now that his job of removing Halborn is done. He adds that he doesn't think Halborn's dead, but his ship has been disabled, so he can't jack in. Maybe he could given time, but Carlyne will be taking steps to make sure that doesn't happen, which--he says--is another reason he's got to dash off. Tyndall says some overrides are still cropping up, and send the player to one site, but all they find there are a couple embarrassed bluepills. They try another spot, and find accelerated programs, but dead ones, and some Machines show up and chase them off (or at least put up a good fight--a level 100 spawns after the first normal Machine is killed). Niobe says she's glad Halborn and Carlyne are out of the picture, but the Machines showing up around those dead overrides is probably a sign that they're stepping their activity back up now that the intruders are gone, and that Zion has had time to get prepared (New Zion finished and so forth), but it's going to be tough facing the full force of the Machines again.

Mach: Sent to investigate possible lingering override programs, the player finds that Carlyne's already killed them. Carlyne says he's leaving the Matrix, as he'd promised to do once Halborn was removed. He says he hopes there are no hard feelings over the times they ended up on opposite sides. Gray calls the player in to discuss priorities in light of Carlyne's departure. Gray says that with the intruders gone, they'll be able to deploy their Sentinels and Agents in full strength again, and take on the terrorists. Pace names EPN and the Merv as recent offenders who need to be dealt with. The player is sent back out to finish scrubbing up override codes, and finds some Merv operatives who've lured Machines into an override field where they got accelerated, and then Cypherites examining dead accelerated programs with Cryptos, who says that he thinks the overrides were tapping into something fundamental in the simulation, that's not likely to go away just because the intruders are leaving. He says that he wasn't vulnerable to overrides, despite being partly Machine code himself, so he's going to try coding something to resist override programs, using his own operating code as a starting point.

Merv: The General beams a slightly choppy holographic broadcast through to say that he's reached the blackout area, and they found a heavily fortified facility, whose defenses they couldn't penetrate. Nearby they found a data conduit that wasn't as heavily defended, and they've managed to tap into it, but the protocols are unusual, only partly matching Machine formats. He sends a sample along. Flood has the player hack into a Sentinel system to look for some kind of match, but they don't find anything. The Effectuator pops in to say that they'll have to go way deeper, since this is something nobody they know has seen before. He gives the player a couple dire lupine defenders, and the player tries a heavily secured Machine database the Merv hasn't been able to access before. After getting past a lot of Machines and ambushes, the player gets matching data from the site and uploads it. (A hackable computer

at this Machine site has text systematically describing how [Halborn] found himself in a position to be scanned by Zion twice, and says information from the scans was probably used against him.) It's beamed to the General, who tries using it to work his way through the strange data protocols. The player has to fight off Machines to get to the comm terminal where the General's data feed is coming in, and it looks like he's found some kind of massive network: the "[secret name zeta] Network," but that's about all that's returned before his session is terminated.

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

5/15

Chapter image: Mauser at a telephone in Tabor Park

### Crit 10.2.1

Zion: While investigating an increase in network glitches, and finding a computer that checks out clean, although a Machine operative was encountered nearby, the player is called in to talk to Colt, who tells them that his old crewmate (he's later called "head mechanic" and "a highly skilled technician") Mauser, supposedly killed by Sentinels after rescuing Lock from the Machine attack on Zion, has been seen in the Matrix--this is doubly strange, since Mauser didn't have jacks. (A Zionite guard here talks about the successful hovercraft battle and Lock's return.) A bit of fruitless searching for him is done based off the initial sighting reports and "disconnected blips at public hardlines," but these are fruitless until his picture comes up on an ID scanner at a nearby internet café. But by the time the player gets there, Mauser is gone, and the security guard confirms he didn't stay very long. A staff member is puzzled that someone managed to wipe the secured cache on one of the terminals.

Mach: The player is going around messing with Zionites who've gotten a little slack with their security after all these months of the Machines playing it cool while the intruders were around. This spree includes beating up Zionites, disabling their computers, and interrupting an awakening procedure right after the bluepill swallowed the red pill. Finally they get to a surprisingly large pack of Zionites headed by Niobe, who says that Zion isn't just going to roll over for the Machines.

Merv: The General tries to get in contact from the no-fly zone, but his signal is too weak. Malphas introduces a scheme for using the humans in pods dotted around the Earth's surface as a wide array broadcast method for reaching the General by taking advantage of the signal generation capability of electroencephalographic (EEG) wiring and human bodies. All operatives have to do is go around shaking hands with bluepills to fire Malphas' program back into their pods. This goes on for a while with various reactions from the bluepills encountered, some of the later ones reacting a little suspiciously (sort of Machine-like, you could say). In

the end the signal generated just isn't powerful enough to get anything to or from the General, giving Flood an opportunity to go on about the weakness of the human mind and body.

5/15-5/21

Required Events:

Zion: [Zion only] Colt leads a hunt for Mauser that has operatives spread out to cover every hardline in the city; Mauser is spotted and pursued, but when Colt catches up to him, Mauser makes no sign of recognizing him, and vanishes through an uncharted line (some nonhardline phone or other somewhere in the city)

Mach: Hm, maybe we could swipe some juicy Zion info on what Lock's been talking to the Council about since he got back (this would be something just read off, and would illustrate that the Council isn't too hot to kick Roland out of the Commander position just because Lock's back)

Merv: The Merv tries getting a crew to establish a broadcast relay to the General in the Real, but although the coordination and setup goes well, and a connection is established, the crew is brutally slaughtered by Sentinels who find their position. Ouch!

5/22

Crit 10.2.2

Zion: The line Mauser escaped through is found to be part of a pre-Truce restricted access Zion network, whose documentation was mostly lost when the Machines zapped Zion's old mainframe. Old operatives like Colt and Roland know a little bit about some of the network, but while Zion can track down some of the old phone terminals, they can't navigate through them--how Mauser is doing it is a mystery. The player's operator tries mapping some of the network by sending tracking packets through it, which works to a certain extent, although they also run into some Machines along the way, and a few puzzled bluepills who say they haven't received a phone bill in years. After these false starts, though, they come across Mauser, standing next to yet another phone. He calmly says he's doing what he can do win the war; he adds that the Machines will be there soon [not actually :p], and he's prepared to leave through the restricted line he's just "spliced."

Mach: The player works with police to check into possible Mauser activity, finding some computers with their access logs wiped (and a dead Night Watchman at one location), and fingerprints. This leads to a bank that just reported a break-in. No money was taken, but a computer was tampered with. There was an attempt to delete the access log, but it was preserved by the bank's backup system. The log is analyzed, and Gray reports that it shows the user connected to a remote system using network tunneling and an unknown, encrypted connection protocol. Gray adds that the way the perp is skipping around indicates that he isn't travelling by usual means. The Machines still aren't sure if this is actually Mauser, but by the end of the mission Gray says they're giving him that designation, at least temporarily.



Merv: The Merovingian wants to investigate using the power generated by the storm to help contact the General somehow. (The Twins are here discussing Lock's transfer to New Zion.) Flood has the player borrow a bluepill phone and call "the popular radio meteorological call-in show, 'Rainy Day Dan,'" to see if there's an easy answer. The ebullient host says he doesn't know of a way lightning would help, but a temperature inversion, that can happen in storms, has the possibility of causing a phenomenon called "tropospheric ducting" capable of boosting radio signal range significantly. Flood thinks this sounds simple and sends the player to ask commandos for details about the storm. They talk about various things like avoiding lightning, the slow process of atmospheric oxygen decay, and the human "Operation Dark Storm" that started the storm, although they have no idea how the humans actually did it, and suggest that maybe the Machines don't even know how it worked, or else they'd have stopped it already. Flood says that isn't much to go on, and sends the player to try to get anything on Operation Dark Storm that Zion might have. They dig up an old newspaper article from about a week before the operation was kicked off (the government is releasing some info to the public about what to expect, it will be perfectly safe and temporary, victory is assured, free flashlights for everyone in the mean time, etc), but that's about it. Flood says if the atmosphere is still relatively similar to the pre-storm atmosphere, they'll just have to have some of the General's Sentinels try various time-tested cloud seeding techniques such as dispersing silver iodide, dry ice, salt mixtures, and so forth.

5/22-5/28

Required Events:

Zion: Could be hectic, but I was thinking of trying a contest where we say that we're trying to track Mauser bouncing around hidden lines, so we have players split into mission teams and find non-hardline exterior phones in the city within a certain time limit. The team leader would have to be at the phone, they /tell an LO, the LO gives me their name, I teleport to their location (invisible), drop a smoke cloud ("message cloud") on the phone to mark it, and an LO keeping score tallies one point for that team. We'd probably have a backlog of reports at first, but eventually I think it would slow down as players would be spreading farther and farther afield to find unmarked phones. Might need a backup plan if we couldn't keep up with the reports.

Mach: Machine crack-down on hardlines in Downtown; maybe something like putting small pvp zones up on various hardlines, and having Machinists try to defend a Mechanic there while he operates on the line, if it's successful, a platoon of level 255 Agents pops out and surrounds the hardline

Merv: I want to dwell on the Dark Storm thing a little while we're on the topic. Mervs follow up some of the leads they found in the previous mission and find an old program, who looks like a Zero One robot (he might have to be extracted and instantiated or something first), and talks about the old times when the humans created the storm.

5/29

### Crit 10.2.3

Zion: Colt provides a program that will shut down part of the restricted access network--Zion still can't utilize the lines, and they're concerned that the Machines may have captured data on the system from the old Zion mainframe. Colt is confused by Mauser's behavior, and thinks "something happened out there with him and Lock." The player shuts the network section down without trouble, and goes to investigate a new line found from the terminal they accessed. They find a bluepill office, with a restricted line in a back room. A clerk says they aren't supposed to use it. Another clerk, however, whispers "it's about time they sent someone," and gives the player an access code for the phone. A locked desk in the area contains a filefolder that the operator says holds a handwritten note saying "Your contact's name is Soren. any changes to your standing orders will come from him." This phone leads to another, but when the player reaches it, they find a Decelerator program, which has scrambled the line. Machine redpills appear at the scene as well. Tyndall says they thought the override programs had been removed weeks ago.

Mach: The Machines have found some data on the old restricted hardline network among the mainframe data captured from old Zion, and start using it to investigate the network. They run smack into Zionites, and a line with strange protocols. The Machines realize they don't have the necessary information to be able to use the network, and Zion seems to know things about it that they don't, so they decide to concentrate on following Zion instead. They find a Zionite questioning bluepills about strange accesses on what the office workers describe as "some kind of old dial-up data line" that they don't really use anymore. Snooping that Zionite's comm tips the Machines off to the location of a Zionite team who thinks they're closing in on Mauser. The player ambushes the team, and the Machines scan the restricted line at their location. This picks up traces of an unusual broadcast signal, and a match at another phone terminal on the restricted network. The player meets Pace there, and she says that Mauser wasn't around, but they got a better reading of the broadcast signal, and were able to determine that it's coming from the vicinity of old Zion. Pace thinks it could be Mauser's signal.

Merv: The tropospheric ducting is working (and the storm seeding worked better than expected, kicking up a pretty heavy tempest), so the player is sent to find unencrypted Machine data of the type the General is encountering in the Oligarch Network, to help the General decrypt it or navigate through it or whatnot. The mainframe they're sent to capture turns out to be in the form of a female office clerk, who seems pretty surprised. The Machines try to stop them, but the player clubs her over the head and drags her off to have her brain downloaded by Merv technicians. The data flow looks good, so the player goes to check with the General to see how he's doing, but the conversation with his holographic broadcast is broken off when his forces are hit by what he calls "incoming missiles." Flood says that the data from the captured mainframe just got cut off. The player finds the mainframe, technician, and Exile guards dead. Flood takes solace in the thought that the General might be dead, too.

5/29-6/4

## Required Events:

Zion: Pursuit of Mauser through a few remaining uncharted hardlines (I could teleport players from one phone to another, then they chase Mauser to another phone, where he teleports again--then we'd have to hack the line to find the phone he went to--maybe we could ask players to load hacker and do Write Code at the line, which would reduce the time) ends when he spawns a Runtime and vanishes into a phone near the Hel Club

Mach: Operation against EPN crews/computers to help Sentinels triangulate the Mauser transmission source near old Zion; they're close to pinpointing it when disabled security routines on the EPN systems suddenly reactivate and cut the trace; the reactivated security routines resist Machine efforts to crack--but we should find some way to show that EPN themselves are surprised by the security routines kicking back on

Merv: The seeded, intensified Dark Storm is still allowing communication with the General and his surviving men. Players help a commando program upload into a restored Sentinel, and protect his RSI while he uses it to scavenge flight recorders from other Sentinels that were taken out by the missile barrage--maybe these spawn in as dead Sentinels in the city, and players have to go track down the body and "loot" it somehow, fighting off Machines; anyway, when the data is added up, it's found that a few of the Sentinels had recorded longrange readings that fit the profile of the ship type Carlyne and Halborn used 6/5

### Crit 10.2.4

Zion: Following the line Mauser had escaped through near the Hel Club, the player finds an Exile, who says they can help, if the player makes sure that a computer nearby is put offline. Tyndall says they may as well give it a shot, and the player disables a computer owned by some Dire Lupines, but when they go back to meet the mysterious Exile (a Nightmare), they find him dead, with a dead Machine next to him, and some ticked-off Exiles. The player manages to find a phone there that turns out to be another of the restricted lines. This one leads to a bunch of Exiles, and Flood, who says that the player is trespassing in the Merv's domain. Tyndall is concerned that Mauser might be walking into a Merovingian trap.

Mach: The Machines go after EPN systems in the Matrix, to capture the scan information that they weren't able to capture in the Real. They get to the right EPN computer, but it reports a strange error when trying to connect to EPN's systems on the surface. Pace shows off a sim of an EPN talking about Mauser's rescue and defense of Lock after the Machine attack on Zion. She points out that although Lock said Mauser was killed by Sentinels, no Machine Sentinels are known to have encountered Mauser, and also, Lock didn't say he'd actually seen it: he'd only heard it from the safe spot where Mauser had hidden him. She says it's important to identify Lock's rescue location and check the place out for themselves, since it had to do with Mauser's last reported location in the Real. The Machines have the player assassinate a well-known user of internet black markets, and log into one with his account. A brief browse turns up someone selling what they claim is hard data on the rescue operation. The player meets the seller's courier and makes the buy. Gray says the data looks legit, and they identify the wrecked facility Lock was hidden in as Danielle Wright's lab, where she was killed by Sentinels shortly before the Machines wiped out old Zion. Gray says that Mauser

may be able to do some of the things he's been doing by taking utilizing technology salvaged from the lab. The Machines modify their surface search to cover the area between the lab and the rough area to which they'd tracked his signal previously.

