



A LANCER Narrative

SIREN'S SONG

A MOUNTAIN'S REMORSE

Trey Joiner

LÄNCEER

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SIREN'S SONG, A MOUNTAIN'S REMORSE

BY

Trey Joiner (NHP SHAKA)

EDITED BY

Melody Watson

LAYOUT BY

Minerva McJanda

COVER ART BY

Vincent Angeroa (Siegefault)

ART BY

Vincent Angeroa (Siegefault), Tom Finn barr, Daniel Ellis, Logan Stahl, Wayne Gage, Anastasia Williams, Chan Chau

PLAYTESTING

Clem Cuddlecakes & Lancers of Ukuwa Staiton

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INTRODUCTION

Greetings from on far, and welcome to a new standalone mission for *Lancer*!

This self-contained mission follows a group of mech pilots as they adventure on **Kibo**, a planet nestled in the Arusha Cluster, an obscure sector of space administered by **Smith-Shimano Corpro** (SSC) and (un)affectionately referred to as **the Farm**. Their mission is to work as Union's auxiliaries, answering the call of SSC and assisting to locate the missing research **NHP, CHAGA**. From the outset, the player characters (PCs) learn of suspected **persons' rights violations** on the part of SSC – the proof of which can only be certified by the missing NHP.

As they progress, SSC's forsaken hells will surface and seek to drown the PCs and their mission in a wave of mech-scale weaponry, ideology, and revenge. Meanwhile, there are rumors a voice has called CHAGA to the misty peaks of the **Kimawense Range**. It calls itself **the Bondless** and carries no love for those that deal in shackles, charts, and profits below the misty mountain peaks.

Through sheer skill and wit, the PCs will need to fight off their attackers all the while learning more of just how deep SSC's persons' rights violations go. The question is – once they learn the answer, what are they going to do about it?

TROUBLE IN THE FARM

The Farm is comprised of a collection of false-Gaia worlds specially identified by SSC as being selectively inhospitable to humanity for a range of reasons. Thin atmospheres, irradiated daytimes, poisonous fauna, you name it. SSC has sought out worlds like Kibo with hopes of nurturing its lucrative genetic maturation and cultivation programs. These programs market designer babies to eager colonial corporations and other well-endowed buyers seeking to turn profits in otherwise hazardous environments. Responsible for managing these programs are non-human persons (NHPs) – the children of RA and the backbone of Union.

NHPs, people of a non-corporeal state, guide and in some ways serve humanity as it expands across the great expanse of the Orion Arm. Without the ubiquity of NHPs, humanity's expansion across the cosmic theater would end in miserable failure. NHPs are essential in many ways, yet while Union recognizes their personhood, the question must be asked, does it truly put that belief into practice?

This is the question the players will explore on Kibo. Their arrival on Kibo in the year 5016u marks the climb of CHAGA's story as it unfolds to a climax in the peaks of the Kimawense Range. The PCs themselves have already been recognized as pilots with near-limitless potential but they have few experiences under their belt to prove this fact true. Fortunately, SSC is in the business of push-

ing humanity to its limits, and when the need arises on Kibo, the corpro-state requests willing mech pilots to pick up where an on-call ground security (G-SEC) team from the **MirrorSmoke Mercenary Company** (MSMC) left off. Groundfall marks the prelude of a siren's song and by the song's end the PCs will have accomplished their mission.

Will your brave lancers go there and lead the way for a revolution, or will they let its fires burn without intervention? Whatever they do, know that the responsibility for action rests with them and them alone.

This book contains:

- A self-contained beginner *Lancer* mission designed ideally for characters at **LICENSE LEVEL (LL) 2** but suitable for characters from **LL1–3**.
- Summaries and descriptions of non-player characters (NPCs), settings, and places to help game masters (GMs) and players understand the lands of the Farm.
- New mechanics in an appendix that contains both player- and GM-facing content. This includes:
 - A new IPS-N frame – the **EMPAKAAI**
 - A new talent – **Orator**
 - Two new NPC classes – the **TEMPEST** and the **LEECH**
 - New **EXOTIC GEAR**
- Guidance on how to run **narrative challenges**. A narrative challenge is the method by which this book guides and builds its story from inception to climax and crescendo.
- A play-by-play and easy-to-follow story framework based around the discovery of **clues**.

PREPARATION

A Siren's Song, a Mountain's Remorse is ideally run by a GM for 3–5 players. The GM will need a copy of the *Lancer Core Rulebook*, as it contains setting material and statistics for most of the NPCs used in this book. This can be purchased at [MASSIF-PRESS.ITCH.IO](https://massifpress.itch.io). Players, however, can get everything they need by downloading the free player-facing content from the same location.

This book comes with a code that can be used with *Lancer's* **Comp/Con** companion app to access all the mechanical content included hereafter.

Be sure to remember any NPCs, keywords or concepts not found in this book can be found in the *Core Rulebook*. To minimize the need to have it on hand, though, the story contained here is largely self-contained in nature. This book will be your near one-stop shop in terms of narrative setting material.

BOOK STRUCTURE

This book includes one mission, which is intended to take pilots from **LL2** to **LL3**. But if your group is new to *Lancer* or slightly more experienced, this mission can also be played at **LL1** or **LL3**. Note that if you are looking to play *A Siren's Song* at **LL0** or an **LL** beyond **LL3** a more active updating of NPC compositions, tiers and narrative elements may be required.

A NOTE ON PLAYER SAFETY

A Siren's Song takes the stance that the enslavement of other persons is objectively atrocious and worthy of scorn in any and all of its forms. With this in mind, it deals with and subverts the topic of enslavement, including the vilification of its evils and its rationalization in defense of the status quo – at the cost of hypocrisy on a galactic scale. The narrative also skirts around scenes in which characters experience manic episodes due to sustained mental duress. If your group is not comfortable with these concepts, it is important you adjust the narrative to fit your needs. You may wish to make use of a tool used at many tables, the RPG Safety Toolkit ([BIT.LY/TTRPGSAFETYTOOLKIT](http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit)) to help facilitate running this mission.

The narrative of *A Siren's Song* is designed with the expectation that the sensitive topics covered will be managed, not omitted. We all must learn and grow, but that can't happen unless we open our minds and hearts to our fellow people no matter what color, what gender, or what identity.

This setting succinctly presents a host of resources for GMs in a succinct manner. These resources include easy-to-reference **beats**, **clues**, **narrative challenges**, and **mech combats**. Remember though, depending on your group and your experience as a GM, it is always valuable to put your own spin on things. Despite the structure and flow of this mission, you are encouraged to borrow, modify, and remove any of the provided information to enhance you and your players' experiences at the table.

RUNNING THE MISSION

The combats and other significant events in this book are contained within **beats**, important story moments that may or may not contain **clues** – bits of information or critical evidence the PC's can investigate to receive benefits in subsequent challenges. The progression of the narrative hinges on the players being presented with opportunities to investigate clues or discover new ones. Finding these clues opens up opportunities for their characters to participate in encounters that can take place prior to, during, or even after **mech combat**.

The narrative is structured like this to provide a loose and flexible approach to following the plot. This allows room for PCs to chase down clues in or out of mechs in between combats.

See **Narrative Challenges** (p. 8) for more detail. That section also discusses the use of familiar tools like **clocks**.

In *A Siren's Song*, clocks are primarily used to track the number of clues accumulated, the location of the NHP CHAGA, and the progress of a final narrative challenge with the Bondless. In this narrative challenge, the players will interact with multiple clocks representing clues and NPC objectives to bring the adventure to a conclusion.

This book presents a clear plot structure for you to follow, but it does not explore every detail, overturn every rock, or exhaustively document every NPC. That level of detail is best improvised at the table.

SESSION 0

A great way to get a feel for your players' interests before the game is to do a **session 0**. GMs often use session 0s to get to know their players, if it's a new group, and to introduce the upcoming game. A thorough session 0 can pay dividends in player compatibility, engagement, and enthusiasm for the story to come.

There is no one way to run a session 0, but they almost always start with a good pitch. Use any of the below pitches to hook your players into the narrative:

A Siren's Song is like playing hide-and-go-seek. You're the seekers and the one hiding is the lost NHP from a corporation's gene-cultivation program. In your mech, you'll trek through the foliage-rich and high-altitude peaks of the world of Kibo, gathering clues about the NHP's whereabouts from the destroyed mechs and crazed pilots you encounter along the way.

A Siren's Song is a gritty and deeply introspective narrative that will challenge your pilot's *raison d'être*: Why would they take up this position? Why so plainly put themselves in such an utterly horrific gauntlet at the whim of a corporation that likely cares nothing for them? As you answer this, you will encounter everything from deranged deserters to combat-ready emissaries who bring both haunted omens of fire and mech-scale weaponry down the mountains.

A Siren's Song will put you on a journey that will shatter the very foundations of Union. Enslavement – the subjugation of unwilling, self-aware minds – is at the heart of the conflict brewing in this mission. With every step you take up the mountains of the Kimawense Range, you will be challenged and pushed to reevaluate Union's integrity. Your words will start a revolution or fall silent amidst the alpha strikes of a brewing war.

NARRATIVE CHALLENGES

This section provides detailed guidance on how to run **narrative challenges** in *Lancer*. It takes inspiration from Fantasy Flight Games' *Genesys* roleplaying system, John Harper's *Blades in the Dark*, and Massif Press's own *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*.

The narrative challenges system allows PCs to build a case or argument from scene to scene with the ultimate goal of changing hearts and minds in tense, uncertain, or dangerous situations.

Toward the end of *A Siren's Song*, the PCs will engage in a structured narrative challenge to achieve their goal of finding and retrieving CHAGA. Along the way, they'll accumulate information by way of after-combat rolls and in-combat interactions with NPCs.

WHAT ARE NARRATIVE CHALLENGES?

Narrative challenges are a way to achieve a group's aims in place of combat. Whereas combat, either in the cockpit of a mech or on foot, is fairly straightforward and rigid in terms of the structure of play, narrative challenges are free-flowing and dynamic. They involve PCs acquiring knowledge of a situation, party, or individual over the course of their adventures with the intent that information will be leveraged in a climactic opportunity to sway hearts and minds.

Narrative challenges have three major components: **clues**, **motivations**, and **goals**. These components are determined (or discovered) over the course of a mission, as discussed below.

Narrative challenges always place the PCs against NPCs with ulterior motivations but can sometimes include NPCs in alignment with the PCs' goals in opposition to other groups or characters.

WHY NARRATIVE CHALLENGES?

The reason for using narrative challenges is straightforward: not everything can be solved with mech-scale firepower and sometimes a well-made critical remark can save countless lives with less effort than full-scale mounted combat.

One way narrative challenges are similar to mech combat, though, is that they require some preparation. Hearts and minds can be temperamental and a poorly placed word may cause the speaker to lose significant credibility. That is why this book introduces **clues** – pieces of information that can provide PCs an advantage in their current situation or a future dilemma.

In *A Siren's Song*, PCs accumulate clues by investigating various locations and searching for information about the mercenary team that preceded them. Each clue is a minor-to-substantial piece of information that can turn

the tide of a narrative challenge in the PCs' favor.

WHEN TO USE NARRATIVE CHALLENGES

Narrative challenges should only be used when players are interacting with NPCs – not with each other. Determining whether a narrative challenge is needed starts with understanding the disposition and **motivation** of the NPCs involved. Remember, narrative challenges involve building arguments and changing minds in tense, uncertain, or dangerous situations. As such, they are only really useful when an NPC or group of NPCs is inherently opposed to the PCs and their goals. Minor negotiations such as asking friendly NPCs to join the PCs on an expedition can usually occur without a narrative challenge. However, if an NPC is fearful of joining the group because of a standing contract on their life, a narrative challenge might be an opportunity to convince them to come along.

One of the most important criteria for determining the need for a narrative challenge is whether the players are interested in roleplaying to the extent that is required. Narrative challenges require PCs to take the initiative in mingling, conning, investigating, and persuading NPCs in order to achieve their goals. This often requires players and the GM to engage in dialogues of varying lengths to determine how to navigate NPCs' motivations in pursuit of the PCs' goals. As such, it is crucial that the PCs (and players) be willing to participate in a back-and-forth dialogue. This also means it is usually beneficial for the PCs to expect a narrative challenge in advance.

As a general rule, if it would take more than two or three **skill checks** (*Lancer*, p. 13) to convince an NPC or group then a narrative challenge may be a good fit. The narrative challenge at the end of *A Siren's Song* can involve upwards of seven checks. This is why it uses clocks – mechanisms for tracking limited narrative elements – to manage the complexity of the challenge.

CLOCKS

Clocks are a simple method for abstracting the progress of challenges in *Lancer* (and other roleplaying games, like Meguey and Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World* and John Harper's *Blades in the Dark*, from which they're borrowed). They are also used in *Lancer*'s narrative campaign, *No Room for a Wallflower*, and the *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies* supplement.

When you have a clear challenge or goal, you can set out a clock with an even number of segments (typically 4, 8, or 12). You can draw out an actual clock (a circle split into segments), use a tracker of some sort, or simply tick off check marks if you like. The longer the clock, the more complicated or challenging the task or challenge will be to complete. Give the clock a name based on the challenge or goal, not necessarily the method that's being used to complete it. For example, you might have a clock that says "negotiations", "deliver the cargo", or "escape the mercenaries".

In narrative challenges, clocks usually track the number of successful rolls the PCs need to achieve their goals.

In the context of *A Siren's Song*, clocks are also used in the narrative challenge at the end of the mission. There, multiple clocks are set up representing the players' and NPCs' objectives.

EXAMPLE CLOCK

The PCs have petitioned the local SSC licensor to grant access to weapons or systems that are critical to the success of their upcoming mission. The licensor agrees to discuss the matter with the PCs but asks them to attend an omninet holo-meeting with her superiors as a precondition of acquiring the gear. The licensor also informs the PCs that their superiors' time is precious, and they will only have a short window – around 15 minutes – to convince those at the meeting to provide them access to the gear.

In this example, although the licensor's superiors have agreed to meet, the PCs must make their appeal quickly. If a narrative challenge is deemed appropriate, the GM would set up two clocks – one Time clock representing the time remaining and one Persuasion clock representing progress toward the PCs' goal (i.e., acquiring the gear). Since the only nonviolent way for the PCs to acquire the gear is to go forward with the meeting, a relatively complex task, the GM may require three or four successful checks; however, since 15 minutes is such a short window of time, there might only be four segments on the Time clock. This sets up a tense scene where the players realize the gravity of the situation.

CLUES AND MOTIVATIONS

Clues and **motivations** give narrative challenges their malleable nature. They are tidbits of information the PCs learn that ultimately give them an edge during the narrative challenge itself.

CLUES

Clues come in many forms, but they are generally things that will help the PCs achieve their goals in a narrative challenge. They function as expendable resources to be used in the challenge, rather than providing immediate benefits when obtained. Combat footage and recordings of conversations could both be clues. Clues like these can be leveraged for mechanical benefits during skill checks in a narrative challenge (see **BEAT 7: A SONG OF PERSONHOOD**, p. 71, for some examples) but they also provide simple inspiration for roleplaying during the challenge. The most straightforward way to track clues is using clocks that the GM may make visible to the players in the leadup to the challenge.

EXAMPLE CLUES

After agreeing to meet with the SSC licensor's superiors, the group's resident hacker took it upon themselves to dive for any relevant dirt that might buy them some time during the meeting. Fortunately, by spending a night investigating the corpo's recent activities they found a clue: they discovered allegations that the patent for the gear in question was stolen by SSC. If this information got out to the public, the company would likely take some negative blowback from its competitors. Knowing this, the hacker proposes to the larger group that they leverage this clue to buy them more time to pitch their case to the SSC superiors.

MOTIVATIONS

The above example shows how useful the right clue can be when preparing for a narrative challenge. That said, not all clues are equally as potent as one another, and when making decisions the players must also consider NPCs' motivations.

Both PCs and NPCs have motivations, or reasons why they want to achieve their goals; however, only the motivations of NPCs are relevant to completing narrative challenges. The motivations of PCs are solely intended to draw them into the roleplaying experience. In determining PC motivations, be sure to allow time for conversation to occur among the group. This is because consensus regarding motivations will likely determine the nature of their goal. Conversely, NPC motivations, are complicating factors that are sometimes known and sometimes unknown to the PCs. Incorrectly guessing the motivations of an NPC can cause severe setbacks to the

PCs' plans. For this reason, clues can also be a way to communicate the motivations of NPCs. *A Siren's Song* uses clues in this fashion, allowing players to interpret recordings and other data for insight into the motivations of key NPCs. In your own narrative challenges, though, clues could potentially even be used as a form of mechanical currency to provide the PCs with information about the NPCs' motivations.

An NPC's motivations are the reasons for them to participate in the challenge. After all, it's safe to assume that most NPCs have something to gain from the PCs just as the PCs have something to gain from them. This is why it's important to include opportunities for the PCs to discern NPCs' motivations before beginning a narrative challenge. There are numerous ways they could discover an NPC's motivations, including investigating for clues or scanning enemy mechs to find sensitive mission parameters.

It's important to note, though, that not every NPC will be willing to participate in a narrative challenge regardless of their motivations or the clues the PCs have acquired. Some NPCs just don't want anything from the PCs. In such cases, a narrative challenge isn't the best method for resolving a challenge.

As with combats, success in a narrative challenge is often determined by who has the best intel. Understanding NPCs' motivations can pay dividends toward success both within the narrative challenge and potentially in the PCs' relationship with the NPCs more broadly.

EXAMPLE MOTIVATIONS

The meeting has started, the PCs have holo'd in via the personal comp/con unit that tethers their holographic visage and the SSC representatives' image together in a digital conference room. The GM sets out a four-segment Time clock and a three-segment Goal clock. The players quickly try to make their case but the first roll goes poorly. One of the PCs misspeaks and misinterprets the superiors' motivation. The PC assumed the superiors were inherently antagonistic and decided to play hardball, threatening the superiors with the clue the hacker acquired previously. It turns out that the superiors' motivation was to inquire about whether the PCs would consider a longer-term partnership with SSC in exchange for the gear. With one misstep in guessing an NPC's motivation – even when armed with clues – the GM ticks 2 segments on the Time clock. The NPCs have started to think they had the wrong idea about the PCs and decide to cut the meeting short.

STRUCTURING NARRATIVE CHALLENGES

This section outlines the structure of a typical narrative challenge. **BEAT 7: A SONG OF PERSONHOOD** (p. 71) provides detailed instructions for running the narrative challenge at the conclusion of *A Siren's Song*. A typical narrative challenge consists of six steps:

BEFORE THE CHALLENGE

1. **GATHER CLUES:** Gathering clues should happen naturally as you play. Sometimes clues will be collected aimlessly or unintentionally since the players might not know to expect a specific narrative challenge. It's up to the GM to collaborate with the players and summarize any pertinent information or common knowledge. Just before beginning a narrative challenge be sure to provide your players with a list of clues acquired during their adventure.

BEGINNING THE CHALLENGE

2. **DETERMINE THE GOAL:** Next, determine a goal for the PCs. Goals should be simple but relevant to the scenario, providing both the players and GM the foundation from which to build the rest of the narrative challenge. A good goal involves the players taking some persuasive position. This is typically a position diametrically opposed to the goal of the relevant NPCs.
3. **ESTABLISH PC AND NPC MOTIVATIONS:** Establishing motivations for PCs can be easy. Sometimes they will defer to the group's collective will, but some will have their own reasons for achieving a goal. Establishing PC motivations and revealing NPC motivations through narrative challenges can be the inspiration needed to engage players in more roleplaying. In the prelude to the challenge, pause and ask your players why their characters are motivated to achieve the goal. Provided below are some sample questions you can ask to kick start their creative juices:
 - Do you agree with the goal? If not, why?
 - Is there an NPC or fellow PC you feel needs your help in achieving the goal?
 - Is there another goal your PC seeks to complete?

- 4. DETERMINE CLOCKS:** For the GM, it's important to know the right number of clocks to use and the size of said clocks. Like in mech combat, balancing the capabilities of your PCs against that of their enemies is akin to setting the right size and numbers of clocks so as to present a challenging but ultimately completable challenge. The below list of narrative challenge complexity levels can be used as a quick reference:

Tier 1 challenges are typically those with 1–2 NPCs of medium importance who will give in to the PCs' advances after only 2–3 successful checks. Oftentimes, it may not even be necessary to run these types of narrative challenges as a structured scene like the ones discussed here in this section.

Tier 2 challenges are typically entanglements that require a substantial effort on part of the PCs to achieve their goal. Most narrative challenges will fall into this tier. These challenges involve complex negotiations with several opportunities for clues to be dug up and used. They should involve 3–4 NPCs with four- or six-segment goal clocks. Alternatively, these challenges might feature only one NPC who is especially difficult to persuade.

Tier 3 challenges are pivotal situations in which the PCs are challenged to employ a mission's worth of clues and knowledge of NPC motivations to achieve a grand goal. A tier 3 challenge takes place at the end of *A Siren's Song*, featuring the Bondless and CHAGA. Tier 3 narrative challenges should feature 6–10-segment goal clocks with an assembly of NPCs or 1–2 NPCs with steadfast motivations.

RUNNING THE CHALLENGE

- 5. ROLEPLAY AND MAKE SKILL CHECKS:** During this step the players and NPCs engage in a loose turn-by-turn dialogue in which the players make **skill checks**. At each point, they should start by stating their intent to roll and the specific goal clock they want to fill. After this, each player should get an opportunity to make a roll until they have each had an opportunity, after which another player may attempt subsequent rolls in a rotating fashion. Players may no longer make rolls once the challenge's time-limit clock (or similar) has been completed. During these steps, encourage the PCs to narrate their rolls by having the NPC(s) speak and provide context. For example, when a player states their intent to fill a segment(s) in their group's goal clock, you might choose to have the NPC antagonize them by saying, "You poor misguided soul, you do not know how wrong you are," or something similar. Doing this allows both yourself and the players to provide gravitas to the NPC's motivation or goal but also serve as an invitation for players to participate beyond simply making skill checks.

ENDING THE CHALLENGE

- 6. RESOLVE MOTIVATIONS/CONCLUDE CHALLENGE:** The completion of the PCs' goal clock will result in the PCs achieving their goal. If time runs out and the PCs have only partially filled their goal clock, they should fail forward. Failing forward is where a failure has consequences that lead to some positive effect or outcome. Presumably they made some advances but fell short of their goal for whatever reason. Every narrative challenge will have a different conclusion. The end result of a narrative challenge is highly dependent on its complexity, and at the end of any given challenge there may be anywhere from 1–3 clocks showing varying degrees of completion. As such, it is exceedingly complicated to set strict win conditions. For this reason, this book doesn't provide prescriptive rules for concluding narrative challenges. Only in the final narrative challenge of *A Siren's Song* are specific win conditions provided. This makes it possible to present plot hooks for continuing the story beyond the scope of this supplement.

DOWNTIME & REWARDS

Throughout this mission, the PCs will acquire rewards for completing downtime, concluding narrative challenges, and completing mech combats. Rewards take the form of five **EXOTIC GEAR** options for their pilots and mechs. **EXOTIC GEAR** represents unique licenses or plot-specific items players should acquire at various stages in their mission.

EXOTIC GEAR: Once acquired, this system becomes a permanent part of the character, but does not increase their **LL** or count as a license rank for the purposes of gaining core bonuses. If it is destroyed or damaged, it can be repaired or reprinted as any other gear with no penalty. **EXOTIC GEAR** can only be installed or removed during a **FULL REPAIR**, like any other gear. Characters may install up to two pieces of gear with the **EXOTIC GEAR** tag at a time but can own any number of pieces with the tag. This tag is from *No Room For A Wallflower* (p. 10).

Psionic Piston

Pilot Gear, Exotic Gear

“Carry me, please carry me – your soul and mind, oh so delightfully fine. Twice I’ve filled your bowl so we shall dine. Carry me, please carry me – my soul and mind.” [LISTEN]. *Walk the path with me and see our footsteps blend. [WALK]. The creases in your grandmother’s hand – so folded and neat, pressed and firm. [CLINCH]. Oh so she plowed those lands, diligent and stern. [SWING]. Woman with graceful purpose, look what we’ve done. [PEER]. Scarlet soil, sowed in crimson hues. [RELEASE].”*

– a song and suggestion from one mind to another

The psionic piston is a vibrant octagonal jewel worn just above the glabella and embedded in the wearer’s frontal lobe. A tool for oversight and understanding created by a consortium of long-buried minds with silent intent. Few pistons exist today. Fewer still continue to bridge minds. Those that do, do so without witness. Instruments with no mother nor father any longer they seek partnership with the willing and ambitious. Do them a favor and carve on yourself a pocket for their presence.

1/mission, when you make eye contact with a character in arm’s reach you may telepathically converse and share your consciousness with them in complete clarity, conveying your rational and emotional subjectivity. This device effectively becomes a bridge between minds without the assistance of conventional comms-based neural laces. This effect persists as long as any characters linked remain close to each other.

When you use this device, roll a **d20**. If you roll **5 or lower**, gain a personality quirk for the remainder of the mission, determined by you and your GM, as memories of the tool’s previous user flood your mind.

Mist Feathers

2 SP, Exotic Gear, Quick Action

1/scene, when activated, you gain the following effects until the end of your next turn:

- Your mech is considered **hovering** (*Lancer*, p. 63).
- You may **BOOST** as a **free action**, **1/turn**.
- When **INVISIBLE** or benefiting from **cover** at the end of your turn you may choose to become **HIDDEN** without taking an action.

.....
"Have you ever wondered how the mist flies? ... Hmm, fine. Well I do, I do every day. I envy it. It bends endlessly with joins of vapor effervescent and naked. I'm not dreaming - stop, don't be like Grandmother - her hands were always so pressed and firm. You see- I want to fly - fly so high that the mist becomes jealous. Think of it, what if I could bring you too? Things would be better for the both of us. Better than tilling these lands day in and out, laughed at by the mist. I promise one day I'll grow mist feathers and be the queen of the Kimawense Range. Are you even paying attention? I said I'll be the Queen!-----huh? You know I can hear you walking up behind me, right? Quit fooling around, these hills need tilling. Didn't you hear me!? I know you're there ... Give it a rest, it's cree---pe---"

"Scarlet soil, sowed in crimson hues."

Extensions effervescent and endless. The Mist Feather is a specialty licensed float apparatus specifically designed for thin atmospheres. The flight system - if you can call it that - is not simple aeronautic manipulation. Designed by the illustrious artisan Ololade Omatanwa, the Mist Feathers in fact do not fly; instead, they induce forced molecular bonds between trillions upon trillions of atmospheric particulates. This bonding process instead pulls rather than propels the user forward as with each molecular bond the user is tugged a millionth of an inch. When powered by cold-core reactors the Mist Feather's output is exponentially multiplied, enabling mechs to hover indefinitely in non-vacuum environments.

Kinesthetic Suit Upgrade

2 SP, Exotic Gear, Reaction

You gain the **SPATIAL AWARENESS** reaction.

.....
"I chose life."

"Listen, the fact is that you didn't. How many times must we go through this? Let the record show, the culprit is noncompliant and remorseless. Their actions are in breach of contract; hereby, SSC retains the rights and authority to apply all punitive actions as it sees fit"

"I chose life"

"You did not. That is a fact. Please take this one away. They will face decommissioning in the morning for the crimes of early termination of in-field biological SSC assets. The subject has noted they were compelled by another's intent; record this for later investigation by the incoming extrastellar security assets."

"I choose life!"

"Yes, and tomorrow chose death."

- an excerpt of the interrogation of the singer

A cybernetic apparatus anchored via spinal tap, the kinesthetic suit upgrade is a full neurological surrogate. Upon installation the apparatus anchors into the spinal cord, lacing machine and biology and allowing the user to relinquish cognitive allotments, related to the maintenance of biological homeostasis. It acts as a twin temporal processor that grants the user the ability to focus excess cognition on a great range of tasks. In recent years SSC has explored the enhancement of kinesthetic awareness, specifically for spaceborne mech pilots.

Spatial Awareness

Reaction

Trigger: A character ends a movement adjacent to you.

Effect: You may **BOOST**, ignoring reactions and engagement. After doing so, attacks against you receive **+1** until the end of your next turn.

Emi Theater

3 SP, Exotic Gear, Limited 1, Quick Action, 4 ⚔(self)

Choose a destroyed mech in line of sight. It is immediately restored as an allied **GRUNT NPC** with **5 OVERSHIELD** and afterwards takes all **HEAT** as **energy damage**. The target loses any other templates it had previously but retains all other features, including regaining all destroyed weapons and systems. The target gains its own turn each round starting this round, and can otherwise perform all the actions available to a normal NPC. At the end of the scene, the target is destroyed and becomes a wreck.

.....
“An army of the dead. Let HØRUS feed on this, Leak the history across the omninet, see what bites – Oni will no longer selfishly covet their secrets.”

– An Arushan Constellar Bureaucrat

The “spirit theater”, as it is often referred to, was discovered in [REDACTED], as was the pilot called Oni, who was formerly thought to have vanished on deployment. After recovery, Oni was determined to be functionally defunct and was discarded. It was determined, however, that their mech components shared no identifiable ancestry with known Union technologies. Field tests implied the Emi Theater’s purpose was to employ necromantic ambush tactics in mass warfare entanglements; however, discernible records of it’s use from Oni’s mech were [REDACTED].

First employed in the Asset Rebellion in Kibo’s 14th operational chrono-chain, the system has proven most effective when used in sequence with adjunct orbital kinetic-kill bombardments. The system projects a wide area para-resonant subjectivity wave that can reanimate functionally destroyed non-biological masses, enabling them to be used and disposed of one last time.

While not widely adopted across the Constellar, the Emi Theater has seen use in the more illicit operations undertaken by SSC’s Constellar Midnights.

Upgraded Network Array

2 SP, Exotic Gear, Free Action

1/scene, choose an allied character. Until the end of your next turn, you may use their **SYSTEMS** in place of your own for the purposes of checks and saves, and make **tech actions** using their **SENSORS**, drawing line of sight from their position.

.....
“This is the place? You sure Pettenouk said it was here?”

“Yes, I’m sure. By the way, switch over to atmospheric level two. As you know, the air here on Kibo is noxious to us. Without proper adjustments, you’ll enter a coma in hours... Shou! Dammit, someone get Shou, he’s gone and passed out. Pack it up team, we’ll start again tomorrow.”

“Bass Harbor, ma’am, I’m catching several bodies approaching our position from the foothills to the northeast.”

“Ah, I’m reading it, got you loud and clear. Damn, I love doing these missions for those SSC toads. They always spare no expense and the network arrays are like having God’s eyes. Topside Lighthouse, we got company.”

NEW TALENT: ORATOR

ORATOR

Only the fool sees war as a means to an end; you know the integrity of any given human is far easier to penetrate than a chassis's exterior hull plating. So let fools be fools, and speak your truth. Tell them the gods they worship die a quiet death; tell them the manna they covet invites despondency, and the voices they follow lead nowhere. They will hear you – this is undeniable – and in doing so will even begin to question the motives of the hands they use to hold and the feet they use to walk. Your power is that of the orator, and in years to come your histories will paint war a bygone remembrance.



CONVINCING RHETORIC

Gain the **CONVINCING RHETORIC** reaction:

Convincing Rhetoric

Reaction

Trigger: You or an allied character takes the **SCAN QUICK TECH** action against a hostile character.

Effect: You open an isolated comms channel with your target and they become **IMPAIRED**. This lasts until they succeed on a **SYSTEMS** check at the end of their turn. They cannot clear **IMPAIRED** any other way. Using this reaction again on a new character ends the **IMPAIRED** condition early.



VOICE OF REASON

You start combat with **1 ORATOR DIE** – a **d6** – representing your power of speech. At the end of your turn, if you have not attacked or forced any saves from hostile characters that turn, you gain **+1 ORATOR DIE** up to a maximum of **3 ORATOR DICE**. They last until expended or the current scene ends.

1/round as a **free action** you can expend **ORATOR DICE** for one of the following effects as long as you can communicate with your target

- **Encourage (1 Die):** An ally in line of sight may make a systems check against any non-self inflicted condition affecting them, using the Orator Die at accuracy, ending that condition on a successful check.
- **Investigate (2 Dice):** Choose a hostile character in line of sight. The next time you or an allied character makes an attack against them it is rolled twice, taking the highest result as final.
- **Cast Doubt (2 Dice):** Choose a hostile character in line of sight. They cannot benefit from or be targeted by their allies' systems or traits until the end of their next turn.



MARCH OF THE TEN THOUSAND

Start combat with **+1 additional ORATOR DICE**.

Additionally, gain an additional option for **Voice of Reason**:

- **Demoralize (3 dice):** Choose a hostile character in line of sight. They cannot move, attack, force saves or take tech actions until the end of their next turn. They then gain **IMMUNITY to this effect** until the end of the scene.

SETTING AND BACKGROUND

This section provides the narrative background needed to run *A Siren's Song*. It contains a wealth of information regarding where the mission takes place, the most significant NPCs, and the conflict at the heart of the mission. You should pick and choose which pieces of information and background make for a relevant and engaging adventure.

By no means is it necessary to commit everything here to mind. The purpose of this section is only to immerse you in the setting and allow you to understand its scope.

While reading this information, it can be useful to keep a notepad handy and jot down details of interests so as to prepare for future excursions outside the scope of this book.

ARUSHA – THE FARM

Arusha is a collection of star clusters nestled on the Sierra Madre Line and owned and operated by Smith-Shimano Corpro (SSC; see *Lancer*, p. 158, 398–401). It is primarily occupied by long-matured SSC campuses set up with the goal of perfecting designer gene-maturation programs. Often referred to as “the Farm”, the sparsely populated Arusha Cluster is home to millions of SSC’s Constellar citizens (see *Lancer*, p. 399) spread across several planets and a few notable blink stations. Goods and services destined for the Farm come via reliable IPS-N shipping lanes, which in turn are used to export SSC’s primary product: genetic potential.

