

E3 - The Final Load Test

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(Please feel free to edit the speaker names if incomplete or inaccurate. Names are handled on a best-effort basis depending on the info on the source file. Dialogue is left as is.)

SIGN Saturday June 27, 2026 San Diego 9 Days before the attack on the Ocean Turtle

[00:14] ---

Leave this to me!

[00:25] ---

Time's up, huh?

[00:27] ---

All teams, retreat.

[00:29] ---

Move away from Grid 1-9.

[00:32] ---

That would've been
the last prey for today, right?

[00:35] ---

You sure you want to end on a loss, Boss?

[00:39] ---

Battling an irregular squadron like that
won't do much good, training-wise.

[00:44] ---

We wouldn't want any negative effects
to carry over into the actual operation.

[00:48] ---

Let's go.

[01:07] ---

Mr. Miller. The men from the NSA have arrived.

[01:11] ---

Send them in.

[01:13] ---

Mr. Miller, we'd like to hire you,
Glowgen Defense Systems, for a top secret mission.

[01:20] ---

And the nature of the mission is?

[01:22] ---

To seize the Soul Translation technology.

[01:25] ---

What is that, exactly?

[01:28] ---

It was developed
by a Japanese company called Rath,

[01:30] ---

and it's a machine
that can decipher human souls.

[01:33] ---

Souls?

[01:35] ---

Decipher them?

[01:36] ---

That's right.

[01:38] ---

Using this Soul Translation technology,

[01:41] ---

Rath has apparently succeeded in not only
analyzing human souls, but in cloning them as well.

[01:47] ---

Should this artificial soul,
code-name ALICE, be fully developed,

[01:52] ---

it could be installed
into unmanned Japanese weapons,

[01:54] ---

which could disrupt the balance
of military power in East Asia.

[01:57] ---

The U.S. needs to take control of that technology
before that can happen.

[02:03] ---

I see.

[02:05] ---

So, tell me the specifics of this mission.

[02:08] ---

There's a mega-float for research called the Ocean Turtle,
moored near the Izu Islands.

[02:14] ---

We'd like your people to break into it

[02:16] ---

and obtain the Soul Translation technology.

[02:19] ---

That will require a raid on a Japanese ship...
one of our allies, you know.

[02:24] ---

We've made arrangements
with the JSDF top brass.

[02:27] ---

Apparently, the JSDF isn't the monolith
it appears to be.

[02:31] ---

Use whatever methods you want.

[02:33] ---

Just remember that the U.S. isn't involved
in this mission in any way.

[02:41] ---

Fine.

[02:43] ---

I'll assemble the team,
and lead it myself.

[02:50] ---

ALICE, your soul will be so sweet.

SIGN The Final Load Test

SIGN Main Control Room Ocean Turtle 35 minutes after the attack

[04:36] ---

Critter, you bastard... just try saying that again!

[04:39] ---

I'll repeat it as many times as you want, Vassago.

[04:42] ---

Listen up! This console is locked tighter
than a pile of dried turds.

[04:47] ---

I could crunch the numbers on the laptop we brought
until you die of old age, and I'd still never crack it!

[04:54] ---

You're missing the point,
you damned four eyes!

[04:57] ---

You said we got locked out
because we took too long to break in!

[05:02] ---

Hey, hey, all I did was point out a fact.

[05:05] ---

For someone who hung back cowering
during the battle, you sure are cocky!

[05:12] ---

Okay, that's enough, you two.

[05:15] ---

There's no time to point fingers at each other.

[05:18] ---

We have to consider our next move now, all right?

[05:20] ---

Yeah, but Bro,

[05:22] ---

this guy needs to be put in his place.

[05:25] ---

I'm satisfied with what
this team's achieved till now.

[05:29] ---

Our only casualty was Gary getting grazed.

[05:33] ---

And we succeeded in taking over the control room,
our primary objective.

[05:37] ---

Yeah, but if we're locked out
of the control system itself, what's the point?

[05:43] ---

Our ultimate target, the Lightcube Cluster,
is beyond that wall, right?

