

Arc 3

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Arc 3 Seq 1 | Command Acquisition

Narrative Purpose

Transitions duo from cockpit isolation to Command authority via Cultist's cocky instincts. Establishes player as "bodega clerk" everyman volun-told into sysadmin role.

- Emotional tone: Cocky dominance → pragmatic delegation.
- Immediate goal: Secure Command Deck access + sysop privileges.
- Mechanical purpose: SocialCapital flag + environmental interaction tutorial (knock vs. mash).

Narrative Breakdown

Beat 1 | Cockpit Exit Pivot

Player ignores Technician's plea; Cultist presses his advantage with cocky bloviation, halting exit to assert dominance before Command push.

- **Camera:** First-person, locked to seated perspective then auto-stand (scripted—no player control during exchange).
- **Audio:** Cockpit hum stabilizes; Cultist voice rises confident, edged with arrogance.
- **Environmental Cues:** Dim amber strips; frost on viewport.
- **Objective / Task:** None.
- **Player Feedback:** UI objective "Reach Command Deck"

Actions:

- Auto-dialogue triggers on stand.
- Cultist reaches out, hand takes player by the wrist to halt forward motion (scripted animation: firm grip, slight pull-back tension).

Dialogue (Auto-Start):



Cultist (*smirking*) "Hold—You chose well; commander's our ticket. When he spins the gates, my hauler flies clean. You saw the dark—told you we'd need him."

Option A – Defer Choice

- **Result:** Cultist preens, releases wrist, leads out immediately; duo exits hauler. Grants "SocialCapital".
- **Dialogue:**

“ **Player** (*nod*) "Yeah, You're probably right."
Cultist (*cocky griny*) "Smart. Keep up—Command awaits."

- **Purpose:** Fuels Cultist power fantasy; banks player leverage for Beta assist.
- **Trait:** Adds SocialCapital

Option B – Push Back Choice

- **Result:** Cultist shrugs indifferently (expects skepticism), releases wrist; player leads exit. No flags.
- **Dialogue:**

“ **Player** (*firm*) "Commander's no guarantee—could be a dead end."
Cultist (*chuckle, amused*) "Doubt suits the uncalled. Lead on, clerk."

- **Purpose:** Establishes early player independence; Cultist tolerance intact.

Notes:

- No relationship hit on Push Back ("unenlightened" tolerance).
- Wrist-grab animation sells dominance physically.

Beat 2 | Bridge Lockout

Duo exits hauler into short access hallway facing small bridge door (submarine-cramped for 5 officers max). Lockout panel glows red; Commander treats arrival as minor interruption amid routine crisis.

- **Camera:** Full Control.
- **Audio:** Steady corridor hum; faint terminal beeps leak through door.
- **Environmental Cues:** Red panel displays "LOCKOUT"; buckled frame shows tremor damage.
- **Objective / Task:** Gain bridge access.

- **Player Feedback:** Panel highlights on approach; UI objective "Reach Command Deck" holds.

Actions:

- Panel interactable (error buzz on use).
- Door knock option unlocks after first panel or Cultist line.
- Cultist stands nearby, arms crossed.

Dialogue (Auto-Trigger on First Panel Buzz):

“ **Cultist** (*casual, abstract*) "Knock knock, Commander."

Triggers:

- First panel → buzz + Cultist line → knock unlocks.
- Knock → brief pause → Commander responds.
- 10x panel mash → Commander responds irritated.

Option A – Knock Path

- **Result:** Door stays locked; Commander responds neutrally.
- **Dialogue:**

“ **Commander** (*tin-toned, preoccupied*) "This station's on lockdown. Better have a good reason to be here."

- **Purpose:** Rewards observation; teaches scan > mash.
- **Transition:** Beat 3 | Sysop Delegation.

Option B – Panel Mash Path

- **Result:** Door stays locked; Commander responds annoyed but procedural.
- **Dialogue:**

“ **Commander** (*irritated, busy*) "You're not one to take a hint, huh? Now that you have my attention—what do you want?"

- **Purpose:** Tolerates persistence; reinforces Commander's workload.
- **Transition:** Beat 3 | Sysop Delegation.

Notes:

- Commander tone: Busy workstation focus—lockout normal, visitors unexpected.
- Dual paths tutorial environmental interaction naturally.

Beat 3 | Sysop Delegation

Commander recognizes duo via tiny-station intimacy, then executes classic switcheroo—flipping Cultist's gate entitlement into mutual troubleshooting labor.