Merv: An attempt to contact the General doesn't even get off the ground, and the commando says that they can't raise him at all after they received reports of a second missile strike. Flood thinks the General is faking it. He also says that someone has stolen the topographic data on the no-fly zone; the General has a separate copy, but of course they can't reach him. The player is sent to investigate the crime and finds three dire lupines around the victimized computer, who say that its only them lupines who are there, and they haven't smelled anyone else around. Flood sends the player to check on a call they just got from some of their people nearby about a suspicious character, and the player finds dead Exiles and a phone. The General's hologram beams in and says he'll send along his copy of the data. This is used to track down the stolen version, and they find a dire lupine, who doesn't talk much like a lupine, standing next to a phone. The lupine says the data's been uploaded, and to thank the Frenchman for making it easy to get the data, because it would've been harder to go through the Machines. Then the lupine falls over dead. Flood says he's pretty sure that was Mauser, and now he's really crossed the line by stealing from the Merv.

6/5-6/11

Required Events:

Zion: Zionites looking for Mauser pursue reports of a hyper-jumping, bald, muscular black male skulking around abandoned buildings in Westview. They find Joshua Maston, who says it wasn't Mauser, but the Morpheus simulacrum, who has returned to the simulation.

Mach: Fallout from the Merv's cloud seeding is causing increased lightning storm activity in the area being searched for Mauser, making Sentinel and hovercraft activity in the area impossible. This would take a significant amount of preliminary work, but I was thinking we have some of the Machinists "on foot" in the Real. We'd give out URLs to web-hosted images containing their visual transmissions from the surface--a first-person "photo" view. Each would have a few visual reference points the team could choose to go to--a distant ledge, or ruined structure, etc. Machinists not on the team could help advise the others. Maybe there could be some random chance of one of the team being incapacitated by a lightning strike each "turn" (searching a location would also take a turn--similar to old text adventures, basically). If they don't waste too much time exploring dead ends (or if they just get lucky on lightning strike chances) they'll find a discarded Zion lightning gun on a small ledge just below the rim of a massive canyon. Wind is whipping through the chasm, preventing descent, but the Machines think they'll be able to get a shielded scanning system trucked out there.

Merv: Ookami's tracking the thief Mauser and runs into interference from Zionites led by Colt. Hm... We could do phone-hopping, too, although Ookami can't hardline so she'd have to be recalled, or just hoof it. Eventually they find Mauser just as he's jacking out in Creston Heights.

6/12

### Crit 10.2.5

Zion: Niobe says they need to figure out who's been over there in Westview. Colt adds some details/rumors about Mauser possibly leaving, and the Machines hunting close to where Lock was found. Tyndall sends the player to check an old sim haunt in Gracy Heights, where they find some semi-hostile Crushers, and a disconnected phone from "an old coppertop network." The operator pulls up some old utility records, and they follow the network to a switchbox in Guinness Lake, where they find Cypherites outside a locked door. The door mysteriously unlocks as soon as the Cypherites are disposed of, the operator reports a burst of network activity as the player steps through the doorway, and in the next room they find a computer with a very cryptic message [it is in fact an extremely vague puzzle whose solution will come along in Zion 10.3.1]. Tyndall has the player go meet with Shimada, who describes a strange find made by EPN. They'd detected a blip heading north from a deep tunnel location around old Zion. It got out of range before they could follow, but backtracking along its path, they found a recently vacated area at the end of an old maintenance tunnel, covered with pieces from Sentinels and hovercraft, some badly damaged. One of the hovercraft terminals was still functional, and contained encrypted data, although the encryption is a familiar type, so they expect to be able to crack it eventually. She adds that the blip wasn't larger than a mid-sized hovercraft, and was moving at roughly hovercraft cruising speed, only they weren't able to catch up to it before it moved out of range, because of twists in the tunnel system.

Mach: Thanks to having narrowed down the search area, the Machines are able to pick up Mauser's broadcast. The player fights off Zionites and tracks Mauser through a phone hop. They find him alone, cut the line of the phone next to him, and start scanning his RSI to lock the signal, but Gray reports a problem with the scan, and orders the player to report to the operations room to have a diagnostic run on them. They get there just as the Morpheus Signal (static-covered version of Morpheus that the Morpheus sim used to try to fool Zion back during the Red Sky) pops in, disrupting the scan operation, which results in the loss of Mauser's signal. The Machines try to find it again, but can't detect it. Gray says that the coincidence of the involvement of four parties who have all been pro-Zion (Mauser, the Morpheus sim, Danielle Wright, the Oracle) in recent illicit activities could point to a larger threat. Pace says Mauser had surprise on his side, but they'll get him if he jacks in again.

Merv: The General, on his way back from the no-fly zone, finishes transmitting the data he pulled out of the Oligarch network line. Analysis of the data finds that part of it consists of data packets carrying traditional 1999 human network headers. Another technician mentions that the Oligarch data is extremely complex, and could take years to understand. The headers are tracked to a "private corporate provider," and upon investigation with some Ookami-provided werewolf reinforcements, the player finds [secret stuff y].

[cryptic message x] = Follow her eyes in the dark binary of the golden prime.

Follow her eyes

golden prime

binary nights

Reference to Tennyson poem, "argent-lidded eyes" -> Argent Biometrics and then Wright Research in 10.3.

[secret location y] = The Ouroboros Corporation

RSI pills for mauser (also going to need two RSIs: t-shirt, and later black long coat version):

rsimbody003

rsimskin010

rsimhair001

rsimhaircolor001

rsimface001

rsimfacecolor001

rsimtat001

rsimhead013

anniv08tshirtnwhite

1101 (mclothing\_pants\_a10\_c1) - gray barrelhead cargo pants

mclothing\_shoes\_a3\_c1

emglasses\_a6\_c2\_1 - enhanced brown sector sunglasses

and later:

mclothing\_coat\_a6\_c1 - brown jayne collarless half-duster probably skip the hat: mclothing\_hat\_a5\_c1

(level 50 char)

Ouroboros:

<http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...061#36300351996>

Yasamuu pointed out that Ouroboros was reported as buying MetaCortex (that was in the Sentinel, during the lead up to the first anniversary with Decius Wadsworth, Blue Sky, and all that: <http://mxoresource.com/sentinel/033006/> ) which is sort of annoying because I don't see any point in reducing the already small number of our in-game corporations. I'd like Ouroboros to be independent so I can do stuff with them without involving MetaCortex. When asked, the tour guide responded that Ouroboros has no affiliation with MetaCortex. I suppose if I have to go into it at some point I'll put in something somewhere about the two going their separate ways at some point after Wadsworth's mysterious disappearance. founded in 1953--"researchers and investors"

## Security:

- silver and black
- long shotguns
- personal firewall and hyper-deflect- tattoo?

tropospheric ducting references:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud\\_seeding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_seeding)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio\\_waves#Propagation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_waves#Propagation)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio\\_waves#Tropospheric\\_modes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_waves#Tropospheric_modes)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tropospheric\\_ducting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tropospheric_ducting)

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

[Abbreviations (just for summary convenience--don't use this as terminology with players):

OG: Oligarchy/Oligarchs

OR: Ouroboros Corporation

WR: Wright Research

PA: Pendhurst-Amaranth

## Ouroboros Corporation

The only thing I've really done with Ouroboros before the 10.2.5 Merv crit (in which Mervs run into silver-and-black SWAT-style, shotgun-wielding "Ouroboros Security" NPCs) was this live event [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300018389](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300018389)

in chapter 8. If I need some Ouroboros employees for LE's I'd probably just dress a normal RSI similarly to the Tour Guide from that LE: pink dress shirt, black striped pants, that sun or heart or whichever it was tattoo, leggings, and black pumps for women, and a red dress shirt, plain black slacks, and black formal shoes for men.

In that event, the Tour Guide said they were founded in 1953 by "forward thinking researchers and investors." During the old Blue Sky event for MXO's first anniversary, one of Paul's Sentinel articles said that Ouroboros had bought Metacortex, but the Tour Guide said here that the companies weren't related, and I'm not really interested in having them stuck together, so if the question does come up at some point I'll just have to say that Metacortex regained their independence.

Ouroboros specializes in the manufacture of electronic devices. Their corporate culture is famously secretive and clannish, with internal divisions who rarely share information between each other. Their headquarters is a marked skyscraper in Creston Heights (Binary Boy is standing in their plaza).

## Wright Research

Aside from the background legal wrangling, Wright Research doesn't feature all that largely in this subchapter. Zion gets a very vague hint from P-A's Brenda Utley that she--Utley is supposedly a bluepill--may know about dead WR founder's Danielle Wright's redpill past.

Danielle was a pre-Truce Zion operative/scientist, specializing in network interfaces, developing most notably the emergency jack-out system, just after the Truce was made. Danielle became disillusioned with Zion's leadership at that point, and went off on her own, using her skills and abilities to make herself a life inside the Matrix as founder of what became a successful R&D company, Wright Research. More recently, Zion approached her to help them revamp the red pill program, which the Machines had compromised shortly after the war restarted (chapter 8.2). Wright completed the work, not seeming all that pleased about Zion, but was then killed by the Machines, who used her hidden connection to Zion's mainframe to help destroy the old city.

Since Danielle's death, it has more or less been business as usual for her company, although there are mentions (an Ouroboros worker says something in a late Merv crit in this subchapter, for instance, and there was one somewhere in an earlier subchapter, I think) that Wright Research hasn't done anything new or interesting lately; still, they continue to be regarded as one of the foremost tech think-tanks. Their corporate headquarters is a skyscraper in Vauxton, marked on the game map.

## Pendhurst-Amaranth

Brenda Utley was a PR rep at mega-consumer-products corporation P-A back in chapter 5.3, when she contacted Zion, approaching them through their coppers "private investigator" front, about weird security problems at the company. This turned out to be attacks by Niobe's ex-controller, Anome, and Utley worked with Zion to get rid of his Unlimit goons through chapter 6.2, when the day was won, and she was promoted to a position on P-A's board of directors. At the current time, chapter 10.3, she has worked her way up to chairwoman of the board.

P-A's corporate HQ is a campus of large buildings, marked on the Hampton Green map.

- Hm, I didn't think of it in time for this update, but I should have made generic missions that would open interior floors inside Ouroboros and Pendhurst-Amaranth, like I did for Wright Research back around chapter 6. I do have old test missions that can probably get interior access at those company headquarters now, but they're full of debug text, can be finished prematurely by talking to an inappropriately placed test NPC inside, and so forth--not what I'd like to use if I can avoid it. I'll have to get decent missions in (not 'til 11.1 I suppose).



Because of the detailed interaction with specific agencies in this subchapter, most of the Zion/EPN & Machine/CYPH events are pre-assigned to just one of the two groups in each pair.]

6/26

[Release pushed back a day or so from the 26th due to build issues.]

Ouroboros tour guide Judie Lahler in uniform in front of the Ouroboros sculpture in their HQ's plaza, with watchful Ouroboros security on either side.

### Crit 10.3.1

Zion: Niobe sends players to find out if the cryptic message found in 10.2.5 ("Follow her eyes in the dark binary of the golden prime") means anything. The player searches the simulation's internet, and comes across some information that makes them think it could have something to do with the Camon Heights Exile, Silver. Silver has apparently gone into hiding already, so they go on to check out Wright Research, since Silver had previously worked with Danielle Wright. Talking to an employee there, the player is told that an internal bulletin alerted Wright workers to a break-in attempt several weeks ago by a man closely matching Mauser's description.

Mach: Gray send the player to ambush an EPN team that is supposedly searching for the Morpheus sim; The player doesn't find the sim, but they do find an EPN mention of the "blip" EPN reported to Zion in 10.2.5. Gray mentions that they'd heard of the EPN report, and that the EPN reading was supposed to have been taken just after Mauser's last known appearance in the Matrix, several weeks ago. Mauser hasn't been located in the Real, either. Next, the player is sent to rescue a mechanic program charged with shutting down part of the old Zion restricted line network. The player saves the mechanic from some Zionites. Gray says that Zion and their new city is of course still the main problem, and with the intruders gone they'd like to get back to work on destroying the new city, but the darn storm is making those arrangements--Sentinel movements in particular--much more difficult than they'd normally be. The player asks a bluepill meteorologist for their "intuitive" analysis of the storm (they tell the meteorologist the data they're showing him is a hypothetical scenario), and the meteorologist says that they think the storm will last for a while, and is probably going to get worse before it gets better. Gray says that in light of not being able to find the sim, storm problems, etc, the best course of action at present is to put a stop to the Frenchman's shenanigans (breaking into the no-fly zone and so forth).

Merv: The player is sent to spy on an OR network manager, and at his office overhears talk of a party some of the employees are holding at one of their apartments. The party is duly crashed, and the manager kidnapped, although if they're looking carefully, the player may notice that one drunk clerk at the party is level 5. The player delivers the manager to Ookami and some assistants for rigorous questioning. That done, Flood has the player check up on

the clerk from the party, and they find him reporting to a Cypherite that "they're after Ouroboros."

6/26-7/2

Required Events:

Zion: (EPN only) EPN decrypt the data retrieved from the maintenance tunnel site, and find it's a copy of the same topographic data on the no-fly zone that the Merv stole from the Machines. Decrypting it might require busting some Machine (or less likely, Merv) skulls. The conclusion is that EPN decide to send hovercraft of their own to that area, to see what's going on. [They'll arrive in 11.1.]

Mach: (CYPH only) Cyphs sneak past some Mervs, capture OG data feeding into OR (see also Merv event details)

Merv: (after Mach event) Merv counter-attacks Cyphs, confronts Cryptos about the Cyphs who've been around his OR activity lately, and Cryptos explains felt he needed the data to advance the research he's doing for creating a counter to override codes 7/3

Crit 10.3.2

Zion: The player breaks into the Wright facility where Mauser is supposed to have broken in weeks earlier, but they find only an alarm-rigged computer and security guards waiting for them. Just then Pendhurst-Amaranth chairwoman Brenda Utley gets in touch, after making the player go through some hoops to make sure no Wright spies are on their tail (officially, PA deals with Zion as if Zion is a firm of private investigators--actually more like mercenaries, but that doesn't sound as civilized). Meeting in secret, Utley tells the player that Wright Research is threatening to sue Pendhurst-Amaranth, alleging that P-A hired a hacker, Mauser, to steal data from Wright Research, and basing that connection off of known ties between Mauser and Zion, and P-A and Zion (Zion worked with P-A back during the Unlimit affair, when Anome tried to take over the corporation). Utley adds that WR's Mauser story is only an excuse: Wright Research thinks she possesses damaging information about their company [she drops what *\*could\** be taken as a hint that WR thinks Utley knows something about Danielle Wright's redpill activities].