[05:48] ---

That's why I'm saying
we need to come up with a way to breach that wall.

[05:53] ---

Still, those JSDF guys won't stay holed up forever.

[05:58] ---

Once the real soldiers come charging in
from this turtle's escort ship—

[06:03] ---

I was told that the client
and the JSDF have a certain deal in place.

[06:07] ---

Apparently, the naval escort won't make a move
for 24 hours after the operation's launched.

[06:13] ---

So this operation's not just a burglary, then?

[06:18] ---

All right. Now let's go over the current situation.

[06:21] ---

It's currently 1447 hours, Japan Standard Time.

[06:25] ---

Forty minutes have passed since we broke in.

[06:28] ---

Right now, we're inside
the Ocean Turtle's Main Control Room.

[06:32] ---

Although we've successfully
taken over our target facility,

[06:35] ---

we failed to capture the Rath tech,

[06:37] ---

and we've been locked out of the system here.

[06:40] ---

Our next objective is to take over
the Sub Control Room.

[06:44] ---

Brigg, do you think
you can cut through the bulkhead door?

[06:48] ---

It doesn't look too promising.

[06:50] ---

It's made of cutting-edge composite materials,

[06:53] ---

and it would be impossible to cut through it
within 24 hours using the portable saw we brought.

[06:59] ---

Hans, what if we used C-4 to blow it open?

[07:03] ---

I wouldn't recommend it.

[07:05] ---

The chamber housing the Lightcube Cluster
is just beyond that wall.

[07:10] ---

If we blast open the door, there's no guarantee
that the contents of that room would be left unscathed.

[07:16] ---

The mission we've been tasked with

[07:18] ---

is to find a single Lightcube out of a mountain of them,
and extract it along with its interface.

[07:25] ---

We already have the cube's unique ID.

[07:28] ---

Come on,

[07:29] ---

this scrawny Four Eyes has been giving us this crap
about hacking into the Pentagon,

[07:35] ---

and yet he can't even crack open
a flimsy system lock.

[07:38] ---

Whoa, what a shock.

[07:41] ---

I just got told off by a gamer
who's only fired a gun made of polygons!

[07:45] ---

You bastard!

[07:51] ---

Do you guys want to go back empty-handed,
and get jeers instead of a bonus?

[07:59] ---

Are you incompetent enough
to be outdone by amateur techs?

[08:06] ---

Then start thinking!

[08:07] ---

Prove that those containers sitting on your necks
are filled with something other than oatmeal!

[08:22] ---

*The pressure bulkhead leading to
the Lightcube Cluster chamber can't be breached.*

[08:26] ---

*Meaning that our only option
is to control the system from here.*

[08:30] ---

How's it looking?

[08:31] ---

No chance of logging in
with administrator privileges.

[08:35] ---

About all we can do is peek enviously at the fairyland
where the Fluctlights live in such bliss.

[08:47] ---

Goblins?

[08:48] ---

Hey, you've done your homework, Captain!

[08:51] ---

Yeah, but they seem kinda big for goblins.

[08:54] ---

Those are Hobs. They're Hobgoblins, I bet.

[08:58] ---

Critter.

[08:59] ---

Yeah?

[09:01] ---

Are these monsters
part of the system?

[09:05] ---

Doesn't look that way.

[09:07] ---

These guys have artificial souls
loaded into the Lightcube Cluster above.

[09:12] ---

They have Fluctlights.

[09:14] ---

Are you serious?

[09:16] ---

These Hobgoblins have souls,
the same as us?

[09:20] ---

Do those Lightcubes
all contain goblins and orcs like these?

[09:25] ---

Is our Alice one, too?

[09:26] ---

Of course not!

[09:28] ---

This realm called the Underworld...

[09:31] ---

is divided into the Human Empire,
where normal humans live,

[09:34] ---

and the Dark Territory that lies outside it,
which is teeming with monsters.

