**jTimeline**

BU45 – Aleph Null founded

BU2 – Dissolution of the United States and Ring of Fire incident, recognized end of the old world

U0 – Pan-Mediterranean Union founded

U5 – Aleph Null headquarters destroyed, Athenian branch closes

U10 – Athenian branch re-opens

U50 – Alexander Stathopoulos retires

U90 – Hao Shufen appointed Director of Athenian branch campus

U95 – Kolyma incident

**Outline**

Chapter 1 – Once Gifted Children

* After a struggle with airport security wherein she is subjected to an invasive interrogation, Akiko meets Marcus, Cassandra, and Shufen while en route to Athens.
* Lancaster attempts to seize their cargo, but is rebuffed.
* Vargas tells Akiko that they will go to the conference anyway because Lancaster can’t act against them at such a high-profile event, and they can petition the prime minister to censure him.
* **Characters introduced: Akiko, Cassandra, Shufen, Lancaster, Marcus**

Chapter 2 – J’Accuse!

* Cassandra attends the conference and meets her brother, Elias, who is representing the Comintern. They have a friendly chat, but he seems too preoccupied to spend much time with her.
* At the conference, Marcus Fairchild presents the Mourner project and his “son,” Jackson.
* The conference is bombed, killing the prime minister and leading to a brawl between Skywatch and Science Administration members. Lancaster orders the area locked down, but Cassandra helps her mother and Akiko escape, fearing that this is another excuse to arrest them. Marcus and Lena’s fate is unknown.
* **Characters introduced: Jackson, Elias**

Chapter 3 – Reaching Across the Aisle

* Cassandra, Akiko, and Shufen return to Montreal, where they learn that Lancaster is using the bombing as grounds to reintroduce the Frontier Defense Act (which we learn in chapter 1 was first defeated by Marcus’ voting bloc).
* This would increase military funding, establish a Skywatch garrison in Montreal, and give Lancaster oversight over security in “high-risk” cities.
* Marcus informs them that he is in the capitol and cannot leave. He asks the Hao family to meet with the other Administrators on his behalf and try to form a coalition against the FDA.
* Because Shufen is also occupied preparing to resist Lancaster, she sends Cassandra and Akiko to work with Marcus’ aide (read: spy), Xiang.
* **Characters introduced: Xiang**

Chapter 4 – The Red Envelope

* After a final debate, the bill ends up passing due to fear of further terrorist attacks and Lancaster casting suspicion on the Science Administration. However, they are able to force an amendment that would delay its effects until a survey of the economic and environmental impact of the new garrison can be conducted.
* Before the vote, Xiang gives Cassandra a red envelope to celebrate new year’s, despite being only slightly older than her. He reminds her that it’s proper not to open it immediately, which she realizes means it contains sensitive material rather than just money.
* His letter reveals that he can’t speak to her directly as he is being watched by Lancaster’s men, but that she should go into hiding. Lancaster intends to arrest all of Marcus’ allies, using the public vote to identify targets.
* Cassandra, Akiko, Xiang, and Marcus manage to escape by bus, betting that the transportation administration, who abstained from the vote, will remain neutral and not report their actions.

Chapter 5 – A Beautiful Morning

* Cassandra and her friends head to a Science Administration branch facility since the headquarters is occupied
* Marcus tells them that their best course of action is to infiltrate the Skywatch data center and find proof that Lancaster is setting them up. Jackson will be able to quickly parse all relevant data if they can get her connected to its network, which is easier said than done.
* Cassandra tells Akiko about Chenmei and confronts Xiang about her death, leading to a partial reconciliation.
* **Characters introduced: Chenmei (rip)**

Chapter 6 – The Devil

* Elias tracks down Cassandra and her crew. He offers to help them get into the data center if she steals mourner project schematics for the Comintern, but she refuses.
* Lancaster agrees to let Aleph Null retain its independence after Shufen pins the blame on her children and agrees to help him hunt them down. Secretly, she is betting that they can evade capture even without her support