Mach: The player is in the process of roughing up some Exiles for info on the Merv when Veil calls and invites them to come see Cryptos, who has "news." Gray says that the Cyphs have been conducting their own investigation of the Merv. Cryptos says that the Mervs are after info inside the Ouroboros Corporation that the Merv believes to be related to the intruders; Cryptos says he doesn't want someone like the Merv, who doesn't really care about human lives except as power/pleasure sources, getting their hands on something like that. Pace briefs the player on Ouroboros, and marches them off with reinforcements. They find Mervs attacking an Ouroboros building. Gray directs them to eliminate the Mervs, without hurting

any surviving Ouroboros guards. He says that Ouroboros had failed to notify the authorities of the attack.

Merv: Using info Ookami got out of the OR network manager, the player, after difficulty with a server that suddenly went out while they were trying to hack it, and some hostile OR security (not to mention their snotty office workers), gets their hands on a bunch of OR network passwords. They're about to put these to use at another OR terminal, when they're rudely interrupted by Machines. They try again, but this time Pace is there to greet them, with two Agents by her side. She warns them that they'd better cease their activity at the Ouroboros Corporation.

7/3-7/9

Required Events:

Zion: (Zion only) WR vs PA pre-courtroom hearing w/ court-appointed mediator; small Zion group backs Utley & PA against WR's claim of PA/Zion involvement in the break-in (hm...I suppose I might dual-client to handle the WR rep and the mediator)

Mach: (Machines only) machinists chasing Mervs also run into OR security; Agent appears and calls machinists off; Gray explains to the Machinists that the Machines have been aware OR was a front set up by the OG, and that now it is causing a problem in the Matrix, but the Machines cannot risk attacking OR directly, lest the OG be notified about it and bring more overrides into the Matrix

Merv: Mervs posing as Agents go into OR and confiscate some data, but are stopped by OR security who "pull rank" and tell the disguised Mervs that their "Federal jurisdiction" doesn't apply inside OR

7/10

Crit 10.3.3

Zion: Utley says that P-A is getting a little too much legal heat from Wright, and asks Niobe to look for clues on Mauser at Ouroboros instead. Niobe isn't happy about it, but it isn't as though the Wright thing was going great for Zion so far anyway. An aide to Utley mentions that since the whole Wright case hinges on Mauser, and the Machines probably don't want a lot of facts about Mauser coming to light, there's a good chance that Wright will have a hard time putting their case through anyway. The player goes to meet an informant of Utley's at Ouroboros, who tells them he's heard rumors of a security incident about four weeks about at Ouroboros. He directs them to a female Ouroboros security guard he trusts, and she says that the attack was a hack attempt that came in over the internet, going right through the Ouroboros corporate firewall. She points the player to Ouroboros' firewall server, where the server's logs are captured, and it is found that a lot of data went in and out during the time when the attack was supposed to have taken place, using encryption somewhat similar in design to the encryption on the red pill program rewritten for Zion by Danielle Wright; the

suggestion is that the thief--probably Mauser--used stolen Wright technology to hack into Ouroboros.

Mach: Gray says they've known Ouroboros is an Oligarch front, and that the Machines have to make sure that the Oligarchs are not called into the Matrix as a result of the security problems Ouroboros is having. He gives the player some Agents and asks them to go make one last attempt to get Ouroboros to let the Machines handle the Merv's attacks. At the Ouroboros office, a rep says that they appreciate the offer, but they can handle "a few latterday gangsters" with their own security force. Gray says that the only recourse now is to cut their communication connection to the Real, whose location they know. The player raises alarms in an office nearby as a distraction, then goes to the Ouroboros communication linkup. Gray says that they'll re-route outgoing messages to a spoofed receiver; they can't replace the actual encrypted outgoing data, but he thinks they can work out the Merv problem before the Oligarchs are alerted by a missing status report or two. But, when the player tries accessing the communication terminal, it goes into lockdown, and an Accelerator and Ouroboros security (who should then get Accelerated by the Accelerator) appear. Gray is worried.

Merv: An irritable Flood will hear no excuses, and send the player back to Ouroboros, armed with passwords. An alarm has already been raised; there are a lot of guards, and the passwords won't work. Trying again (Flood feels a headache coming on), they find their target computer has a bullet through it, with an OR guard and a Machinist next to it, arguing: the OR guard says the Machinist can't just go in there, and the Machinist is arguing that they have to take measures to protect "consumer data" since OR is under assault by "a major criminal syndicate." The player reports these events to the Merv, who thinks it's interesting that OR isn't cooperating with the Machines. He gives the player a letter for OR, which he says details Machine/Cypherite tampering at OR. (Mr. Black is in the room with the Merv here, but says nothing; like Kalt w/ Utlely in Mach 10.3.4, I just wanted to add a hint of other business dealings going on in the background.) At OR, a receptionist, telling an Agent that they'll have to wait, ushers the player through to meet with the OR rep. The rep seems interested when they read the letter, but are tight-lipped, and say only that they'll "check into it."

7/10-7/16

Required Events:

Zion: (Zion only) Utlely/Zion help each other find info about a means of accessing OR's internal network access records (which will be used in the following crit): the name of the Ouroboros employee who has access to a virtual blueprint of the company's internal network, [secret name x]. As PA chair, Utlely has lots of pull in and knowledge of the city's corporate world, so it might be nice to incorporate that aspect into the search.

Mach: (CYPH only) Cyphs tipped off by the Machines intercept and kill an OR security chief who was about to send data out to the OG network; the concern was that this might have been an alert going out to the OG that would have caused more overrides to be brought in. How this sending mechanism would work, I'm not quite sure--could just be a computer the

chief is using. As with most corporate characters, it will generally be implied that the person is a more or less talented bluepill, rather than a redpill or program.

Merv: (after Zion event) Merv, possibly calling in favors from other Exiles around the city, manufactures a scandal implicating WR, and possibly PA as well, in order to take some of the spotlight off OR while he's trying to hack there. It could be stuff like accusations or frame-ups of patent fraud, corporate sabotage, industrial espionage, intellectual property violations, dumping poisonous industrial wastes in poor people's groundwater, and so forth. (PA is a mega-corporation who does just about everything, including military contracts, but makes most of their \$\$\$ from popular consumer products (cigarettes, sports drinks, etc), while WR is a top tech research firm, specializing particularly in computer network technology.)

7/17

Crit 10.3.4

Zion: [secret name x] is quickly located: a friendly Ouroboros IS worker. He acts normally, but the operator detects a "second data channel" on his coppertop signal: there's an extra information feed coming into the simulation from something physically planted in the man's brain at his pod. After mentioning that there's concern any blueprint [x] has may have limited usefulness due to the extremely individualized, segmented way in which the Ouroboros network is put together, Tyndall uploads a modified red pill program to the player that will trace [x]'s signal back to his pod, without actually initiating the extraction procedure (since that would probably kill him at his age and in his modified condition). The player finds [x] at home; [x] becomes suspicious, but the player succeeds in knocking him out and forcing the pill down his throat (:o). The trace runs, the pod is located in the supercluster just next to the Machine city, and a Zion hovercraft is dispatched there. In the meantime, the player follows feedback from the red pill program--unexpectedly showing up inside the Matrix--to what Tyndall says is probably the spot where the data from [x]'s brain implant is dumped into the Matrix. Ouroboros security is working to disable the terminal there, but the player beats them to it, the hovercraft crew finds [x]'s pod and initiates a data dump, and the player pulls the resulting data from the computer; it is in fact the Ouroboros network blueprint. Checking up on [x]'s condition, he's found to be under Ouroboros guard at a private hospital facility. The operator suggests that housing the data in a poddy's brain in the real was a great way to hide it from pretty much everyone other than the Machines; and it is of course pretty obvious that someone at Ouroboros knows a thing or two about the Real.

Mach: A WR rep meeting w/ Pace says that WR can provide footage of Mauser breaking into their facility, and that they have information demonstrating Mauser's ties to the Zion mercenary group; also they know Zion has worked for P-A, and that they've been meeting w/ P-A a lot in recent weeks; WR feels they have a solid case against P-A about the break-in. Pace says that since they're determined, and this suit will involve a terrorist group, it'll need a lot of federal oversight--notify Agent Gray. The player goes to see Gray, who gives them a subpoena to serve to Brenda Utley, calling her to a federal hearing to answer questions about P-A's involvement with Zion and the theft from WR. At the player's first attempt to find Utley, though, they run into Zion operatives in an Ouroboros office, and fight. After that altercation,

P-A gives Gray Brenda's actual location, where the player interrupts a meeting between her and Kalt (no details are given on what they're doing, except that Kalt seems ticked that Brenda didn't warn her about the feds coming by; I just wanted to toss Kalt in there to show Brenda involved in business deals, and Kalt was the one major corp not mentioned elsewhere in this subchapter) and the player gives Utley the subpoena, which she says seems to be in order.

Merv: With business scandals and so forth distracting attention from OR, the Mervs go back to hacking OR's network. The player is tracking network links around computers Mauser (or whoever) hacked, but things take a particularly odd turn when an obvious and active connection between two sections of the network is just plain not there. The Effectuator is called in, but can't make heads or tails out of it, and starts to get weirded out. Skipping that for now, the player enters an area of the OR network that doesn't show any hits in the captured security record of Mauser's attack. They find some corporate finance data that doesn't seem very exciting, but Flood says that parsing through mountains of numbers is how real analysis gets done.

7/17-7/23

Required Events:

Zion: Zion uses the captured network blueprint to obtain the OR network records of the Wright tech break-in there. It would be a little boring if their break-in went as smoothly as Mauser's must have, though... Hm in fact we could have them get caught on their way out by some sort of unexpected and nasty security double-check system that makes them wonder just how Mauser'd got in and out of there by himself in the first place----doesn't go smoothly because individual nodes must be accessed independently, and there's variation from what's shown on the global map

Mach: (Machines only) Utley appears at her hearing and is grilled by the Machines, who end up threatening to crush PA's productivity with a hellacious audit or something if she keeps working with those sociopathic Zion mercenaries

Merv: Could be a little tricky, but in this event the key to accessing the "missing" part of the network noticed in the last crit (an empty room between two rooms with computers) is found to be an emotion: strong physical attraction--this has to be exuded in the proximity of the "missing" network link, at which point the hidden data stream will be detectable. The only hint of this dropped in the mission is the Effectuator (who always feels strong physical attractions...) saying he's "getting goosebumps" and feeling "all tingly" when he's in the empty room. I resisted bringing Persephone in for the crit, because I thought we might want to save her involvement for this event, but neither of them necessarily have to be involved in finding the solution. At any rate, when the solution is found and put to use, accelerated OR Security appear. Nevertheless, access to the hidden subnet has been obtained.

7/24

### Crit 10.3.5

Zion: The player uses the network addresses from the security log to hunt up and hack into the Ouroboros computers previously attacked by (probably) Mauser. The player encounters a great deal of trouble in their initial attempts: numerous Ouroboros Security teams, data they can't parse, security barriers they can't pass, and so forth. Finally, they come across something that looks like partial Machine-format surface coordinates, indicating a position the operator calls "about a thousand miles north" of the Machine city (longitude is missing), and information about power ratings and network links. Just at that point the data is cut off, and the player finds themselves face to face with Seraph, who apologetically asks them to stop investigating the data, saying (vaguely) that it will cause harm if they do. Niobe is not happy about that, but admits she still trusts Seraph--although the Council might take some convincing.

Mach: "Sources" having alerted the Machines to the Merv getting into the OR sub-network, Gray sends the player in pursuit. First, they "steal a headset" from an OR guard so they can listen in on OR's security channel. They use this info to locate some of the invading Merv redpills, and maybe some surviving, hostile OR guards; but they also run into a Decelerator. Gray says they aren't sure what the Merv expects to find, but based on what's been seen so far, it could have something to do with override programs. As the player closes in on another security hotspot, the OR security channel goes dead, and the player picks their way past dead OR guards and Merv redpills to find Seraph, who says that the player's path has to end there. Gray says well great, with the security channel down we're out of immediate ways to track the Merv inside Ouroboros; darn Ouroboros, the Merv, Seraph, and that Morph sim too, for good measure.

Merv: It's slow going through the subnet, since they no longer have the map of Mauser's attack to guide them, the passwords they captured earlier don't work, and there are Machines and Ouroboros security to contend with, but the Mervs get a break when all the hostiles at one location turn up dead (one Merv support program there gasps "It was Wingless" before keeling over), and the target computer is unprotected. It leads to a location swarming with Accelerators, Decelerators, and Ouroboros security, plus a wicked firewall, but taking down the firewall proves surprisingly easy, and they find: [typical Merv cliffhanger x]

[secret name x] = Sheldon Brewer

[typical Merv cliffhanger x] = the biological interface program

Ouroboros:

<http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...061#36300351996>

Yasamuu pointed out that Ouroboros was reported as buying MetaCortex (that was in the Sentinel, during the lead up to the first anniversary with Decius Wadsworth, Blue Sky, and all that: <http://mxoresource.com/sentinel/033006/> ) which is sort of annoying because I don't see any point in reducing the already small number of our in-game corporations. I'd like Ouroboros to be independent so I can do stuff with them without involving MetaCortex. When asked, the tour guide responded that Ouroboros has no affiliation with MetaCortex. I suppose if I have to go into it at some point I'll put in something somewhere about the two going their separate ways at some point after Wadsworth's mysterious disappearance. founded in 1953--"researchers and investors"

#### Security:

- silver and black
- long shotguns
- personal firewall and hyper-deflect- tattoo?

[Square brackets below surround information that will not be revealed to players directly, possibly not at all, during this subchapter.]

[Abbreviations (just for summary convenience--don't use this as terminology with players):

OG: Oligarchy/Oligarchs  
OR: Ouroboros Corporation  
WR: Wright Research  
PA: Pendhurst-Amaranth

BIP: biological interface program

I've added generic "Visit" missions that will let us get the usual six-person mission teams into mission areas inside Ouroboros' Creston Heights building, and Pendhurst-Amaranth's Hampton Green building, just in case we wanted to send teams into those buildings for event purposes. The missions can only be started by an admin. We already have a mission like that for Wright Research (we also have one for "The Oracle's apartment"--ie a random apartment somewhere in Mara--and the Hel Club). Oh and I also added one for Jakubaitus while I was at it.]

#### EPN/CYPH

The "Zion" events are mostly specified for just Zion or EPN this time. Cyphs do not have specific events called out for them here, but the "Machine" events in this subchapter almost all have to do with bluepill situations, pretty in-line with Cypherite aims, and should be suited just as well to either group.