[09:40] ---

It's pretty much a given
that Alice lives in the Human Empire,

[09:44] ---

but since it's so gigantic,

[09:46] ---

there's no way that we'll ever find her
by just peeking in like this.

[09:49] ---

Come on, that's a total no-brainer!

[09:52] ---

If that's the case,
all we have to do is dive into this Human Empire,

[09:55] ---

and ask whoever we come across,
"Hey, do you know a girl named Alice?"

[09:58] ---

Wow, we have a dumbass here!

[10:00] ---

What's that, bastard?

[10:02] ---

Look, there are tens of thousands of people
living in the Human Empire.

[10:07] ---

You really think
you can canvas them all on your... own?

[10:12] ---

Wait. Hold on, hold on!

Maybe it doesn't have to be done by one person.

[10:16] ---

I see.

[10:17] ---

The accounts set up
to log into the Underworld...

[10:21] ---

It's unlikely that they'd all be
Level 1 ordinary citizens.

[10:25] ---

Isn't that right, Critter?

[10:30] ---

For the Rath operators to log in and observe,
or else control it from inside,

[10:35] ---

they must be set up with accounts
of all ranks and professions.

[10:38] ---

Hey! How cool is that?

[10:41] ---

In other words, we should just log in
as a general or president or some other big shot,

[10:45] ---

and order them to smoke out Alice, right?

[10:49] ---

I don't know, hearing you put it like that...

[10:51] ---

makes this idea sound really stupid.

[10:55] ---

Dammit, no good, huh?

[10:57] ---

They have some hard-core protection
on the high-level account logins as well.

[11:02] ---

Looks like we can only dive into the Human Empire
with an ordinary citizen's account.

[11:08] ---

Damn, what a letdown!

[11:11] ---

Critter, aren't there any high-level accounts
set up outside the Human Empire?

[11:16] ---

Outside it?

[11:17] ---

But aren't the chances
of Alice being there close to nil?

[11:22] ---

Well, yes, I guess so.

[11:24] ---

But it's not as if the borders
are totally impenetrable, right?

[11:29] ---

That's my bro! Thinking outside the box!

[11:32] ---

In other words, you mean,

[11:34] ---

go in as general of those monsters
and attack, right?

[11:37] ---

That would get me more fired up, for sure!

[11:41] ---

A-ha, found it, found it!

[11:46] ---

All right! No password!

[11:48] ---

Well, well...

[11:50] ---

First, here's someone with the rank of Dark Knight.

[11:54] ---

His Object Control level is... 70!

We can work with that!

[11:58] ---

Hey, not bad!

[12:00] ---

That one's mine, all right?

[12:03] ---

Right, and here's another one...

[12:06] ---

What's this?

[12:07] ---

The ranking's blank, and there's no level, either.

[12:10] ---

The only setting is its name.

[12:13] ---

Now how do you pronounce this?

[12:15] ---

Emperor... Vecta?

[12:19] ---

Emperor... as in ruler?

[12:21] ---

On second thought, I'll take that one—

[12:23] ---

No.

[12:24] ---

I'm taking that one for myself.

[12:27] ---

I won't argue.

[12:29] ---

Okay, so you can take on the role of Emperor,
and I'll be the Dark Knight.

[12:33] ---

Hey, I'm starting to get pumped up!

[12:36] ---

Hey! Four eyes! Can we log in yet?

[12:40] ---

What's wrong, Critter?

[12:41] ---

Is there some other problem?

[12:44] ---

Maybe it's just something that's bugging me,

[12:47] ---

but I'm looking at the data,
and this odd phrase keeps popping up.

[12:51] ---

I'm not sure what it means yet.

[12:55] ---

What kind of phrase?

[12:57] ---

"Final load test."

[13:02] ---

Um... let's see.

[13:04] ---

As far as Kirito's condition
in the real world is concerned,

SIGN Sub Control Room Ocean Turtle 37 minutes after the attack

[13:07] ---

like I just explained,
things aren't looking too optimistic.

[13:11] ---

That said, Kirito still remains
logged into the Underworld.