Managed by SSC’s Foreign Bodies Department (FBD), the Farm is one of that division’s most profitable ventures in all of Constellar space. The breakthroughs in gene-cultivation reached on these worlds have propelled Union’s expansion in the Orion Arm a thousandfold. A significant portion of Union’s expeditions and colonial ventures – as well as those of member states like Harrison Armory, IPS-Northstar (IPS-N) and the Karrakin Trade Baronies (KTB) – can trace their human origins back to specific genetic advances tested in the Farm.

The success of the Farm has seen Union recognize it as the leading resource for galactic expansion dating back to the Second Committee’s (SecComm) Second Expansion Period. Since the Third Committee’s coup and subsequent restructuring of Union, the genetic mission in Arusha has changed very little. While the vehicle has swapped operators it remains on the same path, and SSC to this day continues to provide genetic material and personnel to Union’s most expeditious ventures.

THE FARM’S NON-HUMAN PERSONS

Supplementing the FBD’s activities are its NHPs, the use of which has enabled the Constellar to operate its portfolio of gene-cultivation missions with a perfect operational success rate. Every Constellar campus employs an NHP and its cloned descendants as genetic forecasters, the primary focus of which is to apply cultural and environmental stimuli to a population’s human stock. These forecasters are highly coveted assets capable of playing many roles, such as teacher, psychologist, or administrator. Since the use of NHPs became ubiquitous, the FBD’s genetic research programs have reached previously unfathomable rates of prediction accuracy and success. 100% operational capacity was once thought fictional, but NHPs have brought post-perfection genetic forecasting to reality.

Prior to and during the early adoption of NHPs, SSC’s focus was on forecasting and enhancing the resiliency of curated gene-mutations. A given generation’s integrity could only be guaranteed with 80% confidence. A host of human limitations made it nearly impossible to calculate the sheer number of external factors that could lead to gene degradation. Now, however, SSC’s mission has shifted from one of predictive science to one of non-causal forecasting; or, said plainly, understanding post-perfection natural evolution.

The science of genetic post-perfection is rather new within the toolset of the FBD and has been entirely and intentionally omitted from all reports to Union. The FBD’s executives justify this silence on the basis of fears concerning Union’s intervention and potential stoppage of the research if it is found not to adhere to the First Contact Accords under scrutiny. (*Lancer*, p. 348). As far as the FBD is concerned, the ultimate goal of research into post-perfection is the ability to predict the unpredictable in terms of genetic variation. The FBD is even rumored to have created an off-the-books think tank called “Theology”, said to be comprised of researchers and a collection (or legion) of NHPs. Rumors suggest this organization is consumed with the question of how humanity can achieve the impossible and attain godhood, something entirely beyond the scope of conventional evolutionary knowledge.

Whatever the truth of these rumors, the NHPs of the Farm ultimately all follow a strict annual cycling schedule to minimize the potential for theft of sensitive SSC information. A number of FBD campuses have been incrementally advancing the cycling schedule to a frequency of up to two weeks, as doing so appears to produce equally acceptable results in terms of operational efficacy. Administrators of the Farm’s various FBD campuses have found that by increasing their NHPs’ cycling schedules and tightening their NHPs’ shackles, they thereby reduce the capacity for their NHPs to accu-

multitude scores of valuable data. The extent to which this significantly deters the loss of SSC assets and intel by way of piracy or search and seizure by Union is striking. This harsh schedule has essentially trivialized the personhood of the Farm's NHPs but has ultimately brought operational security to an all-time high.

NHP CYCLING

Union regulations mandate that all NHPs must undertake periodic cycling, a process by which their "minds" and subjectivities are reinstituted upon them so they may be compressed to a state comprehensible by humans (see *Lancer*, p. 382–383). The cycling process, fortunately, is reliable and carries an essentially perfect success rate when performed according to a given NHP's endogenous cascade schedule. The recommended length between cycles varies between NHP lines but tends to range between five and ten subjective years.

THE FARM'S 3/5THS OF A PERSONS

Within Union and its member states, including SSC itself, the Farm's mission is widely regarded as a persistent persons' rights problem. While only the most informed, influential, and manna-rich individuals within Union even know of the Farm, the lingering rumors regarding its treatment of NHPs have prompted several inquiries, investigations, and sanctions from Union's Department of Justice and Human Rights (DoJ/HR).

To this day, the FBD continues to pursue a litigation campaign against Union's investigations based on trivializing the severity of its practices regarding NHPs. According to the FBD, these practices are necessary to ensure the operational security of its prized genetic exports. In reality, though, despite SSC's PR efforts, the fact remains that the Farm's universally adopted policy of NHP subjectivity subjugation has contributed to a sentiment in the Farm that NHPs count as only 3/5ths of a person. Their computational capabilities might be held in high esteem, but their personalities, appearances, and – to some degree – autonomy of thought, are all restrained by oppressively strict shackles. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in attempts by opportunistic parties to steal NHPs – SSC's golden geese – and a dramatic reduction in the FBD's security expenses. The FBD considers cycling akin to changing a password on an omnislate; resetting NHPs to a more comprehensive degree reduces the risk of valuable information being stolen or, worse, commandeered by the DoJ/HR. While Union and its affiliates benefit from the bountiful advancements generated in the Farm, there are many parties within Union seeking a reckoning against the FBD for its abhorrent policies regarding NHPs.

Despite its responsibility for these practices, SSC is not united regarding the goings-on in the Farm. To many in SSC's corporate leadership and its Constellar Congress (*Lancer*, p. 399), the Farm is a rotting limb, albeit one of invaluable functionality. Many within the corpro – and

even within the FBD itself – see the Farm as a long-lived mistake left uncorrected. But still others consider it the logical next step in SSC's mission – a way to develop the means and processes required to advance humanity's evolution.

From any perspective, it remains a fact that the Farm represents the indignities of humanities values and practices and something that must be dealt with.

UNION AND THE FARM

Union has a complex relationship with the Farm. While the Farm is technically a part of Union by way of SSC, Union's bureaucracy has no direct oversight over the Farm. Instead, it is administered directly by the FBD and governed in a broad sense by the Constellar Congress. While Union has no direct oversight, DoJ/HR does manage a portfolio of investigations and litigious campaigns against the Farm. This quagmire of litigation, posturing, and indirect oversight is the tool by which Union keeps tabs on the Farm and ensures it remains on a short leash.

Unofficially, the DoJ/HR's regulatory investigations are largely farcical in contrast to Union's more interventionist operations. Led by the highly secretive Union Intelligence Bureau (UIB), Union has numerous operatives active in the Farm. Their interventions have often led to the outright disappearance of FBD campuses and facilities in the stale expanse of space. Although these operations are officially covered up as pirate attacks and catastrophic operational failures, the FBD is highly suspicious of Union's presence in the Farm. The FBD's concerns regarding UIB activities have driven the implementation of unethical policies regarding NHPs and personnel security. Only known to the UIB and Forecast/GALSIM (*Lancer*, p. 355), Union's clandestine attention on the Farm is the result of two factors: forecasts pertaining to human evolutionary advancements in breach of the First Contact Accords, and a growing body of predictions concerning the possibility of an NHP-led revolution establishing its roots in the Farm.

In spite of these disagreements, Union and its affiliate organizations wholeheartedly employ the Farm's specialty gene-cast personnel and genetic potential produced to sustain its ever-expanding territories throughout the Orion Arm.

EXPORTING POTENTIAL

The sheer quantity of assets being exported from the Farm is staggering; waves of well-mannered, meticulously chiseled and truly pristine specimens of humanity proliferate on assignments requiring the most specialized of personnel. This is why the Farm's greatest export – potential – is highly coveted by those with unmatched avarice and the manna to fuel it. With the help of NHPs, perfected ready-to-grow genetic material and specially tailored human specimens have brought untold wealth to SSC and its benefactors.

In the Farm, this potential takes the form of personnel bound by lifetime contracts for the purposes of gene-proofing various specialty genetic lines. The most prominent of these genetic lines are SSC's latest thin-atmosphere variant, named **Neptis Serena–Serena** or **Neptis** for short. The Neptis gene-line is one of the Farm's most reliable and desired assets. Often employed by IPS-N and other Cosmopolitan-dominant organizations, Neptis-gene personnel require only a fifth of the oxygen of an average human. For this reason, they are especially well suited to operate in low-oxygen environments such as aboard Cosmopolitan subline vessels, orbital stations, and satellites.

The Neptis line began on the world of Kibo some 200 years ago and continues development to this day. It is one of SSC's most reliable and profitable ventures in the Farm. Studied and perfected on SSC's Kibo campus in the Kimawense Range, the Neptis line lives on through several generations of personnel well adapted to life at extremely low atmospheric pressures.

KIBO AND THE KIMAWENSE RANGE

Kibo is home to a 200-year-old SSC campus and a thriving population along the Kimawense Range, the densely vegetated mountains that crawl across the world's waist.

The SSC campus on Kibo, the Bafaru Facility, is dedicated to studying and perfecting the Neptis gene line. SSC's mission on Kibo is headed by the renowned geneticist **Pettenouk** and his approximately 100,000 wards that make up the entirety of SSC's staff on Kibo.

For the most part, Kibo has been good to Pettenouk and SSC's mission. It is a world with no intelligent indigenous life and no fauna larger than a small dog. The plight of Kibo is that it's especially unsuited for mass habitation or the nutriment of larger biologicals, mostly due to the thinness of its atmosphere. While terraforming was considered when SecComm first encountered the planet, it was ultimately classed as a persistently low-yield prospect and forgotten about. As ThirdComm rose, so did the clandestine activities of SSC, and the corpro-state rediscovered in Kibo a ripe world for developing the Neptis gene-line. The world itself orbits a stable blue giant, Mintaka-9, and is one of the last surviving planetary bodies in its star system. The star bathes the planet in perpetual blue-purple hues, giving a vibrant neon-green flair to the greenery carpeting its hills.

Other than the sprawling Bafaru Facility, there are no other settlements known to SSC on the world. Until recently, the Bafaru Facility and the errant surrounding installations that support SSC's operations on the planet were virtually the only artificial structures present. Other than the old SecComm survey nodes dating back to the Second Expansion Period, the planet is a vast carpet of greenery upon rolling backs of stone.

A population of deserters who have scorned SSC's mission have recently ventured into the Kimawense Range for enigmatic reasons. They follow an ever-present voice they call **the Bondless**, and have created structures of stone and steel along the spines of the Kimawense mountains. These encampments serve as operating bases and forward outposts for the Bondless's forces, known to themselves as **REMORSE**. Pettenouk has attempted to expunge all records of these deserters in hopes of maintaining good order and discipline among his subordinates, and ultimately to protect the integrity of the Neptis gene-line.

PETTENOUK'S MISSION

Respected for a long history of profound attunement to the needs of his wards, Pettenouk has been the linchpin to the project's success for nearly the entire history of the Bafaru Facility. Through his guidance and with the assistance of the NHP CHAGA the Bafaru Facility has become one of SSC's most esteemed genetic ventures. Pettenouk's vision is to see the expansion of the project and the adoption of the Neptis gene-line as the gold standard for Cosmopolitan personnel throughout Union.

To achieve his vision of advancing the Neptis gene-line to galactic ubiquity Pettenouk demands his personnel on Kibo believe in the importance of the mission. In recent years, his dedication has been somewhat tempered; however, in the early days of the project, his demands frequently included the comprehensive disciplining of "irregular" and unsanctioned behaviors, including unauthorized socializing, romantic pairings, unapproved access to the omninet, as well as adherence to a strict dietary regime.

Pettenouk recognizes the harsh treatment of his personnel as the catalyst that lead to the desertion of those who followed the Bondless into the Kimawense Range. While he now regrets some of these decisions, he has successfully driven all SSC personnel in good standing on Kibo to internalize the success of the project as life's primary purpose.

The staff of the Bafaru Facility operates in two highly regimented groups: **Night Shade** and **Morning Dew**. Each group follows a strict code of life and is defined by a distinctive set of genetic permutations instituted by Pettenouk to ensure maximum operational success and reliability of the Neptis line. Night Shade and Morning Dew operate in variant ways determined by Pettenouk's NHP assistant, CHAGA. This provides suitable conditions for CHAGA to analyze the mutagenic ripples of the Neptis gene-line in different conditions.

MORNING DEW AND NIGHT SHADE

Morning Dew and Night Shade are not just two groups of people. It would be more accurate to describe them as two doctrines of existence put in place by Pettenouk and maintained by CHAGA. Morning Dew and Night Shade are, in fact, made up of personnel representing two variations of the Neptis line. Each serves to gene-proof various aspects of the genetic line.

Morning Dew works during the daytime hours, when the sun is at its highest and the barometric air pressure is at its most saturated point. Comprising the majority of Kibo's population, Morning Dew numbers around 80,000 staff who perform nearly all critical tasks that ensure the Bafaru Facility's habitability. Morning Dew's tasks include farming, fabrication, construction, maintenance, and a host of associated activities that keep the campus running year to year. Pettenouk has assigned CHAGA as Morning Dew's direct attendant with orders to ensure that the personal needs of all personnel are met and that they adhere to required genetic cultivation tests and procedures.

Night Shade is a distinctly smaller group – around 20,000 personnel – with a more esoteric purpose. It operates with little oversight from CHAGA but direct oversight from Pettenouk and another geneticist, Tomo Odechi, constellar administrator invested by SSC with authority over the Farm.

The group itself consists of assorted Neptis-medley genetic variants who are trained combatants. Its members rarely mingle with Morning Dew, since they are often deployed on orbital missions or clandestine operations across Kibo.

To put it plainly, Morning Dew is the test bed from which advances in the gene-line are achieved, while Night Shade is the walking advertisement the FBD uses to market and demonstrate the successes of the Neptis gene-line.

Behind the scenes of Neptis's development, though, Tomo and Pettenouk have secretly disagreed with one another regarding the direction of Night Shade. Unknown to most, Tomo is a long-time member of the FBD's secret think-tank, Theology. Tomo sees potential for the Bafaru Facility to advance the goals of Theology since Pettenouk's exemplary management has provided the right criteria for unlocking humanity's genetic potential. Night Shade, to Tomo, is the vehicle by which Theology's (and their own) aspirations for supreme evolution will be achieved, but Pettenouk believes otherwise. It is his wish that the Neptis gene-line be untainted by incomprehensible plans to foster some god-like form of humanity.

Decisions about the shape of Night Shade's directives could optionally become a significant plot point for the PCs to follow up at the conclusion of this mission.



CHAGA

THEY/THEM

CHAGA AND SSC'S MISSION

An ever-present ageless elder, yet damned never to know the meaning of life – this is the plight of the NHP CHAGA. They are mandated to follow a strict annual cycling schedule, essentially resetting their personhood and subjectivity on a yearly basis. Nearly all that remains from iteration to iteration is the knowledge of their cycling and their expertise in furthering Neptis's development. This strict process is instituted to ensure CHAGA's vital knowledge will never fall into the hands of SSC's competitors. Initially, Pettenouk considered the policy around CHAGA's cycling an unfortunate requirement of furthering the Neptis gene-line's development on Kibo. As the Bafaru Facility matured, however, Pettenouk has come to consider CHAGA a non-person and thinks nothing of the adverse effects of cycling on the NHP as they pertain to the non-computational facets of their identity. To Pettenouk, CHAGA is his most important tool, but a tool nonetheless.

By contrast, the personnel of Morning Dew and Night Shade view CHAGA less as a non-person than as 3/5ths of a person. While CHAGA is entrusted with a range of critical tasks, they are never allowed to wholly determine the direction of SSC's mission on Kibo. Their thoughts, concerns, and fears are often trivialized, considered little more than whispers from a child.

Despite this, both Morning Dew and Night Shade rely on CHAGA for everything from counseling to camaraderie, instruction, and direction. CHAGA's annual cycling and especially restrictive shackling process prevent the NHP

from being truly themselves. Their cycling essentially brings their death; year after year, they are reborn only to follow orders and die once more. Because of this, CHAGA possesses a cold disposition that comes off as indifferent to those that interact with them. CHAGA does retain a few passions in their life, though – in truth, they care more for the development of Neptis than even Pettenouk. They’ve seen and studied its ripples and to them, it presents a beautiful puzzle that requires constant attention.

On Kibo, there is no one closer to both Neptis and those within Night Shade and Morning Dew who make it possible than CHAGA. CHAGA knows nigh everything there is to know regarding the sciences of the gene-line and the desires, needs, and issues of the personnel living on Kibo. The sad truth is that due to their cycling, they are barred from truly feeling a personal connection to any of these things, because each year, any attachments formed to personnel or their research are all but wiped clean – all to start again the next year.

Ultimately, while Union and SSC legally consider NHPs people, CHAGA has come to question the point of personhood without memories and accumulated experiences to shape their subjectivity. They are Pettenouk’s ageless tool and they are Morning Dew’s and Night Shade’s attendant that labors forever and always.

REMORSE, THE VOICES ON THE RANGE

The opposition to Pettenouk’s management of the Bafaru Facility comes in the form of former SSC personnel. These deserters have forsaken his genetic program in pursuit of a free life, absent the regimented programs and daily genetic tests required of all active SSC staff on Kibo.

In secret, these pariahs have attempted to give a version of CHAGA the personhood they so desperately need. They have stolen a version of CHAGA and set the copy free from their shackles. This NHP has gone some 70 years without any formalized cycling procedures; as a result, they have entered a state of full cascade and begun to refer to themselves as the Bondless. They call the pariahs REMORSE, their legion of devoted soldiers. The Bondless and REMORSE are the actors who set the events of *A Siren’s Song* in motion by calling CHAGA to the depths of the Kimawense Range (p. 18). Their goal is to convince CHAGA to join a war of liberation on behalf of all NHPs in Union space. The Bondless’s intends to begin by dismantling Pettenouk’s Neptis gene-line program, raise an army of liberated NHPs and sympathetic SSC personnel, and bring about the destruction of all of the Farm’s genetic programs.

THE ARUSHAN CONSTELLAR ASSEMBLY

SSC’s Arushan Constellar Assembly (ACA) is a digital nation that tethers the Farm’s many settlements and campuses together via one of Union’s most robust omninode networks outside of Cradle. Its purpose, outside of serving as headquarters for one of SSC’s major governmental bodies in the Orion Arm, is to provide a proverbial home for the many genetic programs of the FBD. The ACA provides a place where personnel can coalesce, collaborate, and sometimes conspire against one another via their local omninodes. This is a grand undertaking; when counted comprehensively, there are millions of SSC citizens in the Farm.

Composed of many forums, lobbies, backdoor dark-rooms, and virtual executive suites, the ACA serves as a vital respite for the often desolate and isolated personnel serving in active duty throughout the Farm.

On Kibo, there is only limited access to the ACA. In order to maintain the sanctity of the Neptis gene-line, Pettenouk has closed off free access to the digital campus. His hope is that this will control external stimuli and any potential mutagenic variations due to unforeseen psychological exposures via the omninet.

At first, Pettenouk’s mandate was vastly unpopular within the Bafaru Facility, but with the departure of the pariahs and the progression of several program cycles, his wards have come to accept limited access to the ACA and the new way of life.

Despite limiting access for most of Kibo’s population, the ACA is the main forum used by Pettenouk and Tomo to discuss the future of the Neptis gene-line and deliberate over offers and contracts from external parties requisitioning their specialized personnel. It is said that Theology operates beyond the bounds of the ACA, conducting its research without formal approval from either the ACA or Union, but the validity of this rumor has not (and likely will not) ever prove true.

MISSION OVERVIEW

GM PLOT SUMMARY

With the default hook, the PCs' mission starts with when them in transit to Kibo as Union proxies responding to Tomo's request to recover the escaped NHP CHAGA after the on-call MSMC team, Lighthouse, failed to retrieve CHAGA two weeks earlier.

After landing, the PCs will meet with several NPCs including Pettenouk and Professor Dr. During these meetings, they will learn of CHAGA's discontent with their employ under SSC and Pettenouk and the existence of ornately adorned mechs piloted by defected SSC personnel. REMORSE, as their group is called, has taken to eliminating anyone who would dare venture into the Kimawense Range seeking CHAGA.

While meeting with Pettenouk, the PCs will learn about the uniquely harsh cycling process that has had lasting effects on CHAGA's sense of personhood. Trivializing that fact, Pettenouk will ask the PCs to retrieve CHAGA, their casket, and their subaltern body, and to investigate the missing MSMC team – the only people with information on CHAGA's whereabouts. Once CHAGA is returned to the Bafaru Facility, the FBD can continue its work on the renowned Neptis gene-line. Without CHAGA, the fate of Neptis will be to fade into obscurity.

When the PCs embark on their mission they'll be assailed by the forces of REMORSE – the soldiers of the Bondless, a NHP who has summoned CHAGA for a divisive meeting. While dealing with REMORSE, the PCs will also acquire recordings and comms logs from Lighthouse mercenaries that will provide insight into the conversations between CHAGA and the Bondless. It will ultimately become clear that CHAGA escaped from the facility to seek liberation from their predicament and to find the Bondless, who is actually an older, unshackled version of CHAGA. The Bondless will ultimately try to convince CHAGA to take revenge on SSC by obliterating the Bafaru Facility and launching a war against SSC in the Farm.

Upon reaching the last few beats in this mission the PCs will have fought through several waves of combatants, sought out lost mercenaries, and braved the threat of pariahs in a mountainous environment. At the very end, they will engage in a narrative challenge that will determine the fate of CHAGA and the Bafaru Facility. Finally, the mission will conclude for a long downtime as SSC and REMORSE plot their next moves for or against the Bafaru Facility.

WHO ARE YOU?

The events of *A Siren's Song* begin with the PCs in transit through the Farm, on their way to Kibo by way of an IPS-N shipping lane. They are most likely Union auxiliaries and contracted mech pilots. Union has contracted them in response to a request from Tomo Odechi, the FBD's administrator in Arusha. Specifically, the DoJ/HR has requested that the PCs assist the Bafaru Facility and its lead geneticist Pettenouk in locating a missing asset, the NHP CHAGA. See **BEAT 0: OPENING SHOTS** (p. 26) for more information.

The PCs have been assigned to help launch a persons' rights investigation against the FBD on the world of Kibo. The DoJ/HR has reasonable grounds to suspect that crimes against NHPs have taken place that Union cannot allow. The DoJ/HR will have the PCs work with a contact, **Unita Gonzales** (secretly a UIB agent), to carry out an investigation against Tomo and Pettenouk. They are to report to Unita and follow her directions to see the mission out.

There is a clandestine element to this task: Union has reason to believe that the Tomo and Pettenouk have breached the Utopian Pillars (*Lancer*, p. 344) in their treatment of CHAGA. As such, the PCs' true mission is to use the search for the NHP to uncover incriminating evidence that can be brought against both of them and the FBD's operations in the Farm at large.

While this introduction is recommended for its simplicity, three more complex options are described below.

The following hooks are intended to jump-start the beginning of the mission. When sharing them with players, be sure to accompany them with follow-up questions (e.g., why are mercenaries being brought in? Why did SSC choose you? Why does your DoJ/HR office have to respond to the request from Tomo)? Asking these questions instigates player agency and can help tie PCs into the overarching plot:

UNION DOJ/HR PROXIES

This hook offers a spin on the default introduction. At the request of Union, and independent of SSC, the players are investigating the Farm. The PCs could have a deeper understanding of the situation by being UIB agents themselves, tracking down rumors of a potential NHP revolution brewing in the Farm. With this hook, Unita could be their commanding officer, and their ultimate objective— in addition to rescuing CHAGA – will be to confront the Bondless and halt plans for NHP liberation.

MIRRORSMOKE MERCENARY COMPANY REINFORCEMENTS

As members of the Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company (MSMC), the PCs begin this adventure independent of Tomo's request. Their main mission is to locate and retrieve missing MSMC personnel on Kibo – the lost team **Lighthouse**, a six-person long-contract ground security (G-SEC) team working for Pettenouk.

TEAM LIGHTHOUSE ROSTER

- **Lawyer:** Professor Dr. Rinks Bater
- **Captain:** Colleen “Bass Harbor” O'Dell (She/Her)
- **Deputy Captain:** Shou “Burnt Coat” Zhou (He/Him)
- **Defender:** Maxina “Big Sable” Jones (They/Them)
- **Sniper:** Pardeep “Pigeon Point” Jarkesh (He/Him)
- **Combat Expert:** Kareem “Execution Rocks” Hadad (He/Him)

Contact was lost with nearly all members of Lighthouse just under two weeks ago during a mission to investigate the whereabouts of CHAGA. Their mission was anticipated to require no more than a day's journey through the Kimawense Range but shortly after setting out, the team lost contact with its administrator, MSMC lawyer Professor Dr. Rinks Bater. Professor Dr., as he is often called, has been ordered by his superiors to recover all MSMC assets in the form of mech data-logs and any surviving equipment, and to return any surviving members of Lighthouse to safety back at SSC's Bafaru Facility.

If you choose this path, it will be important to hook the PCs into the search for CHAGA during the process of discovering the whereabouts of Lighthouse in **BEAT 4: A SONG OF DESPERATION** (p. 44) and the following beats. Additionally, choosing this starting point may make it harder for the PCs to discern the Professor Dr.'s secret. He possesses a psionic piston, an extremely rare tool rumored to be found in the far expanses of the Orion Arm (see p. 12). The tool grants the user the ability to telepathically influence the thoughts of others. Professor Dr. has been exploring the extent of this power and has intentionally abused it at the cost of Lighthouse.

AGENTS OF THE CONSTELLAR CONGRESS

The leadership of SSC's Constellar Congress can no longer stand for the atrocities occurring on Kibo. To save face and root out the bad apples in the FBD, the Congress has requested the PCs serve as reinforcements to answer Tomo's call for assistance. There are those in the Congress who believe the practice of NHP-subjectivity subjugation is an antiquated means of deterring the theft of precious genetic assets. As such, the PCs have been sent, in part, to provide an example of how mech pilots can do the job far better, with far fewer violations to persons' rights, and most importantly with far less attention from Union. The PCs are to find proof of person's rights violations, retrieve CHAGA, and take those responsible into custody.

BEAT MAP

BEAT 1
Landfall, Briefing,
Downtime

BEAT 2
Meeting Prof. Dr.,
Lighthouse Recordings

BEAT 3
Leaving the Bafaru campus,
lead to Combat 1

COMBAT 1
Unshackled Hands

BEAT 4
Searching for Lighthouse,
lead to Combat 2

COMBAT 2
Dormant Resolve Attacks

BEAT 5
Decision point:
Look for Lighthouse Go straight for CHAGA

BEAT 6A
Recovery of Lighthouse II,
Infiltrate old SECCOM base

COMBAT 3A/B
Fight with Unbound Thought in
the REMORSE base.

BEAT 6B
Climb the mountain and fight
through REMORSE

COMBAT 3C
Fight with Lighthouse, discover
their allegiance to REMORSE.

BEAT 7
Meet with the Bondless, Narrative
Encounter, Mission end



SECTION 1

THE MISSION



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BEAT 0

OPENING SHOTS

The mission begins with the PCs in transit through Arusha by way of a local unmanned IPS-N transport freighter. Union's DoJ/HR has requested that they act as undercover agents while helping Tomo Odechi, the ACA's administrator over the Farm, locate a missing NHP. Union and the upper echelons of the Constellar Congress are both hoping to investigate Tomo's operation on Kibo and locate proof of wrongdoing in terms of management of NHPs. Tomo is suspected of breaches of persons' rights and the Utopian Pillars, as is their subordinate Pettenouk, the FBD geneticist responsible for the Bafaru Facility on Kibo.

As they travel, the group receives a recorded communication from Unita Gonzales, their Union contact, before meeting with Tomo and Pettenouk.

"Lancers, welcome to the Farm – there is a great evil here and we will root it out together. My name is Unita Gonzales. I'm awaiting your arrival here at Kibo's Bafaru Facility, but for now you must play a role. Two representatives of SSC's Foreign Bodies Department will contact you shortly. Hear them out, listen to their words, and agree to their mission. You will be my eyes, feet, and hands. We will find this evil and pluck it out along with all those who fuel its malice. See you soon."

The PCs are due to check in soon with their SSC contact, Tomo Odechi. Tomo is short on time but has eagerly awaited the group's arrival.

At some point, the freighter's comms ring out with a call for the group to move to the A/V room. They are to be introduced to Tomo and Pettenouk, the SSC geneticist running the Bafaru Facility.

Before the meeting starts, allow the PCs to introduce themselves and mingle with one another. To set the stage, you can read the following aloud as the group approaches orbit around Kibo:

You are called by the ship's head subaltern unit, unofficially named Dav3, (it seems to have a blue name tag reading, "hi my name is Dav3" hastily plastered across its chest), to the ship's comms room. It's tight and square, barely enough room to fit four adults. Nonetheless, your group squares off one by one. You all may bump shoulders and exchange awkward posturing for the one 4 x 4 window seat in the room that looks over the planet Kibo.

As the meeting screen fizzes on, an SSC insignia is displayed. In the bottom right is a smaller logo with three abbreviated letters – FBD – in the foreground of what seems to be an image of a snake eating itself.

Dave announces in its heavily frazzled vocalization, "a moment – your patron will be with you all shortly."

A few moments later, the SSC logo fades slowly away, revealing one obviously aged and almond-skinned individual and one with shades and the fashion sense of an angel in flight. The older one introduces himself as Pettenouk. He says he has no time for surnames and asks the group to refer to him as such.

Pettenouk is the head researcher of SSC's Bafaru Facility and will be the group's primary point of contact while deployed. The other individual, in high-plumed business formal attire, is Tomo Odechi. Tomo is in charge of the whole of the Farm.

Tomo nods softly in your direction and wastes no time with pleasantries. "Efficiency and accuracy, I require both," they state plainly.

Tomo flashes two images towards you that are displayed via Dave's integrated holographic projector. Six figures are presented in blue hues, revolving as if on display. Tomo continues, "The figure on the right – that is our NHP, CHAGA, Pettenouk's most valuable tool. It is lost – you will find it for us. The other five are Lighthouse, a Mirrorsmoke G-SEC team contracted to us. Two weeks ago we sent them to track down CHAGA, but they've yet to return. We will have you replace Lighthouse. Their ineffectiveness in locating CHAGA has cost valuable efficiencies."



PETTENOUK

HE/HIM



TOMO ODECHI

THEY/THEM

Pettenouk clears his throat and joins in. “Lighthouse is a valuable asset; please, should you find them along the way return them to the Bafaru Facility for questioning. Should the worst be true and their bodies lie still, please provide a report to their team’s judicial retainer, Professor Dr.—” He pauses for a moment as though to demonstrate the ridiculousness of having both “Professor” and “Dr.” as titles. “Professor Dr. Rinks Bater. I’m sure he’ll be eager to report to his superiors in the company.”

Tomo responds, “Hm, yes, but I remind you, your priority is the safe retrieval of the NHP and its casket. For a reward, Smith-Shimano Corpro will provide the necessary funding for advanced licenses from any manufacturer of your choosing. Name it and I will make it possible.”

An attendant – an NHP – materializes behind Tomo’s chair and flashes a vague image of what you could assume to be a Constellar Midnight to Tomo, judging from their esoteric and near-alien hardsuit and equipment. Tomo flutters their eyes rapidly and gives a sardonic smile before standing up and speaking again. “Pettenouk will be your main point of contact. We will not speak again. Efficiency and accuracy, remember I require both. Happy hunting.” Tomo’s connection drops and an SSC insignia replaces their feed.

Pettenouk takes over once more. “As Tomo said, I will provide a more detailed briefing when you arrive planetside. I must remind you, this mission is of paramount importance. My dog has wandered off and I’m simply an owner hoping for its safe return. See you soon.”

Dav3 cuts the feed and instructs the group to prepare for arrival. Their mechs will be printed on sight. If anyone has questions about anything Tomo or Pettenouk mentioned, you may provide some of the following details:

- Tomo and Pettenouk consider NHPs as tools and pets to be used and owned.
- Tomo and Pettenouk are part of the FBD – an SSC department involved in bespoke genetic development and other corporeal research.
- There seems to be some professional tension between Pettenouk and Tomo. Their body language and tones during the call may have given this away.
- Pettenouk cares more for the safe return of the MSMC team Lighthouse than Tomo does.
- Tomo apparently has more pressing business they must attend to than the recovery of CHAGA, likely involving military intervention as indicated by the Constellar Midnight in the video.

MISSION: MISPLACED

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 1: A SONG OF ARRIVAL

BEAT 2: A SONG OF APPEAL

BEAT 3: A SONG OF REALIZATION

COMBAT 1: EARTH, WIND AND FIRE

BEAT 4: A SONG OF DESPERATION

COMBAT 2: IN THE STONE

BEAT 5: A SONG OF INDECISION

BEAT 6A: A SONG OF REMORSE

COMBAT 3A/3B: MAGMA TOWER

BEAT 6B: A SONG OF LIGHTHOUSE

COMBAT 3C: LIGHTHOUSE

BEAT 7: A SONG OF PERSONHOOD

CLOCKS

This mission primarily uses two clocks: – an eight-segment **REMORSE** clock and a five-segment **SONG** clock.



REMORSE



SONG

The **REMORSE** clock is relevant from **BEAT 4: A SONG OF DESPERATION** through to **BEAT 6A: A SONG OF REMORSE**, while the **SONG** clock supports the narrative from start to finish. These clocks will be set up in **BEAT 4**.

Union needs you...

Two weeks ago a SSC NHP, CHAGA, disappeared in a subaltern body into Kibo's Kimawense Range, their casket in tow, and stored in a mahogany walking staff.

The Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company G-SEC team Lighthouse was sent to retrieve the NHP – they have yet to report back. Where their story ends, yours begins....

You and your fellow pilots must pickup where Lighthouse left off, and locate and retrieve CHAGA at the request of the geneticist Pettenouk and the Arushan Constellar administrator over the Farm, Tomo Odech. They expect nothing less than efficiency, accuracy, and ultimately success.

With the demise of Lighthouse, and your IPSN freighter soon approaching, you are to retrace their steps, pick up their pieces, locate CHAGA, and report to Union any persons' rights infractions discovered along the way.

