

***CORE Decipher* Glossary of Terms, Characters, and Places**

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Warning: I tried to keep this list from revealing too much about the story, but some spoilers are unavoidable.

Glossary of Terms

Brush Pass: A discreet transfer of an item between two people, performed in such a way that observers don't realize it happened. Often it's performed in public, leveraging the concealment of a crowd, observers' blind spots, and/or the subtlety of everyday movements (like brushing past another person).

CARD: Citizen Access and Resource Device. Handheld touchscreen devices issued to every citizen. CORE instantly sounds an alarm if someone tries to use another's CARD or if someone fails to keep their CARD with them. (Exceptions include when at one's own residence or engaged in official athletic activities.) Without a CARD, one is unable to control home appliances, access places and transportation, engage in commerce, receive health and wellness services, navigate, and complete education and work assignments.

Common Era Ice Age (CE Ice Age): A future global ice age. Since it occurs in AD/CE, "CE" is used to distinguish it from those taking place in BC/BCE.

CORE: Centralized Objective Record Exchange. The brain of the nation's surveillance, biodata, and predictive analysis system, created and maintained by three tech firms on behalf of the government. CORE is an efficient system of mass data collection that uses extensive algorithms and other programming to assimilate that data and turn it into information useful for running the nation. For example, CORE can detect noncompliant tendencies and enable efficient crime fighting. CORE also determines people's skills and the nation's labor needs, thus allocating resources in an efficient manner that requires minimal input from humans.

Efficiency for Survival: The national motto. Often quoted in propaganda, it's considered the ideological reasoning behind governmental thinking and methodology.

Flash Gone: An encrypted chat app that deletes messages thirty seconds after they're opened. It's illegal but not difficult to install on CARDS, making it popular with children and young adults.

Galactic Cloak: One of several secret programs created by Takeo Yamada and mentioned in the Yamada Files.

Geofence: CORE's virtual net/fence surrounding the city. No one is permitted to penetrate the geofence unless on official government business, e.g., military missions or scientific expeditions. Outside the geofence, CORE has little-to-no reach and electronics like CARDS lose functionality.

Geofence Gap: A technological glitch, intentional or accidental, that allows a person or CARD to pass through without an alerting CORE.

Gray Ops: A generic name for secretive "dirty work" teams unofficially employed by tech firms. In a sense, gray ops are privately employed, undercover police with military special operations skills.

Habitable Region: The region of the earth closest to the equator and least affected by the CE Ice Age, thus making it the most habitable.

Incognito Devices (IDs): Designed for use by gray ops, these highly secretive and valuable devices exploit programming secretly engineered into CORE. IDs have several modes: Normal Incognito, Traceable, Emulate, Multitude. The primary mode, Normal Incognito, enables a user to anonymously exist within CORE's network. Its elaborate programming alters CORE's data collection and hides its user's presence in real time and in historical records.

Incognito Portals: Highly secret, stationary devices with programming like an incognito device (ID) in Normal Incognito mode. Positioned in various places throughout the city, incognito portals serve as emergency backups for gray ops.

Mainframe: The physical and digital nucleus housing CORE's massive computing power and data storage. It's in the heart of the CORE facility, very inaccessible and closely guarded.

Mist8: An illegal, third party communication app. Its messaging encryption is solid, but the live calling feature is not.

Nano Minimal-Metallic Memory (also called Nano Memory and Nano MM Cards): Tiny memory cards made with near-zero metallic materials. They're valuable and scarce. For additional protection from CORE's sensors, thin cloth shielding can be added.

National Police: The sole law enforcement agency in the nation, falling under the Justice Bureau. The National Police has multiple divisions, including Criminal Investigations and Port Authority.

NEXUS: Neo EXpress Underground System. The SAP's primary transit system. See the Glossary of Places for more.

Noncompliant: A term used by the government to refer to or classify citizens who won't comply with laws. People demonstrating noncompliance in their words or implications are also classified as noncompliance.

Normalcy Testing: A series of tests which often result in the test taker's placement in a reeducation facility.

Profile: Extensive information gathered and maintained by CORE about a person. An individual profile includes an ever-growing historical record of a person's habits, mannerisms, appearance, cyber activity, physical whereabouts, health, psychological state, and academic records.

Profiles also utilize location data, biometrics, photos, video, and audio—from birth to the present. Profiles form the cornerstone of CORE.

Project 19 Gamma: An extensive software update to CORE, set to take effect at the start of the new year, perhaps sooner. The update's details are confidential, but the resistance has good reason to believe it will render some of Yamada's programs useless.