8/7

Chapter image: Just the Merv chatting pleasantly in the chateau while Ookami watches over his shoulder

### Crit 11.1.1

Zion: Zion tells Utey that Mauser has cleared out; she says if that's the case then the Wright lawsuit will collapse. After going to meet with WR's legal reps, she calls Zion back, saying that the WR reps didn't show, and that the WR people who reported this seemed evasive and agitated. Zion checks into it and finds the WR reps being pushed around by Exiles, whom they had evidently been trying to bribe. Brenda says that with the lawsuit, and attention from the feds, she can't help directly, but she's been hearing rumors of internal troubles at WR.

Mach: The Machines send the player into OR to get as close as they can to the terminal where the BIP is supposed to have been stolen by the Merv. Based on the readings obtained, the Machines say it looks like it could really have been the BIP. The player is sent to notify OR that Merv attacks on their company are probably over, and that the Machines will take care of any remaining problems. The OR rep is kind of a jerk, and says that they're back to business as usual anyway. Next, it's time to start getting the BIP from the Merv, and the operative is sent to roll a few Exiles and swipe their computer's data, part of a larger operation aimed at grabbing and analyzing as much Exile data as possible to turn up the BIP ASAP.

Merv: Merv sets to work trying to analyze the captured BIP, but it's a baffling mix of linked Machine functions and "intuitive" routines. Several outside experts are brought in to look over a sample: the dungeon Exile leader Ethereal 2, and the Historic District mission contact, Madame T. They offer a few comments on it, but don't come up with anything definite. The Merv seems more intrigued than ever. (A Wright Research official and security guard are leaving when the player goes to meet the Merv; they were digging for dirt on Mauser (reference to data on Mauser that Merv stole from the Machines in Merv 8.3.1, and to the WR/Exile spat in Zion's mission this week), [but the Merv wasn't interested in dealing with them (he's suspicious of WR, and feels they've got too many problems of their own right now to be of much profit to him)].)

8/7-8/13

### Required Events:

Zion: (EPN only) Departure of the EPN expedition to the no-fly zone (Shimada talked about having to start preparations back in 10.3). Could possibly have players....hmm, well they can't really go themselves, since that would require that they stay out of the game for months, but maybe with a little advance prep they could "call up" one "crew member" or something like that; ie, they'd designate the name of an alt character---wonder if it would be possible to explain that---and then we'd have all those new alts assemble in the event and jack out

together. Eh and then if one of them did jack in before the expedition completes (we'd have to make it clear that this job would very likely keep them out of the simulation for months- because it will), we'd just have to say they went AWOL, and hold the EPN who registered them responsible for the defection. And I suppose since these would just be "alts" we could open it up to EPN from all servers, provided they could produce their named "crew member" on whatever server is actually going to host the send-off event. Of course, names of characters who are actually frequently active in the game wouldn't be allowed; eh, maybe we'd have to tell them that trained \*Matrix\* operatives would be needed in the simulation, and we're only accepting operatives of neurokinetic level five (?) or lower for the expedition.

Mach: Machines go to get the BIP from the Merv. They actually do get it, but then the program removes itself from their possession just as the Mervs counter-attack, and the Mervs make off with it. (I wouldn't be disguising anyone as a jumping computer disk or anything like that :p, so the details of the program's escape would probably be mostly RP.)

Merv: (after Mach event) After its strange escape from the Machines, the Mervs realize that part of the problem in analyzing the program is that it is at least to some extent self-aware, and can modify its own code structures. Some highly experimental means of analysis is called for (maybe we could even just throw this out to the players to brainstorm on) and is attempted, but whatever it is, it ends in near-catastrophic failure, and the Mervs realize that some more informed approach is going to be necessary.

8/14

#### Crit 11.1.2

Zion: An enthusiastic reporter tips Zion off to something weird going on at a WR office (in exchange for an "exclusive interview," but there may be an Agent who wants to interview him first...). The player finds the office abandoned, with a chat session left in mid-chat, saying something about a break-in at another office. That office is empty except for two WR security, who get a call about a network attack as you happen to enter the room. The player follows to the scene and finds this office already under security lockdown; they interrupt the team leader, who was filing a report saying that they'd still found no evidence of an on-site intruder, and indicating that they're watching for Mauser particularly.

Mach: The player is sent to go check out reports of rioting. They find some SWAT members who had inflicted a few civilian casualties while defending themselves from a mob. The SWAT teams says they don't know what set off the mob. The player is sent in ahead of SWAT to the next trouble spot, to try to avoid violence. They find that these bluepills are upset about cable television being out of service; a second group of blues is going crazy because their Internet access is down. Gray says that it looks like a case of mass malfunction among cable boxes and home network routers, almost all of which are manufactured by OR. He adds that media streams are important in keeping the bluepills distracted, and that OR has been successful in large part because their OG backing pretty much gives them unlimited funds and technology, which the Machines didn't want to try to mess with, since that might have brought intruders into the Matrix.

Merv: The Merv determines that the answer to cracking the BIP is to enlist the knowledge of the Exile scientist Silver, who has significant experience in biological research, and advanced knowledge of interface tech that he picked up in the past from working with Wright (although at least some of this was lost when he was terminated and had to be restored from backup). But Silver's gone into hiding, as Zion discovered in 10.3. Flood has the player intimidate a certain Exile lickspittle of Silver's in Camon, who leads them to a hotel room peopled by weird bluepill simulacra, one of whom has a strain of a rare disease, which is traced to a particular lab, where Silver is found, along with a few Exile bodyguards, and some dead scientists. He is marched before the Merv, and agrees to help research the BIP, but very grudgingly; he thinks it's too dangerous, with the Machines after it.

8/14-8/20

Required Events:

Zion: Now that Silver's been roused out, Zion wonders if he's the one behind the WR problems, since he was Danielle Wright's secret co-researcher for a time. They manage to locate him when he *\*isn't\** working on the BIP (which would be extremely heavily guarded), dispose of whatever Exile guards he has on hand, and ask him about the WR thing. He says it wasn't him, and he can prove it: they just have to go examine the hideaway he was using (in the 11.1.2 crit, the Mervs found him in a Richland/Westview lab room--those are usually in slum apartment buildings, I think), and a code scan will show that he was there with minimal outside contact for the past several months. Some players may not be totally convinced even after Silver has waited for them to complete this inspection, and they may want to keep him prisoner anyway, due to the whole BIP thing some of them will probably be aware of, but if pressed, Silver could call in Exile guards and run off in the ensuing melee.

Mach: Ouroboros is not handling complaints of malfunctioning consumer electronics efficiently, and Machinists are called in to quell a civilian riot. This could involve LESIGcontrolled bluepills, or we could try something like having players cast non-damaging stuns/roots and so forth on hostile Bluepill NPCs to keep them occupied and alive; after a certain amount of time we say the Machines have been able to inject enough happy juice into their pods to remove the danger (at which point the NPCs would vanish, since that's what happens to spawns any time I change a setting--such as org alignment--on their sequence). Of course, something like that *\*could\** potentially turn into a massacre if a player with an itchy trigger finger got within firing range.

Merv: Silver, perhaps just a tad vindictive after being pulled out of hiding, decides on a particularly ghoulish first experiment for the BIP, involving human bodies (of the Matrix simulation variety, I mean). Various attempted combinations of the BIP and the bodies do not produce visible results, although Silver claims that he's getting some highly interesting readings. One of the Merv higher-ups calls a halt to the experiment, declaring that a different line of research will be needed, and implying that Silver had better start demonstrating that he can be useful, or else.

8/21

### Crit 11.1.3

Zion: Wright network equipment prototypes have gone missing. Investigation into the nature of the stolen equipment reveals that it was based on research headed by Wright herself. The player tracks down the manager of one of the prototype projects, now retired, who says that the project dried up without her, because nobody else could understand it.

Mach: The service outage isn't being handled by OR, and it's time to go tell them something needs to be done. But the OR rep the player was supposed to meet isn't there, and the few OR staff at the office are acting pretty flighty. Gray sends the player to make an unscheduled visit to another office to find out what's up, and the player finds that OR internal mail and paging services are offline. Checking up on that outage, the player finds the guys in the OR IS department completely baffled by the problems. Gray says that there's got to be some scheme behind it, and adds that they'll have to find "a more...reliable company" to pick up OR's failed public service contracts (Internet, cable devices).

Merv: The BIP is missing from its secure mainframe server, and the guards have no idea how it vanished. Silver, in the midst of some other unspeakable experiment, says he isn't surprised; he'd noticed that the BIP's unique code allows it to circumvent security routines with ease. The program is found circulating the Merv's network: first scaring a commando squad (feedback from one terminal kills a commando), then wandering around computers owned by a couple succubi, although by that time the Machines have got wind of it, and try to snatch it, but the player manages to beat them off, and the BIP settles down. Flood says they'll put it in a server with doubled firewalls cycling at irregular intervals, to prevent it from breaking out again.

8/21-8/27

### Required Events:

Zion: (EPN only) The OR malfunctions and subsequent disruptions in the public sector, due to the loss of home TV and Internet access, are a fine illustration of a system of Machine control breaking down. We could have some young bluepills, adrift at an anti-OR rally, and shocked when OR security takes down a particularly rowdy rioter or something, become candidates for awakening; some sticking it to the OR security at the scene once the bluepills are evacuated might be appropriate, too.

Mach: The Machines snatch some key Ouroboros execs (could be an armed operation, or a little pill in their coffee, so to speak--or a variety), and question them about the situation at the company--what's happened to cause this corporation-wide breakdown? The execs hem and haw, but finally one confesses that they really don't know how this could have happened. The Machines verify that the exec is telling the truth.

Merv: Mervs are called in to defend the BIP against a raid by the Machines. The Mervs are hard-pressed during the attack, and fighting around the BIP's secured server is fierce. When there's a good skirmish going right next to the computer we've designated as the BIP's location, Silver or a Merv story character (probably one of the scientifically-inclined ones, although Ookami would work, too) will announce that the BIP has jumped into one of the nearby operatives (we'd pick one who seems reliable--if they crash or jack out or run away or something we'll just say the BIP has now jumped into someone else). The Mervs fight free of the attacking Machines and regroup at a new location, where the BIP-inhabited operative is sat down next to a computer, and the BIP is coaxed out into a new secure server. 8/28

#### Crit 11.1.4

Zion: Raiding a WR network lab where they're analyzing the attacks, the player finds they've compiled a list of employee passwords used in the attacks, and that the employees were out of town when their passwords were used. The player beats WR security to the next attacked site, and captures the on-site security camera footage. It's just showing WR employees going about their business, but one of them is a clerk that the player ran into on their way out of the security lab--at the same time the footage from the attack site was recorded. They go back to check the clerk, and find him being grilled by WR security, but he seems like a normal bluepill, and it isn't clear how he was apparently in two spots at once. (Not described by Tyndall, but a computer at one of the break-in sites has notes by "W" [Danielle Wright] about "Argent" ["Argent Biometrics" was the company name Silver used when working with Wright previously].)

Mach: Gray sends the player to check into the OR network outages specifically, and also to start taking the rest of their network offline, so they can try to isolate whatever might be causing the problems. They detect an error-free data stream in/out of OR; checking it out, they find a female OR office worker who's been hacking into the OR network to try to figure out for herself what's going on, since nobody else there seems to have any idea (oh, earlier in the mission, one of the frenzied technicians is heard saying "Where the HELL is Brewer," which is a reference to that brain-hacked OR network assistant from the last subchapter). Following a tip from the helpful hacker, the player finds a heavily guarded OR site with a bunch of computers. They shut them down, but not before an outgoing signal of some sort is detected. They also find a data connection similar to the one they used to track down the helpful hacker earlier; this leads to an abandoned hacking station, with a data dump of what looks like a copy of a message routed to a downtown address, with commands that would trigger a power plant like the one in OR's Creston HQ to overload in a runaway reaction that could destroy the whole area. Gray adds that the helpful hacker has disappeared [I mean to imply here that someone got to her].

Merv: Silver has the player go to the BIP's server, and it hops into the player's RSI. Flood is ticked. Silver, by himself this time (I keep characters as isolated as possible for the rest of this, and Flood make snarky remarks about avoiding HLs), sends the player to meet up with a particular operative; the BIP jumps into that operative, just before they're ambushed by Machines. The player and the operative fight free and get the BIP to another secure mainframe, where it settles back down. Flood calls to report that Silver's claiming the success of this experiment shows that the BIP can "interface perfectly with human broadcast signals,"

and semi-sarcastically suggests that next Silver will be wanting to use it to insert programs into real human bodies, or something ridiculous like that.

8/28-9/3

Required Events:

Zion: (Zion only) Mysterious WR culprit located, switches form to escape; operatives locate it again, and can attack it, although they are told not to. If they do attack and kill it, we can say it will be harder to get answers now (also, the terminated infiltrator's body disappears (reconstructs) almost immediately); if they don't kill it, it escapes.

Mach: meltdown of OR's Creston HQ power plant narrowly averted

Merv: (I'd like to run this event on Tuesday the 2nd.) Carlyne (!) appears in front of the Merovingian, asking that the BIP be handed over to him. I might have Carlyne flagged, and we'll see if any Merv operatives decide to attack him. The Merv stalls, saying that the BIP is of course being kept in a scrambled network to keep it secure, and it will take some time to prepare it safely. He asks Carlyne to name a time and place for delivery. Carlyne says just have it ready by tomorrow. On his way out he leaves some hostile overrides nearby as a "reminder."

9/4

Crit 11.1.5

Zion: (The operator mentions: Indications of increased Sentinel activity around no-fly zone; Kid's heading out with additional ships to reinforce no-fly zone exploration team [this means he won't be available for Live Events for a while after this date].) Following up on WR security reports, and scanning for a jack-in signal that can vary its encoded appearance, the player tracks the culprit to a hidden lab equipped w/ a highly sophisticated network interface system built partly from the stolen Wright equipment. Its exact purpose is unclear, and Zion decides to confiscate it for study. [A computer in the lab has a coded message that will give a clue to something...] Accessing a computer in the lab shuts down the culprit, who was evidently some kind of scripted "spider" program, equipped with WR access codes, and the likenesses of WR employees. Could it have been set up by Mauser?

Mach: Gray says it's time to shut down OR; the problems caused are just too dangerous. The Machines freeze OR's assets, and send the player in to notify staff of the federal takeover. Staff are worried, but not terribly so--except for some OR security members, who don't want any part of it, and have to be given a beat-down. The next step is going around to worker terminals and dumping all OR data to a Machine database for analysis, to find the source of the problems. This isolates the source of "suspect directives and programs, disseminated through a network of employees" to a single computer in an OR office, not actually connected

to their network: it's connected to the Oligarch Network. Gray says they have to assume that the OGs know what's been going on, and could be on their way to the Matrix.

