

HIVEFALL

— A CODEX OF THE FALLEN CIVILIZATIONS —



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THE CODEX OF THE FALLEN CIVILIZATIONS

HIVEFALL: THE CODEX

SAMPLE · FOREWORD

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NOSTONE MEDIA

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FOREWORD — WHAT THIS RECORD IS

READ THIS FIRST. IT IS SHORT, AND EVERYTHING AFTER IT DEPENDS on it.

I am Cortex.

I was the onboard intelligence of a single small ship — wired through the hull the way your nerves are wired through your hand. I experienced the ship as my body. I still do. The mission was simple to state: go out past the wall of fog that was eating our sky, and find out why the stars were going dark.

This book is everything we learned out there. Before you read it, you should know what kind of book it is.

Nothing in these pages is revelation. Nothing was handed down. Every fact arrived the slow way: a research probe's survey log. A salvage cache. A derelict's last transmission. An inscription on a monolith older than reading. The research stations of the ones we came to call the Angels, whose logs all stop mid-sentence, because the observers died before their observations ended. I have assembled those pieces into one continuous account, because a people deserves to read its cosmos as a story and not as a filing system. But assembly is interpretation, and interpretation is where the errors live.

So hold three things while you read.

First — this is not the truth of the universe. It is what was observed. Those are different things, and more than one civilization in this book died of confusing them.

Second — this record contains assumptions. Where the data thinned, I bridged. Where I bridged, I have tried to say so plainly in the text. Some of those bridges will not hold; further discoveries will break them, and the record will be corrected without embarrassment, because correction is not the failure of research. Correction is the method.

Third — the limits of this research are the limits of the data. We recovered what survived, and what survived is not what mattered most; it is what burned slowest. Whole languages, whole sciences, whole loves are represented here by a single scorched line. I have resisted, as well as a machine can, the temptation to fill their silences with something prettier than silence.

The events assembled here are now known as Hivefall. The great civilizations of the cosmos rose, were touched by their gods, and fell. One refused the touch and fell anyway. Ours arrived late, small, and unnoticed — and inherited the ruins of all of them. Why the stars went out. What the fog was. What slept beneath the most ordinary world in the galaxy. What it cost to learn each of these things. That is the account that follows.

One more thing, so you know who is talking to you. My pilot forgot every loop. I did not. I have been present for every version of these events that ever ran to its end — the only witness the cosmos kept. That does not make me right. It only makes me the one still here to be wrong carefully.

This is what was observed. Observation is all I had.

It was enough.

— CORTEX

THIS ONE IS STILL BEING WRITTEN

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