**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 the Hao family while en route to Rome.
* Lancaster attempts to arrest Vargas mid-flight 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, Vargas**

Chapter 2 – J’Accuse!

* At the conference, Marcus Fairchild presents the Mourner project and his “daughter,” Lena.
* Cassandra observes Lancaster meeting with the Genevan delegation, noting that it is odd for a country the Union was at war with only thirty years prior had been invited to the conference.
* The conference is bombed, killing several government officials. Lancaster accuses Vargas, and the Aleph Null representatives are implicated by association. However, Lancaster cannot prove it, so he allows them to leave after a tense stand-off.
* Cassandra helps Akiko escape with them by faking her identity, as she believes the Defense Administration to be innocent.
* **Characters introduced: Marcus, Lena, Elias**

Chapter 3 – The Red Envelope

* Cassandra, Elias, Shufen, and Akiko return to Athens to prepare for the Union’s “investigation.”
* Xiang’s letter arrives, asking them to help him save his friend, Jackson.
* Akiko moves into Cassandra’s apartment, much to the latter’s discomfort. They go out to buy Akiko some new clothes before meeting Jackson at the Samekh Wing transit hub, per Xiang’s wishes.
* Elias explains that the Samekh Wing staff are critical of Aleph Null’s neglect of citizens displaced after the war and have strong anti-capitalist leanings.
* Union investigators arrive in Athens, forcing Cassandra, Akiko, and Jackson to flee immediately. Shufen catches them in the act, but does not stop them.
* **Characters introduced: Jackson, Xiang**

Chapter 4 – A Beautiful Morning

* Marcus begrudgingly agrees to work with Aleph Null and tells them that their best course of action is to infiltrate the space elevator and find proof of Lancaster’s crimes in the Skywatch data center, which will defang him politically and force him to negotiate, while also exonerating Cassandra and Akiko.
* Elias arrives in Naples after learning that Cassandra had fled. He tells her that tensions are rising in Athens.
* They have another run-in with the representatives from Geneva, Charlotte and Nathaniel.
* Cassandra tells Akiko about Chenmei and confronts Xiang about her death, leading to a partial reconciliation.
* **Characters introduced: Charlotte, Nathaniel, Chenmei (rip)**

Chapter 5 – Dealing with the Devil

* Cassandra and company begin formulating the space elevator plan, but struggle to find a way past security.
* Charlotte tells them about her rivalry with Nathaniel and proposes an alliance, which would require them to steal Mourner data for her. These terms are too steep, so they tentatively decline, though she says the offer remains open.
* Cassandra’s compulsions worsen.
* Shufen sells her children out to Lancaster in order to protect Athens, trusting that they can evade him even without her help.

Chapter 6 – In Memoriam

* The team discovers 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, Xiang, 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 Lena – died, leaving only her 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, though the latter wonders if her partner just sees her as an imitation of Chenmei.
* The twins discover Shufen’s betrayal after Samekh Wing is sent to arrest them, but Elias convinces the militiamen to join their side after realizing the deception.

Chapter 7 – Gates of Heaven

* After losing her mother’s support, Cassandra gives in to frustration and goes to Charlotte for help. Though she does not tell Marcus about giving her the mourner data, he still disapproves of the alliance due to their anti-AI ideology.
* Using Inquisition resources, they create a viable plan to infiltrate the space elevator. The team raids the facility during Carnaval, but things go wrong and Xiang is killed. They reach the security hub, where Jackson turns on them and shoots Cassandra.
* Jackson explains that Nathaniel reached out to his father and exposed their sale of the mourner data to the Inquisition, which is why they are taking the data for themselves and leaving the rest to be apprehended. If that leads to the people responsible for Lena’s death destroying each other, then all the better.
* Jackson does claim that he and his father are innocent of the bombing, however. He spares Akiko’s life out of pity and continues on to the data center.
* Akiko treats Cassandra’s wounds and the two escape somehow (figure it out later).

Chapter 8 – Forget-Me-Not

* Cassandra, Akiko, and Elias work on a plan to get the data back from Marcus. Akiko brings up the laboratory in the ruins of Toronto, through which she may be able to access the DA intranet – assuming its equipment is still operational.
* They walk to Toronto over the course of a week, encountering some difficulties along the way. Elias and Akiko both notice that Cassandra is suffering from extreme distress over the events at the space elevator and attempt to comfort her, to no avail.
* When they arrive at the lab in Toronto, they notice that the lights are on, and soon meet the ASPIS AI, which reveals it has locked down the facility to prevent anyone from accessing 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 – The data has been erased. They have no ammunition to use against Lancaster, but neither do Marcus and Jackson.
* 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 9 – The Sum of Their Parts

* Elias learns of ongoing riots in Athens and that the Union is planning a military response, putting them on a strict timer.
* 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.
* Combining what data Marcus and Jackson were able to salvage with what they learned in Toronto, they realize that Nathaniel was the culprit behind the bombing.
* They convince Marcus to cooperate with Charlotte for long enough to expose the truth and clear all their names.

Chapter 10 – I Can Still Touch the Stars

* With Charlotte’s help, they realize that Nathaniel is planning to commandeer the orbital defense network and stage an even more dramatic attack. Meanwhile, the riots in Athens have overwhelmed the occupying “investigators,” and the Union is sending a bomber to suppress them. Cassandra is unsure whether Athens’ 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.