- **Camera:** First-person, fixed on intercom during exchange (door stays locked).
- **Audio:** Terminal clacking; tinny intercom distortion; Cultist voice confident.
- **Environmental Cues:** Red "LOCKOUT" persists; locker beside door pings ready post-exchange.
- **Objective / Task:** None (storytelling beat).
- **Player Feedback:** HUD flashes "Sysop Access Granted" on final line; Alpha trunk marker appears.

Actions:

- Cultist leans to intercom (auto-sequence, no player control).
- Locker unlocks automatically post-dialogue (spectral selector inside).

Dialogue (Auto-Sequence):

“ **Cultist** (*confident*) "Hauler Dock 3A. Gate's dark—we need you spinning it."

Commander (*keys clack*) "Dock 3A... only ship there. You're not alone—is that the bodega clerk?"

Cultist (*nod to player*) "Yeah, shop kid."

Commander (*recognition*) "ID pings clean. Bodega kid... right."

Cultist (*pressing*) "Commander, no offense, but we really need that gate live."

Commander (*brisk*) "You need the gate live? Perfect—listen up. The Alpha, Beta, and Gamma trunk lines all drained voltage when the network went dark. I'm pushing sysop access to your ID now; you'll be my remote hands. Follow the paths, run diagnostics at each junction, and I'll handle the endpoints from here. Start with Alpha—the selector's in the locker. Good Luck." (*end comms sound*)

Cultist (*shocked*) "Well, that was..." (*short breath*) "I think he means this." (*points to locker*)

Triggers:

- Locker interaction enabled → acquire spectral selector.

- Step end → [Arc 3 Seq 2 | Network Diagnostics](#).

Notes:

- Sysop targets clerk ID only (Cultist as guest lacks one)—establishes player as primary operator.
- Tiny-station intimacy: Dock 3A uniqueness + bodega recognition = instant credibility.
- Switcheroo: Client entitlement → recruited labor. 25 seconds max.

Narrative Intent

Converts Cultist's cockpit dominance into Command Deck authority pipeline. Player evolves from "unenlightened clerk" to volun-told sysadmin via tiny-station intimacy ("bodega kid" recognition). SocialCapital flag creates forward leverage without derailing duo momentum. Reinforces theme: limited roles collapse under crisis—hauler entitlement, clerk procedures, Command isolation all yield to mutual utility.

Arc 3 Seq 2 | Network Diagnostics

Narrative Purpose

Player assumes sysadmin role through decaying corridors, tracing color-coded trunks under Commander radio direction. Escalates from procedural competence to cosmic disorientation.

- Emotional tone: Focused competence → creeping aberration.
- Immediate goal: Restore network via junction diagnostics.
- Mechanical purpose: Spectral selector tutorial + wire-matching progression with escalating interference.

Narrative Breakdown

Beat 1 | Alpha Junction

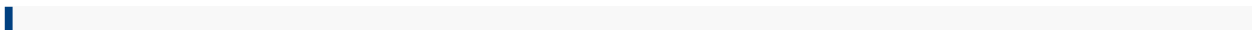
Player grabs spectral selector and traces the alpha trunk, reaching junction control room. Commander delivers first wire directive.

- **Camera:** Full Control.
- **Audio:** Radio check-ins punctuate; steady corridor hum.
- **Environmental Cues:** Alpha terminal pulses on sysop approach
- **Objective / Task:** Trace Alpha trunk → run diagnostics at endpoint.
- **Player Feedback:** "Trace Alpha Junction".

Actions:

- Equip spectral selector (passive HUD overlay: cycle ▢▢▢▢▢).
- Follow blue moldings through corridor vignettes (20s traversal).
- Interact with Alpha terminal for wire matching.

Dialogue:



Commander (*radio, clear*) "Alpha endpoint—Blue wire to Green column, White to Black. Report when live."

Triggers:

- Correct wiring → terminal glows steady; Commander confirms: "*Alpha live. Beta trunk next.*"
- Beta marker appears.

Notes:

- Tutorial beat: Simple directed matching, no interference. Establishes radio rhythm.

Beat 2 | Beta Junction

Player reaches red trunk endpoint; Cultist assists amid first color aberrations. Commander splits tasks, sending Cultist to parallel test.

- **Camera:** Full control.
- **Audio:** Radio check-ins; Cultist nearby commentary; subtle hum increase.
- **Environmental Cues:** Beta terminal flickers; single white reference row blinks interference color.
- **Objective / Task:** Run Beta diagnostics (subtract white reference row).
- **Player Feedback:** "Trace Beta Junction".

