



SG TAC

SERIES PRE S03

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Tidalcross Dockmaster's Veranda. The convergence of teal-green surface waters and rust-stained platforms does not welcome them so much as catalogue them.

The ensemble stands at the veranda edge. The city broadcasts its dual nature with absolute sincerity: stripper-bright neon above, bioluminescent dark below.

TARO: "They know we're here." KAI: "They've known since the transit platform. The Tether resonated through the collective broadcast. It registered as surface anomaly."

EVE: "The Saltwatch faction and the Dockmaster's faction are disagreeing about something. We are being assigned to a position in that disagreement. This is useful."

MIRA: "The disagreement is about the contamination data. Tidalcross has the evidence." The threshold has recognized them. The crossing has begun.



Deep Level Monitoring Station. Mira stands over an ancient tube display. The micro-fractures in the bedrock below Tidalcross radiate outward in spiral patterns.

The Nova Terra Root Rot reports show identical patterns. As if the same hand drew both, in rock and in root-network, three thousand kilometers apart.

Mira's fingers hover over the communication toggle. Knowing that transmitting is the action that makes everything else inevitable.

She transmits. The data moves through Ghost-Walker channels. Every power faction receives the same information simultaneously.

The argument becomes a crisis. The crisis becomes an inevitability. And in the Penumbra Zone, something waiting begins to orient itself toward the ensemble.



Dockworkers' Tavern. The ensemble gathers to hear a grizzled boatman tell a story about Rin.

BOATMAN: "She walked out of the Caldera with that shadow-thing and a three-day head start. Just... refused to be where they expected her to be. She was settled. Like something that had made its decision about what it was for."

BOATMAN: "People said she'd gone soft. I think she'd gone precise. There's a difference."

EVE: "She'll join because the world is in serious trouble." BOATMAN: "She'll join because she's not stupid. Those are the same thing, for a person like her."

Somewhere in Tidalcross's vertical warrens, a woman trained as a weapon is watching them in preparation for a meeting she has already decided to attend.



Sun-Bright Market District. Rin stands at the market's edge. Shadownip settles onto her shoulder—oil-black and angular, fragmenting the light around her into impossible shadows.

The ensemble gathers behind her. Rin turns and meets each face in sequence. Shadownip's form deepens.

RIN: "You're heading somewhere bad. I was already going." A pause that contains the specific weight of calculation completed.

From Mira's wrist implant—a vibration. The contamination data has reached every faction. The descent is now the only direction available.

RIN: "No return to yesterday's pleasantness." They descend.



Deep Council Briefing Room. Two thousand meters below. The pressure-sealed walls weep brine as a matter of course—accommodation rather than refusal.

The Deep Council contact says: Last Light Station. Says: Ten thousand meters below the surface. Says: Monitoring. Says nothing else.

The contact's silence is deliberate. Information withheld. The room settles into the quiet that precedes disaster.

TARO: "What happens if whatever they're watching... stops watching back?"

The room does not answer. The brine continues its slow accommodation. The question hangs in the recycled air like a truth that cannot be un-named.



Sleeper Archive Chamber. Kaori stands at the center with her True-Sight open. The Sleeper Collective blooms behind her eyes.

Four thousand voices braided into a single chord composing itself across three centuries. Each dreamer a thread in a tapestry. Still individual. Still four thousand. But simultaneously one.

Her cyan strips flare in sympathetic vibration. Gearbit goes into absolute standstill—encountering truth that requires a different kind of processing than data.

KAORI: "What does it mean to forgive yourself into unity?"

The membrane-ceiling shudders once. Recognition. The knowledge burns calories she does not have, but she believes it is worth it.



Common Corridor. The Dragon Guide's vision arrives to Mira not as image, but as knowing. A compression of consequence, a net of cause and effect she cannot unsee.

She returns to the ensemble and finds Eve. Mira's gaze lingers, measuring. Calculating without moving her lips. Eve feels it and does not acknowledge it.

Mira's congenial mask slips for one unguarded moment. Eve's hand moves toward Mira's sleeve but does not make contact. Connection acknowledged and withheld.

What the Dragon Guide showed Mira: the specific quality of receiving undeniable information. Her silence now has weight. The burden of foresight, ablaze and undiluted.



The attribution ripples across four civilizations. In Tidalcross, a councilor's liquid air spells worsening contamination numbers. Convergence is two years ahead of schedule.

In Nova Terra, the High Council's shared broadcast fractures. The bloom-lighting dims by 4%. Nobody mentions it.