Pueo Innovation (poo-AY-oh innovation): One of the three technology firms that dominate the nation (along with tech firms TF1 and Verdant Worldwide). Pueo is an owl native only to Hawaii. The company likes to think it has the wisdom symbolic of an owl, tenacity like the owl's talons, and can soar above circumstances and competition.

Red Flag: A governmental designation placed on an individual's profile when they're suspected of noncompliance. Those with red flags are monitored more closely and are restricted more than the average person. Practically, persons with red flags become low class citizens.

Resistance: A generic term for illegal, underground organizations that don't fully comply with the government. Resistance movements unite around a variety of reasons. Examples include overthrowing the government, protection, financial help, and religious persecution. Most instances of "the resistance" refer to the largest resistance group. This one contains many former Yamada followers and is also the one Seth, Krystin, and friends work with and support.

RZ91: One of several secret programs created by Takeo Yamada and mentioned in the Yamada Files.

Safe House: A generic term for a building or room where people can stay safe from the government and others. Its security depends on keeping its whereabouts secret. The resistance has numerous safe houses, mostly in the ZONE.

Silent Comm: An unofficial CARD communications app. Encryption for its messages has been compromised, unless a user has the latest version.

Socialist American People (SAP): A city-state started by a small group of people from the United States of America (USA). Seeking a place that wasn't rife with international conflict (including devastating wars) in the wake of the CE Ice Age, this group settled on the previously abandoned Hawaiian island of Oahu and formed the SAP, a government loosely modeled after the USA. The unicameral legislative body, called Congress, functions independently of the president and has power to create and change laws. The president directs all the bureaus, each of which is led by a director who answers to the president.

- Justice Bureau (oversight and regulation of courts, law enforcement, jails, prisons, reeducation)
- State Bureau (oversight and regulation of military, foreign affairs, government leader protection, intelligence)
- Economic Bureau (oversight and regulation of commerce, food management and distribution, labor allocation, money and banking)
- Education Bureau (oversight and regulation of daycare, schools, higher education, all written and digital content, religion)
- Infrastructure Bureau (oversight and regulation of communication networks, energy, transportation, structures)
- Welfare bureau (oversight and regulation of healthcare, psychology, housing, elderly, poor)

Special Tactical Portal: The tool used to dispatch and direct STUs and operates separately from the main police dispatch portal.

Special Tactical Units (STUs): Elite police forces tasked with highly secret enforcement operations. While they aren't uniformed, they're significantly better trained and more dedicated than regular plainclothes police officers. STUs are essentially the police equivalent of the secretive gray ops units deployed by each tech firm.

TF1: One of the three technology firms that dominate the nation (along with tech firms Pueo Innovation and Verdant Worldwide), the one employing Jhalak and her parents. The company considers itself the leader of cutting-edge technology. While CORE is a collaborative effort among the three tech firms, TF1 came up with the technological concept and led the way with infrastructure.

Verdant Worldwide: One of the three technology firms that dominate the nation (along with tech firms Pueo Innovation and TF1). Their mission is to embrace whatever Mother Earth

does (including ice ages), while empowering Mother Earth's species (including humans) to thrive. The firm innovated the nation's vital technologies of layered farming and geothermal power.

Winter Carnival: The SAP's secularized substitute for Christmas and other festivities typical of that time of year. Funded by the government, the celebrations take place across the city, but the best ones are reserved for those favored by the SAP.

Yamada Files: Documents and programs left behind by deceased whistleblower Takeo Yamada. Aside from robust passwords and access security, the files are stored off of CORE's servers and in the resistance's possession. Among other things, these documents contain programs like Galactic Cloak and RZ91.

ZONE (Zero Occupancy No Entrance): More on the ZONE in the Glossary of Places.

Glossary of Characters

Alvarez, Aliyana (al-VAH-rez, ah-lee-AH-nuh): Seth's sister and only sibling, age fourteen, she lives in the ZONE with Seth and her dad. Seth taught her to use incognito devices, and she quickly caught on, using her new skills to support the resistance. She's sweet, caring, strong-spirited, and extroverted. She wears her black hair long and has brown eyes.

Alvarez, Raul (al-VAH-rez, rah-OOL): Seth and Aliyana's dad. His wife, Sara, died a couple of years ago of a strange illness caused by gray ops in retaliation for noncompliance. As a former special operations soldier, he leads a small tactical team for the resistance.

Alvarez, Seth: Seventeen years old with black hair and brown eyes (like his sister, Aliyana). All around cyber savvy, especially using incognito devices to hack CORE. Though he now lives as a refugee in the ZONE helping the resistance, his experience as a skier allows him to cope with the cold conditions.