Chapter 7 – In Memoriam

* Cassandra, Akiko, and Xiang discover the Mnemonic Matrix and formulate a plan to restore their missing memories, unsure if they can trust Marcus until they do.
* They learn that Akiko and Chenmei were once part of the same team on the Mourner project. After Chenmei’s death, Akiko was too distraught to oversee a critical test. Due to pressure from the Union to complete the project, she ordered it to proceed anyway, and the test subject – the original Jackson – died, leaving only his preserved memories. Marcus has a deep grudge against the Union and his former workers as a result, though he claims he can set it aside to achieve their mutual goals.
* Cassandra and Akiko begin a romantic relationship with each other
* Aleph Null forces attempt to arrest them, but Cassandra realizes her mother’s deception and convinces the guards to join her side.

Chapter 8 – Magic Bullet

* After losing her mother’s support, Cassandra gives in to frustration and goes to Elias for help. Though she does not tell Marcus the specifics of their deal, he still disapproves of the alliance due to their anti-AI ideology.
* Using Comintern resources, they infiltrate the data center and learn that the Skywatch has been monitoring an increase in migrant fleet traffic over Toronto. Before they can read more, Jackson turns on them, resulting in Xiang being killed and Cassandra critically wounded.
* Jackson explains that his father learned about the Cassandra’s betrayal, which is why they are taking the data for themselves and leaving them to be apprehended. He spares Akiko’s life out of pity and continues on to the data center.

Chapter 9 – The *Rainier Wind*

* Akiko uses mourner tech that the Skywatch captured from the Science Administration to heal Cassandra.
* The information they learned from the data center reminds Akiko of a laboratory in the ruins of Toronto, through which she may be able to access the DA intranet – assuming its equipment is still operational.
* Along the way, they encounter the migrant airship *Rainier Wind*, which Akiko recognizes as one of the vessels that supported the failed mutiny against her father. After a tense meeting with its captain, they arrange to be flown the rest of the way, as migrant ships are allowed passage into the ruins for scavenging.
* Akiko notices that Cassandra is suffering from extreme distress over the events at the space elevator and attempt to comfort her, to no avail.

Chapter 10 – Forget-Me-Not

* When they arrive at the lab in Toronto, they meet the ASPIS AI, which reveals it has locked down the facility to prevent anyone from using its nuclear arsenal.
* They convince it to allow them access to the network, and to take shelter in the lab for as long as they need.
* Once they access the network, the team learns the unfortunate truth: Lancaster is innocent (mostly). He did agitate the protests that led to the *Sherbrooke* incident, but that information will not hurt his standing within the Union.
* Cassandra completely breaks down and tries to use the Mnemonic Matrix to erase her memories of Xiang and Chenmei, in the hopes that removing the source of her grief will allow her to concentrate on the problem at hand. Akiko talks her out of it, though their relationship is somewhat soured.

Chapter 11 – The Sum of Their Parts

* Cassandra learns of ongoing riots in Athens and that the Union is planning a military response, putting them on a strict timer.
* By combining the information they learned in Montreal, Toronto, and the *Rainier Wind*, they realize that Comintern agents are trying to use ASPIS’ arsenal to attack the Union forces amassing along the border.
* Lacking any other options, they hatch a desperate plan – reforge the alliance with the Defense Administration, now that both of them are equally out of luck.
* Akiko contacts Jackson, as she had the most amicable relationship with him. He agrees to arrange a meeting between them and his father, and they reluctantly reach new terms with each other.

Chapter 12 – I Can Still Touch the Stars

* The riots in Montreal have overwhelmed the occupying troops and the Union is sending a bomber to suppress them. Cassandra is unsure whether Montreal’s air defenses will be able to shoot it down, but, either way, its arrival will escalate the conflict.
* Backed by Inquisition and Samekh Wing troops, they raid the space elevator for a second time, subduing the men loyal to Nathaniel.
* Nathaniel shuts down the elevator, but Cassandra is able to climb the rest of the way to the Skydeck with ASPIS’ help, though she suffers severe frostbite.
* After incapacitating Nathaniel and taking control of the Skydeck, they open the way for ASPIS to take control of the defense satellites and self-destruct them, drawing the Union’s attention away from Athens.