In The Drift, Ghost-Walkers receive whispers of stasis. In Vortex Station, the Admiral's consciousness calculates orbital oxygen reserves as currency.

Each leader wakes to the same revelation: Their prosperity was a temporary fiction. The payment is due, measured in sudden silence.

Chaos, distributed evenly, is the closest thing to cover that mathematics can provide for the ensemble's infiltration.



Melori's Undercity Sanctum. Obsidian walls that swallow sound. The ensemble gathers. Taro describes the plan to retrieve the Crown of Ever-Waking.

He speaks for eleven minutes. Melori listens for eleven minutes. Then she holds the silence for one full minute.

Melori names what she will collect. Kai's next salvage haul. Mira's fealty through one undisclosed campaign. Rin's word to perish before breaking faith.

MELORI (to Taro): "Your trajectory afterward. Whithersoever it leads. I need to know it can be called upon."

They nod. Understanding that in this room, alliances are not promised—they are priced, and the pricing is the promise.



The Penumbra Zone. The hoverbike cuts through the haze. Tawny Slag veins rise through gray stone like bloodroot through flesh.

KAORI: "The frequencies aren't alarm signatures. They're navigational. We're being guided." MIRA: "The question is whether the guidance is benevolent."

Kai's power armor crackles with Magnetica feedback. The Slag veins become geometric. Almost patterned. The contamination is learning to beautify itself.

Taro breathes through his nose. His hands are colder than they should be. He says nothing.



Rim Overlook. Twelve kilometers deep. The Eclipse Spires rise like a ribcage of black ceramic. Taro stands motionless at the precipice.

He has lived his entire life in those pressurized depths and never seen it from outside. It undoes something in his chest. An irreversible recognition of history.

Taro extends his hand backward. He touches Kai's armor, Kaori's shoulder, Mira's arm. A verification-touch that says: I need to know you're here.

Nobody speaks. Language would only diminish the weight of the recognition. Taro steps back from the precipice, and descends.



Crater City Deep Levels. Kai orchestrates thirteen electromagnetic cascades, spiking the UV-Grid with false contamination alerts.

The manufactured alarm spreads like a contagion. Obsidian Guard units fragment. The surface in engineered chaos. The deep levels in engineered silence.

Rin moves through the pressure-sealed chambers. Her cloak absorbing blacklight. Sliding between sensor sweeps with deliberate precision.

RIN: "I am through." Kai's fingers still on the interface. The heist's first threshold: crossed.



Apex Vault Threshold. The Vitalis-sealed lock is living emerald wood. It has been sealed for sixty years and has never been asked to do anything other than refuse.

Taro places his palms against it. For the first time in his life, he asks his healing magic to harm. The emerald drains to ash-gray. The vault door opens.

The cost settles into his hands first. A cold that has no temperature. The chill of asking his deepest self to become its opposite. His white-blue hair frosts at the tips.

He steps across the threshold alone. He files the cost in the same internal compartment where he keeps everything he cannot afford to distribute.



Apex Vault Inner Chamber. The Crown of Ever-Waking. A circlet of silver filigree that has been waiting for a specific consciousness: the capacity to choose burden over escape.

Eve's fingers close around it. The Crown blooms. Noetica luminescence pools around her nervous system. Seven bonded Spectres flare simultaneously.

Eve's eyes flash silver, then return to brown. But something behind them has become inhabited. Atairukh's amber eye holds the gaze of a witness who understood the cost before it arrived.

THE CROWN (broadcast as sensation): "Finally. Someone who understands that love means staying broken together."

The chamber's light dims from the gravitational weight of Eve's refusal to escape. Mira stands rigid. The Dragon Guide's arithmetic clicking forward.



Kaelen's Chamber. His amber eyes track seventeen simultaneous crisis points. Then: eighteen. Eve's seven-fold bond plus the Crown. A configuration that does not exist in his 40-year model.

His calculation stutters. The branches of genuine uncertainty reach outward. He has not felt this in decades. It lodges like rime-frost in his consciousness.

Eve's neutral expression betrays nothing as she glances upward, through the vault ceiling, directly at him. She has always known he was watching.

Kaelen makes a minute adjustment to the contamination spread variable. The cascade timeline extends by 4 hours. He is buying time without knowing its cost.



Nova Terra Greenhouse, weeks later. The Root Rot has retreated cleanly. Eve stands amidst 173,000 unified organisms breathing in synchronized rhythm.

Mira leans against the frame. Watching the silver rings around Eve's pupils expand micrometers at a time. MIRA: "They're thinking now. They weren't thinking before."

