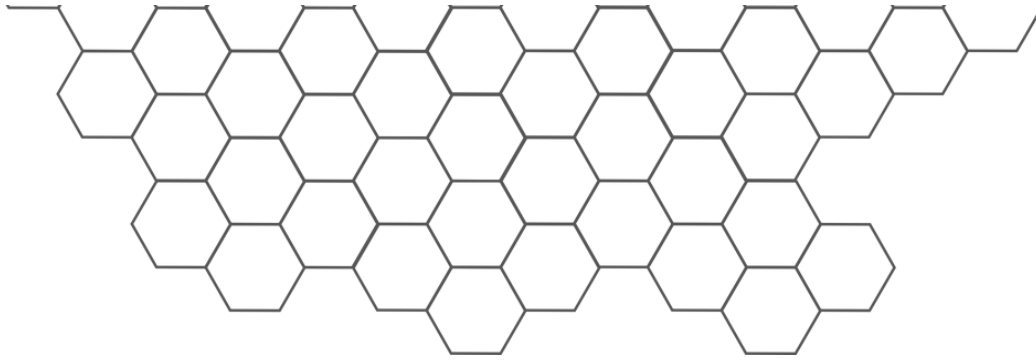




<<STATUS REPORT>>

Oriel: We almost have their system crippled. ETA 40 minutes.

<<CONNECTION TERMINATED>>

<<OPEN FILE // HARD SIX // MISSION 03 - WASP HACKERS (PART 1) >>

FRIDAY NIGHT PARTY

Mr. Long's, Friday Night, a couple days after **The Escape Protocol**, 11pm

Little Z was at the party, several rounds into his "thank you" night he earned for helping the team track Alicia Gonzalez and eventually successfully complete their run. While the Tenderloin DMZ courier was a little rough around the edges, he's Chinese-American, and seems to have charmed the usual crowd of upstanding local small business owners, tong elites, and local luminaries that **Mr. Long** caters to.

Glass was sitting at a booth with Mr. Long's mysterious cousin, **Kei**, who was partaking in Little Z's infectious revelry enough that Glass thought the mysterious cousin might let a little more information slip. Kei was staying with Mr. Long for a week, for business. Glass was very curious what that business might be, and who Kei and Mr. Long are. Indeed, between a few more shots of tequila and Glass' subtle questions, he dropped a little information:

His name is Kei -- which seemed very odd to Glass, given that he referred to Mr. Long as **Jay**. He and Jay are the exact same age, and they grew up together. Whether it's true or not, he considers Jay to be the odd one in the family. He prides himself on being forward-thinking and future-oriented, but he thinks of Jay as very much focused on the present, "being who he is right now, no matter what -- neither living in the past nor looking to the future."

After some more revelry, Little Z started using overproof rum and a broken vape pen to spit fireballs across the room from his barstool, which at least half of the crowd thought was fun. The other half, including Mr. Long, was not amused; so he asked **The Raptor** to escort his friend upstairs to the balcony, where Raptor, Little Z, and one other customer Raptor didn't know shot off some more fireballs, and eventually settled in for a game of strip poker in one of the bordello rooms with a few of

Mr. Long's professionals -- among them, Sapphire (a beautiful young Chinese woman) and Cinnamon (a tan skinned leather daddy).

With the party moved on, things quieted down, downstairs, so Kei checked a message on his commlink. The majority of the message appeared to be in AR, inaccessible to Glass, but he feigned a stumble and got a peek at the phone screen, where it showed an image of a luxuriously dressed older Chinese man who looked exactly like Kei *and* Jay. At this point, Glass put two and two together and realized Kei and Jay were both dressed rather affectedly, with Mr. Long wearing traditional formal Chinese businessman clothing and sunglasses, and Kei wearing flashy street clothes and a beanie. But when you thought about it, putting the flashy dress aside, their similarity was more than just familial resemblance. They -- and other than his age, the much older man in the picture -- were *exactly* the same.

Mr. Long spotted Glass' clumsy fake-stumble and realized that Glass was snooping again, but Kei didn't.