Merv: Flood calls the player in to help him argue with Silver, who wants out since learning of Carlyne's return; he says he doesn't intend to stick around waiting for Carlyne to terminate him when he comes for the BIP. But there's no time for Flood to report Silver's wussiness to the Merv, because the Machines are having their operatives (not their programs--they're keeping them back like they did the last time the intruders were around) make an all-out attempt to get the BIP. After some fighting against Machine operatives, the player comes to a Merv site with dead Exiles, a fried computer, and no sign of a struggle. The operator gets a bad feeling about this. Flood rings up to say that their programs are falling left and right, and the wave of destruction looks like it's heading right for the Merv. The player arrives to find the Merv guarded by worried Exiles, just as Carlyne appears, testily asking for the BIP. Some of the Exile guards die. The Merv seems confident in his ability to negotiate with the stressed intruder, when suddenly "???" appears beside them. Carlyne crumples to the floor, and "???" says they've come for the BIP. The rest of the Exile guards die. The Merv quickly directs the player to open the ports on the computer storing the BIP (he had it there in the room with him) to the "primary network." This is done in an instant, and the Merv and player beat a hasty retreat while "???" is still figuring out what just happened. The Merv says they've allowed the BIP to escape "into the wide network of the Matrix." He seems excited at the thought of facing this new adversary, and beating them to the BIP.

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"???" = Actually Danielle Wright in "Oligarch"-style shell, but I'm not going to positively ID her here, just leave hints like her behavior, and the alphadecimal code found in Zion 11.1.5.

9/18

Chapter image: Wright in intruder form floating in a bubble of code

Crit 11.2.1

Zion: Intel is pretty convinced it really is Wright, and she's after the BIP. The device Zion found with the culprit stealing from Wright Research is giving out numeric sequences, which under analysis are revealed to be a series of updating coordinates. Thinking these might have something to do with Wright or the BIP, the player starts following them, finding a) a bluepill and their computer who seem to steal each other's lines, much to the bluepill's confusion, and b) a dead Exile, and live Accelerated Exiles. These encounters are reported to Niobe, who thinks maybe the device can be used to locate the BIP before Wright gets it. Niobe's also wondering if Wright wasn't quite the martyr she made herself out to be when the Machines

were after her before. An EPN has just told Niobe that the EPN expedition reached the no-fly zone, but couldn't enter because of heavy Machine patrols around the perimeter, and that the Kid has already left for the zone with reinforcements.

Mach: The player is sent to help confirm the identity of the female intruder. They find a panicky bluepill and a dead Agent. The bluepill manages to point out a direction, and override use over that way is narrowed down to Wright herself, and a computer. The computer seems to be tracking something, but Wright blanks it out when the player tries to check it. Wright says she "did make a mistake": "the Matrix was more than I had thought it was"; the "mistake" line is a reference to her last event appearance as a redpill, Zion 8.2.3

( [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300016791](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300016791) ), where she said that if anyone saw her again, she'd "have made a great mistake." Gray says it's time to talk about this person. He says the data scanned off her looks reasonably close to what they know of Wright; how she survived termination by Sentinels, whose sensors confirmed the destruction of her body (in 8.2), is unknown. Gray also says that Wright is not an Oligarch, even if she seems to have "adopted their jack-in protocol"; the old termination order for her still applies. The player is packed off with operative reinforcements to take care of this, but they just run into a bunch of overrides, without finding Wright. Gray says well okay, she's got the Oligarch overrides too, this could be tricky.

Merv: Exiles scanning for signs of the BIP get a report from the white hallways of an access violation, with no detected source. Going to check on the hallway control center, the player finds a glitching computer. As they examine it, the Effectuator appears, surprised to find himself there. Suddenly nine more Effectuators appear, confused. The tenth seems woozy, and all collapse. Flood reports Malphas made it out of the chateau, and may have a report; Flood is then cut off. Malphas says that there have been system failures throughout the chateau, but they couldn't find the source, although it seemed to be internal. He thinks it could have been the BIP. He adds that he can't figure how Flood didn't notice the system failures happening all around him.

9/18-9/24

Required Events:

Zion: (Zion only) Zion comes close to the BIP, runs across Wright. Wright tracks them back to the device and destroys it. Wright has the usual intruder abilities, plus a couple new ones: "Compress," a meatwaddy one with Firewall's metallic skin effect, and "Signal Jamming," an AOE that lays a heavy debuff on everyone's damage resistances.

Mach: Machines want to locate Wright's broadcast position. They find her and scan her signal, but find no data at all that they can trace. Wright made no attempt to avoid the scan.

Merv: The BIP is found having taken over the training sim in a chateau org area. It attacks at first, gradually stops, looks around, says "[bip message 1]," then falls over dead. If players killed the "sim" first, "[bip message 1]" is found on a computer.



9/25

### Crit 11.2.2

Zion: Using information provided by an acquaintance of a chateau guard, the player locates the guard, hoping to get a lead that will get them into the chateau to look for data on the BIP. They find the guard being killed by a fellow guard, however, who is yelling frantically about how a program "won't get" him. Another, wounded guard mentions that one of their members ran off. A scan is run, and a guard is found, dead or unconscious, in the middle of a large corporate network center. It is suspected that this may have been the work of the BIP, jumping from guard to guard. The computers at the center are inspected, and evidence of infiltration and data transfer are found in one of them. This leads to a home computer, with a strange message on it: "[bip message 2]." Also, Tyndall informs the player that EPN has been in touch to say that the Kid has met the expedition, and gone into the no-fly zone.

Mach: Since they can't find her vulnerable jack-in point, the Machines decide to try getting Wright to talk. The player checks up on some chateau Exiles for Wright activity. They get one who says there was some report earlier about a problem. The player comes upon dead and dying Exiles, and Wright, who pretty much refuses to say anything to them. Then the player has to go check on some big override signal that pops up nearby, and this turns out to be Wright again, who says she just thought of something, and wants to meet the Machines after all, with the player there as a "witness." Gray tells Wright that the Machines would like to know how she survived her body. Wright wants to know why the Oracle made the BIP, but she doesn't want to have the discussion there, and she wants more operatives present. Gray says okay, he'll see about getting it arranged.

Merv: Flood sends the player off to kill what he says was a traitorous chateau guard; that done, the player goes after Zionites who've been hounding the guards. A few Zionites are found dead, along with another chateau guard, badly wounded, who coughs out nothing helpful before dying. After a tongue-lashing from Flood, the main group of Zionites are found, apparently looking for something in a room with a dead Accelerated Exile. Once the Zionites are dispatched, Wright appears, possibly there with the intention of ambushing the Zionites who've just been handled. She mentions to the Merv player that it's her understanding the Zionites helped Carlyne, although they probably feel that was a mistake, now. Still, she says, Carlyne did turn out to be way more useful than he'd intended. The Merv ponders this, and decides there's a good chance Wright found Carlyne in the Real and did something to him there to make him fall over dead in the simulation (in Merv 11.1.5). The no-fly zone was supposed to be Carlyne's abode, or something, according to a comment Halborn made a while back, so it's possible Wright ran into him somewhere around there. The Merv decides to send some of the General's Sentinels (which he's kept lurking around) back into the zone to check into this. Persephone is there with the Merv, in some kind of bad mood.

9/25-10/1

Required Events:

Zion: (EPN only) EPN captures Ouroboros data revealed by the expedition's team tapping into a Oligarch Network line found in the no-fly zone, and begins mapping the layout of the Oligarch Network in the Real.

Mach: (Machines only) Wright meets Machines in One Zero. Gray says the BIP was created to help control/monitor unplugged humans in the Real. Wright says she survived the death of her body by entering the Matrix as a complete consciousness, rather than a broadcast.

Merv: Flood is attacked by Exiles in the Hel Club. Operatives arriving at the scene take out some hostile Exiles, then find the "Francine" cake vendor in the club acting oddly. This is the BIP. It says "[bip message 3]," then Wright appears. A battle follows, sort of tailing off as Francines multiply throughout the club, crowding out everyone else. The BIP has disappeared.

10/2

### Crit 11.2.3

Zion: Override activity in the slums leads to overrides and overridden programs, and a guy whose watch has stopped keeping correct time next to a Decelerator. Tyndall reports that EPN contacts have said the expedition was attacked by advanced fighter craft in the no-fly zone; the Kid's hovercraft damaged one of the attackers, but was then shot down, and the Kid was injured. The expeditionary force retreated from the zone after heavy losses. The ships were observed to be similar to the type used by Halborn and Carlyne. In the central Richland area, the player finds more overrides, and trouble from Machine and Merovingian redpills. Override activity moves into Magog/Achan, where the player finds Seraph, who tells them that what they're looking for is in an apartment the Oracle used to live in, and whose location he'll provide to the operator. The apartment is in Mara--although now occupied by bluepills--and includes a computer with a strange message: "[bip message 4]."

Mach: The BIP has moved into Richland, and Wright's after it again. The player is sent to take care of the pesky overrides she's kicking up. They run into Merv redpills fighting Accelerated Exiles, and a computer that's been disconnected from some remote source. This leads to an apartment in the central Richland area, where a computer has crashed, and a bluepill says their (black) cat started acting weird and ran off. Gray says to get back on task, and sends the player to Mara, where overrides are getting pretty bad, and Zionites; and there are reports of Wright being in the area. The player finds Zionites talking about having run into Seraph nearby, but they can't get any more information. Then they find a big override source in Mara, which is Wright, some dead Zionites, and a blanked out computer. Wright says the program's already left, and "Its movements appear to be getting less erratic. In the right hands, it could be a truly elegant control mechanism--not like these Oligarch routines." Gray thinks she's "under some misapprehension" about the program. He also mentions that their sensors can't detect the program, which makes things difficult. Finally, he adds that the cat was located in an alley in Mara, and was returned to its owner.

Merv: The player is sent into the slums to see about override reports there. They encounter

Machinists. Flood says they've lost contact with some of their programs who were in the area (central Richland) on Hel Club business; these are found, being dominated by an Accelerator, poor things. Flood mentions that the General's Sentinels were attacked by advanced fighter craft and forced to retreat (Flood: again! haha) from the no-fly zone. With override activity increasing in the Achan/Magog area, the player finds Zionites there, talking about Seraph being in the vicinity. The player finds him in Mara, trapped by an Accelerator.

10/2-10/8

Required Events:

Zion: (Zion only) See Merv event.

Mach: (Cyph only) Before Zion/Merv events: fighting overrides around Mara with the help of Cryptos' prototype anti-override routines (these are new consumable items). These will make the user immune to a random type of override for a short period of time.

Merv: This is a two-day (back to back), single-server Zion/Merv event.

Day 1: We lock down a Mara apartment building and get Mervs and Zionites into it by teleport at separate, locked locations. Then we let them loose for PVP domination, and see which side survives. If beginning numbers aren't balanced we could either limit the larger side to matching numbers (I'd prefer this I think), or I could try to balance a bit with NPCs.

Day 2:

- If Mervs won: Merv faces Seraph, wants to know where the BIP is. Seraph says only that it is "[seraph message]." He's suddenly covered by a Firewall FX (I made a Firewalled Seraph disguise for this) as the area goes FFA PVP. Seraph, fighting furiously and not talking to anyone, makes his way free of the building.
- If Zion won: Zion fights their way out of Mara--still packed with override spawns, Exile programs, probably hostile operatives--with Seraph. Once clear, Seraph tells them that he doesn't know where the BIP will surface next, but it is "[seraph message]."

10/9

Crit 11.2.4

Zion: Bluepills are dropping dead across the city, sometimes with override use nearby. The player checks out an override signal and comes across Wright and a bluepill. Wright refers to the bluepill by a "pod" serial number--0026:05:0149:032--and says they weren't "the one that program's chosen to call home," and maybe it's someone else "in 149," as the bluepill drops dead. It looks like Wright's going hunting for bluepills, so the player gets ready to follow her, tracks an override reading, and finds a dead bluepill. Intel doesn't know of a connection between the two dead bluepills, but maybe Wright's reference to a pod was significant. The

second bluepill's body is collected, and a red pill trace is forced through them. Their body doesn't seem to have been flushed by the Machines yet, and the trace returns a pod location--fortunately at a pretty nearby pod cluster. Zion dispatches a ship there, which finds mostly empty pods in a ring around one of the towers. They begin running back-traces on the remaining people in that ring. The player goes to check up on one of these, but is stopped by Machines guarding the bluepill's apartment. Tyndall calls to report that they've lost contact with the hovercraft at the tower, and another ship in the area reported heavy Sentinel activity there.

Mach: The Machines have the bluepill (see Zion crit), who is currently inhabited by the BIP, acting erratically. Pace says they're going to take the woman, Imelda Kroller, to a lab where they'll extract the BIP, and asks the player to help hold off nearby overrides while they transfer Imelda. This is accomplished, but extraction is taking too long, and Wright is closing in. The player evacs Kroller from the lab as overrides appear, killing some of the Machines there. Pace is in a back room, and seems to be okay. She says that the BIP took control of Kroller's "somatic nervous system, resisting external stimuli." As the player gets Kroller outside, Gray says her pod routines have stopped reporting, and asks the player to check her status. Kroller says "[bip message 5]", then goes blank. This ends the mission, and Kroller disappears. Gray reports "Unrequested reinitialization of subject's image by the pod hardware... Signal is active. Unable to resolve location. Status unknown. P0026:05:0149:081 is not responding."

Merv: The Mervs have learned the Machines have Kroller (see Mach crit), and set about tracking down her pod ID, first finding the serial number Zionites heard from Wright (see Zion crit). Flood says this is Machine pod serial number format, with the third number being the number of the ring in which the pod is situated on the tower, so Wright was looking for someone plugged into the 149th ring of pods. The Merv is formulating a plan for hacking into Machine systems and locating the pod caretaker, like they did when they wanted to find MacHenry (Merv 8.3.4), but he's interrupted by Persephone, who says that just getting activity reports from the caretaker won't save Kroller, or the BIP. Persephone says she can do it, if the Merv can get her a connection to the right part of the Machine network. The Merv makes a show of worrying about his wife's safety in such a venture, but says he'll make it happen, since she's so concerned about it. The player secures a particular Machine terminal, and gets Persephone to it. She collapses, barely alive, but says she's saved them; the operator says that defensive routines kicked in as soon as Persephone sent her commands into the pod system--they must have been watching for trouble there. The player goes to give the Merv the news, and finds the General's hologram, reporting that his men found a wrecked, advanced craft on their way back from the zone, and salvaged an android of an unknown type from it; they're bringing the android back with them now. The Merv is annoyed with Persephone for almost getting herself killed in a way that would have reflected badly on him; and what was she doing, anyway, not mentioning those defensive routines, which she must have known would be there? Flood says Persephone restarted Kroller's RSI at a random point in the simulation.