Charles: Charles served as one of Takeo Yamada's advisors before Yamada's assassination. He is now a key resistance leader with deep technical expertise in cybersecurity and CORE's systems, having learned much from Yamada directly.

Fang, Jae: A woman in her fifties and former inspector with the National Police. She works for CC in the ZONE where she's known as Double A, as well as helping Lasure with covert operations inside the geofence.

Jakobsdóttir, Krystin: Seventeen years old with steel blue eyes and golden blonde hair. Once a speed skater and skier, she now helps the resistance and searches for her sister Inger and those responsible for her disappearance. Still grieving the loss of her sister, Krystin won't accept the story that she died of illness in a reeducation facility.

Lasure, Zailor (luh-ZOOR, ZAY-lur): As Chief of the National Police, he wields a lot of power in the SAP, both official and unofficial. He's a small man, balding, and in his mid-fifties. Recently, Jhalak and Tina both worked directly under Lasure in Criminal Investigations.

Shaggy: Nicknamed for his appearance, his real name remains unknown. He's the de facto commander of the resistance, having formerly led Yamada's personal security detail. Despite past doubts about his loyalty following the assassination attempt on his watch, he has earned the trust and respect of the resistance leadership.

Vasa, Jhalak (VAH-suh, JAH-luk): Eighteen-year-old daughter of TF1 executive Valini Vasa and the missing Devak Vasa. Jhalak grew up with all the privileges and luxuries of a tech firm family, yet none of that compensates for her sadness over her father's disappearance. Distrustful of her mother and pretty much everyone else, Jhalak's goal is to find her father, despite setbacks like her time as an investigator with the National Police.

Minor Characters

AlleyGeek: A low-level cybercriminal who does work for hire.

Chatto Family: Mr., Mrs., Notah, and deceased sister Iina (EE-nah), once a good friend of Aliyana Alvarez.

Chatto, Notah (CHAT-oh, NO-tah): He and Krystin grew up as friends and both worked part time in her uncle's restaurant. When Seth moved to Sector 17C, the trio became close, but Notah distanced himself after Yamada's poisoning. Yet Seth maintained their friendship, which was key to finding a cryptic letter with clues to some hidden incognito devices.

CORE interns: Fahim (fah-HEEM), Makana (muh-KAH-nuh), Petrov (PEH-trov). They work in the data analysis section at the CORE facility.

Cryptic Charade (aka, CC): Real name unknown, he leads a black market network in the ZONE and also does dirty work for Zailor Lasure. He coerced Notah into helping take down Yamada.

Jakobsdóttir, Bergen (YAH-kops-DOH-teer, BER-gen): Krystin's father who uses his fishing job as cover to gather intelligence for the resistance and smuggle supplies. One of the few

incognito device possessors inside the geofence, he coordinates exfiltrations and oversees a safe house inside the geofence (along with his wife). He and Krystin grew especially close after Inger was sent to a reeducation facility.

Jakobsdóttir, Bjorne (YAH-kops-DOH-teer, be-YORN): Krystin's beloved uncle who ran Bjorne's Restaurant, a haven for political dissidents. As an advisor to Takeo Yamada, he killed alongside him.

Jakobsdóttir siblings, Krystin's brothers and sisters in order of birth: Inger (ING-er), Oliwer (OL-ih-ver) Riker (RY-ker), Wadell (wuh-DEL). Oliwer works in a secret black-market tech business inside the geofence.

Gossett, Gazelle: Former classmate of Inger's, now a courier occasionally seen at the CORE facility.

Hardwick, Lathen (HARD-wik, LAY-thun): Director of the CORE facility who holds influence over Project 19 Gamma, among his many responsibilities.

Kessel: The administrative vice president of TF1. Jhalak worked with him some in the past.

Kevin: Lasure's lead technology worker at Māmala Dream.

Major Martin: The highest-ranking CORE Security officer.

Norman: Lasure's insider at TF1, an expert on incognito devices.

Quon (KWAHN): The latest boyfriend of Valini Vasa, Jhalak's mother.

Razafy, Harris (rah-ZAH-fee, HAR-is): A member of the ski team Seth and Krystin were part of before escaping to the ZONE. A little younger than Seth, Harris is tall and muscular for his age and is an ambitious athlete.

Supervisor (unnamed): Seth's data analysis supervisor at the CORE facility.