Natalie Zavala came into the bar later, around 1am. She had been working a job as a private investigator, which was not something she was used to doing. She "humble bragged" to Glass that she took a job "just like you guys do" only she tempered it by saying she's not working for some Johnson on a dangerous op, but doing some private investigation on behalf of the **San Francisco Zoo** ("...an Aleph enterprise"). Someone had kidnapped **Jumbo** the elephant. Elephants being extinct outside captivity, Jumbo (a rare successful clone of his namesake) was a valuable and rare commodity, and important to the survival of his species. Natalie, being an environmental activist, was passionate about this job. She made subtle suggestions of ways Glass and the team might help her that missed the mark of their capabilities, so Glass did what he could and gave her some good advice. She said she would be interviewing witnesses tomorrow.

She ranted about how the meggacorps owned this town, and could get away with anything. The zoo hired her -- not Aleph -- because the cops didn't do anything. The SFPD said they were on the case, but 48 hours had passed without no leads, and *she* had already made appointments to talk to witnesses. The cops couldn't be *that* incompetent. Someone was clearly covering this up! She didn't stay more than an hour, though, because it was way too late, and she had to get home to the kids.

SATURDAY SHOPPING

The next morning, Raptor went shopping for a concealable wingsuit. Though not illegal, he had to pay 2 Cred for a version that can be rapidly deployed from under seemingly normal clothes. Mr. Long hit Kestrel up for an armored jacket. She overcharged him and made him wait a week to get it, because she's a real fucker. Also he's not part of the gang.

Note: See below.

Wicked Cyril was still recovering from his cybersurgery, and staying out of sight, because Phelps-Decker had ID'ed him during **The Escape Protocol**.

That evening around 9, they were back to the bar, hanging out at Mr. Long's. Raptor and Glass were there again.

Mr. Long noticed Raptor talking to Sapphire and Cinnamon, and overheard that they have been double dealing on him. Normally they pass intel they get from their high status clients on to Mr. Long, but for a while they've been passing intel on to Raptor as well -- and to Raptor's surprise as well, they've passed intel to **Kestrel**, too! This caused a little bad blood between Raptor and Mr. Long, but nothing irreparable. Raptor wasn't too happy with Kestrel, but he didn't say anything.

Mr. Long's other gig, being an information broker, was paying off this week, with a bit of profit off of some deals going down in the bar.

Kei wasn't in the bar Saturday evening, perhaps because of his indiscretions the night before. Glass' curiosity was still itching. Because of Mr. Long's agreement to let Kei stay "for a week," he knew Kei was leaving town on or about Tuesday evening. Whatever he was here for, he'd be doing it in the next few days. And if he wasn't coming down to drink, Glass thought he might have to escalate things a little. But not quite yet...

Natalie Zavala showed up at Mr. Long's again, around 9:30 well. She talked to Glass about her job some more. She had descriptions of the two men who kidnapped Jumbo: Both were white guys with buzz cut hair, black outfits with armor vests under, identical combat boots - likely private military, probably megacorp agents and a description of a truck that they likely used. The vehicle was a large white box truck, pretty nondescript. It made a lot of noise, possibly because it would need a powerful engine to haul a tranquilized elephant. The truck was her main lead, though it was scant, and she was going to ask around about the pair of white guys with buzz cut hair, but was feeling a little pessimistic about her chances of solving the case.

Glass gave a little more advice before being interrupted by his phone.

Mr. Johnson was on the line. He and Glass knew about each other, and while Glass had worked for Mr. Johnson's colleagues, he'd never worked for Mr. Johnson before. Mr. Johnson wanted to meet him for dinner tomorrow night at 8pm, and let Glass suggest a fine steak house. Glass suggested **the Palm** in the **Market district**, and Mr. Johnson suggested he bring along any team members he'd like. "Dinner's on me."

SUNDAY DINNER

Glass spent Sunday tailing Kei, and found him snooping around the **Market district**, near Aleph's gleaming, many-towered arcology. He was clearly checking something out, and was afraid of being spotted by Aleph agents or cameras.

