



There's also a far more practical and immediate reason to cultivate at least some social presence on the Eye. Some of you prefer to work alone, but most of us are part of small teams, and finding a good team is essential. Proxies like myself aren't here to hold your hand and find you colleagues with whom you can work—that's up to you, and this is the place to do it. You might be looking for a new team or you might be part of a team that needs more members; either way, the *Safe Zone* is where you can talk about this and also where other sentinels can at least get some hint of who you are and if they could work with you.

SERVER REP

It's worth noting that individual servers also have their own rep scores. This is one of the way servers keep tabs on each other. Proxies that use and abuse their sentinels or hoard useful intel tend to find that other servers won't play as nicely with them. Server rep scores are an invaluable resource for sentinels and proxies working with new servers, seeking to get a lay of the land.

FACTIONS/CLIQUEs

Posted By: Voodoo Doll

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There's a document that's been making its way around the server for the past couple of days detailing our relationship with outside groups. It's an interesting read, but there's more to this story than just Us and Them. There's Us, Them, The Other Us, Those Two Guys Down The Road, and the Fuckup in the Corner. Firewall may present a nice, united front, but the truth is we're a bickering and opinionated cluster of people only barely held together by concern over the bright, metallic sword named Extinction that's hanging over our necks. Which means if you're on a mission, you want to know who's standing at your back as much as who you're dealing with, cause it'll change the approach you can take.

While it's tempting to think of the various cliques as sub-organizations within Firewall, that's inaccurate. These are more like schools of thoughts, philosophies, or political camps. It's not like there's formal rank within the groups.

The first thing to remember when it comes to most servers is that, like ours, you'll find a mix of camps. There are a few out there that have opted for the echo chamber of ideological purity, but most are a mix. It's handy to have other opinions, so long as we can all manage to get along long enough to get the work done. Of course, like any political camp, you'll find plenty of people who are a little of this and a little of that or prefer to not get involved at all. Whoever you're working with might not agree with any specific party line.

THE FIRST SCHISM

To really understand Firewall's factional divisions, you have to look back at how this crazy conspiracy came together. The roots of our internal divisions are buried deep within our complex history. For folks who weren't around in those early days, Firewall's origins are best described as convergent evolution. Multiple organizations came together on the same trajectory because we could all agree that no one wanted to see transhumanity exterminated. Simple as that. I trust this material's been covered in the briefings or you've at least skimmed the backstory on the Eye.

The fact that we had a common goal doesn't mean that any of us operated the same way or that we even agreed with each

others' methods for our mutually assured survival, of course. Almost from the beginning we had disagreements and major arguments, but there was too much to get done back then for us not to work together, not while we were fighting to survive. After everything settled down and we started planning for the long haul, however, is when we had our first problems.

In those early days, the messages, conferences, and face-to-face meetings were coming in fast. When we weren't sending sentinels out to shoot down the latest threat that popped up to eat us, we were hashing out how to handle things. One of the biggest concerns early on was with our AGI partners. In the prevailing public opinion of the time, anything AI-related was considered incredibly suspect, and a lot of that sentiment reverberated in our ranks. The AGIs in our ranks were undeniably helpful, many of them proving themselves again and again. Still, they raised concerns just by existing in our midst.

Once the suggestion was made to isolate AGIs from our conversations by the bloc that would later become known as the *conservatives* (something the AGIs have not forgotten since), things became heated. We were effectively discussing banning a class of sapient beings from our group, and opinions at both ends of the disagreement were strong. The horrors of the Fall were fresh, and many people who would normally side with AGIs were swayed by the "for our safety" arguments. At the same time, another debate was reaching criticality over how to handle technology captured from the TITANs. The faction soon to be known as the *pragmatists* argued that knowledge was power and some risks are worth taking. The conservatives used their momentum from the anti-AGI cause to win ground, however, pushing to protect ourselves by throwing everything we found from the TITANs into the sun.

As the friction escalated between the conservatives and pragmatists, another fight was brewing. A significant bloc within Firewall, soon to be known as the *backups*, were pushing hard to devote Firewall resources to their pet projects. With limited assets available, this initiated major disagreements over resource allocation with those concerned more with rescuing people and resisting the threats against us. So much of transhumanity was still in danger, crying out for rescue, that only those few of us thinking that far ahead could see any benefit in wasting our precious resources on their backup schemes. In the years since, the resistance has eased, but we've yet to see any immediate benefits from the backups' efforts, making this a perennial issue.

THE SWEET DREAMS AFFAIR

A split within Firewall seemed imminent. Before we hit that breaking point, along came the *Sweet Dreams* disaster. *Sweet Dreams* was a small craft launched after the Exodus had mostly petered out—essentially just hard drives attached to a propulsion unit. It was full of uploaded egos that had been rescued by Conductor, an AGI. Their ship experienced a critical control issue

with their navigation and fell into a decaying orbit. They asked for help and one of the prominent conservative servers answered the call. Unfortunately, they made some gross assumptions regarding the nature of the satellite and the trustworthiness of Conductor. When another Firewall team picked through the rubble afterwards, not a trace of TITAN influence was found. A rough estimate of data space at the time suggests upwards of a hundred and twenty thousand egos were in storage on the craft that was destroyed. The situation was further compounded when another server revealed that Conductor had previously worked with the Lifeboat Institute, and there was a significant chance that some Lifeboat staff had been on that satellite.

The backlash was intense. The pragmatists pushed through a referendum that vetted the inclusion of AGIs within Firewall's ranks. The backups used the calamity to pool sympathy support for Lifeboat projects that Firewall was considering continuing. The conservatives lost major ground. Most importantly, though the balance of power shifted, the organization stayed intact. Opposing viewpoints found cause to stay together. Our judgment as an organization became, thankfully, more nuanced. That almost certainly saved us from compounding one tragedy with another.

The main takeaway here is that the split wasn't over what to do but how to do it. We had just gotten our teeth kicked in. Some of us wanted to make sure there were redundancies in place for the next time. Some didn't particularly care what it cost us individually so long as most of us survived. And we had a whole mass of people in the "nuke it from orbit, it's the only way to be sure" camp. Everyone was scared and hurting, but they stuck together. These three mind-sets continue to duel it out ideologically to this day. While the balance of power often shifts, the pragmatists continue to have the upper hand with setting policy, the backups continue to get a significant chunk of our resources, and the conservatives continue to get their way when situations get really bad.

Things got said and there's people you may run across on missions that still remember that. So try to figure out who you're talking to before you go running your mouth on any of this.

BACKUPS

Memes: Exploration, Nano-Ecology, Research, Resilient Systems, Survival

The backup clique is all about resilience and redundant systems. These are the folks with contingency plans for everything. In their view, once something like the Fall happens, it's not a matter of if it'll happen again, but when. Our job is to keep kicking that can down the road as long as possible. These guys just assume that eventually we're going to trip and then we'll need to be able to pick up at the last save point. Their logic can't really be denied. So long as they don't eat up too many of our reserves planning for what *might* happen that we end up missing what