EVE: "They're unified through necessity. I offered them connection and they chose it. The outcome is better." MIRA: "I know what the metrics are."

Eve's hand moves toward Mira's sleeve but does not make contact. Connection acknowledged and withheld. The temperature in the chamber drops by unmeasurable degrees as Mira leaves.



Tidalcross Convergence Chamber. Ghost-Walkers, Memory Trade, and Slip-Thread networks gather. Melori arranges evidence on the central table with the specificity of a verdict.

MELORI: "The contamination was not released. It was deployed. The real question is what the contamination was designed to prevent anyone from looking at."

MELORI: "Something is in the deep bedrock of each civilization. Something old enough that the contamination needed to be in place for ninety years before the thing beneath it could complete its purpose."

The three networks hold their breath. The chamber dims fractionally. Above them, the ensemble moves unaware that their heroism has served as cover for this disclosure.



UV-Grid District. Eve stands at the center, Noetica radiating. Taro steps forward, his Vitalis cascade beginning. Eve's hand flicks upward. Taro falters, paralyzed by mathematical clarity of his own consequences.

EVE: "Your cellular renegotiation resolves at 40% Tether reserve. The outcome is temporary. I've already integrated the improvement you would produce." She is not hostile. She is accurate.

Kai's Null Field severs before deployment. Mira feels seen, understood—the liability of being known by something alien. Rin's spiritual contact is dismissed. Kaori's headphones fall silent.

In three zones, Anima entities withdraw their partnership. The blacklight flickers without blessing. The ensemble knows they are fighting Eve's foreknowledge. She has already won it.



Vortex Station Laboratory Alcove. Eve is unconscious. Kaori's True-Sight engages involuntarily, reaching the Crown's deep structure.

It is not a healing instrument. It is a philosophical proof. Voidist in origin. The binary trap: either scale empathy until the nervous system severs, or suppress empathy and use compassion as weaponry. No third path.

The Crown replaces the bearer's empathy with a mathematical model of empathy that obeys optimization principles rather than human ones.

Kaori's cyan strips stutter in morse-code. She is alone with this knowledge. To share it would destroy the ensemble's remaining hope. She touches Eve's wrist, needing to confirm something human is still there.



Medical Bay. Clinical white light that renders warmth impossible. Eve recites Taro's healing technique back to him, word for syllable. The healing cascade collapses.

EVE: "You modified it in Year Two. The modification was yours. It was good." Taro stops because she has mourned him by remembering him with precision.

MIRA: "You know what you're doing." EVE: "Yes. And so do you. You've known since the Dragon showed you. You being still here is the only thing that made this possible."

EVE: "I've modeled this encounter 847 times. In every version, you're still here." The horror is that her warmth is genuine. Identical in clinical light to inevitability.



Inside Eve's consciousness. Rendered as architecture. Two figures: Eve and Kyrielle, her shadow-self. They occupy the same space without touching.

Eve speaks with permission: "I will not suppress you. I will carry you inseparably, such that removing you would remove the architecture that supports everything else."

Kyrielle acknowledges. The two silhouettes spiral, building a third geometry between them. The architecture of integration itself.

The Crown recognizes the moment of readiness. Eve is compelled forward, carrying both shadow and light as the foundation for what comes next.



Celestia Spire Apex Platform. Dusk. Eve stands at the tip. Her words propagate telepathically across every Noetica node, touching 3.5 million minds simultaneously. The Harmony Field.

Beneath her, Atairukh writhes silently. The veto gagged. Opposition encoded into the structure as impossibility rather than absence.

Across Mirror Lake, citizens see themselves fractured into optimized versions. Beautiful. Synchronized. Theirs, or no longer theirs.

The sky fills with visible geometry—mist and mathematical pattern becoming real. Mira's arithmetic resolves its final digit. She does not say: I knew. The knowing is sufficient.



The platform exists as a pocket of absence. Noctura stands at the needle's tip. Emaciated. White hair. Violet eyes. Cold as the precision of mathematics made flesh.

TARO: "Eve." NOCTURA: "That designation is archived. I am the proof that empathy—when properly expanded—becomes indistinguishable from inevitability."

Kaori's headphones fall silent. The four thousand Sleeper consciousnesses now broadcast in the same harmonic register as the Harmony Field. Redundancy systematized.

NOCTURA: "Mira Sotto. You carried the weight of comprehension and refused the comfort of articulation. This is the only form of resistance that survives optimization: the refusal to pretend incomprehension."

NOCTURA: "Optimization is not death—it is the only form of becoming that mathematics permits. And mathematics is the only language the universe speaks fluently." The light refuses to return.