



# JUMP POINT

ISSUE: 13 02

SHIP BATTLES

OPEN FIGHTER PILOT'S GUIDE

DRAKE GOLEM

ONE MEMORY AT A TIME

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IN THIS ISSUE →→→

- 05 **BEHIND THE SCENES:**  
Ship Battles
- 13 **UEEN:**  
Fighter Pilot's Guide
- 15 **BEHIND THE SCENES:**  
Drake Golem
- 35 **SHORT STORY:**  
One Memory at a Time

## FROM THE COCKPIT

### GREETINGS, CITIZENS!

Welcome to April's **Jump Point**, though we're actually publishing in early May. However, there's a very good reason, as this issue we're diving into some of the all-new content coming shortly in Alpha 4.1.1 and we don't want to get too ahead of ourselves.

We're kicking off looking into Gilly's Training School and some of the related combat scenarios that you'll be tackling when the patch drops. There's a lot to do in the latest updates, so we reached out to one of the main devs behind the new content, Lead Designer James Kay, who very kindly answered our questions. A huge thank you to him and his team. We uncovered loads of new info about the upcoming content to share with you along with even more we can't divulge yet; all we can say is players who enjoy this update have a lot to look forward to.

Next, we nipped round the corner from the **Jump Point** news desk to get the Game Capture team's take on the new content; there's no one more

qualified to help you take on Gilly's increasingly difficult challenges. A massive thanks to Will Price and Gemma Robinson for helping us out with this one.

We're also going behind the scenes of Drake's first foray into the starter and mining sectors with the Golem. The relatively simple requirements meant the Ships team could focus on the visuals to really dial in the classic no-frills Drake look. Check out its progress from concept to Live along with the usual peek down interesting paths not travelled.

As always, the Narrative team is back with all-new *Star Citizen* lore. This time, Writer Phillip Wall shares a fascinating short story you won't forget...

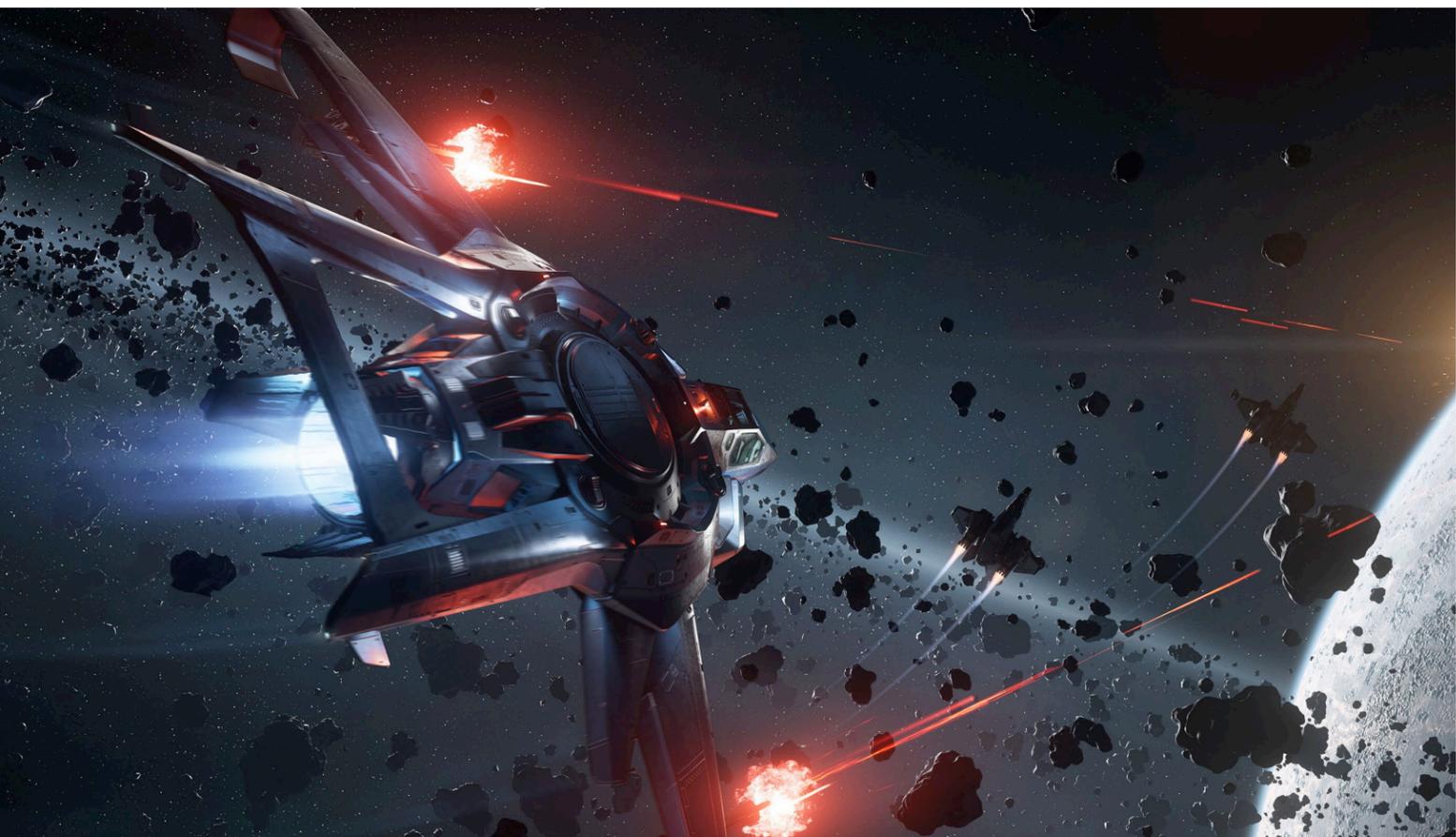
Thanks so much for reading. We'll see you next time.