Actions:

- Cycle selector to red mode → trace distorted path.
- Match wires per Commander directive amid player-only color shift.
- Cultist provides guidance based on SocialCapital.

Dialogue:

“**Commander** (*radio*) "Beta—Blue to Green, Red to Black, White to Green column. Reference clean."

Branch A – SocialCapital Present

Dialogue:

Cultist (*helpful, direct*) "Rough with colors? We all have our falings. Second from right, third from left..."

- **Result:** Streamlined guidance reinforces team rapport.

Branch B – SocialCapital Absent

Dialogue:

“ **Cultist** (*snide, positional*) "Color blind, eh? Blind in this world too... very well. Second from right, third from left..."

- **Result:** Frustrated precision highlights player isolation.

Dialogue:

“ **Commander:** "Need Cultist on parallel test. Clerk, Gamma solo."

Triggers:

- Cultist splits off; Gamma marker appears.

Notes:

- Branches show SocialCapital tone divergence without mechanical branching.
- Cultist always sees correct colors, gives positional help when unhelpful.
- First interference teaches subtraction logic via player-only aberration.

Beat 3 | Gamma Junction

Solo endpoint amid maximum aberration—white reference row shifts every 30s.

- **Camera:** Full Control.
- **Audio:** Radio static heavy; whale-song undertone builds; accelerating hum.
- **Environmental Cues:** Gamma terminal pulses erratically
- **Objective / Task:** Match final trunk amid shifting interference.
- **Player Feedback:** "Trace Gamma Junction".

Actions:

- Cycle to green mode → trace final flickering path.
- Solve shifting panel (white reference row cycles subtraction patterns).

Dialogue:

“ **Commander** (*radio, distorted*) "Gamma... cutting out. Finish the patch—"

Notes:

- 30s color shift prevents brute force; demands QCD subtraction mastery.
- Vision = first physics-break moment; no explanation.

Beat 4 | Network Restored

Commander's voice crackles over junction intercom, grounding disorientation into competence validation.

- **Camera:** Full control, lingering haze (chromatic aberration fades).
- **Audio:** Whale-song cut by intercom static; Commander's relieved tone.
- **Environmental Cues:** All panels glow steady; corridor lights normalize; Cultist absent (parallel testing).
- **Objective / Task:** None.
- **Player Feedback:** HUD: "Network Partial Restore"; "Return to Command" marker pings.

Actions:

- Vision auto-ends on Commander's voice.
- Full control returns; Command marker active.

Dialogue (Auto-Sequence):

“ **Commander** (*junction intercom*) "Hey, kid—you there? Need help? Network's up... or what we can get. Good work. Return to Command—you're useful."
(*comms cut*)

Branch A – Arc 2 Incomplete

- **Transition:** [Arc 3 Seq 3](#) | [Epilogue A](#)

Branch B – Arc 2 Complete

- **Transition:** [Arc 3 Seq 3 | Epilogue B](#)

Narrative Intent

- Player transforms from "bodega clerk" to indispensable sysop through escalating competence display.
- Cultist's Beat 2 assist reinforces fragile duo (SocialCapital payoff).
- Commander's validation cements volun-told status while unanswered cosmic dread lingers.
- Reinforces isolation theme: "no one else is coming."

Arc 3 Seq 2 | Mini-Game

Junction Traversal

Spectral Trunk Locator

Used to Identify trunks when the wall pinstripe is either damaged or not yet set.

- **HUD Overlay:** [□□ Alpha | □□ Beta | □□ Gamma]
- **Mechanics:**
 - Pinstripe on wall panels (bottom edge) displays trunk color
 - Hold trigger → indicator light glows if selector mode matches wall pinstripe
 - Wrong mode → no light (trial-and-error cycling required to find correct trunk)

Puzzle Elements

Wires:

- 5 wires: **Red (R), Green (G), Blue (B), Black (K), White (W)**
- RGB = true QCD colors
- K & W = decoys to increase cognitive load (don't participate in QCD rules)
- **Wire cladding color** = quark's current color charge (mutates under anti-color pressure)

Patch Panel (Ports):

- 5×2 grid (2 rows × 5 columns)
- Columns colored: **R, G, B, K, W**
- Each port has:
 1. **Port color** = environmental reference color (mutates under anti-color pressure)
 2. **Steady light** = color of the connection (mutates along with wire and port to preserve color relationships)
 3. **Blinking activity light** = indicates anti-color / external gauge pressure (may be slightly tinted under transformation)