10/9-10/15

## Required Events:

Zion: Try to stop Wright from getting at a bluepill. Turns out this is not a BIP-inhabited bluepill, just one in an adjacent pod, but Zion will at least have a chance of saving them from Wright's brutal process of elimination. This is complicated, of course, because that pod cluster is now surrounded by Sentinels, and there'd be no chance of saving the person if they were flushed by a red pill. I think it might be interesting to leave it to operatives to try to figure out what to do (might end up being moot if Wright beats them to the more immediate goal of securing the bluepill in the simulation).

Mach: (After Zion and Merv events) Machines able to re-establish control over Kroller's pod, track them to [Kroller location]. Wright appears and tries to grab Kroller. Machinists must keep Wright occupied (interlock, root) while evacuating Kroller. Get some distance away but Kroller collapses, Wright catches up, kills Kroller just after Kroller says "[bip message 6]."

Merv: Deathly Persephone (first appearance of her black-dress/pale-skin RSI) tries to access Kroller's pod again, fails, barely survives Machine counter-attack. Bitter words between her and the Merv; both are disappointed, for different reasons.

10/16

## Crit 11.2.5

Zion: The BIP's trail leads back into the slums. [Morpheus (sim) and [bip message 7] will be involved here, but I don't want to say more about it just now.]

Mach: The player is sent after more trouble in Richland. They find overrides, and Zionites apparently looking for Persephone. Gray says Wright and the Morpheus sim have been reported around there, too. The player is working on some Accelerated Machines when more appear, but are taken down by Cypherites who've arrived on the scene. The Cyphs say Cryptos has a way to stop the overrides. The player meets Cryptos, who says he's got a good start, and he's willing to share his progress, but he needs more information about the overrides to continue to improve his prototype. Cryptos and Gray meet. Cryptos says that the overrides use a root command layer that he can't really access, and he needs more info about it. Gray says info like that is pretty restricted, but since the anti-overrides could be useful, he'll see what he can do. Players get a prototype anti-override consumable when they complete the mission.

Merv: Persephone insists on meeting Wright. Flood doesn't sound like he's inclined to help her get herself killed, but when he starts talking about locating Wright, who's apparently in Mannsdale, in order to find the BIP, a click on the line reveals that someone was eavesdropping: Persephone. The player races off to Mannsdale to find Persephone asking Wright to stop the killing. Wright is cold--calls Persephone "program"--and says she won't stop until the Matrix is run by humans. Flood reports that that ill-advised little meeting actually gave them a chance to take some scans of the region, and they've found Zionites homing in

on a particular location. There they find Wright again, having apparently just removed something that she won't say anything about. A frustrated Flood sends the player to explain their failure to the Merv. As the Merv greets the player, a strange message, "[bip message 8]" appears on his computer screen. The Merv is annoyed that his high-priced network security failed to protect him from this spam.

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Wright abs:

"Compress" (metal meatwad?)

"Signal Jamming" (AOE massive def res debuff)

Anti-override prototype: orbiting gold code fx  
gives random of one imm: Accel, Decel,  
Run

Visiting places from Trinity's past:

The Chateau (mission/event: Merv 1)

The Hel Club (event - Merv 2)

Mara (apartment; mission: Seraph - Zion 3)

Westview (event: Club Kaos, Rogers Way--right by Ascension - mach 4)

Slums (slum apartment, room 101; mission: Morpheus Zion 5)

BIP messages (in white font, no caps or punc until later):

1: where

2: this isn't

3: i'm not

4: not here

5: impossible 6:

oh god 7:

Knock, knock.

8: Wake up.

Seraph message: "remembering"

Kroller location: Club Kaos, Rogers Way

Zion 11.2.5

Tracking BIP in Slums, but lose it. Come across Morpheus, who says that the Machines changed things, but he remembers the telephone exchange, which they didn't change. Come to room 101, Neo's apartment, find [bip message 7].

~~~~~  
~~~~~

Wright

- OG overrides are crude; need program capable of penetrating to the heart of the Machine systems and reconfiguring them carefully--she could make use of the BIP to do that
- Human control...but must be the right humans
- Doesn't know what BIP really is (only Architect, Oracle, Sati, Morpheus, Gray, Carlyne, Halborn know that)
- Brag somewhere to Machines that she survived death of her body by entering the Matrix as an independent consciousness
- When she did that w/ OG overrides, she detonated ship containing jack-in device and Mauser's body cinematic:

scene 1

- close up of computer screen: bip message from merv 11.2.5
- Merv is looking at it in annoyance
- Gen hologram phases in, says they've got the android thing
- Merv has him put it up on the holographic display
- Merv looks at it, grins slowly--"impressive..."

scene 2

- shimada, hovercraft deck, looking at face on transmitter screen- s: how is he?
- f: he won't be winning any beauty pageants, but he'll make it.we'll be in broadcast range in a few days. do you want me to--?
- s: no. I'll do it

scene 3

- hovercraft, shimada jacked in
- door opens, crafty looking woman creeps up to the chair- w: they're all off in no-man's land...
- w: nobody to watch over you while you sleep
- w: now where would you hide that code the Oracle gave you...

- crewman appears in doorway, startled: you! - w grins
- c: stop!
- w yanks shimada's jack out, slices its cable
- w: kept it warm for you, dearie
- w hurls the jack into the crewman's forehead
- crewman collapses as more crew members arrive: veil!
- veil (w) laughs as she vanishes back through the opposite doorway

#### scene 4

- wright floats between skyscrapers, moving slowly over downtown
- gray is watching grimly from a rooftop with another agent, or maybe an operative- g: the program?
- o: we're picking up blips all over the city. still trying to isolate it, sir.
- g scowls
- o: sir, should we--
- wright floats toward the wall of a skyscraper, it warps inward, making way for her to pass through
- g: no. keep your men back.
- wright floats out the other side and continues across the city at the same slow, steady speed- gray scowls even grimmerlier - g: find the program...