[13:16] ---

In other words,

[13:18] ---

even though his self-image has been damaged,

[13:20] ---

his Fluctlight itself is still active,
and is receptive to various stimuli.

[13:26] ---

He's lost his own soul
because he blamed himself so vehemently.

[13:31] ---

If someone in the Underworld

were to offer him forgiveness, then maybe...

[13:39] ---

I'll go!

[13:42] ---

Ms. Asuna?

[13:48] ---

I'll go into the Underworld.

[13:53] ---

I want to go there and tell Kirito...

[13:57] ---

that he did a good job.

[13:59] ---

To say, "I know you went through
so much sadness and pain,

[14:03] ---

but you did the best that you could."

[14:07] ---

It's true that we have one more vacant STL.

[14:11] ---

But the Underworld isn't exactly stable right now.

[14:17] ---

Because we're about to enter the last stage
of the scheduled final load test.

[14:22] ---

Final... load?

[14:24] ---

What's going to happen?

[14:25] ---

The Durability of the Eastern Gate,

[14:28] ---

which divides the Human Empire
and the Dark Territory, will reach zero,

[14:31] ---

and an army of monsters
will flood the Human Empire.

[14:35] ---

If the humans had sufficient defenses in place,

[14:38] ---

they would've ultimately
been able to drive them back.

[14:41] ---

But during this last experiment,

[14:43] ---

Kirito pretty much destroyed
the ruling organization, the Axiom Church,

[14:48] ---

so who knows what will happen?

[14:51] ---

Either way, we may have reached the point
where one of us will have to dive in.

[14:58] ---

Once the invasion begins,

[14:59] ---

it's possible that Alice, who's somewhere
in the Human Empire, could be killed in the chaos.

[15:06] ---

If someone can enter
with a superuser account,

[15:09] ---

transport Alice, under their protection,
to the World End's Altar,

[15:14] ---

and from there, eject Alice's Lightcube
to the Sub Control Room.

[15:21] ---

Isn't that what you asked Kirito to do as well?

[15:26] ---

If he'd made it,
then I'm sure he would've pulled it off.

[15:30] ---

Because he was right by Alice at the time.

[15:33] ---

You're saying that several months later
in terms of internal time,

[15:36] ---

it's highly likely that those two are still together?

[15:40] ---

I think it's safe to assume that they are.

[15:43] ---

Meaning that having Asuna dive in
might be our best option.

[15:48] ---

As well as the ability
to communicate with Kirito,

[15:51] ---

whoever goes will need combat ability
to protect Alice in the Underworld, after all.

[15:56] ---

Then we should have her use
the highest account level possible.

[16:01] ---

Well, the choices are endless, then.

[16:04] ---

A knight, a general, a noble...

[16:07] ---

There are all kinds
of superuser accounts to choose from,

[16:10] ---

Hey, hold on a second.

[16:12] ---

What is it?

[16:13] ---

Isn't there a chance that
our attackers could come up with the same idea?

[16:18] ---

Oh... yeah.

[16:21] ---

True, they're just as likely
to catch onto this method, as well.

[16:23] ---

But they won't have time to crack the login passwords
for any superuser accounts.

[16:29] ---

Their only option would be
a Level 1 ordinary citizen... that's it.

[16:34] ---

What's wrong?

[16:36] ---

Never mind, it's nothing.

SIGN Everyone, I'm going to the Underworld, too. I'll be coming back with Kirito, no matter what,
so don't worry.

[17:01] ---

Are you ready?

[17:02] ---

Yes.

[17:03] ---

Anytime you're ready, please.

SIGN Monday, July 6, 2026 4:56 PM Somewhere in Tokyo

[18:23] ---

Again... the guy from that day...

SIGN You have a message from Asuna Yuuki

[18:28] ---

Asuna?

SIGN Yui

[18:29] ---

*Sinon, there's something
that I'd like to explain to you all.*

[18:33] ---

Would you mind logging into AOL right away?

SIGN Sylvain

[18:40] ---

So you see, in order to repair Daddy's Fluctlight,

[18:45] ---

Mommy has decided to dive into the Underworld.