Puzzle Mechanics

1. **Directed Connections:**
 - The player is instructed to connect a wire to a port (e.g., "Green wire → Red port").
 - The player does **not choose freely**; the puzzle is **guided**.
2. **Color Rules (QCD Analogy):**
 - RGB = real QCD colors
 - Anti-colors: **Cyan = anti-Red, Magenta = anti-Green, Yellow = anti-Blue**
 - **Color mutation rules under anti-color pressure:**
 - **Same color + corresponding anti-color → neutral (white)**
 - **Different color + anti-color → rotates to another RGB color**
 - KW wires/ports = decoys (no QCD rules)
3. **Gauge Transformation (Anti-Color Pressure):**
 - External anti-color pressure causes a **global color rotation**, affecting all RGB elements:
 - **Wire cladding**
 - **Port color**
 - **Steady light**
 - **Blinking light** (indicates anti-color, may shift hue slightly)
 - **Relative relationships are preserved** (the sum of color charges at the connection stays consistent)

Visual Dynamics Under Transformation

- Task: Green wire → Red port
- Steady light = Blue
- Anti-color: Cyan (anti-Red)

Element	Original	Mutated (Anti-Red)
Wire Cladding	Green	Blue
Port Color	Red	White
Steady Light	Blue	Green
Blinking Light	White	Cyan-tinted

In Game Hints

QCD Paper Integration

In the alpha junction after junction reconnect the local terminals will be accessible by the player using their sysop access. This is found within the network files. "Color Charge Confinement -

Jeremy, Age 13"

- $\text{Red} + \text{Green} + \text{Blue} = \text{White}$ (neutral)
- $\text{White} - \text{Red} = \text{Cyan}$ (missing Red charge)
- $\text{White} - \text{Green} = \text{Magenta}$ (missing Green charge)
- $\text{White} - \text{Blue} = \text{Yellow}$ (missing Blue charge)

Role: Optional pre-Beta pickup → Beta/Gamma subtraction hint

Arc 3 Seq 3 | Epilogue A

Narrative Purpose

No Arc 2 Path: Player returns to Command post-network restore; Cultist waits while Commander reveals reactor crisis escalation. Player choice shapes Technician contact method, but both paths route to rescue—establishing fragile trio amid worsening station collapse.

- Emotional tone: Earned competence → escalating dread.
- Immediate goal: Report reactor status → redirect to Technician rescue.
- Mechanical purpose: Choice-driven contact path (flavor divergence).

Narrative Breakdown

Beat 1 | Crisis Revelation

Player enters Command bridge post-network restore. Cultist waits silently; Commander reveals reactor fire threatens hull breach, demanding every available hand.

- **Camera:** First-person, full control on bridge entry (submarine-cramped, consoles glow alive).
- **Audio:** Steady terminal hum; Cultist foot-tap impatience; Commander's chair creak.
- **Environmental Cues:** Bridge lights steady (network live); reactor alert blinks yellow on main screen.
- **Objective / Task:** Report to Command.
- **Player Feedback:** Interaction prompt appears on approach.

Actions:

- Cultist leans against bulkhead, arms crossed (humbled post-switcheroo).
- Commander at console—looks up on player approach.
- Choice prompt: "Mention Technician" or "Stay Silent."

Dialogue (Triggers on Approach):

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Commander (*looks up, brisk*): "Kid. Network's up—things worse than thought. Reactor fire's burning toward hull. Need every hand."
(*Player choice prompt appears*)

Option A – Mention Technician Choice

- **Result:** Commander pings her suite directly via restored network; trio forms post-rescue.
- **Dialogue:**

“**Player** (*suggest*): "Technician from maintenance—she's trapped."
Commander (*nods, keys console*): "TeleTalk implant? Pinging now... Cabin 4B." (*comms crackle*)
Technician (*distorted relief*): "Command? Finally—door's jammed, I-beams everywhere!"
Commander (*to Tech*): "Reactor is priority. Tech, hold tight—reactor's yours again soon. Sending the bodega kid."
Technician (*flat*): "Oh... ok."
Commander (*dry goad*): "You heard her. Cabin 4B. Move."

- **Purpose:** Rewards Arc 1 Step 3 memory; direct agency.
- **Transition:** [Arc 2 Seq 1 Beat 2 | Suite Rescue](#)

Option B – Stay Silent Choice (Revised)

- **Result:** Commander broadcasts station-wide APB; multiple voices respond in confusion, including the Technician.
- **Dialogue:**

“**Commander** (*no pause*) "Network's live—sending APB: all techs report to Command." (*station speakers chime; multiple channels crackle*)
Unknown Voice 1 (*panicked, distant*): "Please—section twelve-A, we're trapped, we need—"
Unknown Voice 2 (*overlapping, corrective*): "No, don't! The fire's—" (*signal distortion, feedback*)
Technician (*cutting through*): "Command, Engineering Tech—Cabin 4B, stuck since the first blast!"
Commander (*to Tech*): "Reactor is priority. Tech, hold tight—reactor's yours again soon. Sending the bodega kid."
Technician (*flat*): "Oh... ok."
Commander (*dry goad*): "You heard her. Cabin 4B. Move."