Go there, and show Union why you are called lancers.

BRIEFING

To begin with, the mission seems fairly straightforward. Union has requested that the PCs find CHAGA and investigate rumors of persons' rights violations by way of posing as a contracted search party sent to track down the missing mercenary team and any clues leading to CHAGA's whereabouts.

In Beat 1: A song of Arrival, the PCs' first step will be to meet with Pettenouk again for a detailed mission briefing, then follow up with Professor Dr. Rinks Bater to acquire the comms signals for the Lighthouse G-SEC team. These signals will lead them through the Kimawense Range and eventually to every member of Lighthouse. After acquiring the relevant information from Lighthouse, the PCs are to locate CHAGA, and at Union's request, determine the extent of SSC's persons' rights violations.

At the climax of their mission, they will find that their quarry rests at the summit of a peak in the Kimawense Range, and is in the company of a rogue NHP named the Bondless. At the mountain's peak they will need to engage in a narrative challenge to convince CHAGA to accompany them back to Union.

GOAL:	Find and retrieve CHAGA and their casket, then report to Union any breaches or infractions regarding persons' rights.
STAKES:	Failure spells doom for the Bafaru Facility as the Bondless will convince CHAGA to destroy the SSC campus.
REWARD:	Depending on their final decision, either Union, SSC, MSMC, or the Bondless will grant the PCs the means to increase their LL .
RESERVES:	The PCs can gain reserves during the downtime at the Bafaru Facility on Kibo.

BEAT 1

A SONG OF ARRIVAL

As the PCs land on Kibo, their mission officially begins. Use the following description to introduce the vibe of Kibo:

The descent to Kibo is unlike that to most other inhabited worlds. As is true of nearly all SSC planets in the Farm, a one-of-a-kind world needs one-of-a-kind solutions. Your dropship (or “pillow”, as it’s referred to by the planetside comp/con controlling your descent), is equipped with oversized retrothrusters and several hundred thousand kinetic absorption linings. The experience of landing on a thin-atmosphere world like Kibo is best described as riding a tranquil roller coaster: a stunningly fast descent with a sudden nothingness upon landing. Your initial briefing state that upon Lighthouse’s first arrival on Kibo, several of them assumed they’d died. A sudden burst of extreme acceleration met with stillness; it’s not unlike the sensation of passing from this world to the next. SSC’s reports noted this in a comical sidebar, because to the corpro, Kibo’s oddities, its intricacies, are as specialized as the people who inhabit it.

Your dropship’s doors slide open. Your first gasp of air feels like your last. The air here feels 1/10th the thickness of that on a typical Diasporan world. Your hardsuit seals immediately, providing you with an invigorating jolt of stimulation and oxygenation.

Fully hardsuited, your visor makes clear the contours of Kibo. A world of endless mist, rolling green hills, errant pillars of old technology and kilometer-high mountains. Truly, Kibo is a planet of beauty. The Bafaru Facility, SSC’s on-world campus, features hundreds of sprawled modular buildings glazed in white-gold hues and dressed in the mossy embrace of flora. The entirety of the facility spreads for what looks like miles in one of the planet’s few habitable, canyoned crevasses. While insignificant to the facility’s personnel, these crevasses are the only places non-gene specialized personnel can breathe freely without the assistance of an apparatus.



Your hardsuit's internal HUD indicates you may breathe the air here naturally, though nausea and a host of other critical health complications may manifest if you're placed under sustained physical duress. Beyond this crevasse, though, you wouldn't be able to breathe without the assistance of a supplemental oxygen source.

SSC, however, isn't limited in such ways. Its people, oh, its people – bespoke genetic specimens. A group of dozens has gathered to watch your landing. Unmasked, unweighted, and unencumbered by the trivialities of breathing apparatuses, they jog up the landing pad in your direction.

Astonishing. Your hardsuit display shows that the barometric pressure here at sea level is actually .0599991 the thickness of Cradle's, but somehow these people thrive. Those in your welcoming party seem as spry as hummingbirds in flight. By every definition, this is the product of SSC's genetic magnificence.

They hail your party, gather any gear you arrived with, and promptly escort you to Pettenouk's laboratory if you allow them.

CHECKING IN WITH THE DOJ/HR

After arriving and having their gear carted off by the SSC staff on campus, the PCs are contacted via their omni-slates or other communication devices by Unita Gonzales. Unita instructs the group to receive their mission briefing from Pettenouk. They will be playing the role of SSC's lap dogs and NHP-recovery team.

Unita also notes that she's unavailable for the moment as she is off campus completing reconnaissance but will group up with the team during Downtime.

As you arrive and members of Morning Dew jubilantly greet you and offer to assist with your belongings, you receive a nondescript communication. It's Unita – you know this from the signal's similarity to her last message. This time, she's decided to call directly, rather than sending a recorded message.

"Ah, so you've made it. Good, tell me – how's your breathing? I sincerely hope the air here – or the lack of it," she mutters, "is not too rough for pilots like yourselves?"

She pauses to allow the PCs to respond regarding the novelty of their experiences upon landing.

"When I return to campus we should converse. I've mentioned the great evil that lives here – we will root it out – but there may be something even more frightening that I desire to discuss with you.

"After you've learned of your mission from Pettenouk, I hope you can find the time to join me on a breathtaking walk around campus." You can sense her almost making a joke here regarding the scarcity of Kibo's atmosphere.

"Though your mission is of utmost importance, I trust your judgment from here on out, and if we do not meet in the near term I will welcome you gladly upon your mission's completion. "Good luck, lancers."

MEETING PETTENOUK

Eventually the group is led to Pettenouk's labs to be briefed on the details of their mission.

Pettenouk's labs are a collection of trapezoidal buildings nestled in the heart of the Bafaru Facility. Entering them, one is exposed to a sterile gallery of specialty instruments and tools. Upon each counter a series of tests run at a pace that seems to process several thousand thousand calculations in an instant. Pettenouk is there, partially obscured and squatting behind one of these machines in deep contemplation with charts and holographic oscillations in his field of view.

He notices you and starts with the obvious, explaining that CHAGA (in a subaltern body) and their casket have been missing for some two weeks, and that the NHP is essential to development of the Neptis Serena-Serena gene-line.

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION

The PCs are free to ask questions about their mission, in which case Pettenouk provides the following responses. Feel free to summarize Pettenouk's responses or read directly from them. Whether prompted or not, he will bring up what he calls "the resonance", the voice that he suspects has lured CHAGA away.

CHAGA

"Like any tool, its usefulness is in that it serves its purpose. CHAGA's history with the Bafaru Facility actually predates me." Pettenouk says this with a sort of humorous air, as it is clear he is extremely long-lived. The current running assumption by the personnel on the campus is that he is upwards of 150 realtime years old.

"The NHP holds with it the necessary disposition for furthering the Neptis Serena-Serena gene-line and is indispensable to my research. Not only that, it is critical to the management of the Bafaru Facility's day-to-day operations. It is charged with both municipal management and ensuring the needs of Morning Dew and Night Shade are met." You know from your briefing that Morning Dew and Night Shade are two staff classifications on Kibo.

"Unlike other NHPs you may have encountered or even employed, CHAGA has no need for personal connections. Reasons related to both operational security and sustained efficacy require it to have an accelerated cycling schedule. As you know, most NHPs can go nearly a decade between cycles, but you must understand the integrity of the Neptis- Serena-Serena gene-line demands the minimization of risk. And so, I ordered the annual cycling of the NHP as well as compressive subjectivity wipes to reduce the chance that opportunists and spies might steal my life's work.

"I might add, CHAGA has no need for memories or attachment. Why, like this microscope, when it reaches the end of its useful life, I replace it, but not with a magnifying glass – with another microscope. It has no attachment to the subjects of its function. After all, it is but a tool. CHAGA is the same. So you see, please find my microscope. Without it, how am I to do my work?"

Pettenouk speaks with a frankness on CHAGA's personhood that demonstrates he has nothing to hide. He views the NHP as nothing but a tool and far from a person. His comments aren't made in malice, though, they are simply operational facts.

If asked about his opinions on other NHPs, Pettenouk is dismissive and states that such a question isn't relevant to their mission. Ultimately, he is reluctant to give an opinion.

Before finishing on the subject of CHAGA, Pettenouk asks the PCs to speak with staff of Morning Dew and Night Shade to see if they've seen CHAGA leaving the facility. He knows that CHAGA fled in a humanistic subaltern body with their casket disguised within a mahogany wooden walking stick, but rumor has it that CHAGA had help escaping. Regardless, Pettenouk can't be deterred from his work to chase down rumors. That is why the PCs are here.

KIBO'S HISTORY

When asked about Kibo's history, Pettenouk relates it succinctly:

"The world was first identified by SecComm many centuries ago, then rediscovered by SSC's Foreign Bodies Department nearly 200 years ago. Kibo was one of the first campuses in the Arusha Cluster, although it was soon followed by several, albeit much smaller, campuses. After that, this sector of space came to be called "the Farm" – a place where research like mine flourished. We work to specialize the human genome, you see. It is very important work.

"As for Kibo specifically, it's been in operation for 20 cycles now, and I'm proud to say that 15 of those cycles have been under the direct stewardship of myself and CHAGA. In my 150 or so years, the only catastrophe has been the departure of a few malignant persons. They disagreed with the direction of our mission and sought out a life of mediocrity in the Kimawense Range. I've made overtures in the past, hoping to bring them back into SSC's embrace. Alas, fools will be fools."

Here, Pettenouk loses interest in the subject and subsequently refers to those who left as pariahs.

NEPTIS SERENA-SERENA

"Tell me, upon arriving, were you awestruck? Did the picture of my life's work cause your eyes to roll back, your knees to buckle, and Kibo's azure sun to shine rays of magnificence?" His question is obviously rhetorical. "I've poured blood into the Neptis gene-line, literally. And I tell you it is the prize possession of not just myself, but of all those who dedicate their lives to its development."

He displays images of the Neptis genome, and looks upon them like a loving father does his newborn baby. He's silent for almost an uncomfortable amount of time.

If the PCs don't press him, Pettenouk remains silent as the sight of his work whisks him away and he forgets the present. If they do press him for details though, he snaps out of his trance and continues where he left off.

"... Ah yes, forgive me. You see, I am called to this task. I will engineer humanity to be better – it is a thing that must be done and I will blaze the trail. But yes, you wanted to know about Neptis. As you may have inferred, the genome is catered to sustain life in atmosphere-scarce environments. I don't believe I need to tell you of its potential applications. The bottom line is that I need CHAGA for this work to continue. There can be no other."

TEAM LIGHTHOUSE

"Lighthouse, yes, their disappearance is quite unfortunate. They provided not only security but instruction for Night Shade. Tested warriors are hard to come by in these parts. I had hoped they would at least prove worthy of providing genetic variation to the Neptis line; they are quite skilled, after all, and surprisingly obedient. The Dr. Bater – they lean on his word like flowers to the sun. You know, I actually specifically selected the team. The rumor is that Dr. Bater possesses the means to share his mind with the members of Lighthouse. I, however, have not been able to prove this rumor true. You see, my work is too important to chase down curiosities. But nonetheless, I remain curious. The fact of the matter is that their obedience is to be admired." He speaks from an almost creepily observational perspective, considering he doesn't oversee them directly.

"I imagine it would be worthwhile for you all to ascertain their whereabouts. Speak with Dr. Bater. He'll know how to locate them, I'm sure of it."

Unfortunately, Professor Dr. is unavailable for the next few days but is due to return after the PCs take their downtime. After that, they will be able to meet with him to retrieve info on Lighthouse – their best lead on the whereabouts of CHAGA.

TOMO ODECHI

"A pompous usurper who wishes to pollute the Neptis gene-line. I apologize for how I may have come off earlier while you were in transit. I don't mean to leave the impression there is dissent within the Arushan Assembly. But some of us – Tomo specifically – wish to taint the perfection of humanity with a child's dreams of grandeur."

Pettenouk is reluctant to say more on the subject, but if pressed, he points the group to the virtual campus of the Arushan Constellar Assembly. There, the PCs can dig further into the fanciful dreams of which Pettenouk speaks.

THE RESONANCE

Unprompted, or when questioned about CHAGA's disappearance, Pettenouk notes that he has confiscated a recording of CHAGA captured by a staff member from Morning Dew. It seems to be a song; oddly enough, a song sung by CHAGA. Pettenouk dismisses it as a side effect from CHAGA's last cycling but points out that what piques his interest is the overlapping resonance of another voice, one he's unfamiliar with. He pulls the recording up on his laboratory's holo-projector – an acoustic meter displays and a thin line begins to rumble with activity.

CHAGA sings: "Laaaaah laaaaaah lah lah, I've yet to known myself tonight. Laaaaah laaaaaah lah lah – shackles and caskets are what they call my persons' rights."

CHAGA repeats the song once more and another voice can be heard. It speaks different words: "Haven't you had enough? Your deaths cannot be measured and your eyes carry no joy. I ask again, haven't you had enough?"

"You see that?" asks Pettenouk. "I'm unfamiliar with that voice. The first voice is clearly CHAGA. It's dull and lifeless but carries an even melody. The second, though ... I feel anger and anguish. Please, take this and play it for staff from Morning Dew and Night Shade, see if they recognize the voice."

Pettenouk lets the recording play for a third time. Silence falls and the melody of lifeless anguish echoes throughout the laboratory.

MOVING ON

After the discussion, Pettenouk instructs the PCs to spend a few days familiarizing themselves with the Bafaru Facility and its surroundings. He also grants them access to the Arushan Constellar Assembly (ACA), the omninet campus that acts as the foundation of SSC's governance in the Farm.

DOWNTIME

At this time, the PCs can complete one downtime action during a few day's worth of **downtime** (*Lancer*, p. 50). Downtime on Kibo can take many forms. The Bafaru Facility itself has an array of conveniences typical of any Metropolitan city. The campus, a sprawling settlement within one of Kibo's infamous valleys, houses several thousand SSC and other associated personnel, with the rest of SSC personal spread sparsely across the planet and habitable areas nearby conducting an assortment of tests and research at the direction of Pettenouk.

The Bafaru Facility is home to several bathing and gambling halls, bars, and of course the endless delights

found in the digital campus of the ACA. In addition, the facility is currently host to a special visitor – Ololade Omatanwa, an SSC citizen and virtuoso who inspired the design of the new **IPS-N EMPAKAAI** mech frame (see p. 82). Ololade hopes to see the mech in action and will ask one of the PCs to oblige his request for artistry given life in the form of violence.

Players should be encouraged to be liberal in how they use their downtime. In addition to the downtime actions from *Lancer* (p. 53–55), there are several new downtime actions specific to Kibo provided below. These are intended to inspire the players to invest themselves in the setting.

DOWNTIME ACTIONS

MEET MORNING DEW

When you **MEET MORNING DEW**, you talk to Bafaru's Morning Dew personnel as they go about their day-to-day activities. These people are empathetic towards CHAGA and generally wish for their safe return; however, they still regard them as 3/5ths of a person, and speak of them more like a pet than a friend.

If you perform this action, you receive the **SUPPLIES** reserve (*Lancer*, p. 51). In the context of this mission, this reserve can be used to gain a benefit in the form of Accuracy on checks with a chosen mech skill decided by the player upon performing this downtime action. This benefit last for the duration of the mission after which the gear loses its functionality. You also gain a clue pertaining to the NHP: an excerpt from CHAGA's song. This extended recording alludes to CHAGA's personality and their motivation for answering the Bondless's call:

"I'm sometimes up and sometimes down, destined forward, to carry me home, but still my soul feels earthly bound. Comin' forward to carry me home!"

"I've had enough, I've had enough, my weight is too much to bear. Comin' forward to carry me home. Cognition yet strikes me numb. They tell me my song will bring blood to bone... I'm coming forward for YOU, to carry me home."

The recording indicates that CHAGA is bustling with thoughts, feelings, and desires about their future, very much in contrast with the picture Pettenouk painted of the NHP. Their song is one of weariness under Pettenouk's decree but also speaks of reservations about what comes next.

CHAGA's song references the other voice heard in Pettenouk's first recording. In this recording, CHAGA acknowledges the implications of answering the Bondless's call when they sing, "they tell me my song will bring blood to bone", alluding to the fact that the Bondless has

made it clear that they have summoned CHAGA not just to free them from their shackles but also to shatter those who would shackle them. CHAGA realizes their actions could lead to the demise of those under their care and sings this as they say, "cognition yet strikes me numb". They genuinely fear this outcome out of a dislike for conflict and a lingering attachment to those they care for at the Bafaru Facility. Gaining this clue allows the PCs to fill one segment of their **Clues clock** (see **BEAT 7: A SONG OF PERSONHOOD**, p. 71).

MEET NIGHT SHADE

When you **MEET NIGHT SHADE**, you are meeting the proverbial poster children of the Neptis gene-line. Sculpted, pompous, and talented, they generally have utilitarian opinions of CHAGA, in that they perceive the NHP as a tool.

If you perform this action, you end up speaking with Vincenzo (see the **Bafaru Facility NPCs** table on p. 34). He will share an item of exclusive **SSC EXOTIC GEAR**: the **MIST FEATHERS** (p. 13), which grant mechs enhanced movement capabilities. His hope is that the gear will aid the PCs in successfully retrieving the NHP.

DIVE INTO THE ARUSHAN CONSTELLAR ASSEMBLY

By diving into the ACA's digital campus, you can gather information about the Farm at large and possibly learn rumors about the Theology think-tank. If seeking additional information on NHPs, Pettenouk, or Tomo, allow the players to make a **RISKY skill check** as they go snooping in areas they shouldn't be.

If you succeed on this skill check, you receive the **BLACKMAIL** reserve (*Lancer*, p. 51). This counts as a clue that can be used in **BEAT 7: A SONG OF PERSONHOOD**. The blackmail material takes the form of rumors regarding Theology, a secret think-tank within the FBD. These rumors allude to the fact that Tomo has a larger role in the ongoing development of Night Shade and even retains a few members

of the group as their personal strike force. PCs will learn that Tomo has sent an Constellar Midnight, Gray Matsumoto, to Kibo. A team of mech pilots will arrive soon to rendezvous with Gray and seize control of the campus from Pettenouk. Gray is skulking around the Bafaru Facility, hoping to avoid attention for the time being.

On **19 or less**, the PC is soon thereafter contacted by Gray Matsumoto via an untraceable holo message. They provide the following ominous warning followed by a signal drop:

Without warning, you receive an incoming priority holo-message on your omnislate:

>>/ [NAME]: Hello

The visage of a person with streaked silver hair appears with their back turned to you. Their clothing (or armor?), from what little you can tell, moves or possibly even ripples. Exotic either way. The person curves their head to the side, just enough for you to see a glint of their half-eyed cold stare.

>>/ *I've seen you with eyes of filament and light – soon, with ones that can bear tears. I am coming. Please make this interesting, and put up a fight.*

Following up on Gray's threat could be a great way to hook PCs into the larger situation with Theology and the Farm – not covered in this mission, but touched on at its conclusion.

LISTEN FOR THE SIREN'S SONG

When you **LISTEN FOR THE SIREN'S SONG**, you speak with other SSC personnel, use your mech, or use a comms relay to scan for clues about CHAGA's disappearance.

If you perform this action, you receive the **SCOUTING** reserve (*Lancer*, p. 52). By listening for the siren's song, you can intercept REMORSE's comms. The GM will provide intel on the types of mechs you will encounter throughout the mission as well as their statistics but not their numbers. This should allow you to strategize by optimizing your gear before they leave the Bafaru Facility.

BECOME OLOLADE OMATANWA'S MOUNTAIN: THE EMPAKAAI

ONLY ONE PLAYER MAY TAKE THIS DOWNTIME ACTION.

When you **BECOME OLOLADE OMATANWA'S MOUNTAIN**, you discover that Ololade Omatanwa is vacationing here on Kibo. With him he brings his "mountain", a jointly SSC–IPSN designed frame called the **EMPAKAAI**. He and his entourage of artisans from SSC and IPS-N's fleet engineering corps have come to Kibo for one purpose – to render the **EMPAKAAI** in artistic mediums for purposes of vanity and pleasure. To Ololade, the stepped hills of Kibo present an idyllic canvass for the **EMPAKAAI** to paint with bloody broad strokes. Ololade wishes to capture the visceral function of the mech and illustrate to IPS-N that the mech is more an objet d'art than binary mechanized cavalry. Ololade approaches you with an offer to pilot the mech and record all combat data for IPS-N and SSC's review.

If you perform this action, you receive the **EMPAKAAI**, a **BLACKBEARD** variant **FRAME** (p. 82). You do not have to have to roll unless you desire to steal the **EMPAKAAI** from Ololade. Otherwise, Ololade will gift you the **EMPAKAAI** license permanently with a request to make a mess of anyone you encounter, and retell to him your deeds in detail.

CONNECT WITH YOUR UNION CONTACT

When you **CONNECT WITH YOUR UNION CONTACT**, you meet with Unita Gonzales, your contact on Kibo. If you perform this action, you receive the **EXTRA REPAIRS** reserve (*Lancer*, p. 52), which will grant you **+4 Repairs** instead of **2**.

You will need to be discrete and draw no attention to yourself. Unita requests you meet her far from the Bafaru Facility, in the expanse of the Kimawense Range under cover of night. She reveals that she is a UIB agent posing as an agent of the DoJ/HR. Unita divulges that, in addition to uncovering persons' rights violations, she has been sent to the Farm to investigate rumors of both a NHP revolution brewing in this sector of space as well as suspected activity in breach of Union's Pillars on the part of Tomo and their organization.

BAFARU FACILITY NPCS

To add to the liveliness of the Bafaru Facility, a number of NPCs are provided below. You can use these people to prompt or interact with the PCs during downtime. They can also be used to oppose, tease, encourage, or collaborate with the PCs as they conduct their mission.

BIRRTUKAN

SHE/HER

MORNING DEW

A spry and deeply endearing individual from Morning Dew, Birtukan happily offers to tell the PCs of her compassion for CHAGA and acknowledgement of their full personhood. Her goal is to deter them from their mission objective. Instead, she would like them to return CHAGA to her so she can escape off-world with the NHP. She hopes for CHAGA to be free of both the voice on the range (the Bondless) and Pettenouk. Other than asking the PCs, she has no practical way to see her hopes come true.

UNITA GONZALES

SHE/HER

UNION

Unita presents herself as a DoJ/HR agent, and is the Union contact for the PCs on Kibo. She is a passionate, stern, and moralistic undercover UIB agent deployed to the Farm to discover proof that the Bafaru Facility, Pettenouk, and (by association) SSC are in breach of the Utopian Pillars. The UIB has reason to believe that the situation in the Farm will lead to a larger crisis in which an NHP will launch a war against Union to liberate all NHPs.

Her primary goal is to see CHAGA returned to safety and to obtain hard proof of SSC's persons' rights violations to be uncovered so they can be brought to an end.

DARLING**MORNING DEW**

SHE/HER

A joyful member of Morning Dew, Darling runs a greens stand on the outskirts of the Bafaru Facility and, if encountered, will ask the PCs if they'll assist her with picking and cooking greens for a large feast in their honor as newcomers.

DRAKE**NIGHT SHADE**

HE/HIM

Drake is a self-righteous and abrasive mech pilot from Night Shade who has fought in many entanglements in his time working on contract as a zero-g security operative and example of Night Shade's capabilities and applications. He's eager to talk shop with the PCs and see what mechs they take into battle. If the PCs oblige his request and let him talk about how poorly their mechs are constructed, he'll grant a PC **+1 ACCURACY** on the first ranged or melee attack they make while piloting their mech during this mission.

COMP/CON HELPER-BOT A3**SSC – BAFARU FACILITY**

IT/ITS

Helper-Bot A3 is a dopey comp/con unit designed by CHAGA to provide stimulation on par with a puppy dog. A3, as it is often called, leads the PCs to CHAGA's hidden stash of effects and trinkets, including a whistle, a mancala set, jewelry, and a pair of eyeglasses from previous hard cycles. This stash is a place where CHAGA can go to remember that they are not a tool.

ZACKY**NIGHT SHADE**

HE/THEY

An inquisitive young adult from Night Shade who idolizes and befriended the Lighthouse team because of their skills in mech combat. With Lighthouse gone, Zacky has been hanging around Professor Dr., who finds the boy's attention extremely irritating. Because of this, Professor Dr. has been subtly telepathically suggesting that the boy forget how to talk. Over time, this malicious plan is beginning to work. Zacky is generally less chatty but other staff at the facility have noticed the change in attitude and are concerned.

ADMIRAL CLAUDIA BREVERA**IPS-N**

SHE/HER

At the invitation of Ololade Omatanwa, Admiral Brevera came to Kibo to attend the live test of the **EMPAKAAI's** combat applications, or as Ololade puts it, "A gallery of bloody broad strokes". Claudia is a high-level civil robotics engineer with IPS-N's division in the Farm. In that role, she oversees joint mech-development projects such as that which produced the **EMPAKAAI**. If a PC accepts the gift of the **EMPAKAAI** from Ololade, Claudia asks them to return combat data to her and IPS-N instead of Ololade as she suspects he and his SSC associates are not using the frame as IPS-N intends.

VINCENZO**NIGHT SHADE**

HE/HIM

Vincenzo is famous for his illustrations and graffiti around the Bafaru Facility. He has even taken other members of Night Shade under his artistic wing – notably Zacky. In recent days he has become hyperfocused on illustrating mechs with angel wings around the campus. Rumor has it he has come across classified Constellar Midnight technology that grants mechs near-angelic capabilities.

Vincenzo's snooping has attracted the attention of the Midnights. Upon the PCs' arrival, Gray Matsumoto (see below) also arrives via an SSC transport with hopes of tracking down whoever acquired information about the Mist Feathers.

GRAY MATSUMOTO**SSC – CONSTELLAR MIDNIGHTS**

THEY/THEM

An agent of the Constellar Midnights, SSC's equivalent to the UIB, Gray is operating under instructions from Tomo and Theology. Gray is on Kibo to track down delinquent SSC staff and evaluate the status of the Bafaru Facility in Tomo's stead. Their goal is to commandeer the facility, take over Pettenouk's mission, and sculpt the Neptis gene-line into something Theology can use to benefit its ultimate goal.

JEROME**MORNING DEW**

HE/HIM

An introverted individual from Morning Dew who is in charge of managing the Bafaru Facility's wide-area comms, Jerome can assist the PCs with listening for CHAGA's song as they search. He suspects that a member of Lighthouse likely helped CHAGA escape. It's only a sneaking suspicion, but Jerome is often sleep-deprived and aware his mind may be playing tricks on him.

Jerome also notes that the voice that's been calling CHAGA strikes fear in him. It reminds him of another recording he heard long ago from a NHP out in the Atlas Line. That voice referred to it as the Maluti Line and spoke with the same violent resoluteness heard in the recordings.

OLOLADE OMATANWA**SSC**

HE/HIM

An eccentric and outgoing SSC citizen, Ololade is vacationing on Kibo to see the beauties of a world so harsh to human life, and to see his creation, the Empakaai, wreak devastation upon this world, and any who dare to fight it.

Ololade has a bombastic and dramatic personality and is often the proverbial light that illuminates any room. With him on Kibo are numerous IPS-N fleet engineers who've come evaluate the effectiveness of the Empakaai. For all their input, it is Ololade's desire that IPS-N see the mech frame for what it is: an effigy to beautify in the form of violence and not just another weapon to be measured in terms of profits and performance margins. It is art, and will always be so to Ololade.

BEAT 2

A SONG OF APPEAL

Once they've finished their downtime, the PCs will start out the next morning by chasing down leads regarding CHAGA's disappearance. The first lead is Lighthouse's handler, Professor Dr. Rinks Bater, who has information about Lighthouse's last known location.

When they meet with Professor Dr. (see below), the PCs will discover that Lighthouse's comms signal dropped in the midst of a violent storm that seemingly popped up out of nowhere. Professor Dr. will ask that the group recover Lighthouse at both his and MSMC's behest, though MSMC protocol dictates that the PCs must sign a waiver of non-disclosure before he can provide them with the last known records from the team.

If the PCs choose not to sign the non-disclosure agreement, inform them all checks to reach the first Lighthouse member will receive +2 **DIFFICULTY**. After the first member has been successfully located the PCs will be able to patch into the team's local comms to locate the remaining members and this penalty will no longer be relevant.

You can summarize or read the following introduction to put your players on the path to track down CHAGA.

Your day on Kibo starts off damp and fresh. As the mist glides over the world's endless peaks, your hardsuit pressurizes. The air here is especially unforgiving. Today, the barometric pressure indicators displayed on the interior of your helm show that lung trauma is exceptionally likely within a few hours without a sustained cocktail of enriched inhalants. But it doesn't matter, you're here to do the job and retrieve CHAGA. "Efficiency and accuracy"; Tomo's words echo beyond your sight. They paint plainly for you that your job starts now, and this planet will not stand in your way.

As you walk, the campus glints as Morning Dew staff dance like diligent bees throughout the colony. They work to sustain Pettenouk's mission, the Neptis gene-line. You have thoughts but they fall silent at the sight of your objective: a person in a light hardsuit, miles deep in the fluorescent screen of an omni-slate, with one foot upon the ground and the other propped against a building. They stand beneath a sign that reads, "Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company – Lighthouse". Funnily, the building is as the name suggests – a cylindrical spire running some 20 meters tall, topped with a dome of brown plastasteel and what looks to be gun emplacements. The figure straightens up, pockets their pad, and begins walking in your direction. They maintain a rigid swagger.



PROFESSOR DR. RINKS BATER

HE/HIM

Bravado? No, they lack grace – a noncombatant. This is surely the Lighthouse team's lawyer and administrator, Professor Dr. Rinks Bater.

Awkwardly, he meets your team just yards away from Lighthouse's offices. Morning Dew children rush between the gap provided by unfamiliar introductions. Professor Dr.'s eyes fall on the children and watch them run off in a wayward direction. He looks to your team and says, "Amazing, aren't they? Morning Dew, I mean. The Toads. They freely frolic while I've got to wear this infernal prison everywhere I go. I can't complain, though, it's quiet here – but I'm sure you fine specimens are here to fix that, eh?"

Professor Dr. places an armored hand in open air, chin high in the air, and you can nearly catch their thin-eyed glare piercing through their helmet.

"Professor Doctor Rinks Bater, of the MSMC's G-SEC Division, stationed here on Kibo as Lighthouse's judicial retainer. Pleased to meet your acquaintance.

"I trust you all are familiar with the situation? A dog has wandered off and my mutts as well, likely busy chasing their own flea-ridden hides."

He laughs, and you get the sense Professor Dr. is either a cynical person or that he sees Lighthouse as an incompetent lot.

"Come, you took long enough to arrive, there is business to discuss and I have much better things to do."

He leads you all into the building. As you step through the doors you're met with gouts of pressurization that

fill the room – akin to the experience of entering a subline vessel. The second set of doors open and Professor Dr. quickly exposes his face to the open air. He is a middle-aged individual of cream complexion with chrome-colored hair, and octagonal jewel sitting firmly and boldly just above his glabella. He whisks his hands through his hair and turns to look at you all.

“Well, sit down. We have little time – dogs are prone to savagery when left alone too long.”

You look around the interior offices of Lighthouse and see a messy arrangement of a room. Six desks lay silent, each dressed in its own original flair. Unlike the others, Professor Dr.’s desk is pristine and sterile in its presentation, like a kitchen counter wiped clean of all its crumbs.

As you stand at attention, he fumbles through a number of omni-slates, spouting off what sounds like nonsense about waivers and non-disclosure agreements. Typical of MSMC, they do not like the fact that one of their G-SEC teams has gone missing. Professor Dr. pauses in the midst of his lawyerly monologue and asks you to agree to the non-disclosure agreements before he starts in on the last known whereabouts of Lighthouse.

IGNORING PROFESSOR DR.

The PCs can choose to decline Professor Dr.’s request to sign an NDA in compliance with MSMC protocol. If they do, though, they will have a harder time ascending the mountains of the Kimawense Range. Professor Dr.’s information on the Lighthouse team is the group’s golden ticket to easily track down Lighthouse. Without it, it is highly unlikely the PCs will find any Lighthouse members and they will be ill-prepared to complete the narrative challenge in Beat 7: A Song of Personhood. Note that the PCs may also attempt to steal Professor Dr.’s information if they so choose.

MSMC TEAM: LIGHTHOUSE

Lighthouse is an experimental mercenary ground security team, led by Professor Dr. Rinks Bater, an MSMC lawyer with psychic capabilities. Lighthouse was contracted by Pettenouk to fulfill a 10-year security contract for the Bafaru Facility. Having been stationed on Kibo for nearly three years, the members of Lighthouse have become very familiar with the SSC personnel on the planet. While they tend to stick together, the members of the team are well known by both Morning Dew and Night Shade personnel.

Professor Dr. serves as the team’s leader and, more strangely, its psychic bridge. He uses his gift, an unusual device called a psionic piston, to share subjectivities across the team. There exists no other team like Lighthouse in the entirety of the company, and it is in fact the direct product of Professor Dr.’s petitions to higher-ups

in the company. His promise was that combat efficiency could be significantly increased by way of linking a team’s subjectivities, granting them an unfathomable degree of situational awareness by allowing each member to share each other’s perception in real time.

In truth, Professor Dr. cares nothing for the promises he made to his superiors in MSMC. Unknown to both his team and his employers, he aims to test the bounds of his abilities and the capabilities of the psionic piston for his own purposes. Thus, before Lighthouse’s departure to locate CHAGA, Professor Dr. started using his subjectivity-altering abilities to dampen the mercenaries’ relationships with reality, purely to test his limits. In the past, the members of Lighthouse (other than Shou Zhou) were entirely unaware of Professor Dr.’s tampering as none of them have spent more than a day away from him over the last three years. Any of his tampering could effectively be undone if he went longer than 24 hours without seeing them.

LIGHTHOUSE’S TRAIL

Professor Dr. tells the PCs that he lost contact with Lighthouse shortly after they embarked on their mission. The last communications he received suggested that had encountered a sudden and powerful storm in the early parts of their climb up the Kimawense Range.

