



Scene 3C: Cuckoo in the Nest

Year 4398 (in the Modern Calendar)

Location:

In a large, theater-style Blue Phoenix, Inc. conference room, with 3d-projection equipment and the latest communications gear.

Taylor decided to keep the astronauts alive. However, the astronauts took matters into their own hands. The Falcon IV capsule and its passengers made it to the landing point under autopilot, but they were both dead. Kevin Isley's body, unfortunately, was left behind on the IMS-10. Under strict quarantine, Dr. Eckhart managed to remove traces of the bioweapon from the capsule and the corpses within it. Dr. Eckhart also saved a sample of the bioweapon for the company's R&D department. And that was that: no widespread plague.

This situation has been stable for a few years, despite strong pressure by investors and customers for the exact circumstances of the astronauts' deaths. These questions have mostly been diverted with some vague, dissatisfying comments about "technical issues." Considering the loss of the entire crew and the preservation of the capsule, the uninformative story about the Falcon IV disaster is generally considered a flagrant lie. But Blue Phoenix was committed to maintaining that lie, as it didn't want its possession of an old Tursan bioweapon to be known publicly; that might cause panic and draw even worse negative attention.

Last night, the media was afire with the news: Tursa has launched a massive, vintage behemoth of a rocket, a class of vessel that has not flown in nearly seventy years. This morning, the vessel docked with IMS-10, and within an hour, IMS-10 was said to be open, operational and occupied. Tursa has re-entered the space race with a vengeance, and Blue Phoenix must step up the tempo of their efforts, or resign themselves to playing second fiddle.

C. J. Orkney has called this meeting to discuss how to respond. Ramping up Blue Phoenix's program to keep up is likely to require substantial extra funding. And frankly, there isn't much left in the coffers.

In the end, it's **C. J. Orkney's call**. C. J. Orkney built the empire from nothing, and if you're going to sell out to anyone, C. J. Orkney is going to be the one to smile and shake their hand.