

The Cipher Key.

This is an encrypted file that wasn't meant to exist. After breaking it, I realized my mistake.

Kael was just another data-runner who skimmed the Neon Verge, trading secrets for rewards. Upon entering the location, it was a basic drop and merely an everyday transfer, until I noticed the file's classification. Priority-Zero. Encryption that is only for top level. I ought to have stayed put.' Instead, I decrypted it.

"The Merge is imminent.
Coordinates set. Await confirmation. "

The words sparked my curiosity. My pulse thundered. The Merge, which was whispered in the darkest corners of existence on the Solverse, turned out to be real. Someone was about to reassemble the eight separated timelines into one.'... Success would come with unknown outcomes. Despite the existence of the file, there was a willingness to put everything on the line for someone to uncover it.

My comms link became red-hot. Why? Inbound trace detected.

I had just enough time to kill the connection before the chase started. I hurried into the maze-like streets of the Verge, a neon-tinged area where reality seemed to be lost in the digital world. I sprinted past holo-adverts, my pursuers revolving around like ghosts in the crowd. The individuals in question were not solely focused on obtaining the data. Their presence was there to erase me.'

I had to find Cipher. He was an ex-Archivist, a ghost in the system, the only one who could tell me what I had just stumbled into.

The Lower Wastes were a graveyard of forgotten tech, a perfect hiding spot. I ducked into an abandoned server hub and punched in an old code. The screen flickered, and a raspy voice filled the room. "Kael... you shouldn't have opened that file. "

Before I could reply, the door behind me exploded inward.

Gunfire tore through the darkness. Sparks rained from broken monitors. I dove behind a console as drones scanned the smoke-filled air, searching for heat signatures. A laser pulse grazed my arm, pain flaring hot and sharp.

"Get to sublevel three, " Cipher's voice crackled in my earpiece. "Now. "

I ran. The stairwell loomed ahead, half-collapsed and rusted with age. Footsteps pounded behind me, closing fast. Another shot whizzed past my ear, close enough to singe hair. I threw myself at the rusted door, forcing it open just enough to slip through.

The sublevel hummed with ancient machinery. Cipher stood in the dim glow of flickering monitors, his hood pulled low. He didn't look surprised to see me bleeding.

"Who sent them?" I panted.

His fingers flew over the keys. A dozen screens blinked to life, each displaying the same warning:

"Timeline integrity compromised.
Eliminate all threats. "

Cipher's eyes met mine, dark with certainty. "They are not coming for you, Kael. "

The building trembled. Dust rained from the ceiling. A low mechanical hum filled the air, growing louder.

"They are coming for everyone who knows.
And they don't leave survivors. "

The lights went out.

I gritted my teeth, listening in the darkness as my heart hammered against my ribs. A faint blue emergency light flickered on, casting Cipher's shadow across the wall.

"They shut down the main power," he muttered, pulling up a map on his wrist console.
"Which means we've about three minutes before they send in the sweepers."

A metallic clank echoed above us. My gut twisted. Sweepers—synthetic assassins designed for one purpose: total elimination.

Cipher reached into a drawer and tossed me a compact energy pistol. "You're going to want this."

I caught it, checking the charge. "What's our play?"

"We get to the Anchor."

I frowned. "The Anchor? That's just a myth."

Cipher's expression hardened. "So was the Merge, until five minutes ago."

I swore under my breath. The Anchor was rumored to be the only thing keeping the Solverse from collapsing. If someone was trying to force the timelines back together, then the Anchor was the last line of defense.

Cipher led the way through a narrow service tunnel, the ground vibrating under our feet as the Sweepers closed in. We emerged into an underground transit bay, where a rusted hovercraft lay dormant. Cipher keyed in a sequence on the panel, and the engines sputtered to life.

We barely made it out before the building above collapsed in an explosion of fire and metal.

The Anchor was hidden beneath the oldest district in the Solverse—an ancient construct of unknown origin, pulsing with raw energy. We stepped onto a platform overlooking its shifting core. The space felt... wrong. Time bent around it, folding in on itself in impossible ways.

A figure stood at the console, hands moving swiftly over the controls. I recognized him instantly.

Archon Vale. The architect of the Merge.

"You're too late," he said without turning. "The Cipher Key is already in place."

Cipher cursed. "He's lying."

Vale chuckled. "Am I?" He gestured toward the core. A crystalline structure hovered at its center, pulsing with an eerie golden light. "Once the cycle completes, all eight timelines will become one. No more division. No more conflict."

I raised my pistol. "No more free will."

Vale sighed, as if tired of the conversation. "It doesn't matter what you think. The process has started. It cannot be undone."

Cipher grabbed my wrist. "He's bluffing."

Vale turned to us fully, eyes gleaming with something almost... inhuman. "Am I?"

The Anchor's energy flared, distorting reality itself. I felt the weight of existence shift—an entire universe teetering on the edge of something irreversible.

I had one shot. One choice.

Destroy the Cipher Key and stop the Merge... or let the Solverse become one.

I pulled the trigger.

CAST:

- **Kael:** Data-runner, expert at decrypting messages
 - **Cipher:** Ex-Archivist, vanished after leaking classified records
 - **Archon Vale:** The mastermind behind the Merge
 - **AI Enforcers & Sweepers:** Programmed to protect timeline integrity at all costs
-

Writing Prompt:

You intercept a message meant for a powerful faction leader. The encryption is way more advanced than anything you've seen before. As you begin decoding it, you realize it contains information about merging the timelines of the Solverse. The moment you open it, someone knows. Now, they're coming for you.

References:

- The Solverse and Its Timelines: [Infinity Labs Wiki](#)
- Haakon the Broken Incident: [YouTube Link](#)
- Neon Verge & Lower Wastes Visuals: [Solverse Scene 0009](#)