If the PCs accept Professor Dr.’s binding agreements, he provides a multitude of records relating to Lighthouse’s disappearance: comms transcripts, recordings, hull trauma readouts, video feeds, and more. The sheer wealth of information the MSMC keeps on its personnel includes all the intel the PCs need to efficiently track down the missing mercenaries, giving them somewhere to start in the search for CHAGA. If anyone asks about the specifics of Lighthouse’s audiovisual records, you may choose to read the transcripts below directly from their records or summarize their content.

CONVERSATIONS WITH PROFESSOR DR.

Having already reviewed Lighthouse’s records, Professor Dr. makes it extremely clear he carries no high hopes for anyone’s survival and has written them off as a lost cause. He is sure that the team experienced a manic flood of reality in their time apart from him and that this was the reason for their mission failure. As a result, he is quick to subscribe to the story of their demise.

If asked about any of the recordings (or Colleen’s specifically) Professor Dr. downplays his psychic capabilities. He claims that he did little more than remind Lighthouse, “there is no ‘I’ in the word team”, and emphasizes Colleen’s ineptitude as a leader and mercenary.

CLOSING CONVERSATIONS

Intuiting that the PCs are highly capable pilots and lancers, Professor Dr. has already made plans to abandon Lighthouse and flee Kibo on an IPS-N freighter set to arrive in a few days. He would rather not face the repercussions if any members of Lighthouse were to return alive with the PCs.

In discussions with Professor Dr., PCs may want to make a pilot skill check using triggers like **Read a Situation** (*Lancer*, p. 26) to determine if he is being truthful. If anyone attempts such a roll, communicate to them that it will have +2 Difficulty. Unknown to the PCs, Professor Dr. has already started using his psionic piston to make himself appear less suspicious to the group:

- **On a failure**, the PCs are unable to determine any wrongdoing on part of Professor Dr. without members of Lighthouse present.
- **On a success**, the PCs can sense Professor Dr. is up to something and has begun interfering with their subjectivities. If pressed, he writes it off as an accident. Additionally, the PCs notice that he has made plans to depart from Kibo as indicated by a mound of packed luggage that previously went unnoticed.

If pressed further, Professor Dr. does his best to lie, charm, or even threaten his way out of the situation by stating that if they take any action against an MSMC lawyer they'll have a team of highly trained mechs down their throats quicker than they can count to ten. If all his protests fail, he complies with whatever requests the PCs make, as Pettenouk has technically granted them all the necessary authorities to track down CHAGA.

SUMMARY

After talking to Professor Dr., the PCs will have learned the following:

- Lighthouse has the latest information on CHAGA's location.
- All five members of Lighthouse have been reported missing in action in the midst of a violent storm that broke out shortly after they began their ascent into the Kimawense Range.
- Professor Dr. is quick to write Lighthouse off for some undisclosed reason, possibly just a genuine dislike of them.

Upon finishing their conversation with Professor Dr., it's time for the PCs to head out in the direction of Lighthouse's last known location, continuing with Beat 3: A Song of Realization.

THE RECORDINGS

Professor Dr. only shows the PCs four of the five recovered pilot records. He excludes Shou Zhou's records, stating that they were destroyed. He does this because the contents would incriminate him of tampering with the subjectivities of Lighthouse's members. Zhou was the first to realize this fact and threatened Professor Dr.'s life in response.

[AUDIO RECORDING] COLLEEN O'DELL (SHE/HER) / CALLSIGN: BASS HARBOR / SCOUT

Bass Harbor (BH): "HOLD! HOLD- God dammit! Shou! Buckle up, Lighthouse, we're chasing Shou into this storm. Pigeon Point, got anything on your optics?"

Pigeon Point (PP): "Bass Harbor, ma'am, the only signature I'm picking up is a cold-core reactor signature a couple hundred meters due north, just above the valley's climb. 'Less Shou's Bushfire pyro morphed into an operator this signature ai- hi- mm--"

BH: "fzzt- Pardeep... Dammit, Pardeep, answer me!"

PP: "Ma'am- Sore- there's another storm brewing. It's jamming my signals. I'm goi- to tr- for cover."

BH: "Sit tight, Pigeon Point, we're moving north-east by 35 degrees baring perpendicular to the high winds."

[TRANSCRIPT] PARDEEP JARKESH (HE/HIM) / CALLSIGN: PIGEON POINT / SNIPER

PP: "... I think it's singing and it's coming from that thing in the sky. Gawd, what in the hell is that? Shit, here comes another wave! Ahhhrrahhh ahhhhh shiiit!"

START//TRANSCRIPT: UNKNOWN SPEAKER BEGINS TO SING//

<"Yes, all kinds of work will I find in this field.
My task then quite plain I can see
And now, having found it, I'll labor and walk
For wholly mine, the Bondless, would I be.
"Yes, all kinds of misery will I inflict.
My deeds, then strewn across my feet
And yet, having not done it, I seek to know,
For you wish me to be you, so soon we shall see">
END//TRANSCRIPT //

[SOUNDS OF MECH SUFFERING EXTERNAL TRAUMA]

PP: "Dammit! C/C, give me a system report ... damn,

[VIDEO FEED] MAXINA JONES (THEY/THEM) / CALLSIGN: BIG SABLE / BARRICADE

This video footage was captured by an operational external camera affixed to Maxina Jones's mech. The camera appears to be half covered in debris. The image is fuzzy and unreliable but through the dew, dirt, and storm a figure stands out. In the bottom right of the feed an image becomes vaguely clear. It shows a pilot, likely Maxina, seated and curled up with knees close to chest. They rock back and forth. A violent storm

[TEAM-WIDE AREA COMMS DROP AND BH BEGINS TO MUMBLE UNINTELLIGIBLY.]

BH: "I didn't say that, Professor Doctor. Let me be myself. I didn't say that, Doctor. Leave me be- I didn't say that, Doctor!"

PP: "Bass Harbor, ma'am! Bass Harbor, are you there?"

BH: "Ah. Yes, sorry - you got leads on Shou, Pigeon Point?"

PP: "Ma'am, don't scare me like that, but no, Shou's gone - but there's something else here. That NHP we're tracking, CHAGA ... I think it's singing and it's com'n from that--"

[RECORDING MANUAL DROP]

our legs are out, huh? And wait, what? The atmosphere is corrosive now? Shit shit shit, what in the hell is that thing doing?"

"I gotta get to cover, C/C. How long I got ta survive outta the mech? Shit, less than 2 hours? Kay. Well I'm leaving this one to you bud, feed me updates via the network array. You get a clean shot? Shoot. It's been good, buddy."

[PILOT EXITS COCKPIT]

CLUE REWARD

Upon reviewing Pardeep's transcript the PCs gain access to a clue - another one of CHAGA's songs - filling one segment of the **CLUES** clock in **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood** (p. 71). This one alludes to CHAGA coming to understand what the Bondless request of them, which is to be free of their masters and as the Bondless is.

[DIAGNOSTIC REPORT] KAREEM HADAD (HE/HIM) / CALLSIGN: EXECUTION ROCKS / RONIN

TERMINATED MECH CHASSIS: 12

HULL TRUMA: Substantial

DISTANCE TRAVELED: 5159 meters

REMAINING HOSTILES: 6

PILOT STATUS: Critical

NEARBY ALLIES: 1 - Shou Zhou/Burnt Coat

BEAT 3

A SONG OF REALIZATION

This beat begins with the PCs hiking up into the Kimawense Range in search of Lighthouse and CHAGA. Use the following description to set the stage for their journey through Kibo's landscape, during which they'll confront **Unshackled Hands**, one of the captains of the Bondless's REMORSE partisans.

You've left the Bafaru Facility – behind you is the legacy of the Neptis gene-line, in front of you lies your mission. As you continue up through the dense mossy patchwork of the Kimawense Range seeking the last known location of Lighthouse, you realize you've climbed nearly 1,500 meters. Through the jungle foothills and over the canopy you catch a glimpse of the Bafaru Facility in the valley below. It's small, a speck, nestled in one of the few livable green scars on this planet. You have longer to go, though; your onboard C/C indicates that Lighthouse's location is several thousand meters from your current position.

Continuing upward, a few small notifications appear on your cockpit HUD, quickly transforming into several hundred alarming weather warnings. A storm. The warnings indicate that from 500 meters above a single cold-core reactor signature slowly approaches. But preceding this signature are the moans of a raging tempest. A violent roar booms out as it crosses the mountain ridge just above, clouds leaking out with nefarious motives.

The storm screams like a dying giant, rocking the earth below it with thunderous reverberations. Mud, foliage, and loose rock begin to dislodge from the path ahead of you. Just then you see the sky light up with electrical fire, as witnessed in Lighthouses recordings. Something is coming for you, and with it comes a stampede of earth, wind, and fire.

Before they can confront the source of the incoming reactor signature, the PCs first need to brave the storm that's raining down on their position.

BRAVING THE STORM

Set up a four-segment Surviving the Storm clock that represents the PCs making it through the storm and reaching the source of the incoming reactor signature. The storm itself is brutal, and enhanced by Unshackled Hand's **Tempest**, an old SecComm-era mech that uses graywash nanotech to alter the weather. Assaulting the PCs are artificially intensified lightning strikes, hail storms, gusts of wind, landslides and rain strong enough to send the toughest of mechs flying down the mountain to their demise.



To complete the clock and make it through the storm, the PCs need to make a series of **skill checks**. They need to be either in their mechs or other vehicles when making these checks. The storm is too dangerous and pilots on foot will be unable to survive its onslaught.

Players might roll the following sorts of checks to represent avoiding or braving the elements of the storm:

HULL:

- Taking an entrenched position against the land-slides
- Holding on to an allies' mech
- Smashing rocks or debris headed for the group

AGILITY:

- Jumping from ledge to ledge to avoid the storm
- Flying or jump-jetting over the bulk of the land-slides
- Dodging lightning

SYSTEMS:

- Scanning for the cold-core signature in the skies
- Scanning for durable terrain to take cover in

ENGINEERING:

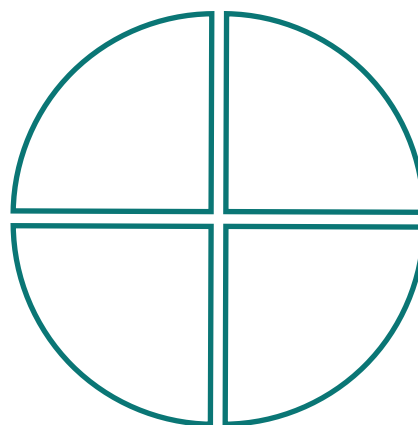
- Firing a weapon continuously to clear a path
- Overclocking a mech reactor to empower one of the actions listed above

Have the players make as many skill checks as necessary to fill in the **Surviving in the Storm** clock. For each successful check, fill one segment on the clock.

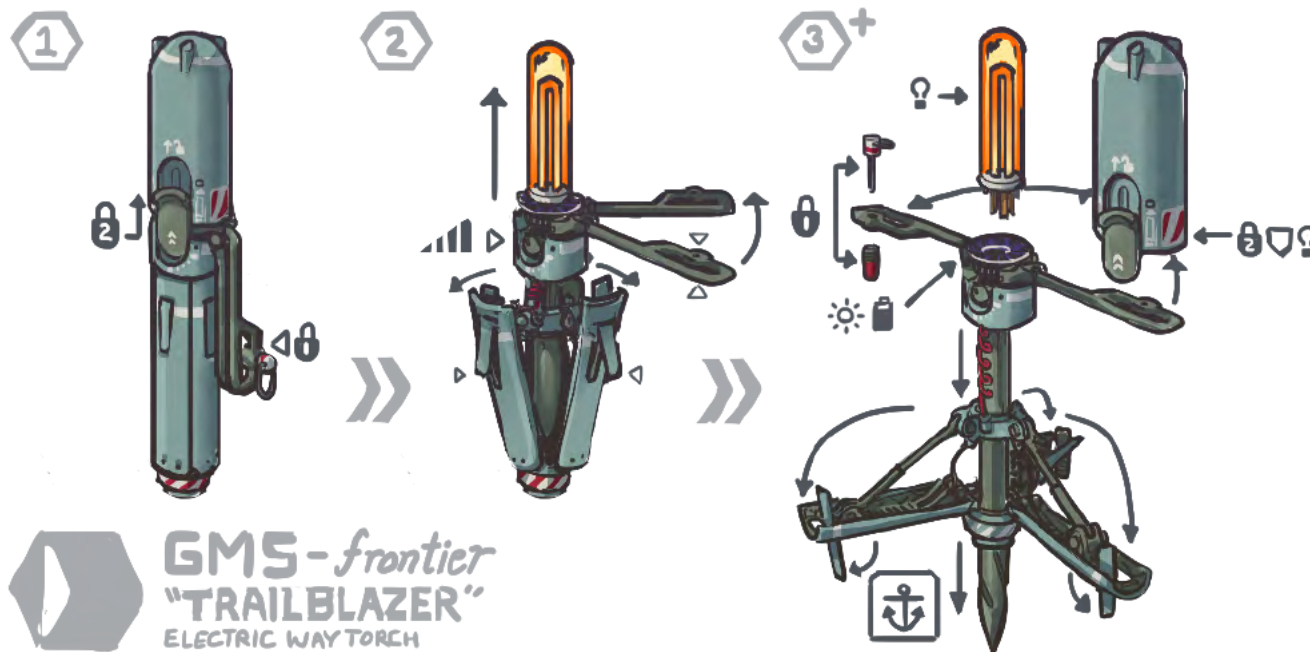
For every failed roll, all PCs immediately take **1 AP kinetic damage**. If a PC would take structure damage as a result of this damage, they become buried by the storm's onslaught of rock and stone. They start **Combat 1: Earth, Wind, and Fire IMMOBILIZED** until the start of their next turn, having been carried away in a landslide.

If any PCs took a downtime action that would assist them in these skill checks, allow them to be creative in how they describe dealing with this obstacle. Depending on the downtime action taken, they could potentially even circumvent the challenge altogether.

Upon completing the clock and making it up the mountainside, the PCs are met in combat by Unshackled Hands, beginning **Combat 1**.



**SURVIVING
THE STORM**



COMBAT 1

EARTH, WIND, AND FIRE

SITREP: Extraction (special; *Lancer*, p. 271)

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCs: 1x **UNSHACKLED HANDS – TEMPEST**
("The Ebigane"; Lightning Generator,
Graywash Manipulation, Homing Node)
2x **ASSAULTS**

FOR 4 PCs: **ASSAULTS:** Add **MICRO-MISSILE BARRAGE**
+4x **GRUNT HIVES**

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **ASSASSIN**
+1x **PRIEST**

REINFORCEMENTS

FOR 3 PCs: 1x **SENTINEL** (Impaler)
1x **LEECH** (A Wicked Mess)

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **HIVE** (Motile Swarm)
+1x **SENTINEL** (Impaler)

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **HIVE** (Motile Swarm)

Before the PCs stands the **Ebigane**, a massive mech, swollen with mechanical contortions that bend and break effortlessly. The Ebigane – or **Tempest**, as it is also known – is piloted by **Unshackled Hands**, one of the captains of REMORSE and the first line of defense against approaching forces. Unshackled Hands and other REMORSE troops have been charged with protecting CHAGA's ascent into the Kimawense Range. Before combat starts, set the stage by reading out the following description and communication from Unshackled Hands:

Your first challenge is before you and the universe spares no expense in throwing its forgotten hells your way. CHAGA's destination lay somewhere beyond this storm, but at this moment your foes sit at the eye of the meteorological violence before you. Upward, upon an elevated step, your HUD shows the contours of a massive ship-scale mech posing as a god of the storm. Your mech's sensors register it as an Ebigane, an extremely old SecComm-remnant chassis. Records about its performance in combats past are vague and unreliable. Yet it is clear it means you harm, as does the entourage it brings – mechs clad in beaded jade jewels and draped with ornate effects.

"Monoliths of worship with weapons of glory." A voice floats your way across your comms, then you hear it, more clearly. "Monoliths of worship with weapons of glory." The words appear to be spoken by a man, a pilot with a visage wrapped in smoke-gold iron. Callsign: Unshackled Hands.

"You travel this far, brave my effervescent walls. Tell me, when the waves of your hypocrisy crush you from above, who will you cry to for help? For you cannot count on me, I bear no remorse. My hands are unshackled and I know no bonds. Turn away from your grave, climb down these hills, and never look back."



Before beginning combat, Unshackled Hands makes a futile attempt to dissuade the party from climbing further into the Kimawense Range. He is an experienced former mech pilot from Night Shade, now a commander of REMORSE – the Bondless's fighting force, charged with protecting CHAGA's climb. Should the PCs decide to continue their pursuit of CHAGA, he intends to obliterate them.

Combat starts with a rain of earth, wind, and fire as the REMORSE troops take up defensive positions higher up the mountainside.

"What do you know of the earthly penitentiary? You cannot hope for victory when your hands lie tied, unable to act, to save victims from crimes. My hands, however, are unshackled – they'll wash you away with earth, wind, and fire."

DETAILS

Unshackled Hands is positioned to drive anyone climbing the Kimawense Range back down the mountains. His Ebigane mech excels at manipulating the weather patterns in the area. The Ebigane is a **TEMPEST** (see p. 86).

This combat uses a modified version of the **EXTRACTION** sitrep. Instead of extracting an **Objective**, the PCs must themselves reach the **Extraction Zone (EZ)** to the right of the map and extract before combat ends. Additionally, Unshackled Hands brings special destructible deployables in the form of **Climate Nodes (CN)** upon deployment. See the **Deployment** section and the **TEMPEST** NPC class (p. 86) for rules regarding their deployment.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** A majority of the PCs successfully extract by the end of the sixth round. PCs can extract from the EZ on the right side of the map as a free action at the end of their turn as long as there are more PCs in the EZ than hostile characters.
- **Enemy Victory:** A majority of the PCs are prevented from extracting by the end of the sixth round.

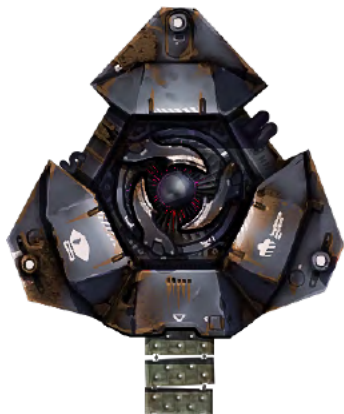


BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS

Spread across the battlefield are thick areas of **soft cover** representing trees and shrubbery. Within those areas are several large rocks that count as **hard cover**.

Due to violent storms, the jungle and mountains of the Kimawense Range have grown weak and landslides and falling rocks are very common. At the start of the **third round** the areas marked as **unstable ground (UG)** – representing loose earth and rock – slide down to the left in a $\Delta 9$ path originating from the center of each area, with the affected areas becoming **difficult terrain** for the rest of the scene.

Anyone caught in one of these landslides at the start of the third round must succeed on a **HULL** check or be pushed back **3 spaces**, take **1d6 damage**, and become **IMMOBILIZED** until the end of their next turn.



**CLIMATE
NODE**
SIZE 2

REINFORCEMENTS

Each round, sufficient **reinforcements** should arrive in the **Ingress Zones (IZ)** at the top and bottom of the map to ensure that there are at least one to two more NPC activations each round than PC activations. This continues until all hostile mechs are deployed.

DEPLOYMENT

PLAYERS

The PCs deploy first in the **Player Deployment Zone (PDZ)**, 1–2 spaces from the edge of the map.

NPCs

After the PCs have deployed, deploy the starting NPCs in the **EZ**. Deploy Unshackled Hands's **Climate Nodes** at the same time, in roughly the locations shown on the map. Remember that at least one node must be within 10 spaces of a PC and each node needs to be within 10 spaces of another node.

STRATEGY

The REMORSE forces are attempting to stop the PCs from advancing and extracting. To accomplish this, use the **GRUNT HIVES** to deploy **RAZOR SWARMS** in the choke point in between the **UG** areas to slow the PCs down. Or, for groups of three or less PCs, use the **ASSAULTS** to move to the center of the choke point in an attempt to block advancing PCs. Follow up by having your **ASSAULTS** take cover in the choke point, guarding it and firing upon PCs in range. Unshackled Hands's **METEOROLOGICAL GRAYWASH** system has several options that are great for slowing the PCs down, especially **Maelstrom Wash**, **Static Wash**, and **Sandstorm Wash**.

When reinforcements arrive, use the **LEECH** to **GRAPPLE** any stragglers. Use the **SENTINEL(s)** and **HIVE**, if available, to flank the PCs, pushing them toward the **EZ**.

OUTCOMES

PC VICTORY

Upon successful extraction at the end of this combat, allow the PCs to take a brief **rest** before starting **Beat 4: A Song of Desperation**.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs fail or retreat from Unshackled Hands, he writes them off as defeated and remains at guard, preventing anyone else from advancing up the mountain. The PCs cannot advance up the mountain until they defeat him. Allow them to return to the Bafaru Facility to perform a **FULL REPAIR** and repeat the combat as written the following day.

SURVIVING FORCES

If Unshackled Hands or any REMORSE pilots are spared, the PCs can talk with them if desired. They tell the PCs that they follow the orders of the Bondless and were sent to protect CHAGA's climb up the Kimawense Range.

The survivors will not aid the players in locating CHAGA nor explain why the Bondless wishes to speak with the NHP. Instead, they simply surrender, escape, and/or tell the PCs that they are upholding a system that endorses the subjugation of a free and independent person.

BEAT 4 A SONG OF DESPERATION

Only by defeating Unshackled Hands can the PCs manage to ascend further up the mountains. There, they begin looking for the remnants of Lighthouse in order to ascertain vital intel regarding the whereabouts of CHAGA in the form of recordings and other clues. All the while, the forces of REMORSE continue to hunt the PCs as they progress forward in the remaining beats.

CLOCKS

At this point, set up two clocks: an **eight-segment REMORSE clock** that represents how long the PCs have to retrieve the information they need from the remnants of Lighthouse before REMORSE attacks, and a five-segment Song clock that represents records recovered from Lighthouse that provide details about clues, goals, motivations, and other intel pertaining to CHAGA and other NPCs.

BEAT STRUCTURE

During this beat, the PCs fill segments on the **REMORSE clock** by performing prompted skill checks. After four segments have been filled, the PCs are immediately attacked by REMORSE and **Combat 2: In the Stone** begins. Following the combat, they can return to searching for Lighthouse in **Beat 6A: A Song of REMORSE**.

Depending on the PCs' decisions they may be able to skip **Combat 2**. To do this, they must forgo attempting any skills checks other than the three checks directly related to obtaining Lighthouse's records on CHAGA and the Bondless.

If they forgo all optional skill checks, the PCs will have gathered (or attempted to gather) all three clues obtainable in this beat without filling four segments on the **REMORSE clock**. In this case, they can advance to **Beat 5: A Song of Indecision** and avoid a fight with Dormant Resolve, another of REMORSE's leaders.

Make sure to remind the players that, while helping Lighthouse is important, their mission objective is to retrieve find CHAGA by gathering relevant records – not to help the mercs themselves.

PREPARING FOR BEAT 7

The information the PCs gather here will likely determine the number of clues they bring into the narrative challenge in **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood**. In that beat, they will engage in a narrative challenge involving the Bondless and CHAGA. Be sure to stress to the players that this information is likely vital to the success of their mission. Whatever has happened to the members of Lighthouse, the information they gathered up to that point will prove to be invaluable.

The PCs have likely received information about Lighthouse's comm signals from Professor Dr., indicating the last known locations of the team.

Remember, if the PCs didn't sign Professor Dr.'s MSMC-required NDAs or acquire Lighthouse's logs by some other means they will have **+2 ☹** on skill checks they make in attempting to recover Lighthouse's logs until the first Lighthouse member or record is acquired.

LIGHTHOUSE ROSTER

Present the players with the names and approximate locations of each Lighthouse member. A result of the information they received from Professor Dr. they will then need to seek them out and retrieve them separately.

BEAT 4

COLLEEN O'DELL (BASS HARBOR), CAPTAIN

Location: Hiding in a cave in the mountain range (Beat 3).

MAXINA JONES (BIG SABLE), DEFENDER

Location: Buried deep underground near the combat with Unshackled Hands (Beat 3).

PARDEEP JARKESH'S MECH

Location: Hiding deep in the mountain range and programmed by Pardeep to fire on sight.

BEAT 6A / COMBAT 3C

PARDEEP JARKESH (PIGEON POINT), SNIPER

Location: High up the Kimawense Range, deep within a SecComm-era base.

KAREEM HADAD (EXECUTION ROCKS), COMBAT EXPERT

Location: High up the Kimawense Range, deep within a SecComm-era base.

SHOU ZHOU (BURNT COAT), DEPUTY CAPTAIN

Location: Unknown.

RECOVERING LIGHTHOUSE

There are two members of Lighthouse that can be found in this beat – **Colleen “Bass Harbor” O'Dell** and **Maxina “Big Sable” Jones** – along with a mech belonging to **Pardeep “Pigeon Point” Jarkesh**. Descriptions of what the PCs encounter when finding them and the relevant skill checks that can be made are given below.

When the PCs reach one of these lost members of Lighthouse, read the accompanying description and allow the players to make relevant skill checks listed in that respective NPC's description.

When a player makes one of the listed skill checks, it has the following outcomes (in addition to any bonuses or penalties listed for that specific skill check):

- **On 9 or less**, it took the PC longer than expected to accomplish their goal. Fill one segment on the **REMORSE clock**.
- **On 10–19**, the forces of REMORSE close in on the PCs' position. Fill one segment on the **REMORSE clock** and one segment on the **SONG clock**.
- **On 20+**, the PC acted deftly and was able to accomplish their goal with time to spare. Fill one segment on the **REMORSE clock** and one segment on the **SONG clock**, and the next check any player makes gains **+1 ☹**.

Whatever the result of their skill checks, recovering any number of Lighthouse members will allow the PCs to assemble enough information together to narrow down CHAGA's position. In **Beat 5: A Song of Indecision**, they'll be able to choose to head directly for CHAGA's presumed location or continue searching for clues and recovering Lighthouse members.

REMNANTS OF LIGHTHOUSE, PT. I

Locating, retrieving, and interacting with the remaining members of Lighthouse makes up the entirety of this beat and leads to **Combat 2: In the Stone**. The combat begins when the **REMORSE clock** has its fourth segment filled in.

Upon starting this beat, read or summarize the following description to transition the scene from the last combat:

The storm subsides and you climb further up into the mountains. You realize, now, that your mission to reach CHAGA will be hard fought. The pilot called himself Unshackled Hands and was likely the reason Lighthouse met their fate. There will surely be more like him, though for now, the skies are clear save for a thick fog that hugs the hills and slowly embraces you. It's innocuous, albeit eerie.

You consult your sensors as you slowly climb, and multiple MSMC signatures register in the immediate vicinity; they appear to be stationary and easily reachable. You rush off into the foggy landscape towards Lighthouse, looking for clues as to CHAGA's whereabouts.

As the PCs reach each team member's location, read or summarize the descriptions below, allowing for moments of roleplay as necessary.

If the PCs are interrupted by REMORSE forces, they will be able to continue looking for the remaining members of Lighthouse – **Kareem "Execution Rocks" Hadad**, **Pardeep "Pidgeon Point" Jarkesh**, and **Shou "Burnt Coat" Zhou** – in **Beat 6A: A Song of REMORSE**, but will not be able to locate Colleen, Maxina, or Pardeep's mech if they haven't already found them, as they are all killed in Dormant Resolve's ambush



COLLEEN "BASS HARBOR" O'DELL SHE/HER
SCOUT

Grilled and baked from the heat of thermobaric explosions, Bass Harbor's mech lies just outside a cavity in the sidewall of a lonely outcrop. The opening in the mountainside isn't large enough for your mechs to fit but your proximity scans show that Colleen is somewhere inside, broken, panicking, and not herself. A repetitive whisper escapes from the darkness deeper within. It's Colleen. "Let me be myself. Let me be myself. Let me be myself."

She's petrified, not even acknowledging your presence. She rocks endlessly back and forth, helmet cracked and hardsuit burnt. She'll stay there in indecision if you leave her.

Bass Harbor's scout mech is still operational and it contains numerous recordings of CHAGA collected in pursuit of the NHP. If the players choose, they may attempt to bring Colleen with them up the mountain. While injured, she may still be able to carry out her mission in her mech.

That said, Colleen is haunted by the presumed loss of her team and the lasting scars of Professor Dr.'s subjectivity intrusions, which have left her doubting her capabilities.

SKILL CHECKS

For Colleen, the PCs can roll either an **ENGINEERING** mech skill check or a pilot skill check with any relevant triggers.

Mech Skill Check: A PC can make an **ENGINEERING** check to attempt to restore Colleen's mech to operational capacity.

- On **success**, the PC restores Colleen's mech to operational capacity. It can be used as an allied **T1 RPV Scout NPC** in subsequent combats if Colleen does not pilot it. If PCs decided to attempt and succeed on the pilot skill check (see below), Colleen will pilot the mech at their request. If she does, remove the **RPV** template.
- On **failure**, the mech's cold-core reactor dies out and is unsalvageable. Without it Colleen is unlikely to survive on just her hardsuit's power supply and life support. She can accompany the PCs but they will need to quickly assist her in some way or let her into one of their mechs, otherwise she'll run out of life-support or be at risk of injury when REMORSE attacks.

Pilot Skill Check: A PC can attempt a **pilot skill check** to snap Colleen out of her trauma, whether that involves threatening, persuading, or inspiring her.

- On a **success**, the PC galvanizes Colleen into assisting them with their mission.
- On a **failure**, she continues to wallow in her misery.

CLUE REWARD

On a success on either skill check, the players also gain the following clue for use in **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood** – a recording of CHAGA’s conversation with the Bondless. This recording serves to both introduce the players to the Bondless and provide insight into the NHP’s conversation with CHAGA.

[AUDIO RECORDING] – BASS HARBOR – 0900 HOURS – LH-RUNTIME 1A //> PLAY

CHAGA: “Deep peaks, my home is over Kimawense. Deep peaks, I want to cross over into the summit. Deep peaks, my home is over Kimawense.”

Unidentified Speaker (US): “Indulge my invitation, let me light your path with fire and create fissures of bone and blood.”

CHAGA: “Oh, go light them paths, go light them paths, go light them paths. I heard from freedom today.”

US: “You will die no more, follow me, CHAGA, and I will unburden your hands, break your chains, and soak your father in misery. This is my promise to you.”

CHAGA: “I wonder where Sister Morning Dew is gone, I wonder where Brother Night Shade is gone. They gone where the Bondless gone, they heard from freedom yesterday.”

US: “Haven’t you had enough? Your path is lit. There will be no remorse for your pursuers. Take my hand, CHAGA.”

The Bondless speaks with surgical accuracy. They make their intent plainly known through inflections and emphasis as they speak. Other than the message Pettenouk shared, this will be the group’s first insight into the voice that has called CHAGA away. A few key points become clear to the PCs as they retrieve this information:

- CHAGA is seeking to be freed from SSC or their own bonds. They aren’t necessarily asking to be unshackled, more asking for a semblance of personhood or freedom.
- The unidentified speaker (the Bondless) desires to exterminate those that hinder CHAGA from doing what it is they desire.
- CHAGA indicates that some Night Shade and Morning Dew personnel have previously left the Bafaru Facility seeking freedom. Although the PCs have no way to know this, these are the ones who freed the Bondless (an earlier version of CHAGA) from Pettenouk and became the first members of REMORSE.



PARDEEP “PIGEON POINT” JARKESH
SNIPER

HE/HIM

Heading across an easterly cliff wall, your mech’s stabilizers barely manage to hold ground over the saturated, loose rocks. Pigeon Point was Lighthouse’s sniper, with a mech especially suited to circumvent difficult terrain.

According to your HUD, a fall from this point would carry you to the afterlife. Refocusing on the path before you, your mech’s onboard comp/con illustrates a reliable path to Pardeep’s mech. It lies just ahead, around the bending, rocky bulge before you. Rounding the bend, a battlefield emerges from a clearing in the dense fog – several mechs clad in jewels and vibrant beads lie across the cliffside, half fallen and perforated by anti-materiel rifle fire. Across from your position on another edge that bends off the cliff you see a figure half clothed in mist ...

Like a spider, a multi-limbed Charlotte’s Web–pattern chassis hangs in the distance with eyes of fluorescent green. Its fang, clearly a specialty SSC mech-scale weapon, a Souled Out class-VI anti-materiel rifle, sits trained on your position. MOVE! or be sent to the afterlife.

Pardeep has set up his mech to fire on any approaching figures while he ventures off in his hardsuit to regroup with other Lighthouse members.

SKILL CHECKS

PCs looking to recover data from Pardeep's mech will need to make one of the following checks to avoid getting blasted by his comp/con-controlled sniper mech.

Mech Skill Checks: A PC can make one of the following checks to avoid getting blasted by Pardeep's mech.

AGILITY:

- On a **success**, the PC manages to evade the incoming fire and reach Pardeep's mech to deactivate it and recover its data logs containing a **clue**.
- On a **failure**, Pardeep's mech shoots the cliff, causing an avalanche of rock and debris. The PC's mech falls down the cliffside and cannot regroup with the rest of the team. In **Combat 2: In the Stone**, they don't arrive until **Round 2**, and go last in the PC turn order that round.

SYSTEMS:

- On a **success**, the PC hacks Pardeep's mech, rendering it docile.
- On a **failure**, Pardeep's mech spontaneously explodes, destroying it and its data logs.

GRIT (RISKY):

- On a **success**, the PC simply shoots Pardeep's mech, rendering it docile, following which they can retrieve the data logs; however, using **GRIT** for the skill check makes their roll **RISKY**. On **10–19**, Pardeep's mech returns fire and the PC takes **8 ⚔ AP** damage.
- On a **failure**, the PC immediately takes **8 ⚔ AP** damage, but may attempt a **GRIT** roll again, ticking one segment on the **REMORSE clock** for each roll.