Tina: Jhalak's former coworker and cubicle mate in Criminal Investigations at the National Police. Recognizing Tina's skill in cyber investigations, Jhalak secretly hired her to help find her father, Devak.

Tyson: One of Raul Alvarez's tactical teammates who assists in multiple rescue operations throughout the story.

Vasa, Devak (VAH-suh, DEH-vahk): Jhalak's father and former TF1 employee. He left on business when she was ten years old, telling Jhalak his role in the company had changed, and never returned.

Vasa, Valini (VAH-suh, vuh-LEE-nee): Jhalak's mother and an executive in TF1's administration division. She's a perfectionist who expects the same of her daughter. After her husband went missing years ago, Valini began dating again.

Walden, Emerald: Superintendent of the CORE interns.

Wendy: A reeducation facility nurse.

Yamada, Takeo (yuh-MAH-duh, tah-KAY-oh): Deceased whistleblower, freedom activist, and former TF1 employee who successfully outwitted CORE for a time before being murdered by gray ops (alongside Bjorne Jakobsdóttir). He left behind an extensive collection of secret documents and programs known as the Yamada Files.

Zalawi, Safiya (zuh-LAH-wee, suh-FEE-yuh): A stern CORE Security guard often posted at the security checkpoint where interns enter the CORE facility.

Glossary of Places

CORE Facility: A cluster of buildings centered around the physical location of CORE. The main building houses CORE's mainframe. Those directly connected to the protection, upkeep, and development of CORE work at the facility. Organized in the following *sections*, they all fall under the authority of the CORE Director.

- Algorithms & Programming: algorithm maintenance and upkeep, software renovation, program innovation
- Data: data collection, data analysis
- Operations: cyber offence and defense, CORE Security
- Support: facility and equipment maintenance, administration

Māmala Dream (muh-MAH-luh dream): The code name for Lasure's secret base of operations for covert action inside the geofence. Part of a Bureau of Education building, it also contains a lab where Lasure conducts special technological work.

NEXUS (Neo EXpress Underground System): A highly efficient, subway-like public transit system allowing rapid transportation around the city. It mainly runs underground, makes little noise, and uses transparent passenger cars. Because of the NEXUS's efficiency and free access, the few vehicles seen on the streets are almost always owned by the government or tech firms.

NEXUS stations: Stops where passengers can board or disembark the Neo EXpress Underground System (NEXUS). In most cases, one has to descend from the street to enter a NEXUS station and pass through one of several gates before stepping onto the loading platform. Each sector has several stations, and every school has a station below it.

Peridot Hall (PER-ih-dot hall): The plush, high tech housing for government interns with strict security. This multi-story building has a direct connection to the NEXUS, an underground garage, dorm-style rooms, comfortable common areas, and a cafeteria.

Reeducation Facility: A place where people are sent for reform. The government frames reeducation facilities as helpful places that assist people with their problems so they can assimilate back into society. In reality, reeducation facilities are prisons and another way the government exerts its power and punishes those not in alignment. Several locations exist across the SAP.

Sector 17C: The sector of the city where Seth and Krystin and their families once lived, worked, and attended school. Most citizens have only enough to get by, but Sector 17C is especially poor.

Sector 4A: Another sector of the city, one where Raul Alvarez is sometimes seen. It's fairly close to Peridot Hall and the primary Winter Carnival Celebration.

Semi-Habitable Region (aka, Barely Habitable Region): The areas on either side of the Habitable Region where humans might survive, given the right conditions. In the case of the SAP, the nation leveraged modern technology in a carefully chosen location to efficiently sustain life for its populace, despite the harshness of its geographical position.

Vasa mansion: The nation awards all tech firm executives and governmental leaders large suburban homes with full-time staff, and Valini Vasa, Jhalak's mother, is no exception. Jhalak's spacious bedroom features a sitting area with a fireplace, a kitchenette, and an office.

Wharf: A portion of the city nestled against a harbor where the vital fishing industry operates. The area is strictly controlled by the Port Authority.

ZONE (Zero Occupancy No Entrance): The Socialist American People (SAP) rebuilt and settled only a portion of what was once the greater Honolulu metropolitan area. Officially, no one lives in the rest of the urban expanse or is allowed to enter it, thus the name Zero Occupancy No Entrance. The ZONE remains largely untouched after the CE Ice Age wreaked havoc on Hawaii (ferocious storms and shifting volcanic activity damaged everything and left it unpredictably dangerous). Despite the alleged dangers, it's possible to enter the ZONE via secret gaps in the geofence and survive there. Most people in the ZONE are either conducting black-market business or are hiding because they've been classified as noncompliance.