



Scene 3A: Cuckoo in the Nest

Year 4398 (in the Modern Calendar)

Location:

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

In 4395, Taylor decided to keep the astronauts alive. The Falcon IV capsule and its passengers made it to the landing point under autopilot. Kevin Isley's body, unfortunately, was left behind on the IMS-10. Under strict quarantine, Dr. Eckhart managed to halt the bioweapon's progress in both survivors. Barbara Williams was affected worse by far, and ended up retiring from Blue Phoenix on medical disability. The mission commander got a clean bill of health and returned to full duty. Not only that, 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 the last three years, despite questions by investors and customers on the exact circumstances of Kevin Isley's death. These questions have mostly been diverted with some vague, dissatisfying comments about "technical issues." Blue Phoenix doesn't want the existence of the disease to be known publicly; that might cause panic and draw unwanted, 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.