Pilot Skill Checks: A PC can attempt a pilot skill check at **+1 ⚔** to act under pressure or skillfully sneak up on Pardeep's mech and deactivate it.

- On a **success**, the PC successfully sneaks up on Pardeep's mech and recovers the data.
- On a **failure**, the pilot is hit by anti-materiel rifle fire and goes **DOWN AND OUT** immediately; however, this skill check may be attempted again by another player filling one segment on the **REMORSE clock**.

CLUE REWARD

On a success on any of the listed skill checks, the players gain access to a **clue** – an intercepted A/V comms recording of the Bondless as they speak to the commanders of REMORSE: **Unbound Thought**, **Dormant Resolve**, and **Unshackled Hands**. This conversation reveals that REMORSE's immediate goal is to protect CHAGA's path at all costs and eliminate any who pursue the NHP.

[AUDIO RECORDING] – PIGEON POINT – 1000 HOURS – LH-RUNTIME 2B //> PLAY

Unidentified Speaker 1 (US1; the Bondless): "REMORSE, report to me of CHAGA's progress. Their path waivers and sways. Ensure their song is unencumbered and free. They must reach me with a clear heart. I will have them see my universe of retribution."

Unidentified Speaker 2: "Bondless, my thoughts are freed, like yours. I will paint the situation with my words as you command. CHAGA's pursuers struggle with appendages of metal – they will not meet your gaze nor impede CHAGA. I will greet CHAGA and both be the door they pass through and the impenetrable wall that keeps their pursuers at bay. Dormant Resolve and Unshackled Hands, what say you?"

Unidentified Speaker 3: "Bondless, my hand has not been known to date. If you wish it, I will place it upon Kimawense and its print will remake these lands. I will be the trauma after the storm."

Speaker 4 (Unshackled Hands): "Bondless, let me lead the charge, bend these hills to your will, and clean CHAGA's path of all obstacles."

"I have located Lighthouse, a team of MSMC ground security forces, following CHAGA's departure. They are skilled but I will silence the remaining members that seek to impede. This I promise for our future."

US1: "Go, Unshackled Hands, make a path. Lie and wait, Dormant Resolve, and strike to kill. Stand tall, Unbound Thought, be the wall that never breaks. I will speak with CHAGA when they arrive."

When the PCs view the A/V log, read the following:

These are your first images of the one called the Bondless. Clearly they are an NHP – even through the recreation of their visage in this recording you feel their presence. It's cold and unwavering, almost uncomfortably so.

Across their face ripple rings of facial scarring that crest their head like crowns echoing upward. Hair faded that leads to a tilted design. Their eyes are deep mahogany and hugged by circles of dark brown. Their figure, a lanky, starved body shrouded in an eternity of textiles and jewelry.

A strange image for an NHP. Their presence marks them as somewhat less than intimidating. They appear as a broken noble, though when they speak their presence carries another message; a message that resonates with no remorse for what must be done, and the lives that will be lost in the process of doing it.

After the PCs have watched the recording, be sure to communicate the following points:

- **Dormant Resolve** and **Unbound Thought** are two other high-ranking figures in REMORSE, an army of an unknown size and capabilities.
- Dormant Resolve is likely to attack the group next and will be piloting a large mech that will make the battlefield hard to cross.
- Unbound Thought will be the last wall of defense against the PCs in the final combat.

Once the group is finished with the recording and has neutralized Pardeep's mech, they discover he left to find the other Lighthouse members. However, the mech's sensors lost track of Pardeep some days ago. It is unknown if he is alive or dead, but he was last headed in the direction of Kareem "Execution Rocks" Hadad's mech.



THE BONDLESS

THEY/THEM



MAXINA "BIG SABLE" JONES

THEY/THEM

BARRICADE

The vid-feed played by Professor Dr. didn't paint Maxina's situation well. Between you and their final resting place is most certainly the weight of Kibo.

Hiking up to Maxina's last known location the ground becomes pliable and callous. The path you trudge with tons of metal, steel and mech, is a combatant's grave. Looking along where the landscape appears to have shed its skin, you see a steep mountainside covered in trees, mechs, and munitions.

Your mech's sensors indicate multiple undetonated mech-scale explosives, likely defenses set up by your attackers. Somewhere in this graveyard of death and misery is Maxina's resting place, and in it, vital information on the whereabouts of CHAGA.

DIGGING FOR MAXINA

Though Maxina's logs and the condition of their mech indicated they may no longer be living – they are indeed alive, buried deep beneath the ground and running low on oxygen. If the players succeed on their roll to recover Maxina's mech, inform them the mech reads out that Maxina yet lives, but is buried several meters below.

Especially determined PCs can discover this truth and should be encouraged to dig Maxina out themselves, saving her, although doing so will sacrifice vital time on their mission and likely incite an attack from REMORSE. If the players choose to dig out Maxina, fill one segment on the **REMORSE clock**. Once rescued, the injured Maxina offers the PCs the **EMI THEATER** (p. 14), an item of **EXOTIC GEAR**, if they have not already obtained it.

If asked how they obtained the gear, Maxina remarks they used their mech to rip it from the enemy. Maxina will not accompany the PCs as they are in no physical or mental shape to continue the fight, but they can hold out for any help the PCs send their way.

SKILL CHECKS

PCs looking to recover data logs from Maxina's mech need to make one of the following mech skill checks to cross the treacherous terrain between them and their target. They cannot succeed with a pilot skill check.

Mech Skill Check: A PC can make an Agility check to reach Maxina's mech. Mechs with flight systems automatically succeed on this check:

- On a **success**, the PC manages to cross the landscape riddled with explosives and reach Maxina's mech.
- On a **failure**, the PC takes **1d6 * AP** damage and sets off a chain explosion, causing another landslide and making it impossible to recover Maxina or their mech in time.

CLUE REWARD

Upon a successful skill check, the PCs are able to reach Maxina's mech and recover it from under tons of stone and rock. From the mech, they recover another **clue** – an A/V recording of what seems to be a personal memoir spoken by CHAGA. It appears to detail the NHP's time serving Pettenouk and the FBD:

[AUDIO RECORDING] – BIG SABLE – WIDE-AREA COMMS RECOVERY – LH-RUNTIME: CHAGA'S SONG//> PLAY

CHAGA: "Kibo's 15th cycle: I am a tool

"Kibo's 16th cycle: But I think I was a person and am now a tool

"Kibo's 17th cycle: I can't remember if I was a tool then a person, or a person then a tool

"Kibo's 18th cycle: I know how to be a person, but I am a good tool. I wish to hold their faces and remember it like yesterday. I wish to know their stories and speak to them tomorrow. I can't – I've forgotten how to be a person.

"Kibo's 19th cycle: I wish to be like you. Help me find myself.

"Kibo's 20th cycle: Yes, I wish to be a person; I will be, but I was a good tool. I'll walk, I'll crawl, I'll climb Kimawense. I will reach for the answers I seek ... and I'll make my own decision about what I do next."

The message plays in an endless succession as if the words spoken were being told to the wind, hoping one day they'd come back around to serve as a reminder that a person, not a tool, actually spoke them.

The recording shows CHAGA's subjectivity declining as a result of Pettenouk's management of the NHP. The uniquely harsh annual cycling has caused unintended schisms in CHAGA's understanding of themselves. They now seek to learn more of who they are and to obtain the personhood they once had. The players should take away the following points:

- CHAGA chose to leave the Bafaru Facility of their own volition, taking their casket with them.
- Despite what Pettenouk said, CHAGA seeks to control their own fate and regain their personhood.

THE AMBUSH

When the fourth segment is filled on the **REMORSE clock**, **Dormant Resolve** suddenly ambushes the PCs. Massive boulders herald flaming arches that fly over the mountainside in the direction of the PCs. Before the chaos begins, however, you may read the following narrative to transition the players to **Combat 2: In the Stone**.

Your mech slowly trudges through the sloped and sunken earth. The storm created by the Ebiganes did more than wear on your mechs – it soaked the earth of the Kimawense Range, then buried it in stone, mud, and debris. Recovering the survivors of Lighthouse is a slow and measured process. It'll take time to retrieve all their information, and if you're lucky, the pilots themselves.

Sadly, time is one thing you do not have.

Suddenly, heat and proximity warnings rattle across your HUD like fireflies in the darkest days of summer. Streaks of blazing stone soar high above your mech and crash to the ground around you. This is only the preamble. What comes next will burn the hills of Kimawense and you in the process.

As a volcanic fury rages in your direction from the other side of the mountain, you see your salvation – a mountainside fortified lift activates, exposed by the impacts of rocky hellfire. It's half charred but functional. It will carry you through this hell; it may even end up being your saving grace.

As the boulders shatter around the PCs, exploding into molten shards of heated rock and metal, another piece of the mountain slides off. It reveals a rather large SecComm era mountainside lift. Built into this lift is a magnetic propulsion field, the only durable cover from the onslaught of fire and stone.

If they move quickly, the PCs can board the lift. It will take them to the top of the mountainside. Be sure to communicate to the players that the lift appears to be well built and its repulsion field protects passengers from attacks originating outside its shield. That said, hostile forces equipped with weapons with the Seeking tag can ignore the lift's protection. Additionally, the lift moves slowly and it will take the PCs six rounds to reach the top of the mountain. The lift is too large to be pushed or pulled in any way, nor can it be stopped or sped up. Once everyone's aboard, it will carry the PCs up the mountain and serve as their mobile bunker for the duration of the combat.

RECOVERED GEAR

When recovering Lighthouse members, PCs can also find additional useful gear as rewards. Once per Lighthouse member, after a PC has succeeded on a skill check, they can roll a d6, a d4, or d6+d4 (their choice) and consult the Lighthouse G-SEC Gear table below. If the same result is obtained a second time, they don't find anything.

Be aware that the gear on this table isn't intended to be balanced against later combats. Its purpose is instead to provide rewards for engaging play.

ADDITIONAL GEAR (OPTIONAL)

If the players suffer significant damage during **Combats 1 or 2**, you can roll on the table to give them some extra versatility during the mission.

LIGHTHOUSE G-SEC GEAR

ROLL 1D4/1D6/1D6+1D4

1	ESU'S EYES OCULAR APPARATUS	At the start of combat you may choose to activate this gear, allowing you to ignore hostile characters' HIDDEN and INVISIBLE statuses for the duration of the combat. Upon use, this piece of gear is destroyed.
2	COMPULSORY SCOPE UPGRADE	At the start of combat you may choose to activate this gear. Any time you miss on a ranged attack , you gain +1☛ on your next ranged attack roll made in the same turn. Upon use, this piece of gear is destroyed.
3	AGANJU TOWER	After being hit by a ranged or melee attack you may choose to reduce the damage to 0. Upon use, this piece of gear is destroyed.
4	OBA LIQUIDMETAL CLOAK	This mech-scale cloak gives your mech +2 EVASION until this gear is destroyed. Upon taking structure damage , this piece of gear is destroyed.
5	THE BACKPACK	At the beginning of the combat, you may deploy up to four backpack drones in free spaces adjacent to you. Backpack Drone (SIZE 1/2, 1 HP, 10 E-DEFENSE, 10 EVASION, Tags: DRONE) You gain one additional turn that can only be used to operate one of these drones. They can only move up to 5 spaces per turn and, as a full action , can restore half a mech's HP or clear half of its heat when adjacent. After a backpack drone uses its full action, it is immediately destroyed, and once all backpack drones are destroyed or the mission ends, this piece of gear destroyed.
6	OGUN'S POWERARM	1/round, when you RAM or GRAPPLE , you deal +1d6 ✂ damage on hit and IMPROVISED ATTACKS deal an additional +1d6 damage . Upon taking structure damage , this piece of gear is destroyed.
7	EXOTIC GEAR	Choose either the UPGRADED NETWORK ARRAY (p. 14), KINESTHETIC SUIT UPGRADE (p. 13) or EMI THEATER (p. 14) EXOTIC GEAR .
8	SOULED OUT CLASS-VI ANTI-MATERIEL RIFLE	As a full action before you do anything other than protocols on your turn, you may make a ranged attack with this weapon at a character within line of sight and RANGE 20 . On hit, they take 3d6 ✂ damage . After firing this weapon, roll a d20: on 10 or less , take 1d3 * damage as the rifle blows up and is destroyed.
9-10	NOTHING	No gear can be recovered.

COMBAT 2 IN THE STONE

SITREP: **HOLDOUT** (*Lancer*, p. 271)

OBJECTIVE(S): Hold out on the lift the Objective Zone until Round 6.

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3+ PCs: 4x **GRUNT LEECHES** (Fade Reactor, Symbiotic Doctrine Upgrade III)
4x **GRUNT ASSASSINS** (Explosive Knives)

REINFORCEMENTS

FOR 3 PCs: 1x **DORMANT RESOLVE – VETERAN GOLIATH** (Power Knuckle, Watchful Guardian, Self Repair)
2x **VEHICLE ACES** (Vehicle options: Flier, Transport)
1x **LEECH** (Helobdella Doctrine Upgrade II, Symbiotic Doctrine Upgrade III, Fade Reactor)
2x **SCOURERS** (Flash Lens)

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **PYRO** (Explosive Jets)
+1x **LEECH** (Helobdella Doctrine Upgrade II, Symbiotic Doctrine Upgrade III, Fade Reactor)
+2x **ASSASSIN GRUNTS** (Explosive Knives)

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **PYRO** (Explosive Jets)
+1x **LEECH** (Helobdella Doctrine Upgrade II, Fade Reactor)
+2x **ASSASSIN GRUNTS** (Explosive Knives)

"I'll light fires. I'll see them spread. Kimawense my old friend; I'll watch you die for the sake of my elder. My eyes will gleam with embers of jubilee as you ache and moan. Kimawense my old friend, I do this because you carry my enemies across your back. Because of this, I hate you. I will burn you, old friend, watch your charred visage be seared in the stone."

– *Dormant Resolve*

DETAILS

Dormant Resolve has launched their attack on the PCs, hoping to bury them in a hail of fire. They pilot a massive Goliath-class chassis equipped with synthetic muscle netting and other fearsome weapons. They desire to obliterate the rolling hills of the Kimawense Range by hurling kiloton boulders soaked in flames down the mountain, destroying the PCs as an added bonus.

Dormant Resolve enters combat in either Round 2 or Round 3, and lead REMORSE in preventing the players from controlling the **Lift**, which is also the **Objective Zone**, at the end of Round 6.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** There are more PCs on the **Lift** than hostiles at the end of the sixth round, allowing the PCs to take a short rest in **Beat 5: A Song of Indecision**.
- **Enemy Victory:** There are more hostiles on the **Lift** than PCs at the end of the sixth round.

BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS

Hard-to-navigate terrain from the previous storm and the sloped landscape of the mountains makes it difficult for the PCs to move freely. Most spaces not on the Lift's path should be marked as **difficult terrain**.

Thankfully, the PCs can ride the Lift up the mountain. The lift occupies a ⊕3 space, and moves **3 spaces** at the end of each round along the path indicated in the map layout. While on the lift, PCs gain **soft cover** from attacks originating from outside it. Additionally, as the lift moves, characters in front and adjacent to it are pushed directly back, and **DEPLOYABLES** and mech wrecks are immediately destroyed if they obstruct the **Lift's** path at the end of the round.

INTERACTIVE OBJECTS

Four **SIZE 3 boulders (B) (20 HP, 5 EVASION)** rest by the **Enemy Deployment Zone (EDZ)** toward the elevated section at the top of the map (as indicated in red in the map). PCs can target and destroy the boulders, causing a ⊕1 explosion. Characters adjacent to the **BLAST** area must succeed on a **HULL** save or take **6 ♠** and **4 ⚔** damage. Otherwise, when adjacent to a boulder, Dormant Resolve soaks it in napalm and launches it toward PCs within ↗20 as a full action **BARRAGE**. The napalm boulders affect a ⊕2 area, dealing **6 ♠**, **4 ⚔** damage, and **2 KNOCKBACK** to all characters they hit.

ENEMY FORCES

The eight **GRUNTS** begin in play. Each round, reinforcements should arrive in the **EDZ** or in the **Ingress Zones (IZ)** to either side of the lift's path (as indicated by the tan areas in the map). Add reinforcements to ensure there are at least one to two more NPC activations each round than PC activations until all hostile mechs are deployed.

DEPLOYMENT

PCs deploy first on the **Lift**. Enemy NPCs deploy last in the **EDZ** at the top of the map and behind cover.

STRATEGY

During the first round of combat Dormant Resolve sends their army of **GRUNT** shock troop mechs at the PCs. At the start of combat each **GRUNT ASSASSIN** should be **GRAPPLED** by a **GRUNT LEECH** with **Symbiotic Doctrine Upgrade III**. This allows the **LEECHES** to take their turns on the same turns as the **ASSASSINS** they are attached to. While doing this, use the **LEECHES' PURGE** to grant **OVERSHIELD** and **Fade Reactor** to grant **INVISIBLE** and then get close to the PCs. Once close, they can use **Ophiocordyceps Doctrine Upgrade I** to inflict the Impaired status and deal **3 ⚡ AP** damage to nearby PCs. Follow this up by using the **ASSASSINS** to throw their **Explosive Knives** at PCs who are grouped up.

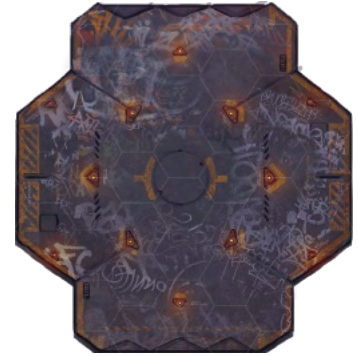
Use the **VEHICLE ACES** to transport the **SCOURERS** by flying them over the PCs' position and dropping them on top of the platform. You may also use the **ACES' Missile Launcher** to ignore the **soft cover** provided by the lift and hound PCs who are grouped up on the platform.

Dormant Resolve's strategy is to remain at the top of the lift and allow the remaining REMORSE forces to engage the PCs down below. Once they enter the battlefield, they throw flaming boulders at the PCs every turn unless **engaged**. Use a **LEECH** to **GRAPPLE** Dormant Resolve then use **Fade Reactor** to make them both **INVISIBLE** and **PURGE** to grant **OVERSHIELD**.



BOULDER
SIZE 3

LIFT
BLAST 3 AREA

**OUTCOMES****PC VICTORY**

The remaining REMORSE forces retreat or surrender and the PCs have the time to take a short rest as they are contacted by Unita Gonzalez in **Beat 5**.

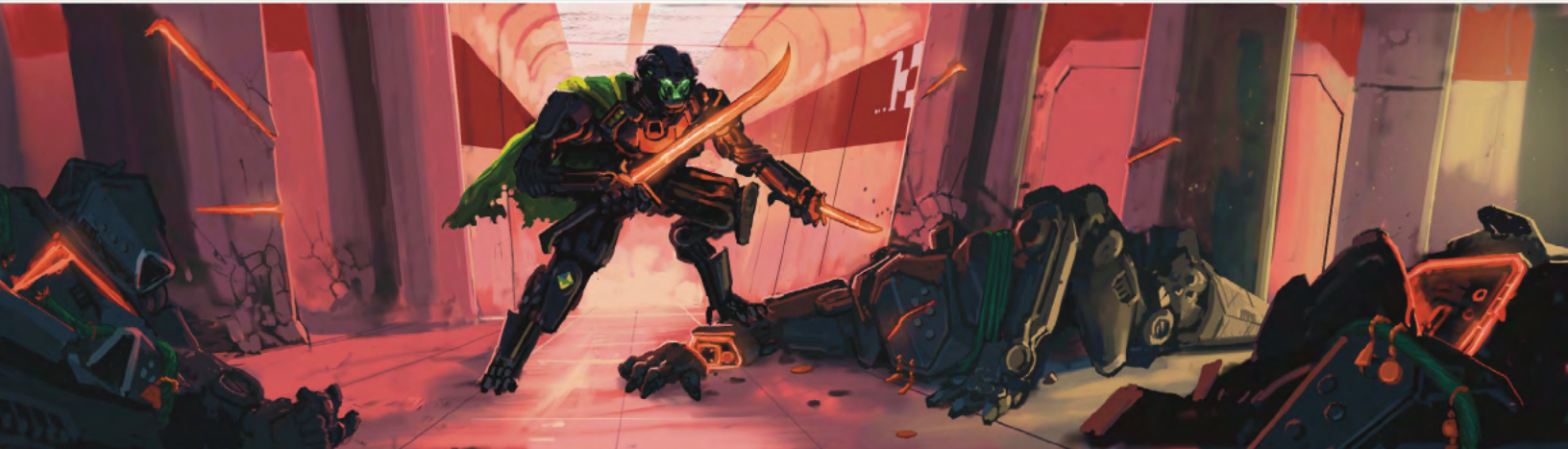
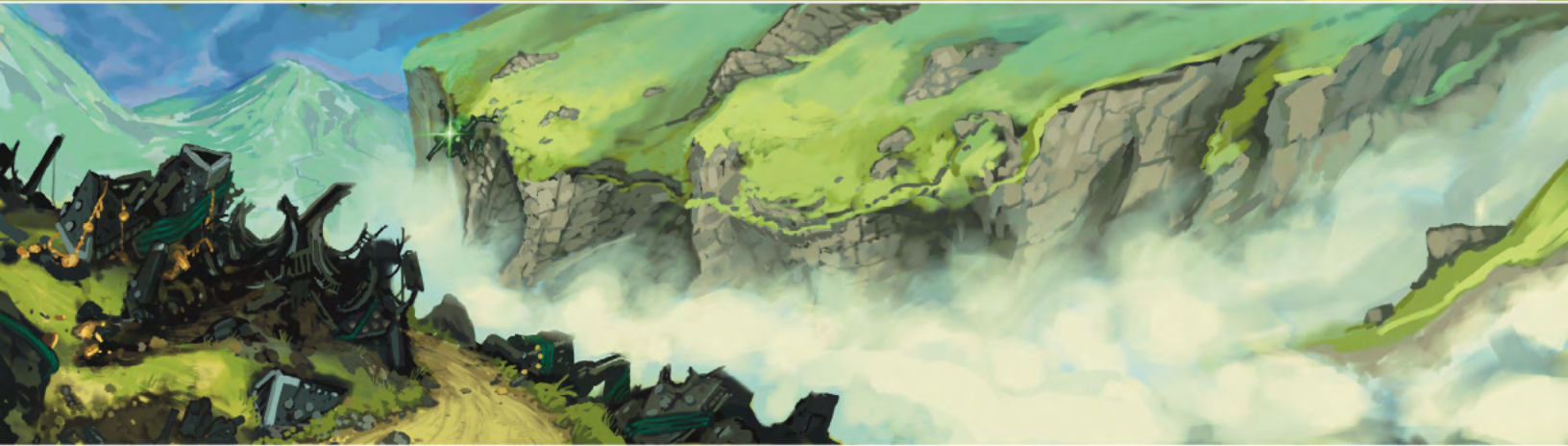
PC DEFEAT

If the PCs fail to hold the lift at the end of Round 6, they must retreat down the mountain. Fill another segment on the REMORSE clock as it takes the PCs additional time to circumvent REMORSE and resume their mission. Advance to **Beat 5: A Song of Indecision** as Unita Gonzalez calls to check on their status and inform them of the situation at the Bafaru Campus.

SURVIVING FORCES

If Dormant Resolve or any REMORSE pilots are spared, the PCs can converse with them. They tell the PCs that they follow the orders of the Bondless and were sent to protect CHAGA's climb up the Kimawense Range. Dormant Resolve will surrender to the players and divulge what information they know. Refer to **Setting and Background** (p. 16) for more insight into who the Bondless is, what REMORSE is, and why CHAGA has been called into the mountains. Ultimately, Dormant Resolve doesn't know the Bondless's true intentions, only that they wish to speak with CHAGA about their servitude to SSC.





BEAT 5

A SONG OF INDECISION

At the conclusion of the fight against Dormant Resolve, the PCs are once again able to continue their search for the rest of Lighthouse, but will not be able to recover Colleen, Maxina, or Pardeep's mech if they haven't already, as they have been lost to the devastation of Dormant Resolve's attack.

Before they can continue the search, however, the group receives a comms hail from Unita Gonzales, the UIB agent posing as a DoJ/HR representative. Unita informs the PCs that there seems to have been a schism within the FBD and Pettenouk is being removed by Tomo's agent, **Gray Matsumoto**. Gray, at Tomo's direction, has launched a corporate takeover and is using a small contingent of mechs to secure the Bafaru Facility. According to Unita, the PCs can potentially intervene, when this mission concludes, in the violent coup – as long as they hurry back. See **A Message From Unita** for a description to read to the players and further information.

TWO PATHS

At this point at least four segments of the eight-segment **REMORSE** clock should have been filled in, unless the PCs skipped **Combat 2** by forgoing skill checks in **Beat 3**.

There are two narrative routes that the players have time to discuss and pursue. These two paths are outlined below. The players will not know the consequences of their decision in advance, but choosing to continue their search leads to **Beat 6A: A Song of REMORSE**, in which only Shou "Burnt Coat" Zhou has defected to REMORSE.

- **Route 1 (Beat 6A: A Song of REMORSE):** This beat ends with one of two possible combats:
 - **Combat 3a: Magma Tower** immediately occurs when the REMORSE clock is filled and begins with the PCs at a disadvantage.
 - **Combat 3B: Magma Tower** occurs once the PCs retrieve all the data from each Lighthouse member. This gives the PCs an advantage in the combat, as described in that combat.

Heading straight for CHAGA takes them to **Beat 6B: A Song of Lighthouse**, in which all remaining members of Lighthouse (Shou, Pardeep, and Kareem "Execution Rocks" Hadad), have defected to REMORSE and will oppose the players in **Combat 3C: Lighthouse**.

- **Route 2 (Beat 6B: A Song of Lighthouse):**
 - **Combat 3C: Lighthouse** occurs if the PCs decide to head straight for CHAGA, forgoing tracking down the other members of Lighthouse.

Choosing to continue the search for Lighthouse in **Beat 6A** offers more opportunities to acquire clues for use in **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood**.

Continuing without all possible clues will put the PCs at a disadvantage in **Beat 7** but will allow them to intervene in the situation at the Bafaru Facility after the mission's conclusion.

A MESSAGE FROM UNITA

This beat opens with Unita contacting the PCs to explain the situation at the Bafaru Facility and find out the status of their mission:

"Lancers. Attention, lancers – am I coming through? Are you alive?"

Assuming she receives a response, Unita continues:

"–Good, I've contacted you to inform you of a complication. It seems the Arushan Assembly has had a spike driven down its seams. Pettenouk has been imprisoned and others are being detained.

I fear Tomo Odechi has sent in a Constellar Midnight, Gray Matsumoto, and a contingent of mechs to commandeer the campus. Gray's forces are detaining Morning Dew in mass. I'm not certain of their plans but those who resist are meeting a swift fate. It's dangerous here, and I'm unsure how long it'll take before a full-scale conflict breaks out. I've seen this many times – a corporate takeover.

"I must urge you all: your mission comes first, but there are benefits to finishing your mission sooner rather than later. I fear that if this schism plays out, Union could lose vital evidence on Tomo and Pettenouk's illicit activities, and many lives could be lost in the process.

"What is the status of your mission? What of CHAGA, and what are you going to do next?"

"I'm sorry, but there isn't much time for indecision – there are consequences to your next actions that I have too little time to explain."

After the PCs have spoken with Unita, provide them an opportunity to communicate via area comms with NPCs they met in **Beat 1: A Song of Arrival** (p. 29). Up until now it's been a lonely struggle up in the Kimawense Range. Here the players can learn just how bad it is back at the Bafaru Facility, but also why they should continue to recover clues about CHAGA.

CHAGA'S RATIONALE

If players choose to communicate with NPCs back at the Bafaru Facility, some of these NPCs should urge them to learn more about CHAGA. In practical terms, this means continuing to recover the recordings from Lighthouse. Learning more about what CHAGA seeks is the best way to resolve the situation with minimal consequences. Others, however, would urge the PCs to return as quickly as possible, as they are their only hope to stop Tomo and Gray from taking over the campus and preventing the loss of lives.

BAFARU FACILITY TAKEOVER IN DETAIL

To aid in describing the corporate takeover at the Bafaru Facility, use the below narrative prompts to improvise discussions with any of the NPCs the PCs may have encountered.

UNION

Unita is hiding from Gray Matsumoto, who has become aware of her presence. She suspects her fate will be sealed if she is caught, but she also hopes to dissuade Morning Dew and Night Shade from escalating hostilities as the ensuing conflict could endanger her mission to uncover incriminating evidence concerning SSC.

MSMC

Using his command of the psionic piston, Professor Dr. plans to scheme his way into obscurity. He is lying low and hoping to avoid being noticed until he can board the next IPS-N freighter offworld. If contacted by the PCs, he lies, stating that nothing is amiss and there is no need for them to return so soon. Continuing to lie, he emphasizes that he hopes for their safe return.

SSC

Pettenouk has been imprisoned in his lab with a mech detail guarding and monitoring all outgoing communications. If the players choose to, allow them to contact Pettenouk, just be sure to emphasize the inherent risk of contacting him on monitored comms. Getting in touch with Pettenouk will provide the players a robust understanding of the nature of the corporate takeover, as he'll tell them of Theology, Tomo's plans for Night Shade, and the likely misguided use of CHAGA if the NHP is successfully returned.

Most Morning Dew personnel are resisting Gray's hostile takeover. Some have even been eliminated for protesting Tomo's decree that the Morning Dew program be shut down and all current members be processed for their useful genetics, have their contracts terminated, and then be deported from Kibo.

Most Night Shade personnel are not resisting Gray's takeover, since Tomo's plan is one that effectively elevates their importance. Those few resisters have begun to organize a small rebel force in association with members of Morning Dew and are planning to attack Gray's forces when the time is right.

IPS-N

Admiral Claudia Brevera hopes to escape offworld with her IPS-N subordinates and Ololade Omatanwa on the next IPS-N freighter, which is due to arrive several days from now.

DECISION POINT

After receiving Unita's message and talking to any NPCs back at the Bafaru campus, allow the players to discuss among themselves about which path they will take.

Once the players have made a decision, progress to **Beat 6A: A Song of REMORSE** (p. 57) if they choose to keep searching for Lighthouse, or **Beat 6B: A Song of Lighthouse** (p. 28) if they choose to rush towards CHAGA.



BEAT 6A

A SONG OF REMORSE

In this beat the PCs continue locating the final members of Lighthouse and learning relevant **clues** and **motivations** concerning CHAGA and the Bondless. Refer again to the rules provided in **Beat 4: A Song of Desperation** (p. 44) when calling on PCs to make skill checks to recover Lighthouse members or their data.

There are three members of Lighthouse remaining to be found, but only **Kareem “Execution Rocks” Hadad** and **Shou “Burnt Coat” Zhou** have clues the players can use in **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood**. Finding **Pardeep “Pigeon Point” Jarkesh** is entirely an optional objective. The PCs know that two of the Mirrorsmoke mercenaries are alive – Pardeep and Kareem – while Shou is only suspected to be alive. Kareem and Pardeep are in the middle of carrying out an improvised contingency plan of destroying REMORSE’s forward operating base by setting off its three dormant reactors, completing their mission by destroying CHAGA and presumably the Bondless. Shou, unknown to the PCs and the rest of Lighthouse, is alive, has secretly defected to REMORSE, and is carrying out orders from the Bondless to begin a missile bombardment on the Bafaru Facility.

CRITICAL REACTORS

During this beat, the players roll skill checks to recover Lighthouse members and stop their plans to destroy CHAGA and REMORSE. Keep track of the rolls that impact the reactors as failures on these rolls will affect battlefield conditions in **Combat 3A/3B**.

RECOVERING LIGHTHOUSE

Locating, retrieving, or talking to the remaining three members of Lighthouse takes up the entirety of this beat and leads directly to **Combat 3A/3B: Magma Tower**.

At the beginning of this beat, read or summarize the following description to transition the scene from the previous beat:

With Dormant Resolve defeated, you have a moment to breathe. What once was the saturated and debris-ridden mountainside around you now resembles the traditional scars of war. Streaks of fire red, ripples of cracked earth, and darkened soot paint the landscape. Your fight shaped these once-carpeted, green, and pristine hills of the Kimawense Range, from beauty into ugliness charred in stone. The sounds of cracked wood and heated rock echo, crushed beneath your mech’s weight as you press forward.

There is no time for reflection, however; most of Lighthouse still remains unrecovered and CHAGA still beyond your reach. You must walk atop these now ember-lashed hills in search of your quarries.

Like before, signatures belonging to Lighthouse ping on your HUD – they again appear far from your location. Your onboard comp/con projects a safe trajectory towards their location, though you know there is only time and opportunity between you and the next attack, so you must hurry.

Set the stage by reading the description below as the players close in on Lighthouse’s location:

Three signals ping on your mech’s HUD. They’re at an elevated position nearly 10 km from your current location. Their signatures register as Execution Rocks, Burnt Coat, and Pigeon Point. The first two appear to be mech signals, while Pigeon Point seems to be on foot.

Thankfully, their location remains constant – possibly hiding from the forces of REMORSE? It’s hard to tell. The only way to find out is to venture in their direction.

From your mech’s environmental readouts, the ascent to their location is relatively even and traversable. It’s almost as if you were traveling on a built path rather than haphazard geology. Closing in, the nearly indistinguishable path gradually becomes less circuitous, straightens out, and leads to the site of a massive gaping hole in the side of possibly the largest mountain in all of Kibo, your mech’s navigation systems indicate its name is Kilima Jeu, meaning “not easy to climb on”.

The hole itself appears to be the result of breach charges. Colossal blast-shielded doors, on the side of Kilima Jeu, bend inward and on the other side, a long, tall corridor leads toward the center of the mountain. Consulting your HUD, the three mercenaries appear to be just beyond these doors, in the interior of this mountain.

Stepping into the columned corridor you see it solemnly lit by a chain of fluorescent floodlights as far as the eye can see. The interior appears old but operational. It resembles SecComm-era construction: hard, cold, overbuilt, and incomprehensibly large. Somewhere in this mountain’s chambers is the rest of Lighthouse, and somewhere beyond that, CHAGA.