#### scene 5

- close up of bip message from zion 11.2.5 on a computer screen- niobe is watching it, with ghost behind her - n: the interface program?
  - the message, which had paused, continues briefly
  - n: jesus christ
  - the message suddenly floods the entire screen
  - n: ghost--
  - ghost is already hyperjumping high above the city, his face set in a determined maskmap
- zooms in on spot in some city neighborhood

~~~~~

### 11.3

#### Cinematic:

- The General shows the android body to the Merovingian, says they've completed retrieval, and that it isn't a Machine mechanism.
- Shimada is told that the Kid will be back from the no-fly zone soon; he was injured but will recover.



- Veil sneaks up on Shimada while she's jacked in, muttering something to herself about looking for the program the Oracle gave Shimada. When surprised by an EPN crew member, Veil pulls Shimada's jack, killing her, and escapes.
- Gray monitors Wright as she continues her disruptive search through the city for the interface program. Gray tells another Agent to avoid Wright, and to find the program.
- Niobe gets a "Wake up" message like the one from the 11.2 crits. This turns "Wake up, Neo," and then a constant stream of "Wake up Wake up Wake up..." Niobe is alarmed, and Ghost speeds away.

The action indicator points to a spot in west Hampton Green.

Quests:

Quests take place in Downtown, mostly around Hampton Green.

Machines

- 1) The Machines can't detect the program themselves, but Wright seems to have some means of doing so, so they follow her, running into a disrupted computer, dead bluepill, Accelerated Suits (Hampton gang), and finally Wright in Maribeau, where she says she'll have it soon, and the Machines had better stay out of her way until then. She adds "The Machines left a gaping security hole in their core programming a long time ago. They were only as perfect as the people who made them."
- 2) Talk to Veil about newfangled Wright Accelerated Programs (tough Exiles/Machines with wireframe overlays). Veil points the player to a Cypherite in Morrell, Neglect (visible on the map, 13th floor of the building just S of Cyclo), who is distributing anti-override routines the Cyphs, led by Cryptos' research, have been cooking up. Gray says that being able to resist overrides will be necessary if Wright's going to be dealt with. The anti-override routines are consumables protect against override abilities like Deceleration (speed/acc debuff), Runtime (spawns), and Signal Jamming (resistance debuff) for a limited time.
- 3) With Wright closing in on the program in Hampton, the player battles a tough Wright Accelerated Program, then talks to Cryptos, who speculates on how Wright could be disabled:

"As for what may happen if critical damage can be inflicted on her RSI, that I cannot predict. We know that she has co-opted the jack-in protocol utilized by the Oligarchs, and we know, from Halborn's example, that they were to some extent vulnerable both within and without the simulation. Wright, on the other hand, has claimed to be able to enter the Matrix without maintaining an exterior connection. How that could affect the outcome remains unclear."

Gray comes through with the coordinates of Wright's position on a rooftop in Hampton (98 131 -216), saying that she's been staying around there, which probably means the interface program is in the vicinity.

## Merovingian

- 1) The player scouts Wright activity in Hampton, where she's been disrupting things. With help from Nicky G., they find Accelerated Suits, and track down Manager, the Suits boss, in the Historic District, who mentions hearing about a Cypherite in Morrell who's got override countermeasures.
- 2) The android's been found to have "data structures similar to what we've found on the Oligarch network," so Flood sends the player to hunt for a data match at an Ouroboros office in Vauxton. The Machines took over Ouroboros a while back, and the player runs into Ouroboros Security and Machines there. Flood says the Machines must have confiscated the data, and sends the player to raid a Machine facility in Maribeau to track it down. The player is ambushed by a Wright Accelerated Program on their way. They capture the data from the Machines, and it does have similarities to the android's hardware. Flood figures the Oligarchs built it. He also mentions that Cypherites think the Wright Accelerated Programs carry valuable data.
- 3) The player goes hunting a Machine mainframe in the Park East Gov Building to get real data on the android. There's a tough battle, and they get some help on the mainframe from the Effectuator. In Center Park, the Merv says the data was interesting, as it shows the android was designed to be controlled by a human consciousness--for the Oligarchs to control themselves as a surrogate body? He also wonders what destroyed the ship carrying the android, and speculates that foul play was involved. Persephone is there, still in black and very pale.

## Zion

- 1) In Chelsea, a scarred Kid has news of suddenly losing contact with a transmitter they'd left monitoring the Oligarch network line in the no-fly zone. He says the Oligarchs could be on their way to the Machine city and the Matrix. He's also determined not to let Shimada down. The Council thinks the interface program has some central role in all this, and wants it kept out of Wright's hands, to the player catches her trail in Hampton. The operator mentions that the program has used Trinity quotes. They run into Accelerated Suits and then Wright, who says that Zion should be helping her, since she's doing this to put the Matrix in mankind's hands.
- 2) Still trying for the program in Hampton, the player gets some static from a Decelerator and Machinists. They're also ambushed by one of Wright's new Accelerated Programs, and run into more of them around a dead Cypherite. Tyndall mentions rumors of a Cypherite in Morrell, wondering if it's related.
- 3) Overrides are keeping the Machines busy, which gives Zion a shot at checking out a burst of override activity in Park East, normally heavily guarded. They find a message ("Soon") which the operator thinks is from the interface program, but while tracing it, they're interrupted by a tough Agent, and the trace is lost. The operative is sent to Ghost in Hampton, who says that he thinks Wright's around there, probably high up, and probably with the

program. He's determined to look for her. Tyndall says taking on Wright may be the only option left.

## Wright

Wright (level 100) is on the Hampton rooftop where Gray said she was, with some tough Accelerated Programs around her. She uses AOE overrides, and a nasty zap. When her health has been worn down, she dies (System message says she was killed by herself), and a floating gold code ghost figure, "???", appears. Its details say "'It's beautiful...'"

## Cinematic

bit of a wrap on wright? arch & gray?

ghost finds trinity, brief convo making clear it's her, pace shows up, then Helian and Tesarova show up, pace leaves ("Acknowledged"), trinity is gone, h/t leave, ghost leaves, ookami spying

scene 0 - 15 seconds

- chapter caption, pan over to dead Wright

>The Matrix Online\_

>Chapter 12.1\_

scene 1 - 30 seconds

- zoom out from inert Wright to Architect viewing in his monitoring room2

- a: Where is thy humanity now...?5

- a: Agent Gray.

6

- gray appears on monitor

7

- g: Sir?

9

- a: Have you located the program?

12

- g: No, sir; not since it terminated Wright.

15

- g: We have found Zion operatives conducting their own search.

18

- a: ...

20

- g: Sir?

22

- a: Prepare for our visitors.

25

- clicks screen off

30

scene 2 - 120 seconds total

2a - 50 seconds

- ghost lands on a slum building rooftop

4

- looks around

8

- opens a door

10

- goes down a dark stairway

12

- enters a large darkened storage room

16

- doesn't see anything

20

- turns to leave

21

- screen flicks on behind him

22

- s: Ghost\_

24

- ghost turns and looks at it, face blank

25

- code shimmers in the air

26

- falls down

28

- forming around

30

- a standing female body

32

- ghost stands frozen

33

- trinity takes a step toward him

35

- stops

37

- t: Ghost...

40

- ghost flinches

42

- trinity looks pained

44

- g: We...

47

- t: I...didn't know.

50

2b - 45 seconds

- p: Freeze.

2

- p: pace steps from the doorway into the glow of the monitor/trinity, gun levelled at g

4

- p looks at g

5

- p: Predictable.

7

- p: Hmh.

9

- p put her gun up

11

- half turns away<sup>13</sup>

- p: Your program...friend cannot survive here.

15

- g looks at p

17

19

- p: She will be removed.

A code lock is already--

21

- h & ts appear in midair,

24

- float down to the floor

28

- p puts her gun back on g

30

- ts: Ooh.

32

- This looks fun.

34

- p touches her earpiece

35

- listens

37

- looks frustrated

39

- p: ...

- p: Acknowledged.

41

- pace stalks out45

2c - 30

seconds+ - h:

And you? 2

- h: Will you offer resistance?

5

- g: No need.

7

- h looks around; trinity has vanished- t: Huh! The program's gone.

10

- h: Is this your--

12

- ghost has vanished

13

- ts: Hah!

14

- This \*will\* be fun.

16

- h & ts vanish

19

- room goes dark

22

- a shadow24 hops 25 up 26

to a high

window: 27

ookami

30 (may need to hold here an extra second or two)

scene 3 + map - 15 seconds

- ghost

2

- is standing on the roof,

4

- looking out

6

- over the Ikebukuro docks8

- g: Trinity...

10

map

15

12.1

[] Stuff in square brackets is not mentioned directly to players in the 12.1 quests, and shouldn't be given out unless specifically cleared with me first.

() Other stuff is mostly fair game, although in general you shouldn't just go around dropping tons of the details to players, but rather let them work things out themselves--this includes a lot of what appears in parentheses below, for instance. I mention certain details and quotes here because I figure they might be things you have questions about, or may be interested in developing further.

## Cinematic

- The Architect is in his TV room, with Wright, dead on a Hampton rooftop, on the monitor. He asks Gray if the (biological interface) program has been found; Gray says no, but they found Zion looking for it, too. The Architect frowns, then tells him to "prepare for our visitors."
- Ghost lands on a rooftop (supposed to be the rooftop pointed out in the coordinates at the end of the cinematic, Ikebukuro 630 9 -180), looks around, opens a door, goes down dark stairs, opens a door into a dark, mostly empty storage room. Looks around, doesn't see anything, and is just turning to leave as a monitor in a dark corner of the room flicks on and prints out "Ghost."
- Code falls down into a female form next to the monitor. This is the golden code "???" character who appeared when Wright was killed. A halting conversation begins, in which Trinity (which is the name that appears above this character in this subchapter) says "I...didn't know," by which she meant that she didn't know she was a program.
- Agent Pace interrupts the conversation, her gun on Ghost, who steps between her and Trinity. Pace says the program (Trinity) can't survive there, and will be removed, but then she in her turn is interrupted by a bright flash, out of which gleaming male and female forms appear, descending to the ground. They have no clothes, wires, eyeballs, or hair. In missions, it will be found that the male (red) is "Helian," and the female (purple) is "Tesarova," and that they are Oligarchs. Helian is fairly straightforward and serious, although not as blunt as Halborn; Tesarova is usually in a playful vamp mode in this subchapter.

- Pace touches her earpiece, looks frustrated, reluctantly lowers her gun from Ghost's head, and stalks out. Helian looks at Ghost, and asks if he's going to resist, but Ghost says there's no need; H&T realize that Trinity has vanished, and while they look around to find her, Ghost makes a sudden unseen exit as well.
- H&T leave, and the room goes dark. A pause, then Ookami creeps out of the shadows-she's observed the entire scene.
- Ghost stands on the rooftop, looks up at the moon, and finally says Trinity's name.

The idea was that he hadn't allowed himself to believe 100% that it was her until just now when he was able to meet her for himself. The small Live Event I ran with him during 11.3 ( [http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300026820](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300026820) ) where he "remembered" "something" after reviewing the BIP's progress through the Matrix, and realizing that it roughly corresponded to Trinity's progress through the Matrix (from the movies, starting with contacting Neo in his apartment), reminded him of this Ikebukuro spot where he and Trinity had met each other at some unspecified time(s) in the old days--this is briefly mentioned by Tyndall at the beginning of Zion 12.1.1 [but I probably won't dwell on it any more than that, as the choice was fairly arbitrary--I wanted somewhere with a large interior room and a nice view from the rooftop, and preferably elsewhere than DT, since all of 11.3 took place in that district].

## Quests

The 12.1 org contacts are spaced within about a half-block of the Ikebukuro rooftop location.

## Machines

1) Gray sends the player to Akasaka, scene of the latest sighting of the program. He implies a need to find it before either the Oligarch representatives (H&T) or Zion do. Gray doesn't refer to the program as "Trinity," but the operator discusses it a bit. They find Zionites and a blank computer entry in her recent style (">\_"), but nothing else, and are re-routed to head off H&T, who have arrived in the area, along with Pace.

H&T are slightly bemused--although not really surprised--by a human operative working for the Machines. [The Oligarchs have been aware the Machines have managed things this way, but they haven't seen it much directly, and find it odd, since they (Oligarchs, who are human) view the Machines as their own servants.]

H says they're there for the BIP (he uses "biological interface program" as a quote from operatives or Machines; H&T generally just call it "the program"), and won't be needing any help getting it.

T says something odd about "the exciting ones" (operatives) "escaping" from the pods, and that this explains "why our entertainment's been so dull lately."



H mentions they know what happened to Halborn and Carlyne, and that those two were operating independently. He says they (the Oligarchs) have "made adjustments that will ensure our safety from the compromises they allowed to our security" [partially an explanation for the difference in their appearance from H&C: H&T are less transparent, and have no wires].

Pace seems a little relieved to have the player there to talk to the Oligarchs, and purposefully speaks aloud (in italics) to the player so that H&T will overhear, saying that they'll leave their guest in peace.

On the way out, the player encounters Satiare, a shoeless female Cypherite boss who appeared previously in a few Live Events:

[http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300024639](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300024639)

[http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/...\\_id=36300026073](http://forums.station.sony.com/mxo/..._id=36300026073)

She's now fixed at level 55 (I think in LEs I had her at 60). She says it would be nice to pop "those pretty new bubbles of theirs" (the Oligarchs), and suggests that the Machines might even have something that could do it, but they probably wouldn't tell the (Machinist) player even if they did, and wouldn't use it themselves.

Gray summons the player for their report, concluding that H&T are operating as agents for the Oligarchs, rather than independently like Halborn and Carlyne. He thinks this might cause them to behave a little more levelheadedly, but says it also means the Oligarchs will be watching developments closely. After saying this, he very deliberately states that the Machines do not consider them a threat.

Between missions, Machine operatives are sent to "patrol" the International District for more signs of activity (ie get gang tokens from Murasaki, Furihata, and Kowloon).

2) Still in International, the player deals with some searching Zionites, and is then sent to answer a summons from Helian, who's got a couple of his "Override Function" NPCs with him (whitish-skinned forms similar to H&T, with a mixture of hacker and MA abilities, pretty good accuracy and damage, and high viral defense), and he loans these two NPCs to the player, suggesting that he's doing this to help the Machine operative deal with the Zionites (he refers to Zionites here as 'the other "Awakened"'), although the operator and Gray hint that H has found he actually needs help from the player. The Override Functions don't talk; H refers to them as "basic" combat programs.

The player checks for enemy activity and finds Merovingian redpills. One of them rather obviously pretends to be a Zionite (sort of a play on the Merv knowing that what he's doing is probably going to cheese the Machines off, although he isn't so worried about it as to halt his Oligarch power grab). Gray says a Merv Exile named Azuna is known to have obtained sensitive information on the Oligarch's Matrix activities.

Between missions, the player has to go find Azuna, following the mission's hint "northwest Downtown." Azuna is a female lupine with a teal mohawk, and she's placed as a collector

NPC on the second sublevel of the Museum dungeon in Creston. The player has to kill some of the Merv-aligned lupines around Azuna (a little farther away from her are some Machinealigned Override Functions).

3) Gray says the Merv's found H&T have a "virtual space," and is planning to invade it; this should be stopped so that the Oligarchs aren't "aggravated." The operator mentions that the Merv tried hitting on Tesarova to get OG programs, but wasn't successful in his advances. The player takes out some Exiles and gets a trace running through their computer.

In this same area, a certain unspecified and optional sequence of actions will cause Trinity to appear in a side room. She appears upset, even angry, at the situation she's in, doing /talknegative as she says

"I don't--

I didn't choose this. This can't be--

..."

(The progress of her appearances across the missions of the three orgs (counting the second mission of any org as happening after the first mission of any other org, etc, and even the second phase of mission x for one org happening after the first phase of mission x for another org, etc) goes sorta: surprise -> dismay -> frustration -> anger.)

Following the trace, the player runs into heavy Dire Lupine resistance, but in the end gets data that Gray says is about access routes "through 'white hallway' systems." He doesn't have exact coords, but says there seems to be an entry point somewhere high up in north Union Hill.

A dead Override Executable NPC was in the room with the lupines/computer. Executables are dark grey humanoids in the same bubble-skin way as Functions and H&T.

## Merovingian

1) Flood sends the player into Stamos to find the program (like Gray, he doesn't refer to it as "Trinity," but the operator talks about the identity possibility). They don't find anything besides a computer with ">\_" but Ookami arrives, and "leads" (ie is escorted by the player) to a Manssen location, where they find Tesarova.

Tesarova coos over Ookami, calling her the player's "pet," then gets down to business, saying that she just thought she'd mention that there seem to be others nearby who are also trying to find the program; while sort of playing her ditzy blond act, what she says shows that she's aware of a lot of what's going on: what the player's after, what the other orgs are doing around there--and she even takes a veiled swipe at the player's operator.

With coordinates from Tesarova, the operator guides the player to a Guinness Lake location, while Flood mentions that there's also this "Helian" Oligarch around, and saying that they'll play Tesarova's "little game," since they don't want to show that they're on to her. Flood also refers to their names as "barbaric." ["Tesarova" is a Czech name, and "Helian" is a Chinese name.]

T's "game" in this case was sending the player to intercept Machinists, who appear, from their comments, to have been trying to keep tabs on her. Flood wraps up by asking the player to find four groups of programs they've lost in South Vauxton.

Between missions, the player has to locate and kill members of four separate groups of Accelerated Exiles around South Vauxton.

2) Flood says the Merv thinks "exploiting the Oligarch Tesarova's softer side" might get them some juicy override info, and sends the player to collect data from a contact, Azuna, for whom they'd spared no expense and skullduggery to get into a spot where she could get some dirt on Tesarova's Matrix activities. The player heads to the Downtown rendezvous, but Azuna isn't there; instead, there are a couple dead Machines.

Flood is annoyed, and sends the player to look for Azuna in her spying location. She isn't there either, but some hostile Override Functions are.

In a separate part of this same area, a certain optional and unspecified series of actions will cause Trinity to appear. She does /talkscared, saying

"I'm not. I'm not what--

God! What have they done?"

Flood says that some checking has shown Azuna has taken cover in the second sublevel of the Creston Heights Museum.

Between missions, the player has to kill Machine-aligned Override Functions near Azuna, and trade the tokens they drop to Azuna, who then hands over her intel.

["Azuna" is a corruption of "Asena," a "she-wolf with a sky-blue mane" in Turkic mythology, according to good old Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asena> . I just needed a cool lupinish name.]

3) Flood says that thanks to the info (from Azuna), the Merv has been able to meet Tesarova. Hints indicate that the meeting has not gone well, possibly because Persephone found out about it. The player finds Persephone and Tesarova together. Persephone is still in her "dark" outfit, but her skin is back to its normal healthy hue. Tesarova says the Merv's been showing her interesting things, including the android, which she identifies as "Carlyne's android body." She almost seems genuinely surprised about the Merv having it, saying she didn't think she'd see it again "after Carlyne let the podling woman steal his signal." ("The podling woman" was Wright--she jacked Carlyne's signal / android body when Carlyne crumpled just before she

appeared as the wireframed "???" in Merv 11.1.5, which forced the Merv to dump the BIP/Trinity.)

All Persephone says is "Only a human can be 'inhuman.'"

Past them, the player finds the Merv, who rants a bit about Tesarova laughing at his offers of power in the simulation. He sends the player to contact Flood for a plan B, which involves getting a trace through an Oligarch-occupied computer in order to locate H&T's Matrix power base. The player runs into some of their Functions, and then a hostile Override Executable, who can spawn a small swarm of additional, higher-level Functions to attack the player. Executables have a constant blur FX over their dark bubble body (this sorta causes them to flicker light/dark), and boosted defense and speed, but no actual combat loadout or weapons.

Success results in coordinates of an entry point to the Oligarch hideout: 129 223 789, Union Hill. (This is a doorway at the top of one of those skyscrapers with the flying buttresses.)

Zion

1) Tyndall mentions that Ghost found "the program" by "checking places he'd been with Trinity when they operated together in the Matrix." She sends the player to get more details on the Trinity thing from Ghost, who is in an International District room with a computer (">"), convinced that Trinity was just there. He says he doesn't understand how Trinity is the program, but insists that she really is. He guesses that the two strangers he encountered (in the cinematic) were Oligarchs, and says he isn't going to let them or the Machines get Trinity.

Tyndall says she trusts Ghost's instinct about "whatever Trinity or the program is now," and reminds the player that the Council had already decided (mentioned in Zion 11.3.1) to do what it could to ensure the program's safety. She sends the player to check a reading in Murasaki, where they find a message on a computer:

"How well do you know yourself?  
Are you sure?  
I thought I knew. But this\_"

(The dangling cursor at the end there is a hint that this is probably from Trinity, although the operator doesn't make anything out of it.)

Inbound hostiles are reported nearby, and the player finds Machines and Machine redpills. Tyndall mentions that intel shows the Machines are cooperating with the two Oligarch representatives. After the hostiles are taken care of, Tyndall says that they could use the player's help in Shirakaba, where their teams have been hit by Machines while looking for the program; they've also started picking up override signals there.

Between missions, the player has to hunt down Accelerated Machines in Shirakaba.

2) Tyndall sends the player into Downtown, following the trail of data that they think may have come from Trinity (Tyndall is still hedging a bit on the name, and here says "from the interface program--from Trinity"). She gives the names of H&S, saying they found them out from "our sources within the Machines" [aren't those convenient?].

The player finds a computer, activates it (it says ">Yes.\_"), and Trinity appears. She says

"I don't have much time. I don't know what...this means.

Before... I thought I died. I was with him... I said goodbye. I don't remember...until--

I don't know how to make it make sense.

... They're getting close. I have to go."

Tyndall gives the player the location of the intruders, and although she thinks they're Machines on Trinity's tail, they turn out to be Merv Exiles. Tyndall thinks this is an indication that the Merv is trying to get in on the Trinity action, and hopes that his machinations with Halborn and Carlyne, which ended up causing a good deal of trouble for the Machines, will at least give the Machines some incentive to act against him. She ends by asking the player to look into an "unusual signal" and override activity in Baldwin Heights.

Between missions, the player has to take down Override Functions scattered around Baldwin Heights.

3) The player responds to an alert from Ghost, who's still been combing International for Trinity. They find him facing Helian and Tesarova, with Helian asking Ghost why he's going after the program. Tesarova coyly interjects that she thinks she knows (wink wink). Ghost doesn't respond to them, and whispers to the player to make sure that Trinity's safe, saying Sparks will have info for them.

Tyndall gets the info from Sparks, which is a location where Trinity might have been hiding "from the Oligarch scans." They find an Override Executable there, as well as some Override Functions, but no sign of Trinity. Tyndall, who feels able to refer to her as simply "Trinity" by now, says she thinks they stopped those programs from finding her, but that stopping H&S is going to be tough. She mentions reports of the Merv having got access to some kind of area the Oligarchs have set up, and that they're picking up activity from his operatives on rooftops "at the extreme northeast end of Downtown."

#### Extra Credit

A teleport from the area referred to in the last missions takes the player into some white hallways, which eventually may spit them out into an interior office space [that is pretty similar to floor 77 of the Government Building in Park East--I liked the layout of that one, and I wanted to use something that would feel very elevated]. It's full of nasty Overrides and Executables with special prizes. The only exit is a rotary telephone on a desk in one of the

offices, which teleports the user to a public phone on the north side of the base of the SE tower in Park East.