[18:48] ---

Big Brother...

[18:50] ---

Kirito...

[18:51] ---

Oh, he'll be fine!

He's always come back, hasn't he?

[18:57] ---

So, is the Ocean Turtle all right?

[19:01] ---

Aren't they under attack by some sketchy guys?

[19:05] ---

Isn't there something that we can do to help?

[19:10] ---

Well, about that...

[19:12] ---

We might need to call on you for help later on.

SIGN Main Control Room Ocean Turtle 2 hours and 53 minutes after the attack

[19:29] ---

All right, let's do this!

SIGN October 30, 380 HE Dark Territory Obsidia Palace

[19:59] ---

Knight Lipia Zancle has returned.

SIGN Dark Knight Eleventh Rank Lipia Zancle

[20:03] ---

Good work. You can have a seat.

[20:06] ---

Yes, my lord.

[20:09] ---

Don't call me "your lord"
when it's just you and me.

SIGN Dark Knight Commander Vixur ul Shasta

[20:13] ---

Right, but officially, I'm still on duty.

[20:19] ---

So anyway...

[20:20] ---

What's this grave incident
that you had to send a familiar to alert me about?

[20:25] ---

Right. The pontifex of the Human Empire's
Axiom Church... is dead.

[20:34] ---

That immortal being?

[20:36] ---

Yes.

[20:37] ---

I also found it hard to believe,
so I spent a full week making sure it was true.

[20:48] ---

This is our chance.

[20:50] ---

Chance for what?

[20:51] ---

Needless to say, for peace.

[20:54] ---

Do you really believe that's possible, my lord?

[20:59] ---

Whether it's possible or not,
it's something we must do, no matter what.

[21:04] ---

But...

[21:05] ---

How do you intend
to convince the other lords, my lord?

[21:10] ---

And would the Order of the Integrity Knights
even entertain peace negotiations?

[21:17] ---

Regarding the Integrity Knights,
I believe there's a chance.

[21:20] ---

If the pontifex has been defeated,
it must be old man Bercouli at the helm now.

[21:27] ---

I can't stand the guy,
but I can have a dialogue with him.

[21:30] ---

It's the Council of Ten
that could prove to be a problem.

[21:33] ---

I know it sounds contradictory, but we...

[21:36] ---

...may be forced to eliminate them.

[21:39] ---

Four of them, at least.

[21:41] ---

Which four are you talking about?

[21:43] ---

Would it be both Goblin chiefs,
the Orc chief, as well as...

[21:49] ---

The chancellor of the Dark Mages Guild.

[21:51] ---

That woman's gotten her hands
on Administrator's immortality secret,

[21:55] ---

and is most likely desires
to become emperor herself someday.

[21:59] ---

No way would she accept any talk of peace.

[22:01] ---

But...

[22:03] ---

that would be far too risky, my lord!

[22:06] ---

The leaders of the Goblins and Orcs
may not be our enemies,

[22:09] ---

but as for the Dark Mages,

[22:11] ---

there's no telling what tricks
they might have up their sleeves!

[22:22] ---

Listen, Lipia.

[22:24] ---

How long has it been
since you came to me?

[22:28] ---

Um... it was the year I turned 21,
so... four years.

[22:33] ---

It's been that long already, huh?

[22:36] ---

Forgive me for putting you
in such an ambiguous position for so long.

[22:41] ---

What do you say?
Isn't it about time you, uh...

[22:45] ---

You know...

[22:48] ---

Officially... became my wife?

[22:56] ---

My lord!

[22:57] ---

Sorry that I'm so much older than you...

[23:09] ---

Emergency!

[23:11] ---

It's an emergency!

[23:13] ---

Th-The Throne Room!

[23:15] ---

The chain sealing it is shaking!

[23:36] ---

Next time: "Dark Territory."

Revision #1

Created 2024-02-15 22:21:35 UTC by whimsee

Updated 2024-02-15 22:21:35 UTC by whimsee