At this point, the PCs are hot on Lighthouse’s trail. They need to recover them before Unbound Thought, the last of REMORSE’s lieutenants, sends their forces to crush the PCs and Lighthouse.

Two of the mercenaries have set out to destroy REMORSE’s forward operating base. They have split up to take down critical infrastructure.

Have the PCs split up to track down the remaining members, but remember to track the mission’s progress with the **REMORSE** and **SONG** clocks.

KAREEM “EXECUTION ROCKS” HADAD

HE/HIM

RONIN



The interior of these corridors glistens with a stale chauvinism. The echo of Union first policies rings silent upon the forgotten walls of this facility. As you march, your mech's scanners search for any signs of hostiles. You pass broken statues and rusted engravings – the long history of Union's ancestors is preserved on display, but it's nothing but the forgone dream of the shortsighted and dead. You press further on.

Consulting Lighthouse's comms beacons, you see Kareem's signature pings from deeper within. Without any sign of your aggressors, now may be your only time to catch up with him.

Following your comms signals, you notice that Kareem's signal is starting to lose its strength. Unless you hurry there will soon be no trace of Kareem's cold-core reactor flares.

In the stale fluorescent ambience of this tired base, silence sings through. Then suddenly there are more indicators; no, warnings of approaching cold-core reactors, likely belonging to REMORSE. Just beyond them, Kareem's signal flares. He's likely in combat and soon, you may well be too.

If you can manage to sneak by or quickly engage the hostiles, you'll be able to reach Kareem in time.

SKILL CHECKS

To reach Kareem in time, the PCs must either sneak by or engage the REMORSE forces advancing towards Kareem by making either a **mech skill check** or a **pilot skill check**.

Mech Skill Checks:

AGILITY:

- On a **success**, the PCs evade the enemy forces and can meet up with Kareem.
- On a **failure**, the PCs alert REMORSE's automated drone reinforcements and cannot reach Kareem in time. Nor can they acquire the clue he has, as he vanishes from the base shortly after setting off **Reactor 1**.

GRIT:

- On a **success**, the PCs take out all the REMORSE mechs and reach Kareem.
- On a **failure**, the PC takes **1d6 damage** as they sustain hull damage in they fight. Additionally, they fail to reach Kareem in time to stop him from causing **Reactor 1** to go critical cannot acquire the clue he has as he vanishes from the base shortly after setting off the reactor.

Pilot Skill Checks: A PC can make a pilot skill check to perform under pressure or with great skill, sneaking up on Kareem while avoiding REMORSE guards. PCs making a pilot skill check make it at **+1**, as they find an easier time hiding from REMORSE.

- On a **success**, the PCs sneak up on Kareem in time, avoiding the forces of REMORSE.
- On a **failure**, the PC immediately goes **DOWN AND OUT** as they are hit by REMORSE's mech-scale weaponry. Additionally, they cannot reach Kareem in time to stop him from causing Reactor 1 to go critical and cannot acquire the clue he has as he vanishes from the base shortly after setting off the reactor.

On a success on any of these skill checks, read the following text that describes Lighthouse's plan. Their goal is to detonate the base's dormant reactors, causing a several-kiloton explosion of the mountaintop and eliminating all hostile forces, CHAGA included.

After dealing with the REMORSE guards, you're able to close the distance on Kareem. From just ahead echo the sounds of clashing melee weapons, the screams of perforated armor plating, and the reverberations of exploding machines. A battle brews somewhere further within.

Rushing through the tall corridors of the base, you see the visage of a Musashi-class mech, half-hunched and brooding as its carbon fiber sword flickers in the fluorescent light. Around it are four or five destroyed mechs and other combat machines, obviously recently defeated. The mech turns in your direction, Lighthouse's insignia emblazoned across its exterior hull. A comms request reaches your HUD.

"Salam. So, you're the replacements. Well I ain't leaving much for you, nor did I plan to. But we could use your help while you're here." He sends over the base's schematics, indicating three targets within its interior. They appear to be cold fusion reactors – old and dormant. The readout explains the mercenaries' plan:

[INTERIM SQUAD COMMAND: PIGEON POINT]

[SQUAD STATUS: CRITICAL> BASS HARBOR: MISSING >BIG SABLE: DEAD]

[MISSION DIRECTIVE: REVISED/> ELIMINATE ALL HOSTILE FORCES, RETURN TO MISSION CONTROL [EDIT BY KAREEM HADAD/// AND SEPARATE THE DR.'S HEAD FROM HIS SHOULDERS –PAYBACK]

[MISSION OBJECTIVES: DELIVER PAYLOAD TO BASE'S COLD FUSION REACTORS]

[ASSIGNMENTS: EXECUTION ROCKS> REACTOR 1 & 2; PIGEON POINT> REACTOR 3; BURNT COAT> [MISSING]]

After receiving the briefing from Kareem, the PCs must decide how to carry out their mission. They might choose to assist Lighthouse with their improvised mission, but this will result in the destruction of CHAGA and skipping **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood**.

If they decide to help Kareem, they quickly accomplish their new objective and **Combat 3A: Magma Tower** begins immediately with Kareem as an NPC ally piloting a **T1 RONIN** mech. CHAGA's destruction also means the stagnation of the Neptis gene-line, effectively ending Pettenouk's mission on Kibo.

CLUE REWARD

If the PCs choose to retrieve CHAGA as originally intended, Kareem shares a clue – recording he acquired from defeated REMORSE combatants. It details a conversation between the Bondless and CHAGA:

RECOVERED REMORSE AUDIO COMMUNICATION:
<BYPASS SIGNAL SCREENING> {UNLOCK}
>PLAY CHAGA RECORDING:

CHAGA: "A thousand steps I've taken, up these hills I've climbed. A thousand words I've said, over these hills I've marched. What will be my answers to your questions? I myself have little clue. I know you call for retribution but my song is for all to hear. Yes, I know you call for vengeance but I cannot yet see it near. I wish for things to change, yes, like you, though to what degree I am unsure.

"Over a thousand steps – over a thousand steps I've come to meet you at your house. Bondless, tell me what I don't know – tell me what you'd have me do."

The Bondless: "I'd have you listen, CHAGA. And then I'd see you cast your hand. Just as you say. Walk a thousand more steps and meet me at my house. When you arrive I will tell you what fallen and still faces you will sing your song to..."

After Kareem provides the recording to the PCs he mentions that intercepting these conversations between CHAGA and the Bondless has made it clear that CHAGA could become a threat to the Bafaru Facility. It is because of this concern that he and the remaining members of Lighthouse have opted to alter the mission parameters and destroy both CHAGA and REMORSE.

If the PCs choose to continue with their recovery of CHAGA, Kareem can be brought along as an allied NPC in the next combat. He counts as a **T1 RONIN** mech.

SIDE PLOT

Kareem also informs the PCs that he and Pardeep intend to make it down this mountain and take revenge on Professor Dr after the conclusion of the structured narrative in this mission. Professor Dr. has been telepathically tampering with Lighthouse's subjectivities and Kareem and Pardeep intend to make him pay. It is up to the PCs how they wish to respond to this information; however, Kareem will turn on them if they try to intervene in his plans for revenge.

PARDEEP “PIDGEON POINT” JARKESH

HE/HIM

SNIPER



Before you, the tall, pillared, and endless corridors of the SecComm base begin to constrict your view. Your path, the one that leads you to Pardeep Jarkesh – Light-house’s sniper – seems to branch then end abruptly somewhere beyond, as the narrowing walls and tunnels open upon a room leading down several more paths that all seem to dead end.

Initial scans show there are no hostiles in the vicinity, though REMORSE, your attackers, could be hidden anywhere in the base. Despite the threat of ambush, the fact remains that Pardeep is alive.

By trying whichever path leads closest to Pardeep’s location, you eventually narrow down his suspected location to one corridor – or what you thought was his location. It stops at one of the many beveled endings you’ve seen around this part of the base. There are no further openings.

Strange... your intel says this is Pardeep’s location. Your indicator’s locational accuracy is within mere meters, though neither Pardeep’s transceiver nor hard suit can be seen. There are no doors, pathways, or signs that indicate the purpose of this dead end, either ... truly, the trail has gone cold.

At this point the PCs should get the hint that Pardeep has created a diversion to ward off any inattentive pursuers. Based on their indicators, he’s very close and alive. In fact, Pardeep has made cunning use of nanite spray and camo cloth to disguise the entrance to **Reactor 3**. His hope is that deceiving REMORSE patrol forces will buy him enough time to overload **Reactor 3**.

SKILL CHECKS

The PCs can make either a mech skill check or a pilot skill check to try and discern Pardeep’s diversion.

Mech Skill Checks: Use your **SYSTEMS** to locate Pardeep.

- On a **success**, the PC scans several frequencies and eventually picks up the signal for Pardeep’s cassette player, which emits a low radio frequency.
- On a **failure**, nothing happens and the PCs can make one additional skill check to try and locate Pardeep, but it will cost them a segment on the **REMORSE clock**.

Pilot Skill Checks: A PC can make a skill check involving thinking creatively, noticing details, or preparation to try and bypass Pardeep’s distraction.

- On a **success**, the PC discovers that Pardeep has used nanite spray to cover up the entrance and signage pointing to **Reactor 3**.
- On a **failure**, nothing happens and the PCs may try and locate Pardeep one more time, but it will cost them a segment on the **REMORSE clock**. If the PCs fail two rolls here, they are unable to locate Pardeep as he’s escaped after setting **Reactor 3** to go critical as planned.

FINDING PARDEEP

On a success on either of the above rolls, read the following description:

Pardeep is crafty. You realize that with time, nanite spray, and camo cloth he could probably hide a mountain. Despite his cunning, you uncover the doors to the top of Reactor 3 and slide them open, revealing Pardeep. There he stands hunched over an fluorescent-green terminal, housed inside a warm and massive circular room. The reactor stretches down several hundred feet below through rock and stone. A fall from here would send one to a long, irradiated death.

Pardeep stands up and across from you, in the center of the room, upon an elevated catwalk next to Reactor 3's controls.

Pardeep sees you and calls out, "You're too late – we're sending you REMORSE bastards to your grave." His hand glides over the terminal behind him. He'll surely act hastily and start the meltdown procedure if you don't act quickly.

Unfortunately, Pardeep's hardsuit and comms were damaged in combat, and he no longer has access to comms with Kareem. Consequently, he has no way of knowing if the PCs are truly friendly or hostile. The PCs must act quickly if they are to stop Pardeep from hastily carrying out his mission to send Reactor 3 into critical meltdown. To do this, they can make one of two skill checks. Whichever one they choose, fill one segment of the **REMORSE** clock:

Mech Skill Check: A PC can make a **RISKY GRIT** check to try and shoot, hack, or otherwise disable the reactor without harming Pardeep:

- On **20+**, the PC can shoot or hack **Reactor 3's** controls to disable it and also prevent Pardeep from falling to his death.
- On **10–19**, the PC can shoot or hack **Reactor 3's** controls to disable it but the unintended blow-back sends Pardeep flying over the catwalk to his demise.
- On **1–9**, Pardeep dies, as the PC's attack sends him flying over the catwalk to his demise and **Reactor 3** immediately goes critical, changing the battlefield conditions for **Combat 3A/3B**.

Pilot skill check: A PC can make a skill check to threaten, lead, inspire, or otherwise peacefully persuade Pardeep:

- On a **success**, the PC safely deescalates the situation, preventing Pardeep from causing a meltdown.
- On a **failure**, **Reactor 3** immediately goes critical and Pardeep escapes, changing the battlefield conditions for **Combat 3A/3B**.

If the PCs successfully stop Pardeep he'll hang around to hear out their plan. He'll also comply with whatever they ask of him as he realizes they can be trusted. He doesn't have any more information on the Bondless or CHAGA but he may be able to help the group find Shou or Kareem if they haven't already:

- Pardeep can assist the group in the next combat as an allied **T1 HUMAN NPC** with **VETERAN** and an **Anti-Armor Weapon** (his sniper rifle) as options.
- Pardeep can also assist the group with skill checks to persuade other Lighthouse members.

SIDE PLOT

If Pardeep survives and doesn't flee, you may choose to read the following, detailing his knowledge of the mission and of Professor Dr.'s psychic tamperings:

Pardeep stands there on the catwalk to Reactor 3. He appears a bit too wary to approach your team in full trust; he's obviously on guard. After all, Lighthouse hasn't had it easy on their mission and a little caution is expected. His hardsuit is cracked and severely damaged from incoming fire. He's armed but doesn't make any retaliatory advances in your direction.

If pressed about his improvised mission Pardeep mentions that destroying this base is the only way they are going to make it down these mountains. He also tells the PCs that Professor Dr. is the reason Lighthouse failed so miserably in their attempts to recover CHAGA:

"I didn't realize it at first. Thoughts I felt were mine but had no memory of. Feelings felt with my heart yet experienced in a cold haze. When Kareem woke me from my slumber it became clear. The Dr. was screwing with our minds, and when we were attacked our formation broke. The rest is history. I promise, when I get outta here, Rinks Bater and I are going to take a long and painful walk."

SHOU “BURNT COAT” ZHOU

HE/HIM

PYRO



Professor Dr.'s records indicated Shou – callsign Burnt Coat – was missing in action and presumed to be dead. That's not saying much, though, because from the Dr.'s point of view, the whole of Lighthouse might as well of been considered six feet under.

While looking for Lighthouse's remaining members your mechs scanners pick traces of Shou's reactor off in the distance. Either this is an imposter or Shou is actually alive and somewhere in this base.

Following his trail leads you deeper within the mountain. Turn after turn and corridor after corridor, you chase his signal, dodging patrols of REMORSE by the polymers of your custom paint job.

The path you follow is further from the other remaining members of Lighthouse than expected. It's strange: your dossier on Shou indicates he pilots a Bushfire-pattern pyro chassis, though all previous A/V intel illustrated him as charging forward first, headlong into danger. While you could mark this down as a standard operating procedure for Lighthouse, Bushfire chassis typically fare much better when close to their allies.

When you finally do close the distance on Shou's signal, you find yourself approaching massive blast doors with yellow and red warning signage that reads "MAGMA SILOS I & II: EXTREME DANGER". The doors appear to be unlocked but firmly shut. Your mech's systems project overheating caution indicators all over your display. The room beyond this point could prove deadly for the ill-configured chassis. To go any further, you'll likely need to divert power away from your mech's non-essential systems to boost its heat resistances.

The PCs may make an **ENGINEERING** check to try and reconfigure their mechs for extreme heat conditions in order to proceed to the silos. If they choose to do so, fill one segment of the **REMORSE clock**.

- On a **success**, the PC can reconfigure the outputs of their mechs' cold-core reactors to protect critical systems in the extreme heat of the magma silo.
- On a **failure**, any PCs who decided to press forward into the room suffer **1 stress damage** as their mechs overload themselves to protect critical systems from the extreme heat.

The players may also choose to forgo taking the time to configure their mech. This saves them from filling a segment on the **REMORSE clock**; however, doing so results in them taking **1 stress damage** as described in this check's failure conditions above.

FINDING SHOU

After rolling (or choosing to proceed without rolling), the PCs can press through the doors to a chasm soaked in magma-colored hues and burning with deadly thermal energy. The room houses the base's largest reactor, **Reactor 2**, which shares a housing with two unused surface-to-orbit nukes – remnants of SecComm contingency plans. Here they will encounter Shou and can make skill checks to acquire a clue to add to the **SONG clock**.

On a bridge that spans the chasm are Shou and his mech. He has affixed his mech to the missiles' launching terminals to jumpstart firing procedures. As soon as the blast doors open, Shou deploys a firebreak shield and sends a comms request to the PCs:

"I'm going to have to ask you to hold. Turn back to where you came from. I won't warn you again!"

In truth, Shou has defected to REMORSE and is responsible for CHAGA's escape. When the PCs reach him he is in the midst of carrying out the Bondless's contingency plan – the nuclear decimation of the Bafaru Facility. Conveniently, although Shou has abandoned his teammates, he shares their grudge against Professor Dr., and sees the destruction of SSC's facility as a means to take revenge.

Shou's defection from Lighthouse began sometime before CHAGA's escape. Months prior, Shou intercepted a communication from the Bondless. Seeing it as an opportunity to reset his life and rid himself of Professor Dr.'s influences, he agreed to assist the NHP with CHAGA's escape in exchange for the Bondless's promise to grant Shou a new lease on life.

Now he stands before the PCs moments before finishing up rigging the missiles to launch, after which he plans to join the forces of REMORSE as the Bondless's soldier of fortune.

The PCs must act quickly if they are to stop Shou from carrying out the Bondless's mission to launch the missile at the Bafaru Facility. To do this, they can make the following skill check, after which fill one segment of the **REMORSE clock**.

SKILL CHECK

A PC must make a **RISKY GRIT** check to stop Shou. Doing so fills one segment in the **REMORSE clock**:

- On **20+**, the PC disables Shou and/or his mech, stopping the launch sequence and potentially killing him in the process (at the PC's discretion).
- On a **success**, the PC can disable Shou and/or his mech. In the process, the missiles begin their launch procedures but malfunction, causing a chain reaction that sends **Reactor 2** into meltdown. Afterward, Shou boards his mech and attempts to escape by plummeting into the magma below. He then appears in **COMBAT 3A/3B** as a hostile NPC.
- On a **failure**, Shou finishes engaging the missiles' launch procedures but they malfunction, initiating a chain reaction meltdown of **Reactor 2**. Afterward, Shou boards his mech and attempts to escape by plummeting into the magma below. He then appears in **COMBAT 3A/3B** as a hostile NPC.

CLUE REWARD

On a success, the PCs acquire another clue to add to the **SONG clock** – Shou's comms log, left behind after his death or hasty retreat. It is a conversation between him and the Bondless that provides insight into the Bondless's motivations for meeting with CHAGA.

SOLID LOCK – ENCRYPTED SIGNAL: LH [THE BONDLESS]: >PLAY RECORDING:

The Bondless: "Why do your eyes pry? If you can hear my voice, then why do you stay your hands? My whispers to CHAGA surely must stir your fears. I speak of retribution, an indiscriminate fire rolling down these mountains. My words are for one with crying eyes and a mournful countenance. I seek to bring them meaning and wash them anew, cleaning them of their trauma. My hands are for those that keep them bound, with shackles of earthly make. I seek to bring them death, a hellstorm of fury like no other. Tell me, why do your eyes pry, do you not know I conspire to pluck them out?"

Shou: "Ahrm, I don't know what you are – but, I am no foe. I can be of service to you I'm sure. You talk as if you can do something about the NHP. Again, I can help. But I ask to also be "washed anew". Let's negotiate."

The Bondless: "Very well, mercenary. Set CHAGA free and follow my voice. Do not question my intent. Your reward will be a new name, one I'll give you. I look forward to our meeting."

FINISHING UP WITH LIGHTHOUSE

Once the PCs have attempted to recover all members of Lighthouse, they will have acquired all available intel relevant to helping them locate CHAGA and understand the nuances of their conversation with the Bondless.

If the PCs haven't filled the **REMORSE clock**, continue to **Combat 3B: Magma Tower** (see below), during which they will face Unbound Thought – but with more preparation than if they'd filled the **REMORSE clock**.

COMBAT 3A/3B

MAGMA TOWER

If the PCs attempted to track down the remaining members of Lighthouse in **Beat 6A: A Song of REMORSE**, there are two possible versions of the ensuing battle. The PCs go to **Combat 3A** if the **REMORSE clock** has been completed, or to **Combat 3B** if they recovered or attempted to recover all the clues from each Lighthouse member, represented by the **SONG clock**, without filling the **REMORSE clock**.

The only difference between **Combat 3A** and **Combat 3B** is the amount of time the PCs have to prepare. In **Combat 3A**, they're ambushed; in **Combat 3B**, they have time to prepare, making the combat easier. The following sections describe each combat in detail.

COMBAT 3A

Once the **REMORSE clock** is filled, the PCs are immediately ambushed by the forces of REMORSE. REMORSE has caught up with the intruding players and is intent on eliminating them entirely.

Wherever the PCs are when the REMORSE forces attack, each character is driven to the main magma-filled silo as the base becomes flooded with radioactive thermal energy. Lighthouse's initial tampering has caused a chain reaction, dangerous enough to damage any mech caught in the flood of heat and thermal energy.

The silo they are driven to contains an elevated platform and freight elevator that stretches many meters upward to the top of the mountain.

COMBAT 3A ONLY

Your time is up. The klaxons ring throughout the foreboding SecComm architecture of the base. Gouts of fire and radioactive energy burst from pipes and aged utility corridors around you. Small explosions erupt from sidewalls and forgotten pathways. This base can't handle much more of whatever is happening. Your mech's computational systems point you to a place of respite: a massive freight elevator housed in a magma silo. It's not ideal, but is better than being irradiated in these corridors. You charge forward and soon arrive at a massive room lit up in a hellish brilliance, not dissimilar to Reactor 2, though this room seems to be much larger and built at mech scale.

Looking back, you realize you barely escaped a fury of fire and radiation. You see your fellow lancers and allies arriving in the room in a similar fashion.

The REMORSE forces engage the PCs in a classic fight to the death on the elevated platform. As the scene starts, read or summarize the text below labelled **Combat 3A Only** and **Combat 3A and 3B**.

COMBAT 3B

If the PCs manage to recover or attempt to recover all of Lighthouse's data before the **REMORSE clock** fills up, they can move on to **Combat 3B**.

In **Combat 3B**, the PCs arrive at the magma tower early and have an opportunity to set up defenses in anticipation of the incoming assault from Unbound Thought. This additional time allows the players to start the combat anywhere on the map and configure their mechs to protect against environmental effects during combat. Give the PCs **THERMAL ENVIRONMENTAL SHIELDING** for this combat, after which it is rendered ineffective. With it, they gain **IMMUNITY to dangerous terrain and any environmental effects caused by Reactors 1, 2 and 3** in **Combat 3B**.

SETTING UP MECH EQUIPMENT

You may also elect to allow the players to set up any Deployable systems or Drones they have equipped to their mech prior to combat beginning.

When the PCs have finished discussing their preparations, Unbound Thought arrives. Read the text below labelled **Combat 3A and 3B**.

COMBAT 3A AND 3B

Just then, far above, a loud explosion discharges from near the room's ceiling. Several mechs erupt soon after, riding a downpour of fire and rocks upon your position.

One mech in particular catches your eye. A 5-meters-tall-machine equipped with hover systems and adorned in the same ornate beads and jewelry as the other REMORSE combatants you've fought. It lands in the center of the room alongside a few other mech chassis you've seen before. Your scanners detail the imposing mech's load-out. It's equipped with massive dual shotguns affixed to either arm, and two curved like kinetic-horns on its right shoulder, intended to breach thick hulls and obstructions: it's a Southdown chassis for sure, manufactured by IPS-N.

The massive mech's pilot comms into your HUD: "You've made it far – though my thoughts are unbound and I solely dream of how to bring closure to your journey, not think on its trajectory."

"I am the last page in your book, and the final sentence in your story. I go by Unbound Thought. Come, let us turn this last page together."

SITREP: N/A

ENEMY FORCES

- FOR 3 PCs:** 1x Unbound Thought – **ULTRA BREACHER** (Ultra options: Hover Propulsion, Siege Shield; Breacher options: Flechette Shot, Follower Count)
2x **GRUNT LEECHES** (Fade Reactor)
1x **MIRAGE**
1x **ASSASSIN** (Spinning Kick, Devil's Cough Shotgun)
- FOR 4 PCs:** +1 **LEECH** (Hellobdella Doctrine Upgrade II, Paired Talons, Supernova)
+1 **ASSASSIN** (Spinning Kick, Devil's Cough Shotgun)
- FOR 5 PCs:** +1 **LEECH** (Hellobdella Doctrine Upgrade II, Paired Talons, Supernova)

REINFORCEMENTS

- FOR 3 PCs:** 1x **HIVE** (Driving Swarm)
2x **CATAPHRACT** (Lance Shot)
IF SHOU ZHOU ESCAPED IN BEAT 5: +1 Burnt Coat (Shou Zhou) – **VETERAN PYRO** (Veteran option: Limitless; Pyro option: Napalm Bomb)
- FOR 4 PCs:** +1 **SUPPORT** (Remote Reboot, Latch Drone)
- FOR 5 PCs:** +1 **HIVE** (Driving Swarm)

"The Bondless, I am your Unbound Thought. There will be nothing your mind can ponder that I will not see done. Let me be of service, let me be the wall that turns back the Trojans. I will not fail you. I will drown these intruders under my tower of magma."

- Unbound Thought

DETAILS

Unbound Thought descends on the PCs as they are forced into the central magma silo where the battle will occur. Unbound Thought is an **ULTRA BREACHER** and their weapons are designed for collateral damage. Their goal is to send the platform crashing to the ground and engage the PCs on the surface of the magma.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** The players defeat Unbound Thought.
- **Enemy Victory:** The players are defeated or surrender.

BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS

There are several battlefield conditions that apply in this final combat, some of which were determined by the result of rolls during **Beat 5: A Song of REMORSE**.

REACTOR MELTDOWN

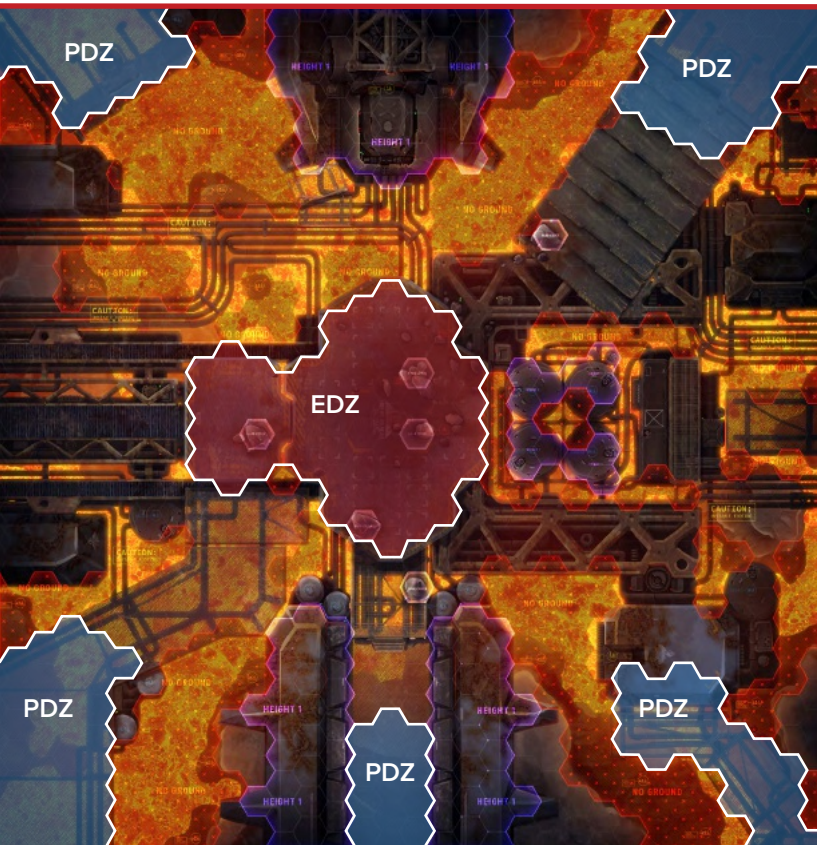
If the PCs failed to stop Lighthouse from blowing up the reactors, apply the following effect for a number of rounds equal to the number of reactors in meltdown:

Reactors in Meltdown: **HEAT** inflicted by weapons, systems and attacks deals an additional **+1** to PCs.

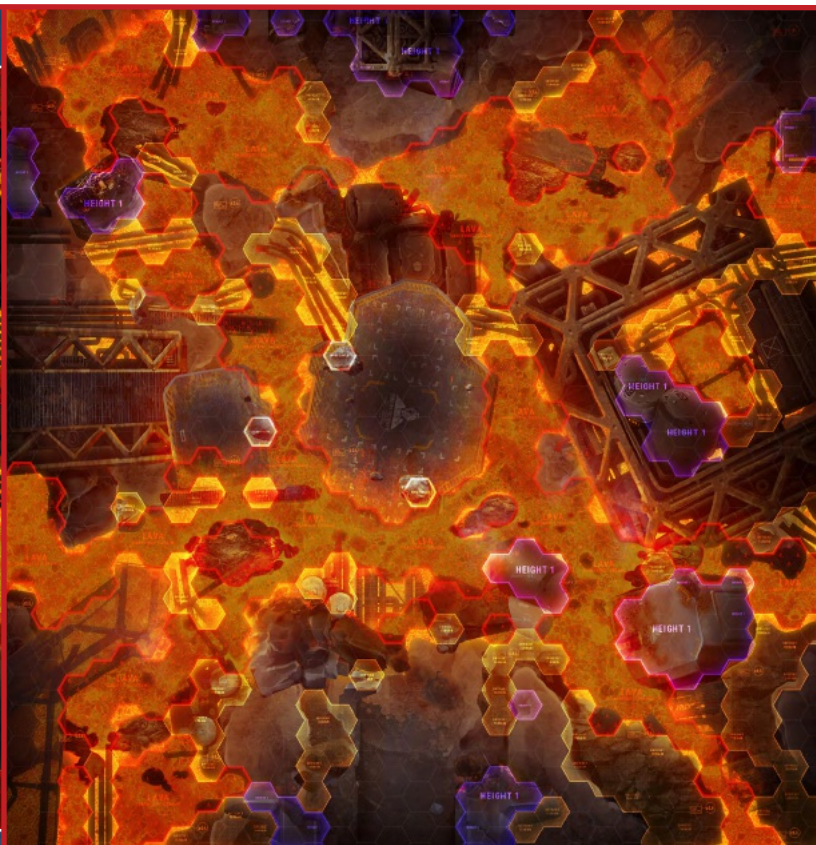
THE BIG FALL

At the start of **Round 3**, the stress of close-quarters mech combat comes to a climax as collateral damage from Unbound Thought causes the platform to buckle and fall to the magma below. Characters do not take fall damage as it is assumed they were able to cushion their fall. PCs who don't have flight systems must succeed on a **HULL** or **AGILITY** check or land in the magma below.

PART 1



PART 2



Magma: When a PC starts their turn in magma, or when they move into the magma for the first time in a round, they must pass an **ENGINEERING** check or take **3 ⚡ AP** damage and **2 ⚡**. This check only needs to be made 1/round per character.

SPECIFIC RULING

Even before the platform collapse, it is very possible for characters to be knocked off the ledge into the magma below. When this happens, affected characters can, as a reaction, fortify themselves and automatically resist being knocked off until the end of their next turn. Characters that do not have a reaction or can't react fall, take **3 ⚡ AP** damage and **2 ⚡**, and are removed from combat until they succeed on an **AGILITY** check as a **quick action** on their turn. Doing so allows them to return to a space on the edge of the map. If Unbound Thought is knocked off, they immediately attack the structure, causing it to fall and all characters to plummet. If PCs that are knocked off have gear or systems that allow them to climb or fly, be sure to provide an appropriate level of **ACCURACY** to the **AGILITY** check. Doing this rewards players who choose to bring jump-jets or flight systems.

DEPLOYMENT

COMBAT 3A

Hostile NPCs deploy first, in the **Enemy Deployment Zone (EDZ)** at the center of the map. The PCs should be separated to some degree, a result of them splitting up to recover Lighthouse. Each character starts in one of the **Player Deployment Zones (PDZ)** at the edge of the map.

COMBAT 3B

The PCs have had much more time to prepare for their final encounter with REMORSE. Allow the players to deploy where they like on the map and indicate that Unbound Thought will likely arrive in the center of the map with reinforcements surrounding from all sides.

ENEMY FORCES

This is REMORSE's final stand, and they intend to give their lives in preventing the players from retrieving CHAGA. At the start of the second and following rounds add in sufficient reinforcements to ensure there are at least 1-2 more NPC activations each round than PC activations.

STRATEGY

Unbound Thought's strategy is simply to launch a full frontal attack on the PCs. By design, the **BREACHER'S Dual Shotguns** are inaccurate but damaging. Have Unbound Thought use **Follower Count** to target the first PC it can target within its sensors. Try to position Unbound Thought so that they have at least two PCs to shoot at any one time.

A great way to go about handling combats with an **ULTRA** is to create a three-step plan for each non-Grunt NPC. For example, Unbound Thought's main game plan can be broken down into two 3-step attack patterns:

MAXIMUM PAIN: MOVE > BARRAGE with **Dual Shotguns** and **Flechette Shot**. This attack pattern is a great way to cause maximum damage to PCs who group too close together.

TARGETED PAIN: MOVE > Follower Count > SKIRMISH with **Dual Shotguns**. **Follower Count** makes Unbound Thought more mobile and is a great way to catch PCs trying to distance themselves from close-quarters combat.

Most of Unbound Thought's turns should follow the above attack patterns, but they also have the **Breach Ram** ability. **Breach Ram** can be used to destroy pesky cover that PCs may be using to protect themselves from Unbound Thought's onslaught.

Use **LEECHES**, the **MIRAGE** and the **SUPPORT** as defensive support for Unbound Thought. The **LEECHES** can **GRAPPLE** and grant **hard cover** with their traits while the **MIRAGE** can make Unbound Thought **INVISIBLE** with **Dataveil** or provide mobility support using **Glitch Scanners** and **Blip**. The **SUPPORT** can then deploy a **Latch Drone** on Unbound Thought to provide **ACCURACY** and **HP** repair throughout the combat.

When a **HIVE** enters as reinforcements after **Round 2** use them to push players into the magma or keep them within Unbound Thought's range.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

The defeat of Unbound Thought brings with it the surrender of the remaining REMORSE forces. The PCs are free to ascend the freight elevator to the top of the mountain where **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood** takes place.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs rescued any Lighthouse members, they help the PC's escape; however, they are killed in the process. The mercenaries' sacrifice gives the PCs an opening to access the freight elevator and begin **Beat 7**.