It was decided that the team should *not* bring Wicked Cyril to dinner, since he was still recovering (though he was plenty healed enough to come to dinner) and because of his worry about Phelps-Decker.

That evening, at the Palm, Glass brought The Raptor and Mr. Long. They arrived on time, and Mr. Johnson was a few minutes late, blaming traffic. They went to the back room, ordered real beef steaks, a bottle of fine wine, and scalloped potatoes and string beans. As they enjoyed the expensive meal, Mr. Johnson laid out the details of the mission he wanted the team to take on.

His client had developed a patented gene for a parasitoid wasp, and the target recently released a parasitoid wasp product on the market. Though the two wasps were entirely different species, both were genetically modified, and both developments were adjacent to certain events in the two companies' history that it implied a certain degree of "hanky panky." Mr. Johnson wanted to hire Glass to get a scientist or executive at the offending firm to admit to the patent theft, to support his client's suit in corporate court. Barring that, breaking in to steal evidence or hacking in to get it were options as well.

Raptor got the sense that Mr. Johnson was holding back a nugget of information he knew the team wouldn't like, but negotiated the pay anyway. As usual by this point, Raptor talked Mr. Johnson into a fairly high rate for their services.

Mr. Johnson revealed that **Mitchell Kurosawa** was the cause of the suspicion of hanky panky. He knew that Glass was involved in the **Kurosawa Extraction**, and knew Glass was enough of a professional that this would not be a problem. After all, his client (clearly **Monsagra** at this point) did not want Kurosawa back. They just wanted proof that Kurosawa used Monsagra-patented gene technology to advance a **Phelps-Decker** parasitoid wasp product. It's unclear if Monsagra knows the team was involved in the **Kurosawa Extraction**, or if it's just Mr. Johnson's own personal knowledge. It's the kind of thing Johnsons do: They keep track of what teams pull off what runs.

The Phelps-Decker product that's about to come out are **Network Superiority Tracker Wasps** - a milspec infowar weapon. They're based on tracker wasp frame (the giant ichneumon - a big scary-looking wasp that implants eggs in other insects, eventually killing them when the larvae hatch), but with a genetically enhanced and technologically modified ovipositor that carries a modular plug, and a wireless modem, allowing the device to inject malicious software, monitor traffic, or rapidly establish a wireless connection to hardwired systems. They can be guided remotely over the wireless modem or using an infrasound targeting beam, in situations where radio silence is desired.

Monsagra's wasp (that Mitchell Kurosawa was involved in the development of) is a much smaller species of parasitoid wasp. It was modified to be more lethal to insects that blight rice crops, and easy to contain using infrasound; but the development and testing of Monsagra's product was delayed due to the Kurosawa Extraction. Two megacorps developing infrasound-guided modified parasitoid wasps (even if they were different sizes, and for different purposes) seemed like too great a coincidence.

The team asked some of the obvious questions:

How do you think we should do this? The easiest approach is for Glass to do what he does best and get someone there to admit to using Monsagra patented gene modifications on the Phelps-Decker wasp.

What are the dangers we might face? Obviously the dangers Glass often encounters -- being hassled by corporate security while snooping around and interviewing people, getting arrested by the SFPD or corporate police, getting roughly bounced out of a corporate building, etc. But also, if the investigation fails on human terms, they might need to break in or hack in, and there are obvious additional risks there, what with Phelps-Decker being a weapons company.

What if the evidence points the other way? Unlikely. Parasitoid wasp products don't just come out every day. It would be a hell of a coincidence. "But regardless, one way or another, deliver me something that proves there was hanky panky."

How soon do you need this? Legal cases don't move all that fast. Mr. Johnson admitted that the team could probably take a month, but he doesn't want to wait a month to get paid, so he asked "How fast do you think you could get it done?" Raptor and Glass suggested two weeks, and that they could probably get it done in one week, if all goes well. Mr. Johnson agreed that that was reasonable.

After that, Mr. Johnson suggested dessert, and they had a nice evening, mostly talking small talk about food and wine.