

WELCOME TO FIREWALL

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Greetings,

Your references and background have been triple-checked and confirmed, and you are now vetted as a sentinel operative. Welcome to Firewall, friend.

For those new to our private network, Firewall is an organization dedicated to protecting transhumanity from threats—both internal and external—to our continued existence as a species. The Fall may have reminded us that our ability to survive and prosper is not guaranteed, but our kind has a remarkably short attention span. Despite our achievement of functional near-immortality, we continue to face numerous dangers that may contribute to our extinction. Some of these risks come from our own factionalism and divisiveness, combined with universally available technology that could cause widespread destruction and untold deaths in the wrong hands. Some stem from our short-sightedness, failing to see the dangers in which we place ourselves and our environments

through careless actions. Some arise from our own creations turned against us, as the TITANs proved. Other risks may come from alien intelligences whose motivations we cannot yet fathom, and of whom we may not even be aware. Still others may threaten us by sheer chance and the mindless but deadly cause-and-effect of a universe in which we are but an insignificant speck.

Firewall exists to identify, analyze, and counter these risks. We are all volunteers. We are all placing our own lives at risk in order to ensure the survival of transhumanity.

Firewall has existed, under other names and guises, since before the Fall. Numerous agencies with a similar agenda banded together in the wake of those cataclysmic events to assess our situation and prepare for the worst. Now we operate under a single umbrella.

We are a private network for two reasons. First, our existence and operational abilities are protected by our secrecy. The less our opposition knows about us, the more effectively we can counter them. Similarly, certain authorities might be hostile to an organization such as ours operating in their

claimed territory. Though some may be aware of our existence, we bypass numerous legal and jurisdictional hurdles that might otherwise hamper our actions and goals. Second, our mission sometimes brings to light information that is not only dangerous in the wrong hands, but might even trigger widespread panic if made public. In some cases, the very existence of such knowledge could be problematic. By retaining secrecy and operating on a need-to-know basis, we automatically counter certain risks.

Firewall is a decentralized, peer-to-peer network. We have minimal hierarchy and we answer to no one but ourselves. Our node structure enables us to share resources and talents without sacrificing the privacy and security of our operatives.

You have been recruited because of your knowledge, assets or skills, and/or because you have come into contact with certain restricted data. You have proven your willingness to support our goals. Our lives and existence—and the future of transhumanity—may rest in your hands.

So here's to the future—may we all live to see it.
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WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW

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Sit down, and grab yourself a fucking drink.

Forget all of that AI-generated intro crap you just read. Here's the real deal.

You're probably dying to know what you've been dragged into. Maybe you've been told the party line already: that we're all that stands between transhumanity and extinction. Or maybe someone whispered to you that we're a rogue operation that meddles in heavy shit that we have no authority to get involved in, and that we sometimes get people killed as a result. You must be curious. Maybe you've got a vigilante streak, and you're looking to spill blood for a good cause. Would it matter to you if the cause was a deluded one? Maybe you're a conspiracy wingnut and you're dying to know what secrets Firewall is clutching to its collective chest. What if those secrets shattered the carefully constructed lies that we all tell to ourselves to keep our sanity intact?

Everything you've heard, good or bad, about Firewall very well may be true. We're not angels. We lost the sheen on our ideals when the TITANs forcibly uploaded their first human mind. Right now, you should be asking yourself what the fuck you just signed up for. I did.

Truth is, Firewall is lots of things. Most of it is good, but a lot of it so fucking horrible you'll be thinking about planting a bullet in your stack and resorting to an earlier backup, just so you can forget it all. If you have any romantic visions about being a hero, though, drop them now. You won't feel like a hero when you airtlock some kid because he's carrying an infectious nanovirus. You won't feel brave when

you run across some alien *thing* and crap your pants. And you won't even feel human anymore when you make a call that will cost dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of people their lives, even if you are saving millions more.

So why would anyone be crazy enough to be part of this thing? Because it needs to be done. Our survival depends on it. To some people, it's altruism, defending transhumanity. But really, it's about saving your own fucking neck too. Sure, you could abstain from taking responsibility and let some self-described authority take care of it. But if the anarchists have anything right, it's that people in power can't be trusted. As often as not, they're part of the problem. So Firewall does things the collective way. We're underground, but we're an open source operation. We share information and resources towards a common goal. We organize in networked ad-hoc cells, smart-mob style. We don't let anyone accrue too much power or control. Everyone involved in an op has an equal say. We police ourselves. We come from all sorts of backgrounds and factions, but we face a common enemy—and we fight to win. There is no alternative.

Maybe you've heard of the Fermi Paradox? That question asked why, with a galaxy so huge, there were so few signs of other life? Even though we've met the Factors and seen evidence of other aliens, our galactic neighborhood should be crawling with intelligence—but it's not.

I'll tell you why. The universe is not fucking fair. If transhumanity were wiped out, the galaxy wouldn't even notice. Just look at the Earth. That planet still exists, still supports life, even though we're far gone. Reality is an uncaring asshole. Forget all that utopian crap about living forever. We'll be lucky to survive another year. We've developed technologies

that put weapons of mass destruction in the hands of everyone, but we're still an adolescent species that has trouble overcoming petty tribal bullshit. If you're really looking forward to exploring the universe as a postmortal, you're going to have to work hard at it. Survival isn't a right, it's a privilege.

When you sign up with Firewall, you put yourself on call. Anytime some shit goes down in your neck of the woods or that you might be particularly helpful in dealing with, you'll get a call. You'll be expected to drop whatever you're doing and put everything else on hold as if your life depended on it—it probably does. When you're in the field, on an op—"going to the doctor," as we call it—your cell is empowered to act as it sees fit ... just keep in mind that you'll be answering to the rest of us later. You'll also have the Firewall network to back you up—though resources are often limited, so don't expect us to always save your ass. Other sentinels can be called on to pull strings, but every time we do so, it threatens to unveil an agent, create a trail that we need to clean up, and otherwise complicates matters. Self-reliance is key.

One last thing: don't ever, ever forget that we have enemies. I'm not just talking about the nutjob who wants to nuke a habitat to make a political statement or the neo-luddites who think biowar plagues will teach us all a lesson, I'm talking about the agencies that know Firewall exists and consider it a threat. If they tag you as a sentinel, your days are numbered. Maybe your backups too. So watch yer friggin' back.

So that's the real deal, as honest as I can give it. Welcome to our secret clubhouse, comrade. Remember: death is just another day on the job.

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