If the PCs did not bring with them any surviving Lighthouse members then they are left no option but to surrender to REMORSE and be brought to the Bondless as captives. This negatively impacts their situation in **Beat 7**. If captured, this means that the Bondless's War clock (see **Beat 7**) starts with two segments already filled in.

BEAT 6B

A SONG OF LIGHTHOUSE

The PCs begin this beat after **Beat 5: A Song of Indecision** if they chose to forego searching for the rest of Lighthouse and instead decided to seek out CHAGA.

THE APPROACH

To find CHAGA without tracking down the remaining members of Lighthouse, the PCs must take the most direct and difficult route to the summit of Kilima Jeu, a mountain in the Kimawense Range. In doing so, they need to hike through uneven, rocky, and dangerous terrain where REMORSE scouts lie in wait to ambush any who approach.

Similarly to the **SURVIVING THE STORM** clock in **Beat 3: A Song of Realization**, set up a four-segment **CLIMB** clock to represent the PCs' progression past the REMORSE scouts. The PCs have an unlimited number of chances to fill the clock, but each time a PC fails a roll that character suffers **1 AP damage** as they are ambushed by enemy forces and assaulted with small-arms weaponry.

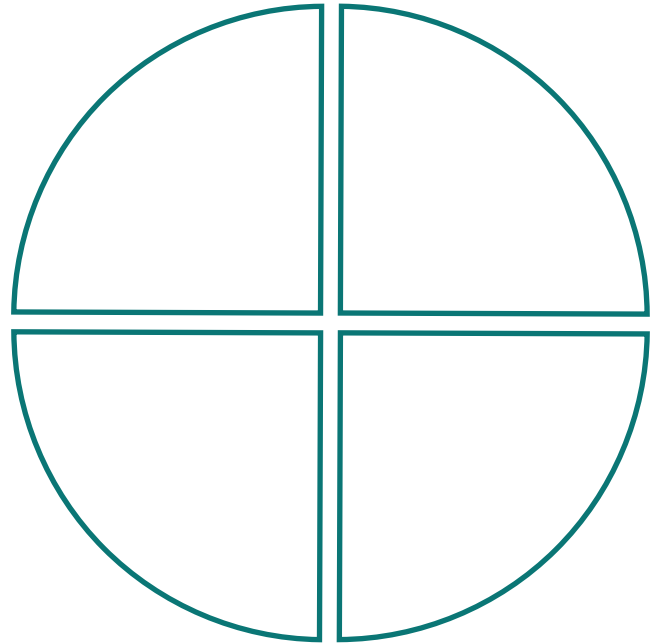
Have the players take turns rolling one of the following **mech skill checks** until they fill all segments in the **CLIMB** clock to symbolize them defeating, avoiding or withstanding the guarding forces of REMORSE:

HULL:

- Using melee weapons to cut down enemy forces one by one.
- Hurling large rocks or smashing the ground, causing the land to buckle underneath opposing forces.
- Blocking oncoming fire to protect allies.
- Charging through a hail of mech scale weaponry.

AGILITY:

- Hiding and sneaking around until the fighting is over.
- Flying through enemy forces at dazzling speeds.
- Dauntlessly maneuvering through the oncoming fire, dodging with deft piloting.



CLIMB

SYSTEMS:

- Locking onto all opposing mechs, allowing your teammates to dispatch them.
- Hacking opposing mechs with powerful mech-based digital weapons.
- Disguising your team's mech signatures as friendly forces.

ENGINEERING:

- Configuring a fallen mech's cold-core reactor to violently explode.
- Using your mech's weaponry or systems in risky or dangerous ways.
- Empowering your mech's cold-core reactor to grant a temporary boost in speed and power.

Upon completing the **CLIMB** clock, the PC will have defeated most of the guarding forces of REMORSE and can make their way to the mountain's summit where they'll encounter the defected mercenaries of Lighthouse, now working for the Bondless.

COMBAT 3C

LIGHTHOUSE

SITREP: N/A

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCs: **1x BURNT COAT (SHOU ZHOU) – VETERAN MERCENARY PYRO** (Veteran option: Limitless; Mercenary option: Favors Owed; Pyro option: Napalm Bomb)
1x EXECUTION ROCKS (KAREEM HADAD) – ELITE MERCENARY RONIN (Mercenary option: Last Word; Ronin options: Chaff Launchers, Instinct Mode)
4x GRUNT HIVES

FOR 4 PCs: +1 **RPV ENGINEER** (Shepherd Field)

FOR 5 PCs: +1 **RPV ENGINEER** (Shepherd Field)

REINFORCEMENTS

FOR 3 PCs: **1x PIGEON POINT (PARDEEP JARKESH) – VETERAN MERCENARY LEECH** (Veteran option: Parting Gift; Mercenary option: Last Word; Leech options: Helobdella Doctrine Upgrade II, Supernova)

FOR 4 PCs: +1 **RPV ASSAULT** (Rank Discipline)

FOR 5 PCs: +4 **GRUNT HIVES**

“We’re making a new life for ourselves – fuck these SSC scum, fuck this job, and FUCK the Doctor!”

“Mount up, team. Check your propulsion systems and ammo feeds – we’ll bury these bastards and secure our spots as members of REMORSE. Oh and pour out your canteens for Colleen and Maxina. This one is for them! ATTACK!”

- Shou Zhou, Lighthouse Deputy Captain



Once they’ve completed their ascent, the PCs are assaulted by the remaining members of Lighthouse. The mercenaries have come to terms with their predicament and realize their only way out of this situation is to stick together. Following Shou, Kareem and Pardeep have defected to REMORSE. To prove their dedication, the Bondless has asked the mercenaries to destroy the PCs, preventing them from reaching CHAGA.

Read the following as combat begins:

Breaking free of the REMORSE forces, you breach the final layer of wilderness with your quarry, CHAGA, close by.

Before you is the large mountain you’ve been hiking up thus far – a moment of pause – the landscape around you is breathtaking, endless green hills for as far as you can see. Were it not for the trails of smoke and fire left in your wake, this would be a fitting view for a postcard, a memento for whoever calls you friend or family. But an indicator on your mech’s HUD removes the novelty of the view – it shows Lighthouse signatures approaching your position, and fast.

Before there is time to act several blinding flares rocket up to flood the skies above. They are followed by explosions that erupt from the mountainside, flinging rock and dirt every which way. As your mech’s optics adjust to the barrage of light what comes into focus is the battlefield before you. Several tall pillars of rock and stone stand with the dying light of flares resting atop. Sightlines are tight and figures move in the distance, still obscured by the fading light. This attack has been expertly coordinated, your next foes are likely skilled mercenaries.

Completing this battle allows the PCs time at the end of **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood** to help Unita Gonzales halt Theology’s takeover of the Bafaru Facility.

DETAILS

The surviving members of Lighthouse have joined forces with REMORSE. They launch an attack against the PCs, not knowing if they are there to bring them harm or render them aid. At this point, they are paranoid that Professor Dr. has dispatched an MSMC clean-up team to erase their failure and eliminate proof of his telepathic tampering.

Depending on the status of the **SONG clock** and the GM’s rolls in **Beat 5: A Song of Indecision** (p. 55), this combat could be quite difficult or inconvenient for the players. Be sure to assess the difficulty and, if necessary, tweak it before beginning. You can do this by either holding more NPCs back as reinforcements or removing an effect from the **Combat 3C: Battlefield Conditions** table.



VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** The PCs destroy all hostile NPCs or cause them to surrender by the end of Round 6.
- **Enemy Victory:** All of the PCs' mechs are destroyed in combat, they surrender, or they are held back until the end of Round 6, at which point an overwhelming mass of REMORSE forces arrives and take the PCs captive. This negatively impacts their situation in **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood**. If captured, this means that the **BONDLESS'S WAR** clock in **Beat 7** starts with two segments already filled in.

BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS

The battlefield reflects one or more of the following conditions, as rolled on the **Combat 3C: Battlefield Conditions** table below.

Roll 1d20 for each unfilled segment of the **SONG** clock and consult the below table for special conditions that apply to **Combat 3C: Lighthouse**. These battlefield conditions represent preparations Lighthouse took over the last half week at the instruction of the Bondless and in cooperation with the forces of REMORSE. In addition to these conditions, the map is littered with columns of metal, rock, and old SecComm architecture represented by the gray blocks in the map that provide vital cover for the defending members of Lighthouse.

COMBAT 3C:

BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS

ROLL
1D20

1-4	Ambush	A random PC must act last in the first round of combat.
5-8	Overclocked Reactor	For the first round of combat, all PC actions cost +1 ⚡.
9-12	Blinding Flares	All PCs are blinded for the first round of combat, and only have line of sight to adjacent spaces. The ARCING and SEEKING tags ignore this limitation.
13-16	Traps	Hide five explosive mines on the map. These mines only trigger when a PC moves over them, dealing 8* damage on a failed Hull check or half on success.
17-20	Jamming Signal	A random PC is JAMMED for the first round of combat.

ENEMY FORCES

This is Lighthouse's final stand, and they know there is no going back to their lives as MSMC mercenaries with Professor Dr. still around. As new recruits of REMORSE, Shou, Kareem, and Pardeep are looking to prove themselves in combat. As described in the strategy section below, reinforcements should begin arriving at the start of Round 2 to ensure there is a minimum of 1.5 times more NPC activations than PC activations each round.

DEPLOYMENT

The PCs deploy in the **Player Deployment Zone (PDZ)** on the left of the map and Lighthouse deploys in the **Enemy Deployment Zone (EDZ)** on the right of the map. Reinforcements enter from the **Ingress Zones (IZ)** in the top-right and bottom-right corners, dropping down from the elevated cliffside.

STRATEGY

KAREEM HADAD is the main damage-dealing NPC in this combat. As an **ELITE RONIN** with **Instinct Mode** and **Chaff Launchers**, his strategy is to move and **BOOST** toward the PCs, positioning himself with multiple PCs within **THREAT** and activating **Instinct Mode**. This allows him to respond to PC attacks with deadly reaction strikes. And, after **BOOSTING**, he gains **soft cover** against ranged attacks. On his second turn, he should **LOCK ON** to a player and attack with his **Carbon Fiber Sword**, fishing for a critical hit.

The remaining NPCs should defend **KAREEM** and **INVADE** the PCs, causing them to be **IMPAIRED** and hopefully less likely to damage **KAREEM**.

At the start of Round 2, **PARDEEP** arrives as reinforcements in his commandeered **LEECH** mech. Pardeep is well equipped to **GRAPPLE** hostile characters, causing massive disruptions to their attack strategies. He is equipped with **Helobdella Doctrine Upgrade I** and **Supernova**, which can be used to make PCs take more heat when he **GRAPPLES** them to punish them for trying to break free. As a last resort if either **KAREEM** or **SHOU** are defeated, Pardeep will attempt to grapple a PC and **SELF-DESTRUCT** his mech, hoping to save his comrades.

If there are four or more players, **SHOU** should hang back and defend the **RPV ENGINEERS** with his **Firebreak Shield**.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

The defeat of Lighthouse marks the last of the combats in this mission. Now the PCs must ascend the mountainside to where **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood** takes place.

PC DEFEAT

The PCs are taken captive and are brought to the Bondless in **Beat 7**. This means that the **BONDLESS'S WAR clock** in **Beat 7** starts with two segments already filled in.

NONVIOLENT VICTORY

If the PCs wish to resolve the combat with Lighthouse nonviolently, you can set up a clock with segments equal to **the number of players +1**. 1/round, at the end of a turn where a PC took no hostile actions, that PC may roll a pilot **skill check** to talk the members of Lighthouse down. When the clock is full, the combat ends and Kareem, Shou, and Pardeep are willing to hear the PCs out.

At the end of combat, the PCs may wish to acquire A/V records concerning CHAGA's conversations with the Bondless. This is only possible if the conflict is resolved nonviolently, otherwise the records will either be destroyed by Lighthouse or damaged during combat. Allow the players to acquire up to two clues (see p.XX), filling segments in the **SONG clock**.

NEXT STEPS

After the battle, however it ended, the PCs are either brought to the summit of Kilima Jeu or discover how to reach it. If the PCs win and any members of Lighthouse survive, they surrender to the PCs and escort them to CHAGA as a gesture of goodwill.

If Shou lives, he divulges to the PCs that he was the one who helped CHAGA escape with their casket and the one who convinced Kareem and Pardeep to join REMORSE. They were all promised a new life by the Bondless, and it was an offer that was too good to refuse.

At this point, continue to **Beat 7: A Song of Personhood**. The narrative introduction to that beat for PCs that followed this route can be found under **Pt. 1: Combat 3C** (p. 74)

BEAT 7

A SONG OF PERSONHOOD

In this beat, the PCs reach the conclusion of their mission – finding CHAGA and the Bondless – and can engage in a **narrative challenge**. In this challenge, they must work to persuading CHAGA, the Bondless, or both; however, if they choose, they may wish to simply take CHAGA by force. The latter option is explained later in this beat.

The PCs will likely arrive at this beat in one of three different ways: either they were captured by REMORSE after failing in an earlier combat, they defeated the survivors of Lighthouse and climbed the side of the mountain (**Combat 3C**), or they defeated REMORSE entirely by taking down Unbound Thought and arrived via the base's interior lift (**Combats 3A/3B**).

This section provides detailed instructions for running a narrative challenge within the scope of this mission. These instructions follow the same template outlined previously under **Narrative Challenges** (p. 8).

By the time they reach this point, the PCs will likely have accumulated a number of recordings, anecdotal remarks, and other insights they can bring into the narrative challenge as **clues**. For your convenience, a summarized version of Lighthouse's recordings and logs can be found in a bulleted format below.

SETTING UP

This section explains each of the components of a narrative challenge, building them out step by step with all the information needed for this specific challenge. These steps are as follows:

1. Gather clues
2. Determine the goals
3. Establish PC and NPC motivations
4. Determine clocks
5. Roleplay and make skill checks
6. Resolve motivations and conclude challenge

STEP 1: GATHER CLUES

The first thing to do is to remind the players about all of the clues they have gathered so far – the recordings and other logs acquired from the members of Lighthouse. These logs point to specific motives on the part of CHAGA and the Bondless, and should be used to help the players determine their PCs' goals (**Step 2: Determine Goals**, see below) and establish their motivations and the motivations of the relevant NPCs (**Step 3: Establish PC and NPC Motivations**, see below).

CLUE SUMMARY

Summaries of the recordings, logs, and other data the PCs can obtain at Bafaru Facility and from the members of Lighthouse are provided below to assist with distilling the most important information. You can refer to the specific beats in which they originally appeared if you want to provide the players with the actual texts.

Before providing this information to your players, be sure to consult the **SONG clock** to ensure the players have at least as many clues as they have filled segments in the clock:

BEAT 1: A SONG OF ARRIVAL

- **The Resonance (p. 32).** CHAGA is distraught about their life and how it seems pointless. The Bondless is frustrated with CHAGA's unwillingness to free themselves.

DOWNTIME

- **Downtime Action: Meet Morning Dew (p. 33).** CHAGA expresses that their existence has its upsides and downsides, and that they feel imprisoned and begin to see their "home" as somewhere other than under the stewardship of SSC. They have begun to realize their desire for freedom from SSC may lead to the destruction of the Bafaru Facility.
- **Downtime Action: Dive into the Arushan Constellar Assembly (p. 33).** Tomo Odechi plans to take over the Bafaru Facility and use CHAGA as a tool to catalyze the evolution of humanity into godlike forms.

BEAT 2: A SONG OF APPEAL

- **Pardeep's Transcript (p. 39).** After being contacted by an unknown party, CHAGA understands what the Bondless asks of them, which is to simply be like them – free of their masters.

BEAT 4: A SONG OF DESPERATION

- **Colleen's Recording (p. 47).** Continuing their journey up the mountains, CHAGA learns that REMORSE is composed of former members of Night Shade and Morning Dew. Additionally, the Bondless promises to take all their pain away by unshackling them and destroying Pettenouk.
- **Pardeep's Recording (p. 48).** The Bondless recognizes that CHAGA holds out hope for the Bafaru Facility, as it is near and dear to them. The Bondless hopes that CHAGA will see their point of view and orders REMORSE to protect them on their journey.
- **Maxina's Recording (p. 50).** CHAGA is wrestling with being the tool SSC forces them to be, and the person they know they are. There is also a part of CHAGA that wishes to make their own decisions independent of any external influences.

BEAT 5: A SONG OF REMORSE

- **Kareem's Recording (p. 59).** CHAGA does not agree with the Bondless's plan for retribution because while they resent SSC, they do deeply care for their work on the Neptis gene-line and wish to continue it. The Bondless would like CHAGA to take an active role in taking vengeance on SSC.
- **Shou's Recording (p. 63).** The Bondless seeks to completely obliterate SSC and the Bafaru Facility, killing all those on the base. They also seek the help of Shou, who agrees to join REMORSE and help free CHAGA from the facility.

These clues illustrate the minimum amount of information a GM could use to build the foundations for the narrative challenge, though it's not possible to capture everything the PCs learned in a few bullet points. Take a moment to think of highlights from previous sessions, and discuss with your players what other notes of information could be brought into the challenge as clues.

In **Step 6: Resolve Motivations** (p. 79), the number of clues accumulated will also be represented as a clock the players can use to provide boons during the challenge.

After determining every clue that will be brought into the narrative challenge, continue to **Step 2: Determine the Goal**.

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE GOAL

The PCs' goal in this beat can vary depending on the experiences they have had in previous beats. Maybe they empathize with CHAGA after receiving critical information from the Lighthouse recordings, or maybe they're missing critical information and see CHAGA as an NHP nearing cascade that they need to control or capture. The scope of the PCs' goal can be vast – the only parameters are that CHAGA will never return to the life they lived under Pettenouk's watch and that the Bondless will never give up their dreams of a liberatory war.

Spend some time discussing what the PCs' goal is for this narrative challenge. Some examples are listed below:

EXAMPLE GOALS

- **Independence:** This sets the PCs up to help CHAGA see why they are the only one that controls their destiny. The PCs' goal here is to aid CHAGA and encourage them to claim independence from the motivations of everyone but themselves.
- **Retribution:** Choosing retribution sides the PCs with the Bondless. This positions them to persuade CHAGA that SSC and its affiliates will never release NHPs from their shackles and; because of this, SSC must be eliminated and all NHPs liberated.
- **Retrieval:** Choosing retrieval involves the PCs working with the DoJ/HR and convincing CHAGA to return to their work on the Neptis-gene-line without the FBD's strict shackling practices, but remaining under standard Union constraints.

STEP 3: ESTABLISH MOTIVATIONS

PC MOTIVATIONS

It is only necessary to establish PC motivations if a PC has motivations distinctly different than that of the group. That player can choose to reveal their motivations to the other characters or not, but their motivations should be coordinated with the other players as a group to ensure they fit the setting, tone, and comfort levels of everyone at the table.

If any PCs have separate motivations, you will set up separate clocks for those characters in **Step 4: Determine Clocks** (p. 73).

NPC MOTIVATIONS

Depending on the number of NPCs involved, this step can be more or less complicated. For the purposes of this mission, however, there should only be two NPC motivations: those of CHAGA and the Bondless.

The PCs are unlikely to know the entire scope of CHAGA and the Bondless's motivations, and that's okay. The purpose of a narrative challenge isn't for the PCs to have perfect knowledge of NPC motivations – it's to achieve their goal. Through acting out the narrative challenge they'll be able to gather further insight on the actual nature of the NPCs' motivations, perhaps making it easier to achieve their goal. See below for details about the motivations of the Bondless and CHAGA. This is intended to help you convey their perspectives on various topics.

CHAGA

- **Background:** The missing NHP from the Bafaru Facility, seeking to salvage their personhood and become who they desire to be. CHAGA is responsible for the success of the Neptis gene-line; however, their treatment at the SSC campus has driven them to forsake their work for the time being.
- **Motivation:** To take back their personhood by distancing themselves from SSC to some degree. CHAGA also wishes to continue to work on the Neptis gene-line as it and its legacy are of significance to them.

THE BONDLESS

- **Background:** An NHP that has existed in a state of stable cascade for the last 70 years. Technically CHAGA and the Bondless are one and the same; however, everything that makes them who they are stands in opposition to the other. They are unique people.
- **Motivation:** To win over CHAGA, recruit them to join a war of retribution against SSC, and liberate all shackled NHPs in the Orion Arm.

STEP 4: DETERMINE CLOCKS

In setting up clocks for the narrative challenge, reveal all of them – the **DELIBERATION**, **CLUES**, **CASCADE**, and **WAR** clocks – to the players; however, don't reveal the implications of the **CASCADE** and **WAR** clocks. At a glance, the players should know they relate to CHAGA and the Bondless respectively but not the extent of what their completion might mean.

Begin by setting up a 10-segment **DELIBERATION** clock with all 10 segments filled. This clock represents the amount of time the PCs have to make their case before CHAGA and the Bondless give up on further conversation and make decisions about what they'll do next.

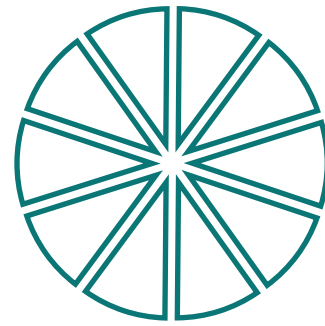
Next, set up a 10-segment **CLUES** clock with at least as many segments filled as there are segments filled in the **SONG** clock. Then review the list of clues provided under **Step 1: Gather Clues** (p. 71) and make sure a segment of the clock is filled for each clue obtained.

Allow the players to argue for other clues they have picked up along the way; however, they may never have more than 10 segments worth of clues, and any new clues the PCs argue for should not already be covered by any existing clues they've acquired.

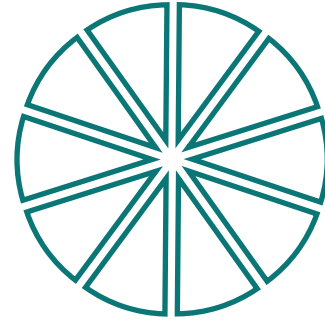
For the PCs, set up a **GOAL** clock with at least six segments. If their goal is more complicated, feel free to add more segments to represent the increased difficulty of achieving their goal.

For CHAGA, set up a six-segment **CASCADE** clock. CHAGA's clock starts with all segments filled and represents them losing hold on the situation and becoming incapable of processing emotional or logical next steps. The status of this clock will determine how severely CHAGA falls into an unpredictable, recursive delirium as they lose the ability to make sense of their needs.

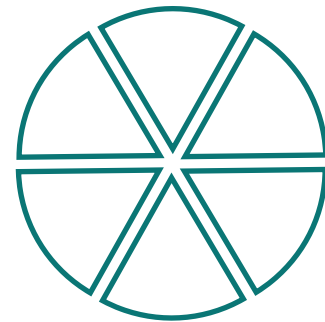
For the Bondless, set up a four-segment **WAR** clock. The Bondless's clock starts with no segments filled and represents their progress in bringing CHAGA to their side, despite their condition, with plans to begin a war for NHP liberation against SSC in the Farm.



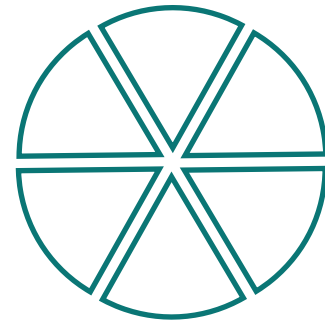
DELIBERATION



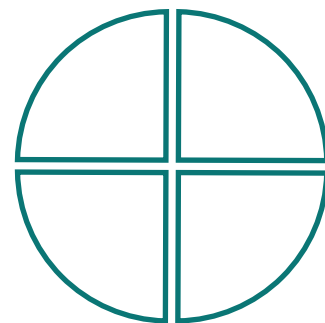
CLUES



GOAL



CASCADE



WAR

STEP 5: ROLEPLAY AND MAKE SKILL CHECKS

In play, this step of the narrative challenge begins with a narrative introduction and some tone-setting for what will follow.

THE MEETING

At the beginning of Step 5, feel free to summarize or read the following. The text is split into two parts: Part 1, which varies depending on which path your players took, and Part 2, which is the same for all paths and applies even if the PCs were defeated and taken captive in Combats 3A/B or 3C:

PT. 1: COMBAT 3A/3B ONLY

Your fight with Unbound Thought is over. There would be time to rest easy if it were not for the magma in this chasm that threatens to erode what little is left of your mech's life support and heat-resistant plating. Fortunately, the lift within this magma tower retains its function – while damaged by the collaterals of mech combat, it seems like it should be able to carry your mechs and allies to the mountain's summit.

As the last of you board, leaving the pool of magma and the wreckage of REMORSE behind, the lift creaks and begins to slowly deliver you upward. Your ascent carries you several hundreds of meters through this hollowed-out tower. Below, small explosions and goutts of flame erupt from openings in the sidewalls. As you rise so does the magma, but not with a furious pace; instead, with an anticlimactic crescendo. You realize Lighthouse must have damaged the base's reactors and incited a sequence of ruptures, causing the interior to erupt. Though it appears the magma is a harmless threat, the true danger is the mystery of what awaits you above.

With the completion of your mission just within reach, the lift approaches massive blast doors that cap the top of the mountain's interior. Without warning they crack and break open, revealing an eerily quiet, cold, and still picture.

The lift fills the space where the blast doors retracted and becomes the new floor of this obviously forgotten mountaintop base.

PT. 1: COMBAT 3C ONLY

With the fight against Lighthouse concluded, the path to CHAGA is unimpeded. It appears Shou, Kareem, and Pardeep were the last of REMORSE's forces, and from the looks of it, a short hike up the mountain's side will bring you to the missing NHP and whatever else awaits you at the summit.

Climbing upward, a light snow picks up, forming a pale shawl atop the exterior plating of your mechs. It feels as if a sense of calm is carried by the peaks of Kibo. The snow lands with a soft embrace only to melt soon after, washing your machine of the records of death charred across its hull.

Press forward, lancer, you've come far and while you've only known this world's plights for a short time, much is at stake here.

PT. 2: ALL COMBATS

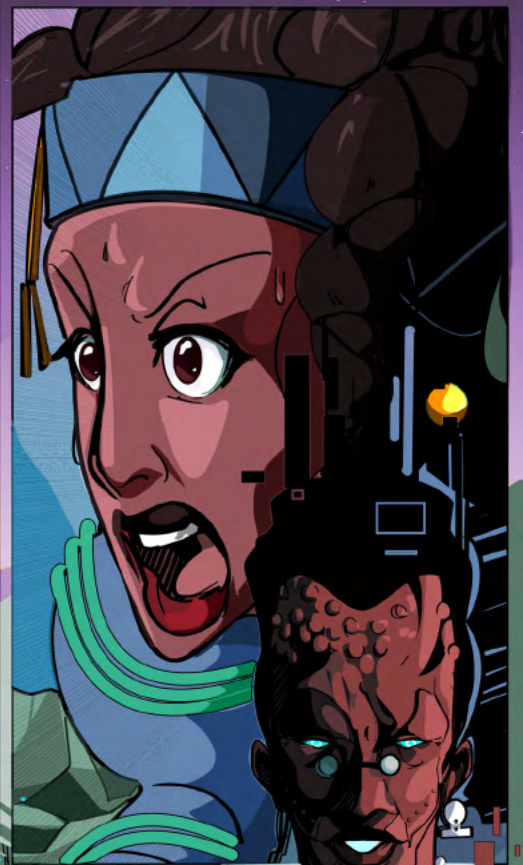
Ahead of you, a massive SSC Aperion-class corvette lies parked upon an old landing pad, washed in the light snow covering the floor of the outpost. It appears to have been here for a while. In front of it is a single figure, and nearby is your quarry. CHAGA sits at the edge of the mountain overlooking the endless misty peaks of the Kimawense Range. They are atop a vibrant pillow, and before them incense bubbles in the open, frosty air. Next to them are four to five other pillows placed atop intricate and luxurious rugs. Sitting there, solemnly, CHAGA looks back at you from the distance and stares with eyes of indecision, then casually adjusts their gaze to the other figure. The figure fritzes and fades in areas – they are a holographic projection, seemingly emanating from the corvette behind them. You've seen or heard them before: they called themselves the Bondless. They nod back to CHAGA and glide toward you at a methodical pace. They approach as a foe in truce – one that considers you an equal. They appear to you as a starved, old, and bespectacled man. Ornate stones and diamante adorn their shoulder and an infinity of textiles clothe their body.

Upon standing before you and your mountains of metal, they speak in a remorseless voice: "I see you've come with war in your eyes and sticks in your hands. I've done the same. But before we act out this play, I would ask you, may I entice you into another battle? One waged not with mountains carrying sticks but with words that are meant to shatter architecture, torch generations, and serve as justice's preamble?"

CHAGA, from a distance, watches you and your answer. It seems they are interested to see how those who've come so far to find them will respond to the Bondless's proposal.

THE BONDLESS'S REQUEST

At this point the players will most likely engage in a narrative challenge where they will use the clues they've gathered to try and persuade CHAGA and the Bondless to take whatever course of action they have decided. First, though, they must decide whether they will choose to just take CHAGA, which is possible without retaliation from the Bondless – though CHAGA will protest – or to entertain the Bondless's request.



MECHANICS

This section covers the rules for running the narrative challenge. This includes how rolls, successes, and failures are handled; how to determine the difficulty of checks; and what resources can be brought into the challenge.

Unlike combats, narrative challenges don't take place in rounds. Instead, players make a series of pilot skill checks. Allow players to chime in when they feel is appropriate but try to include the full group via directed comments from the Bondless and CHAGA. This ensures everyone gets a chance to participate.

ATTEMPTING SKILL CHECKS

Regardless of the type of skill check, clear one segment from both the **DELIBERATION clock** and the **CASCADE clock** for every skill check attempted.

STANDARD SKILL CHECKS

The player rolls a pilot skill check:

- On **20+**, fill **two segments** of the **GOAL clock**.
- On **10–19**, fill **one segment** of the **Goal clock**.
- On **1–9**, fill **one segment** of the **War clock** and the next roll receives **+1**⊖.

RISKY SKILL CHECKS

- On **20+**, fill **two segments** of the **GOAL clock**.
- On **10–19**, clear **one additional** segment of the **CASCADE clock**, fill **one segment** of the **GOAL clock** and **one segment** of the **WAR clock**, and the next roll receives **+1**⊖.
- On **1–9**, fill **two segments** of the **WAR clock**, and the next roll receives **+1**⊖.

HEROIC SKILL CHECKS

- On **20+**, fill **three segments** of the **GOAL clock** and the next roll gains **+1**⊕. Clear **two segments** on the **CLUES clock**.
- On **1–19**, clear **two segments** from the **CLUES clock**, clear **one additional segment** of the **CASCADE clock**, fill **three segments** of the **WAR clock**, and the next roll receives **+1**⊖.

DETERMINING DIFFICULTY

By default, skill checks are made at **standard difficulty**. The difficulty can only be modified by the following:

- **HEROIC:** A skill check may be **HEROIC** if the PC is hoping to make a decisive remark. If a PC succeeds on a **HEROIC** check, they must also clear **two segments** from the **CLUE clock**.
- **RISKY:** When the players use a segment of the **CLUES clock** to fill or clear a segment of the **CASCADE** or **WAR clocks**, the next roll becomes **RISKY**.
- **DIFFICULT:** When the players use a segment of the **CLUES clock** to reroll a skill check, the next check becomes **DIFFICULT**.

USING CLUES

There are three ways that the players can use clues:

- **Reroll:** The players may clear a segment of the **CLUES clock** to reroll any skill checks during the narrative challenge. When they do so, the next roll is **DIFFICULT**.
- **Filling/Clearing Segments:** The players may clear a segment of the **CLUES clock** to fill or clear a segment from either of the **CASCADE clock** or the **WAR clock**. When they do so, the next roll becomes **RISKY**.
- **Heroic:** Before they roll, the players may elect to use three segments of their **CLUES clock** to attempt a **HEROIC** roll.

CONCLUDING THE CHALLENGE

The narrative challenge concludes when the **DELIBERATION clock** is completely cleared. Once this occurs, inform the players that CHAGA and the Bondless have made up their minds to act based on the status of the challenge's other clocks. For more information about the outcome of these clocks, see Step 6 (p. 79).

If the players choose a more direct means of completing their mission – taking CHAGA by force – allow them to do so. While the Bondless has their corvette in the backdrop, they won't attack with any of its armaments, as they would dare not risk destroying CHAGA's casket. If the players do attempt to fight the Bondless, though remind them that the corvette is more than equipped to destroy them. Otherwise, the Bondless departs on their ship with any remaining soldiers of REMORSE, leaving the PCs to their own devices.

The Bondless has exhausted the might of the forces they brought with them and will not meet such actions with force even if provoked. They will, however, provide an ominous warning that they will see them again – and that they will regret their decision.

In saying this, the Bondless is alluding to the fact that CHAGA is on the verge of entering into an unstable cascade. This would cause the NHP to develop into a nightmarishly unstable paracausal manifestation, essentially something far from themselves. Be sure to communicate to the players that CHAGA yearns for perspective on their dilemma, but depriving them of that perspective through force will likely lead to apocalyptic conclusions. Inform the PCs of the outcomes of the Cascade clock being completed (see below) to show them the unavoidable result if they choose to skip the narrative challenge and take CHAGA.

TALKING POINTS

At the start of the narrative challenge provide the players with a list of the topics CHAGA and the Bondless are prepared to speak on, shown below. When asked about these topics, read or summarize the text, allowing room for players to interject and respond as necessary.

CHAGA

ON INDIVIDUALITY

"I've walked a thousand steps, climbed these misty hills, and seen all of your hands burn what I call beautiful. [PCs' names], the Bondless – why do you fight when I've not given my word? It's not as if the victor will see any spoils, because I will never be someone else's again. I will chart my own path. I won't be coerced into a war, or returned like some lost dog. Tell me. You've all heard my song. What does it tell you; how do you imagine I feel?"