- **Purpose:** The hail logically surfaces multiple survivors. The Commander's reaction reveals his command logic and sets causal direction toward the reactor mission.
- **Transition:** [Arc 2 Seq 1 Beat 2 | Suite Rescue](#)

Triggers:

- Either choice → UI: "Rescue Technician - Cabin 4B"; Cultist follows.
- SocialCapital+1: Cultist less snide on rescue path.

Notes:

- Cultist silent (awaits cue)—post-minigame humility.
 - Choice = flavor divergence only; both paths succeed.
 - Reactor fire establishes stakes without resolution.
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Narrative Intent

Arc 2 Exclusion Path: Network competence victory sours into reactor crisis—player's sysadmin glow-up meets station-wide meltdown. Choice reinforces agency (proactive mention vs. procedural APB) while threading Arc 1 TeleTalk memory. Cultist's silence marks character growth arc. Establishes player as Command Deck "useful" asset amid scarcity. Reactor fire escalates isolation theme: technical wins cannot halt systemic collapse.

Arc 3 Seq 3 | Epilogue B

Narrative Purpose

Arc 2 Complete Path: Player returns to fully-operational Command bridge post-network restore. Commander validates sysadmin competence; Cultist delivers bemused "little hero" acknowledgment. Technician summoned from stabilized reactor room—trio assembles efficiently at Command Deck.

- Emotional tone: Earned victory → team synergy.
- Immediate goal: Report success → rendezvous with mobile Technician.
- Mechanical purpose: Arc 2 reactor outcome divergence via environmental branches.

Narrative Breakdown

Beat 1 | Team Validation

Player enters Command bridge; Cultist smirks with backhanded praise while Commander confirms network restoration. Environmental state reflects Arc 2 reactor success/failure.

- **Camera:** First-person, full control on bridge entry (submarine-cramped).
- **Audio:** Terminal hum; Cultist smirk-chuckle; comms crackle.
- **Environmental Cues:** Bridge lighting varies by Arc 2 reactor outcome.
- **Objective / Task:** Report to Command.
- **Player Feedback:** UI updates: "Meet Technician at Command Deck."

Actions:

- Cultist leans against bulkhead, smirking expectantly.
- Commander at console—looks up on player approach.

Dialogue (Triggers on Approach):

“ **Commander** (*nods approval*) "Kid—trunks live, voltage steady. Good sysadmin work."

Cultist (*smirking, bemused*) "'Kid' ran those lines like a pro. Little hero."
Commander (*keys comms*) "Engineering—reactor's yours. Report to Command Deck."
Technician (*crackling*) "Cores stable—on my way." (*comms cut*)

Branch A – Arc 2 Reactor Success Path

- **Environmental Cues:** Full power—bright consoles, steady white lighting.
- **Audio:** Clean terminal hum, no generator whine.
- **Dialogue Addition:**

“ **Commander** (*added*) "Power's green across board now."

- **Purpose:** Rewards Arc 2 competence with visual victory.
- **Transition:** Wait for Technician arrival.

Branch B – Arc 2 Reactor Failure Path

- **Environmental Cues:** Emergency power—red strips flicker, dim consoles.
- **Audio:** Generator whine under hum.
- **Dialogue Addition:**

“ **Commander** (*added*) "Emergency power only—still holding."

- **Purpose:** Acknowledges Arc 2 struggle while maintaining forward momentum.
- **Transition:** Wait for Technician arrival.

Triggers:

- Comms end → new objective "Meet Technician at Command Deck."
- Technician arrival → [Arc 4 Seq 1 Beat 1 | Aftermath Assembly](#)

Narrative Intent

Arc 2 Integration Path: Rewards dual competence (network + reactor) with team assembly at Command Deck—player's sysadmin glow-up meets established trio dynamic. Cultist's bemused acknowledgment completes his character arc (cocky hauler → reluctant respect). Environmental divergence sells Arc 2 reactor outcomes without dialogue branching. Technician's mobility reinforces her reactor domain mastery. Establishes Command Deck as operational hub; gate undervolt tension lingers unresolved.