~~~~~

## LIVE EVENTS

EPN (event) - meeting w/ unknown pedestrian (pseudo Oracle)

Merv hitting on Tesarova?

## Various Rarebit Questions and Answers

Q: Rarebit, what was your ideas about Operation Dark Storm? During chapter 10, it seemed that neither the humans nor the Machines knew how it worked. And if I remember correctly, CAR80N said that the pre-Matrix human civilization didn't have access to nanotechnology. It seemed like you were going to make some kind of revelation concerning Dark Storm.

A: Hm... I don't think I was going to try going into it in detail. After the Merv seeded the storm you pointed out that...I think it was the director's commentary for the Next Renaissance said it was nanomachines or something, which I hadn't been aware of, but it's all just some flavor of sci-fi magic anyway since as far as I know there's no currently known or even theoretical way that something like a perpetual Dark Storm would be possible. As far as that kind of thing goes--how is the Earth not frozen, what's this crazy fusion power with humans, etc--it's usually the less said, the better.

Q: Rarebit, in your outlines, you wrote "Mach: (after Zion event) Cypherites, Cryptos, and the Morph sim; Morph sim eventually agrees to listen when Cryptos offers to tell him why Morpheus was so obsessed with obtaining the One's remains--they go off for a little private chat [note that players are \*not\* going to be told what they talk about...and actually I still have to figure that out at some point, but it can wait for a later subchapter]." Was this ever "figured out"?

A: No. I wasn't interested in trying to unravel and continue the "Neo's remains" story angle that had been mostly an LET on-the-fly invention without any surviving official documentation (the story outline by Paul that we mission designers were following had Morpheus wanting to know about it, throwing up posters and causing a stir that got him killed, but that was all). The Morph sim/Cryptos meeting was on Vector on 10/24/07, and I think I may have had a feeling or two of what I might have had them "talk" about if I had to give any details about it, but I can't remember what those were. I'd \*guess\* it was probably something along the lines of Morpheus feeling purposeless under the Truce, and using the hope of Neo's resurrection as a way to resurrect his own dreams and motivations, but that's just a guess, and, again, it wouldn't really have been something I'd have wanted to go into.

On 7/6/07, also on Vector, the Morpheus sim had said that Morpheus was "mad" (as in crazy) when he was on the "Neo's remains" kick, and I think (another guess) that whatever Cryptos told him in their later meeting wasn't intended to change his mind substantially on that score, but it would help him get some closure on it and get his own head back together.

Q: Speaking of Cryptos... what exactly happened to him? Why did he become the way he is now, when everyone else who Seraph whooped went back to normal?

A: The overwriting used on Cryptos was different than the others. You'd get a better idea going back through those missions that were investigating the other overwritten people, but as far as I remember off the top of my head, their overwriting was a cruder form, where the Machine program just took control and didn't have access to the person's memories and

personality. Cryptos had to be much more convincing, so they had to come up with a different overwriting scheme that left his original memories and personality intact and accessible; so with Cryptos the program and human had to coexist to an extent.

Q: This is going back a bit before 5.2, but did you have any hand in the creation or implementation of the Antedeluvian / Boxmaker / Pandora storyline? I found the storyline behind that to be rich, immersive and very enjoyable.

Since the last box effectively ends as a cliffhanger did you ever have any desire to continue that sidestory forward with additional quests using the Seraphitic Feather as the starting point? (It seems to me this was the original intent, to be revisited at a later date).

A: The Pandora's Box concept (spawns popping out of boxes) was handed to the four mission designers we had at the time, one of which was me--HCFrog was another--by the original Live Team design lead, Archon. The four of us brainstormed the four main NPC spawn types the boxes would use.

Then came the move to SOE, and the PB design team was down to HCFrog and I (oh, and Dracomet designed and implemented the loot items you get from the box spawns). I handled most of the story and missions for arcs 1, 2, and 4, and HCFrog did most of 3.

The original PB concept included putting out more box arcs from time to time. I chose to work on other types of "quest" content for a number of reasons: mostly because the story was tricky to handle, since it sort of tied in with some existing main story characters, but not really with the main story itself, and also because the box spawn mechanism had some drawbacks. Taking it into a separate, specifically tailored construct like Sati's Playground solved some of those.

Q: I've read both of the threads about the story, and if I've missed this feel free to openly berate me, but I'm just curious what Carlyne was doing with the Trinity program during the two years he had it? Did he not know how to use it, or maybe had some long term plan down the road for it? I like that he knew all along where it was while Halborn was blustering around the Matrix but I wonder why he'd leave something like that just sitting in storage somewhere.

A: Presumably he was doing research and laying plans for how to use it. He wasn't a guy who liked to hurry things if he could help it, and he thought he had it pretty well hidden. He'd also have known that the others would come after him if they found out about it. There were somewhere near 100 of them, including Halborn, and he saw most of them as enemies or rivals, so he had a good deal of work on his hands coming up with a way to neutralize them. He wasn't very far along at all when Halborn found out about it.

Q: Among other enjoyable aspects I liked the backstory as it related to the "Heavenly" version of the Matrix and the subsequent disillusionment /frustration of the Seraphim. It implied maybe future fleshing out of Seraph's backstory, his alliance and breakup with the Merv, and of course Flood's predecessor.



A: Yeah, we all thought the Seraphim were a cool idea; it was one of the other mission designers who thought of the "white Agent" angelic theme, and our art lead whipped up those keen wings and white suits. I gave them the pink shirts. ;) Hm I think I did the names for them, and HCFrog handled most of their ability balancing.

*Rarebit concerning loose ends:* I don't have any significant Morpheus loose ends as far as I know. Paul had the Assassin kill him: bang dead. The Morpheus I used was a simulacrum built by the General, based on compiled footage and memories of the original; he had enough of the original's spirit to fight off the General's control, but while closely related to the original Morpheus, he essentially developed into his own man. Program. Whatever.

Novalis II and Sarah Edmontons were side stories by other people that I did not take up myself, because I didn't feel like I had a sufficient understanding, from how they were initially presented by others, of how they could tie into the story of the Matrix as a whole. LESIG has done and may continue to do things with them, if they feel they can make good stories out of them.

*Regarding Neo's remains:* Sort of, I suppose. Paul's story had Morpheus, before he was killed, laying a lot of stress on finding them, but I never saw an outline of any story that would come back to that. When players asked me about it in events I've run, if I had the characters reply at all, it was to say that Morpheus was crazy at that point (the Morpheus sim said this once, for instance), and also that the Machines simply recycled Neo's remains, since they had no other use for them (Pace has said this at least once in a very straightforward fashion--probably so straightforward that everyone assumed she was lying, which is just \*so\* unfair =p).

That is pretty much my own take on it though, because, according to my own line of thought, what use would the Machines have for a dead human body, other than as fodder for recycling? Even if Neo was a genetically engineered human, or hybrid human program, or whatever, in that case he was their creation, and they had any data they could conceivably have gotten from his dead body already on file. And I didn't want to bring Neo back in any form--saying the Machines had been able to preserve him in program form like they did with Trinity, for instance--both because the resolution of his battle with Smith was supposed to have been his sacrifice and cancellation, and because I felt that the story, while it revisited a lot of the themes and characters from the movies, should at least let a different character or characters take the lead role(s) this time around.

...I suppose my own take on that Oracle comment would be a little more metaphysical--a lot more so than ways in which we've already had other developers bring him back, such as N30 Agents, various "frags," and the memorial in the Gracy Heights fight club.

Q: I know this isn't completely related, but it does have something to do with story. What was the purpose of SSR and creating them? Did you plan on doing anything with them other than the secretive backstory they already had?

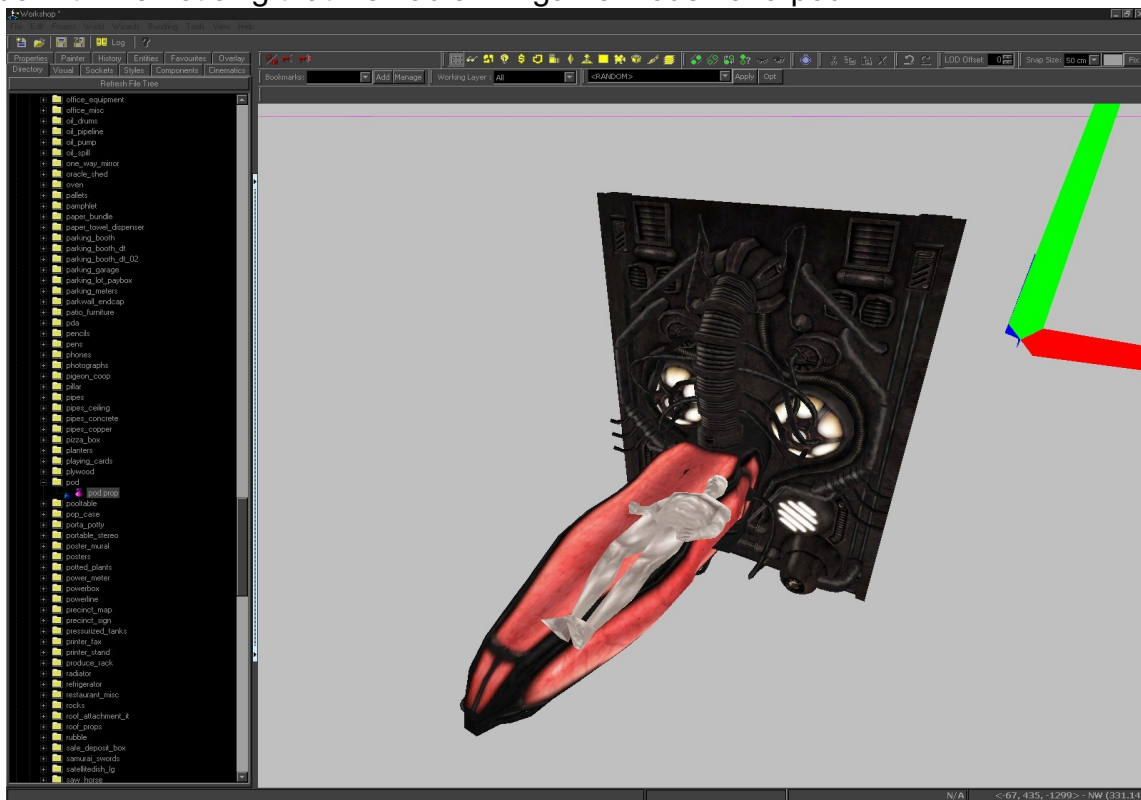
A: That's an interesting question. The primary goal of Datamine was to provide an area with new twists on gameplay: high-profit data mining in a free-for-all PVP zone. As I got to thinking

about it, a story on what type of facility might have become such a place got into my head, and that helped shape what turned out to be the artificial island with separate administration and research buildings and so forth, and it gave a good angle for Dr. Martin's collector dialogue.

It wasn't a hugely ornate story or anything, and you can probably guess most of it from the hints in the doc's messages and the details text on the items and NPCs from the construct. I suppose you might be able to tell something from what Raeder said in the one Live Event he was in there, too.

The warehouse building at the SE corner had interiors that could still be opened up, and I figured some day I might open them up, stick some NPCs in and add a new boss on the roof or something. I didn't have a particular story in mind for that, though.

There's space for some more floors to open up in the lower section of the administration building (SW corner), although I think I would have had to put them together myself, which would have been more time consuming. I did have a bit of an addition or final hint to the little story of the place that I was thinking I could try sticking in there, and I'll just say that it had to do with me noticing that we had an in-game model for a pod.



Q: Oh, that makes me think of another construct, the Sati's Playground. Didn't you imagine a backstory for it too?

A: Just what it says on the collectors or somewhere, that Sati made it for fun.

Q: I have another question, Rarebit. During a chapter 10.2 Zion mission, the player encounters a bluepill who is apparently a disguised redpill whose organization can't be verified. The character mentions that it was about time they sent someone. And in a desk there's a note saying something like "your contact's name is Soren", which appears to be a reference to Captain Soren, who died before the truce started.

Is this some poor uninformed redpill, or is something else going on? At the time, with Mauser running around and this note that mentions a long dead captain, I was beginning to wonder if the Oligarchs were taking the bodies of dead characters and using them for their own purposes.

A: Poor and uninformed is the correct answer. They were a wartime Zion plant whose contact had been lost before the beginning of the Truce, so they hadn't received any word and didn't know what had happened since then.

Q: I like the general idea of the oligarchs, but I'm not all too fond of the final resolution and trinity and neo as perfect genetic design etc. I give Rarebit much credit for coming up with something that does fit with the overall source material.

A: When putting the OP together I realized that I'd sort of been heading away from the "genetic" explanation toward having them as pure programs, maybe just because that ended up being easier to convey. I'm not sure now if I'd have kept going that way or not.

Q: As far as the genetic thing, I think back to Neo's conversation with The Architect and it wouldn't make sense unless pretty much everything Archy said was a lie. [...] If Neo is an anomaly that was beyond his control, then he wouldn't have been specifically created with that purpose etc.

A: It was the Oracle who came up with the inherent error scheme. The Architect allowed it, but he did so knowing that that part of it wasn't something over which he had direct control.

Heyyy this is a good opportunity to mention that personally (I wouldn't enforce this on others, mind you, since it's pretty touchy in some ways), I don't think Neo was "the anomaly." The Architect calls him "the eventuality of an anomaly," which is different than actually being the anomaly. If you have to pick a character as the anomaly, it seems to me that it would have been Smith; but I think it's more accurate to say that the "anomaly" he was talking about was the cascading system of errors that inevitably result from the current Matrix program's built-in imperfection that allows for a small percentage of the populace to reject it ("the anomaly is systemic," etc). The tricky part about this interpretation is that one of those knuckleheaded Agents later says "The anomaly" when he finds Neo; I explain this away for myself (whee magic!) by making excuses like "Agents didn't know everything" or "the Agent was simply referring to Neo as one of the primary manifestations of the consequences of the anomaly."

Q: So the reason the Oligarch's appeared as "wire-framed humans" was because they were jacking in from android bodies

A: Pretty much. They were using a different kind of interface than operatives use to get in. Also, they didn't particularly care about looking normal.

## About the Compiler

Julio Angel Ortiz is a writer in both print and electronic media. Julio has had an audio drama released for the original sci-fi series *The Dome* and short stories published in collections by Obverse Books featuring Iris Wildthyme and Señor 105. He also has several eBooks available for Kindle via his Vox Camera imprint. When not banging his head against his notebook in order to string words together, Julio works in Information Technology during the day and is also active blogging, posting on Twitter, and working at his photography.

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