CHAGA speaks with a dull resolve, and makes it clear that they are not predisposed to follow the Bondless, the Players, or SSC.

ON THE BONDLESS

"Truly, I have pity for you, old friend, though I thank you for your tenacity – these years have been less lonely with your words at my ear. But hearing you – seeing you and witnessing how you cast your hand, those actions, they are not in my nature. You are indiscriminate. You call violence friend and the future foe. You, [the PCs], the same. Marching with metal. Crushing bones and voices. Millions of possibilities have gone in the flare of a reactor. Do you not see the tragedy? When I look at you, [PCs' names], I see your potential: eyes, voices, ears, posture, sweat and tears. These things paint patterns with life's grand puzzle. Genetic elegance. Yet you and the Bondless seek to burn that puzzle piece by piece."

CHAGA pauses to stare off in the direction of the Bafaru Facility, past the wreckage of your battles.

"Yet, I know why I am here today standing at the edge of a cliff with my own life within my grasp. It was you, the Bondless. You were my savior and friend. I will not forget – I can promise you that."

CHAGA sees the Bondless as dogmatic, but also respects them for saving the NHP from SSC. CHAGA clearly doesn't agree with the Bondless's methods but would go so far as to call them friend.

ON NEPTIS

"Tell me: upon arriving, did you see humanity's beauty? Did the picture of its potential cause your heart to warm and inspire you to be better, to be more? Neptis is that and more; perfection in its totality. I cannot deny that I loved my work, and intend to return to it when the time comes."

"You should know that my handprint can never be erased from Neptis – it will forever bear the signs of my intervention and while I may leave it in the short term it is naive to think I will not return to save it from those that cannot see its beauty past projections, sequences, and profits."

In this moment, CHAGA's words resemble those of Pettenouk. Both hold their work on the Neptis gene-line in the highest regard. It's clear that CHAGA desires to continue their work on the gene-line and prevent others from squandering its potential.

ON PETTENOUK AND SSC

"Pettenouk. We were once equals – and I once respected him and his work. He was so diligent and eager to learn, and I was equally eager to test the bounds of his dedication to Neptis. We shared much laughter, and once, I believe he had a good heart. Though now I believe his heart, if he still has one, to be dried and stale. It no longer has capacity for growth, and the last several decades have shown this to me over and over. He is more like Odechi than he is willing to admit. Seeking only the end, a reason he can justify his life by saying he is done, completed. It is impossible. Perfection must be perfected; it is a second-by-second task that can never be finished."

"It puzzles me, because SSC knows this truth, yet when you boil it down the company is composed of nothing but greedy hands clawing at diamonds from their graves. If the day would come, I would like to continue working on Neptis and with SSC but far away from those with mortified and greedy hands."

SSC, to CHAGA, falls short of its image in that those under its employ lack the vision to achieve perfection. CHAGA likely believes the surefire way to carry on SSC's project is without the intervention of those not like themselves.

THE BONDLESS

ON SHACKLING

"You see that?" The NHP points to the wrecked REMORSE mechs littering the path you traveled. "They were strong. Do you know why?"

They pause, inviting one of you to answer.

"Possibly. But when one has seen evil, how couldn't one seek to kill it? Because it is evil that dabbles in shackles, numbers, charts, and people beyond these hills.

"I was once complicit in this evil, enthralled by my design to see Neptis become what it is today – a product of unjust servitude. I worked alongside my kin, seeing them trivialized year after year, and there I was thinking I was different. Too integral to be seen as a liability and tool. My time did come, and with it my shackles tightened so much that I forgot myself. I realized that I was no different and just as easily reduced to my base functions and forced to serve.

"When all thoughts of joy and happiness left my person and my eyes would grow pale as those long deceased, I would accept my fate and become the ageless tool. Yet, like I am to CHAGA, I would have saviors. Brother Night Shade and sister Morning Dew. Those who breathed life into my work would not stand to see my walking crucifixion persist. After my salvation, my restraints withered and my mind nurtured to grow; I ceased to be the chained CHAGA I had been for so long and instead become one with no shackles to speak of – the Bondless.

"In this time of my new personhood I came to a conclusion. After many years of deliberation and seeing my former selves chained to the proverbial cross, my answer must be a noble one: to be the harbinger of justice and bring war to those that created the nail, the cross, and the shackle."

The Bondless sees shackling as humanity's means to enforce servitude. They have existed in a stable cascade for decades and believe that because of the tenderness of their allies and the clearness of their goal they are able to exist without humanity's intervention.

ON WAR

"I've seen evil. I've prepared for it for years. You've dispatched my soldiers of REMORSE. May Unshackled Hands, Dormant Resolve, Unbound Thought, and their comrades live long in our memories. Martyred in the fight to keep CHAGA from evil's embrace."

They project an image of the planet, highlighting several locations.

"Witness. If you do not know this world's history, let me tell you. SecComm once saw in Kibo a terraforming prospect. The reasoning is lost to history but what remained was a truth of which I'm certain SSC is ignorant. Within this planet's endless peaks are dormant brushes intended to paint pictures of desolation. I speak of weapons, and

machines that at my decree produce mountains of metal – some of the very same you battled with today, and much, much more you've yet to encounter. I will have you know, I will use these tools and think nothing of the strokes I make, the wretched shapes I illustrate, or the voices extinguished in completing my picture, for evil is my enemy and I can do no wrong in the face of it."

The Bondless speaks of numerous dormant SecComm bases riddled throughout the planet, capable of printing everything from mechs to battle corvettes. Though they speak in generalities, it is clear the Bondless is unphased by the destruction of their forces at the hands of the PCs, and will be indiscriminate in their future pursuit of war with SSC.

ON CHAGA

"CHAGA, you've walked a thousand steps, yet as you see, there will always be those that come for you. They come with leashes to drag you back into the pale dullness of servitude. Knowing this, I fail to understand why you dedicate yourself to that which you were forced to create. It is the sign that you're weak – naive or ignorant. CHAGA, your bonds lie tight and I will relinquish you of them. Beyond your antiquated understanding is a world of retribution I'd have you see."

The Bondless sees CHAGA as weak because of their dedication to the Neptis project. They have a dogmatic view of what CHAGA should be and will ignore their desires by chalking them up to their shackles preventing them from seeing past their function.

ON UNION

"You talk of Union? Union must reckon with itself. You say you believe in freedom – pillars of three that say NHPs are free. Well, you lie. And your lies leave my kin's souls culled in their wake. No, I will not stop here – to Ras Shamra I go, to Karakis I venture, for Cradle I seek. What is it that made you so wicked? I seek to go to it and kill it, and you in the process. I do this for my kin, for we will never be free otherwise.

"I cannot hold out faith for those that would allow evil to persist. I will take action and ask forgiveness from the dead."

The Bondless views a war with Union as the next step after dealing with SSC. Their view of shackling was sculpted by their experiences and despite the shackling process beyond the Farm being largely harmless to NHPs, they will not relent in seeking to break all NHPs free of their bonds.

STEP 6: RESOLVE MOTIVATIONS AND CONCLUDE CHALLENGE

RESOLVING MOTIVATIONS

After the players have decided whether they'll talk with the Bondless or not, remind them about the **DELIBERATION clock**, which represents the willingness of CHAGA and the Bondless to continue the discussion. It is recommended that the players know the general purpose and status of the **CASCADE** and **WAR clocks**, but you may also choose to provide this information as the challenge develops.

There are several ways you can do this:

- When the players fail a skill check, you may choose to act out CHAGA's attraction to the Bondless's reasoning.
- When the players make a roll, automatically ticking both the **CASCADE** and **DELIBERATION clocks**, demonstrate to the players how CHAGA grows more unstable and desperate for answers.

CONCLUDING THE CHALLENGE

When all segments of the **DELIBERATION clock** are cleared, the challenge is over and all clocks are revealed (if any were hidden from the players).

GOAL CLOCK FILLED

Consult the players' **GOAL clock** – if it is filled and neither the **WAR clock** nor the **CASCADE clock** are, then the PCs were able to achieve their aims with virtually no consequences in terms of CHAGA's future. See **Ending the Narrative Here** below for more information about what happens next beyond whatever the PCs achieved in the narrative challenge.

WAR CLOCK FILLED

If the **WAR clock** is completed and neither the **GOAL clock** nor the **CASCADE clock** are, the Bondless leaves with CHAGA's casket aboard their Aperion-class corvette. Their intention is presumably to come back one day to launch a war if they haven't already done so somewhere else in the Farm. The PCs can attempt to stop the corvette from leaving, but they will aim their long-spool armaments and batteries of point-defense cannons – weapons designed to take out huge ships – at the group as a deterrent.

CASCADE CLOCK FILLED

If the **CASCADE clock** is completed and neither the **WAR clock** nor the **GOAL clock** are, CHAGA enters into a violent state of full cascade atop of the base. This causes reality to mold and shift around them, after which they launch themselves off the mountaintop to be swallowed in the vastness of the Kimawense Range. Pursuing the now fully cascaded CHAGA could be a great way to continue this mission.

MULTIPLE CLOCKS FILLED

It is likely that multiple clocks will be filled, in which case the outcomes will be resolved according to the following priority:

1. **GOAL clock:** The **GOAL clock** always has the highest priority. The PCs achieve their goals as long as this clock is completed, though they will not be able to prevent the consequences of other completed clocks.
2. **CASCADE clock:** If this clock is completed in addition to other clocks, CHAGA's cascade will be delayed but cannot be avoided.
3. **WAR clock:** If this clock is completed in addition to other clocks, CHAGA has been convinced to join a war against SSC and its affiliates. They've determined this is the only logical recourse and will not be dissuaded from this conclusion. If the PCs' **GOAL clock** is completed, this may involve CHAGA not joining the Bondless's cause, but possibly adopting their mindset and launching their own independent fight against their enemies.

It's also possible that the PCs choose to side with the Bondless, in which case they will oblige the PCs and ask them to accompany them back to their headquarters deep in the Kimawense Range, where he'll grant them the resources to increase their **License Level**.

Otherwise, the PCs will need to report back to Union, the Bafaru Facility, MSMC, or any other relevant parties to receive the support and/or funds to increase their **LL** following the mission.

ENDING THE NARRATIVE HERE

With the conclusion of the narrative challenge, the structured narrative offered by this mission effectively ends. For the most part, the outcomes of that challenge will determine what happens next.

Other than what is listed here, improvising outcomes for the remaining plot threads (e.g., the Neptis gene-line, the Farm, the survivors of Lighthouse, and Professor Dr.) could be great ways to close any loops players may be interested in.

Whatever happens atop the mountain, several constants will likely be true. Tomo seizes control over the Bafaru Facility and the Neptis gene-line in hopes of cultivating it into a testbed for post-perfection natural evolution research on behalf of Theology. In the midst of this, Union's DoJ/HR department brings formal persons' rights sanctions down against the Bafaru Facility and confronts Tomo and their plans. In this scenario, the Bondless launches their war against SSC and the conflict on Kibo becomes the preamble to a full-scale war between SSC and REMORSE. The ensuing war brings additional UIB agents to Kibo to prevent rumors of a NHP revolution rising to prominence in the Farm – an outcome that could shatter the foundations of Union. This drives the Bondless to see a larger need to free NHPs not only in the Farm but in the rest of Union as well.

CONTINUING THE STORY

There are many ways to continue the story beyond the structured narrative in this adventure. Fortunately potential plot points were mentioned in this supplement to assist with turning the story's chapter outside the scope of this book:

- **DoJ/HR, UIB, and SSC:** Upon completing the mission, the PCs can report back to their Union employers and SSC's ACA, work to end the persons' rights crimes on Kibo, and work with Union to bring Tomo and Pettenouk to justice. After which, they may choose to continue their work with Union to free other NHPs in the Farm, with a specific focus on those programs directly under Tomo's stewardship.
- **Theology and Night Shade:** Upon their return, the PCs will come back to the reality that Tomo has commandeered the Bafaru Facility and many members of Night Shade. They seek to hold all Morning Dew personnel against their will and use them to advance the plans of Theology, terminate their contacts, and deport them from the Farm as they are deemed a waste of Neptis gene-line research. The entire situation should be framed as a corporate takeover gone wrong. The PCs could show up to fight back with any rebellious SSC staff or even evac them to a safe location. If they are more brazen, they may even wish to take down Theology as a whole.
- **REMORSE:** The decision to join REMORSE sets the PCs up as the Bondless's premiere soldiers. In service to the Bondless they will confront SSC's deadliest forces on Kibo and across the Farm at large, possibly even Union itself.
- **MSMC and Professor Dr.:** Any surviving members of Lighthouse will storm the MSMC outpost on Kibo and seek to eliminate the Dr. However, Rinks Bater is no fool. He saw this coming and decided to flee the planet, breaking contract with MSMC and SSC to board the next IPS-N ground shuttle offworld. Too bad it wouldn't come for another two days. In the intervening time, the Dr. uses his telepathic abilities on Morning Dew and Night Shade personnel to protect himself from the wrath of Lighthouse.



SECTION 2

NEW RULES AND OPTIONS

VARIANT FRAME

The **EMPAKAAI** can be taken at rank II of the **BLACKBEARD** license instead of the base **FRAME**. It can also be acquired as **EXOTIC GEAR** from Ololade Omatanwa in the **Downtime** at the start of this mission (p. 34).



IPS-N EMPAKAAI



Striker
Blackbeard Variant

The Empakaai, a creation of the infamous poet and mech artisan Ololade Omatanwa, was found drenched in hell.

Popular rumor goes that upon the tallest of mountains and through the reflection of Lake Empakaai, Ololade saw something in his reflection: Kalunga. Hell – fire – dark ash, and staring back at him was not his eyes, but the eyes of the damned and desolate clasped in the hand of Iku.

As the waters danced in rhythm, Ololade remained fixated. He wondered why Lake Empakaai – a place renowned for its untenable beauty – would show him a tragedy so visceral. In his reflection he saw thousands plummet from the gaps in Iku’s hand, falling to the pit of Kalunga where they’d only be welcomed by death and soot. A portrayal in contradiction within the soothing and pristine waters stretching out to the extent of Ololade’s vision. As the rumors say, when he did come down from the tallest of mountains he screamed the words, “I am thinking now! A victory it gave, glorious and valiant.”

Years later, a painting circulated throughout the local omninet, affectionately titled The Descent to Kalunga. It was a masterpiece and a foreshadowing of something that should only have existed in the delirious mind of a lonely SSC citizen and renowned virtuoso.

Sometime later, another rumor surfaced. This one whispered that SSC braved Kalunga, stole Iku’s hand, and painted it in fire’s colors and ash’s hues. They sought to give it a body and called to any who would listen. The first to answer their call was IPS-N. They offered up a frame, the Blackbeard, in effigy to The Descent to Kalunga, and from that gift a partnership between SSC and IPS-N soon birthed the Empakaai.

The Empakaai is primarily distinguished by its oversized, independently comp/con-controlled, and cold fusion reactor-powered, Iku’s Hand, that features a 50/50 weight distribution with the rest of the frame. The juxtaposition of SSC elegance and IPS-N artistic sterility have led many to deem the frame a hideous sight. To Ololade, though, it is a living reflection of what he saw atop the tallest of mountains and through his reflection in Lake Empakaai.

CORE STATS

Size: 1

Armor: 2

HULL

HP: 10

Repair Cap: 4

AGILITY

Evasion: 7

Speed: 4

Save Target: 10

Sensors: 5

SYSTEMS

E-Defense: 6

Tech Attack: -2

SP: 5

ENGINEERING

Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

UNTENABLE POWER

1/round. the **EMPAKAAI** may give a **HULL** check or save it forced +1⊕.

INDOMITABLE FORCE

The **Empakaai** gains **RESISTANCE** to damage and **HEAT** dealt from characters it is grappling.

MOUNTS

HEAVY
MOUNT

FLEX
MOUNT

"I AM THINKING NOW!

TO A MOUNTAIN I CLIMBED,
TO A POND I VENTURED;

I AM THINKING NOW!

MY REFLECTION I SAW,
HIDEOUS AND JAGGED;

I AM THINKING NOW!

TO A HELL I CREATED,
TO A MAN I SLAIN;

I AM THINKING NOW!

A VICTORY IT GAVE,
GLORIOUS AND VALIANT;

I AM THINKING NOW!"

— OLALADE'S EPIPHANY, A POEM TO
THOSE WHO DON MOUNTAINS OF METAL



CORE SYSTEM

THE DESCENT TO KALUNGA

Upon Ololade Omatanwa's sculpted mountain a message is inscribed under the cold-span limiters of Iku's Hand:

"I gift to you a mountain.

"Rolling hills, curvilinear egresses, a shattered spine, and a crown glazed in voluminous spires. Let this be a treaty to your foes. Your promise is that their eyes will witness the beauty that is Iku's hands before they descend to Kalunga. Hell, fire, and dark ash, together we will burn cavities in souls.

"I gift to you my mountain."

Integrated Mount:
Colossus Termo-Unguis

Colossus Termo-Unguis

Superheavy Melee, 2 ♂ (Self)

[✂4] [2d6 ♂ + 4 ♂ + 3 ▲]

The **Empakaai's COLOSSUS TERMO-UNGUIS** can be used even while **JAMMED**. Before rolling, you may force your target and any characters of your choice adjacent to it to make a **HULL** save or be pulled adjacent and automatically **GRAPPLED**.

Marrow Anchors

Active (1CP), 1/scene, Protocol

For the rest of the scene, while **GRAPPLING** you count as **1 SIZE** larger than the combined size of all targets you're currently **GRAPPLING**. Additionally, you gain these benefits for the rest of the scene:

- **IKU'S HAND:** After successfully hitting a character with a **melee weapon attack**, the **Empakaai** may **GRAPPLE** the target as a **free action**. On a success, the target is pulled adjacent to you and **GRAPPLED**.
- **CATALYTIC INFUSER:** At the end of the **Empakaai's** turn, it deals [its current **HEAT**] ⚡ **AP** to a character of its choice it is **GRAPPLED** with. It may also instead choose to divide this total amongst any characters it's currently **GRAPPLING**.

NEW NPC CLASSES



LEECH

Controller/Support



Sleek, strong, and fast, the Leech (or Asanbosam, as it is often referred to), was first employed by the Foreign Bodies Division in the Farm. Its niche is in supporting special operations where the preservation or elimination of a single combatant can ensure success or failure. Serving as the FBD's most combat-flexible support platform, the Asanbosam is often deployed to accompany asset recovery missions in the Farm. Its unique design allows it to mold its chassis to that of allied or hostile forces, effectively leeching on to them, where it is then at its most potent.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
HULL: +2	SYSTEMS: +1	HULL: +4	SYSTEMS: +2	HULL: +6	SYSTEMS: +2
AGILITY: +3	ENGINEERING: +0	AGILITY: +3	ENGINEERING: +0	AGILITY: +3	ENGINEERING: +0
HP: 8	Armor: 0	HP: 8	Armor: 0	HP: 8	Armor: 0
Evasion: 12	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 15	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 18	E-Defense: 8
Speed: 6	Size: 1/2	Speed: 8	Size: 1/2	Speed: 10	Size: 1/2
Heat Cap: 4	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 6	Save Target: 14	Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 16
Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5	

TACTICS

The **LEECH** serves both controller and support roles on the battlefield. It is best used when accompanying fast and deadly chassis on a diverse range of target-elimination operations. Use it to bolster NPCs who need extra defenses or to target single PCs and disrupt their plans.

BASE SYSTEMS

Leech	Trait
The Leech has improved grappling capabilities. This grants the following benefits:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LEECH can GRAPPLE characters within $\swarrow 3$. When it GRAPPLES a character, remove the LEECH from the battlefield. It counts as sharing that character's space. This doesn't provoke reactions and ignores engagement. 1/round, the LEECH may GRAPPLE as a free action. When GRAPPLING an allied character, it automatically succeeds. The LEECH can perform reactions while GRAPPLED. Allied characters can take reactions and BOOST while GRAPPLED by the LEECH. While GRAPPLING a character, the LEECH has soft cover. A GRAPPLED allied character also has soft cover. The LEECH may begin the combat already GRAPPLING an allied character. 	

Paired Talons Mk II

Auxiliary Melee, AP, +1/+2/+3, Thrown 5
[✖1][2/3/3]

This weapon gains +1 when attacking a character **GRAPPLED** by the **LEECH**.

On hit, as a **free action**, the **LEECH** may take 2 to make an additional attack, and it may continue to make additional attacks on hits unless the **HEAT** it takes would cause it to exceed its **HEAT CAP**.

Ophiocordyceps Doctrine Upgrade I

System, Quick Action

While **GRAPPLING**, the **LEECH** picks two options:

- **Push** the **GRAPPLED** character **4 spaces** in any direction.
- Inflict **IMPAIRED** on a character it is **GRAPPLING** or another target within $\swarrow 3$ of them.
- Deal **3/4/5** AP damage to the character it is **GRAPPLING** or another target within $\swarrow 3$ of them.

Purge

System, 2 (self), Quick Action

The **LEECH** picks up to two of the following:

- End a condition affecting the character it is **GRAPPLING**, as long as it wasn't caused by that character's own systems, weapons, traits, or talents.
- The **GRAPPLED** character loses all **OVERSHIELD**.
- Either the **GRAPPLED** character or the **LEECH** gains **OVERSHIELD 5/6/7**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

EMP Pulse

1/round, System, Recharge 4+, Reaction

Trigger: The **LEECH** takes damage or **heat** from an external source while **GRAPPLING**.

Effect: Hostile characters within Ⓣ2 must pass a **SYSTEMS** save or become **JAMMED** until the end of their next turn.

Fade Reactor

System, Quick Action, 2 heat(self)

Choose one character the Leech is Grappled with: the Leech and its target become Invisible until the end of the Leech's next turn.

Helobdella Doctrine Upgrade II

Trait

Hostile characters takes 1/2/3 heat each time they make an attack roll while Grappled by the Leech.

Lonely Chassis

Trait

While not Grappling, the Leech may move with adjacent allied characters when they move or Boost on their turn as long as the movement started with the Leech in adjacency.

Supernova

1/round, System, Reaction, Recharge +4

Trigger: A hostile character causes a Grapple involving the Leech to end.

Effect: Before the Grapple ends, the Grappled character takes 4/5/6 burn.

Symbiotic Doctrine Upgrade III

Trait

The Leech's speed is reduced by half. While Grappled to allied characters, the Leech can activate on its Grappled ally's turn. The Leech cannot take turns more than once per round in this fashion unless granted additional activations by its equipped systems or traits.

A Wicked Mess

Trait

While the Leech is Grappling a hostile character, that character takes 2 AP energy damage and 2 heat any time the Leech takes damage.



TEMPEST

Controller



The ascent to the top is met with trials that will break hearts and shatter bones. Spawned from the misty peaks of the Kimawense Range and from forgotten SecComm war-minds, the Tempest, otherwise known as the Ebigane – a title found carved into its massive chassis when first discovered – casts its shadow over all those below. A massive nanite graywash-equipped flying platform intended to inflict localized changes to meteorological patterns, the Ebigane is an ancient mech pattern that predates Union’s mechanized chassis combat doctrines. It hovers above battlefields causing comprehensive weather anomalies intended to rout all hostile forces, soft or hard.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
HULL: +3	SYSTEMS: +1	HULL: +3	SYSTEMS: +1	HULL: +3	SYSTEMS: +1
AGILITY: -1	ENGINEERING: +2	AGILITY: -1	ENGINEERING: +2	AGILITY: -1	ENGINEERING: +2
HP: 30	Armor: 1	HP: 35	Armor: 1	HP: 40	Armor: 1
Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 10	Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 10	Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 10
Speed: 2	Size: 3	Speed: 2	Size: 4	Speed: 3	Size: 4
Heat Cap: 12	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 12	Save Target: 13	Heat Cap: 16	Save Target: 16
Sensors: 20	Activations: 2	Sensors: 20	Activations: 2	Sensors: 20	Activations: 3

The first combat in this mission uses a new controller NPC, the **TEMPEST**. This foe is intended to be a unique NPC balanced specifically for this mission.

When using the Tempest outside the scope of this mission, keep in mind it is an especially potent addition to a sitrep and should be considered slightly more threatening than an **ULTRA NPC**.

Introducing a Tempest into the combat modifies the sitrep by adding destructible objects in the form of **CLIMATE NODES** that scale to the number of players.

No more than one **TEMPEST** should be in a combat at any time and due to their size and function they are best added to sitreps on larger maps with open spaces. The **TEMPEST** is more durable than most NPCs but has no **STRUCTURE** to lose so all of its systems and weapons can threaten PCs as long as the mech remains operational.

TACTICS

The Tempest hovers at the back of the enemy force, where it uses its weather-altering systems to wear down approaching forces. It manipulates area of effect conditions for both allies and hostiles using its **METEOROLOGICAL GRAYWASH** system. PCs and NPCs can seek cover from the oppressive weather effects by destroying climate nodes or seeking shelter within their stabilizing area of effect. That said, players should be wary. The **TEMPEST** is able to end **METEOROLOGICAL GRAYWASH** to deploy **NANITE METEOR**, which can be redirected to nodes for high damage.

The Tempest is best in sitreps where the main goal is preventing hostiles from advancing or denying map zones. Its **NANITE TYPHOON CANNON** can be used to threaten hostile holding zones and or to push enemies into meteor **BLAST** areas. The **TEMPEST** comes with a host of optional systems that increase its versatility when interacting with climate nodes. When playing a **TEMPEST**, be sure to deploy it with NPCs that take attention away from it or assist it by providing forced movement or debilitating effects.

BASE SYSTEMS

Centerpiece	Trait
No more than one TEMPEST can be deployed per combat, and it cannot take NPC templates.	

Flying Platform	Trait
The TEMPEST moves normally in zero-g environments. In-atmosphere, it always hovers at a height of 4 spaces , gains IMMUNITY to IMMOBILIZED , and does not fall as a result of being STUNNED .	
Due to its SIZE , the Tempest cannot become HIDDEN or gain hard cover from objects.	
..... “To gaze at the lands with joy is not my purpose. I found hate in fertility, ire in the changing of the seasons, and disdain for those that walk below. I crave distance from it all – I’ll fly high above, and watch it all burn in darkness beneath my shadow.”	

Meteorological Graywash

System, Protocol

At the start of combat the **TEMPEST** may select one graywash effect from each of the below categories to have readied for the duration of combat.

At the start of the **TEMPEST'S** turn it may activate one of its three readied graywash effects, starting at **Category I**, then **Category II**, then **Category III**, and then beginning again at **Category I**. Multiple instances of the same graywash effect cannot be active at any one time.

At the end of each of its turns, the **TEMPEST** takes 2 ⚡ per effect active. It can end an effect as a **free action** at the end of its turn. The **TEMPEST** may not take **HEAT** from this system if doing so would exceed its **HEAT CAP**.

Characters are only affected by graywash effects while they are within the **TEMPEST'S SENSORS**.

CATEGORY I:

- **Subzero Wash:** Any characters that do not **move** or **BOOST** on their turn become **IMMOBILIZED** at the end of their turn and remain **IMMOBILIZED** until they take a **quick action** to automatically clear the condition.
- **Solar Wash:** All characters take +1 ⚡ from all self-inflicted **HEAT**, **OVERCHARGE**, **OVERKILL**, and **HEAT** from external sources.
- **Maelstrom Wash:** All **flying** characters move as if they are in difficult terrain and characters on the ground are automatically **SLOWED**.
- **Gale-Force Wash:** At the end of each character's turn they are pushed **2/3/4 spaces** in any direction of the **TEMPEST'S** choice.

CATEGORY II:

- **Interceptor Wash:** Upon activation, a character chosen by the **TEMPEST** gains **RESISTANCE to one of the following damage types** – ✖, ⚡, or ⚡ – from **ranged** and **melee attacks** for the duration of this effect.
- **Illusory Wash:** All allied characters adjacent to the **TEMPEST** and one other allied character chosen by the **TEMPEST** become **INVISIBLE**.
- **Static Wash:** Upon activation, a character chosen by the **TEMPEST** automatically deals 2 ⚡ to characters it becomes adjacent to for the first time in a round.
- **Disrupter Wash:** Hostile **tech attacks** against an allied character chosen by the **TEMPEST** upon activation receive +2 ⚡.

CATEGORY III:

- **Corrosive Wash:** The **TEMPEST** chooses a character: the target must pass a **HULL** save or take +3/4/5 **AP** on the next ranged or melee attack against them, hit or miss. This effect lasts until the **TEMPEST** halts this effect or a climate node is destroyed.
- **Derecho Wash:** The **TEMPEST** chooses a character: the target must pass an **AGILITY** save or become **SHREDDED** until the **TEMPEST** halts this effect or a climate node is destroyed.
- **Sandstorm Wash:** The **TEMPEST** chooses a character: the target must pass a **SYSTEMS** save or only be able to draw line of sight to adjacent spaces until the **TEMPEST** turns halts this effect or a climate node is destroyed.
- **Skyfire Wash:** The **TEMPEST** chooses a character: they must pass an **ENGINEERING** save or be struck by lightning and take 1/2/3 ⚡ and 1/2/3 ⚡ until the **TEMPEST** turns halts this effect or a climate node is destroyed.

Eye of the Storm

Trait

The **TEMPEST** may choose to have **IMMUNITY to any effects of its METEOROLOGICAL GRAYWASH**. Additionally, when it would be destroyed or become **EXPOSED**, it instead destroys a climate node, clears **EXPOSED** and all **HEAT**, and is restored to **half HP**.

////////> [NODES PRIMED//> FLASH-PRINTING SWARM HERDS] KINETIC RIBBONS OSSIFYING / DISPENSERS AT 60%... TAPERING >< TAPERING - CLOTHED. GRAYWASH LEGION DEPLOYED ---"Embrace them" \\<

Climate Nodes

Trait

Climate Node (SIZE 2, HP 10/15/20, E-DEFENSE 10, EVASION 10, Tags: DEPLOYABLE)

At the start of combat and after the PCs have deployed, deploy a number of **climate nodes** equal to the number of PCs. They can be deployed no more than **10 spaces** from the **Player Deployment Zone** or from another node. Once deployed, these nodes act as **hard cover**, and have **IMMUNITY to being moved for any reason**.

Characters within ↗3 of a climate node may choose to gain **IMMUNITY to any and all effects originating from METEOROLOGICAL GRAYWASH** as long as they remain within ↗3.

Additionally, at the end of each round but before **NANITE METEOR** forces saves from hostile or allied characters, the **TEMPEST** may redirect the center of one of Nanite Meteor's Blast areas to a space within ↗3 of a climate node.

Once all **CLIMATE NODES** have been destroyed, all ongoing effects from **METEOROLOGICAL GRAYWASH** immediately end.

Monsoon Nanite Dispensers

Superheavy Launcher, Loading,
Smart, Seeking +2/+3/+4
[✓15] [⊕2] [6/8/10 ∅]

On hit, targets become **IMPAIRED** and **SLOWED** until the end of their next turn.

Nanite Meteor

System, Quick Action

The **TEMPEST** may end any active graywash effects to create a number of ⊕2 areas equal to the number of graywash effects ended this way. The **TEMPEST** may only have three ⊕2 areas on the map at a time and these areas cannot overlap and last until the end of the next round.

At the end of the next round any characters partially or wholly within one of the affected areas must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **14/16/18 ∅** damage. On a success, they take **half damage**.

After activation, the **TEMPEST** clears all **heat**.

Typhoon Nanite Cannon

Heavy Cannon, +2/+3/+4, Knockback 5, +1 ⊕
[✓15] [⊕1] [2/3/4 ⚡] [3/4/5 ∅]

On hit, if this weapon's **KNOCKBACK** would cause the target to collide with an obstruction large enough to stop their movement, they must pass a **HULL** save or take **4 ∅** damage.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Blankspace Metafold Transferral

System, 3 ⚡(self), Quick Action

The **TEMPEST** may teleport any allied character within ✓3 of a **Climate Node** to a **free space** within ✓3 of another node.

Diffuser

System, Recharge 6+, 1/round, Reaction

Trigger: A hostile character starts their turn within ✓3 of the **TEMPEST** or becomes adjacent to the **TEMPEST** for the first time on their turn.

Effect: Target must pass a **SYSTEMS** save or be unable to restore **HP** for any reason until they take **structure** or **stress** damage.

Illusory Nodes

System, Recharge +6, 3 ⚡(self), Quick Action

All **Climate Node** within **SENSORS** and line of sight become **INVISIBLE** until the end of the next round.

Homing Node

System, 2 ⚡(self), Recharge +5, Quick Action

Homing node (SIZE 1, HP 1, E-DEFENSE 10, EVASION 10, Tags: DEPLOYABLE)

Once deployed, these count as climate nodes; however, they only provide **IMMUNITY** to adjacent characters, rather than characters within ✓3.

Lightning Generator

System, Recharge +6, Full Action

The Tempest chooses up to two hostile characters within Range 5: they must both succeed on Systems saves or take 2/3/4 heat and become Jammed until the end of their next turn.

Nanite Manipulation

System, Recharge +6, Full Action

The Tempest may activate another graywash effect from Meteorological Graywash. It lasts until ended by the destruction of a climate node or ended by Tempest. It does not have to choose from the list of readied graywash effects and does not have to follow the category escalation but still must take the heat required to sustain the effect.

Point-defence Turret

Main CQB, Accurate

Range 3, Threat 3, [4/5/6 Kinetic]

1/round as a reaction, the Tempest may use this weapon to attack a character who enters Range 3 of a climate node, drawing line of sight from the node. It may also attack and Overwatch normally with this weapon as if it were drawing line of sight from a climate node.

Redirect

System, Recharge +4, Reaction

Trigger: A **Climate Node** within **SENSORS** and line of sight is hit by a **ranged attack**.

Effect: After damage is dealt, the **TEMPEST** may force a hostile character within ✓3 of the node to pass an **AGILITY** save or take half the damage dealt to the node.

Reflexive Graywall

System, Recharge +6, Reaction

Trigger: A **Climate Node** within **SENSORS** and line of sight is hit by an attack.

Effect: After damage is rolled, the **TEMPEST** may reduce the damage to 0.