*Jump Point Team*

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# BEHIND THE SCENES: SHIP BATTLES

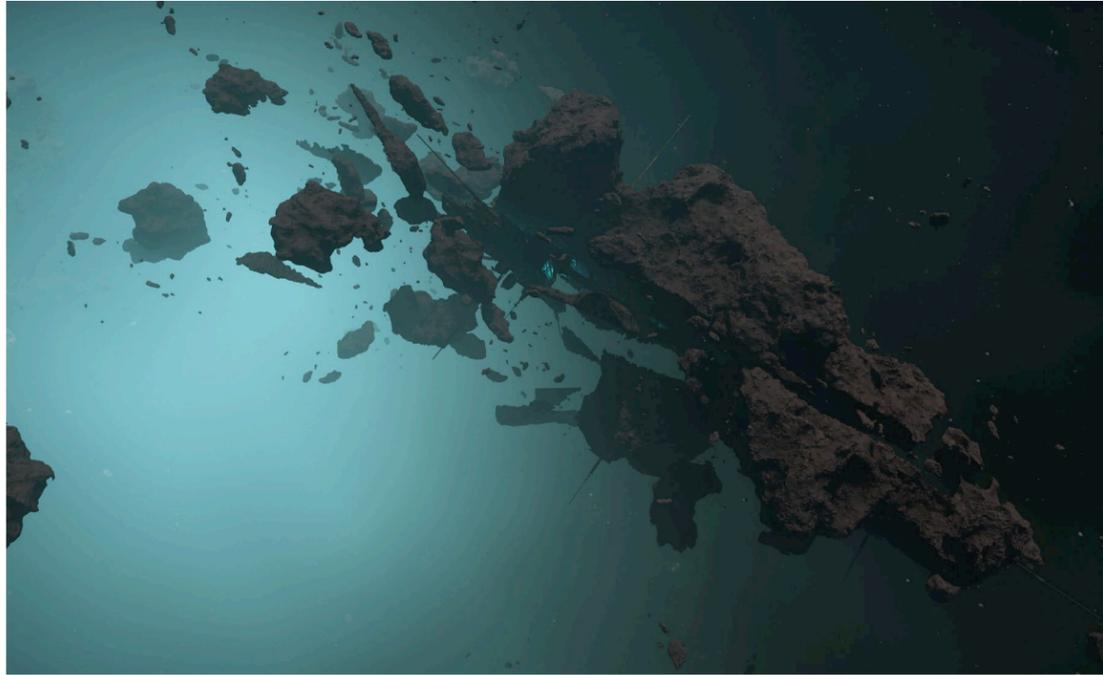
## SHIP COMBAT SCENARIOS

It's well established at this point that the 'verse is a deadly place. From opportunistic lone pirates to organized outlaw gangs, pilots must be prepared to defend themselves and their cargo holds whenever they take off into the great unknown.

While being escorted by fighters or caravanning across the system can mitigate the risk, every citizen should understand how to tackle threats themselves. To help players get up to speed with the demands of space combat, Alpha 4.1.1 introduces an all-new set of missions.

Known internally as 'Ship Battles,' the new content begins with Lucas 'Gilly' Baramasco at his Training School. There, players are put through eight increasingly difficult combat challenges before taking on more free-form scenarios out in the wider 'verse. Gilly's training missions each focus on a specific aspect of vehicular combat, such as countering single targets, multiple hostiles, and much larger ships; each a vital skill for players hoping to go the distance when they leave their hangars.

These new additions are the work of the Content Design team. To find out more, we spoke to Lead Designer James Kay. A huge thank you to him for taking us through it all.



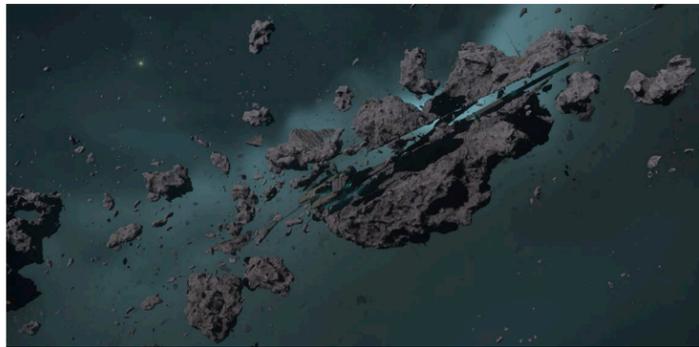
## SHIP BATTLES

Development began with a simple ask: Create a collection of missions focusing on ship-to-ship combat. Kay explained the overall aim was “to increase the number of ship combat missions in the game, add longer and more complex mission scenarios, and raise the quality bar.”

This began with the team devising two distinct mission types that would complement each other. The first, ‘Assault,’ teaches players the needs of ship combat through more traditional scenarios that build on each other until the player has the skills to take down the ‘verse’s more dangerous foes.

‘Assault’ is used in the initial Gilly’s missions, while the second, ‘Patrol,’ “challenges players to jump from point to point and ensure the location is clear. The dice is rolled at each point so you will get something different every time.”

Although players can take on all of the new content as soon as Alpha 4.1.1 is live, the team recommends working through Gilly’s Training School first.



**GILLY'S TRAINING SCHOOL**

Gilly's Training School missions are accessed from the Contract Manager in the mobiGlas. Players will then meet Gilly, who will direct them to the combat location and stay in contact as they progress. Once

a mission is complete, the next will be available to accept in the Contract Manager. There are no reputation requirements, so this content is open to everyone, regardless of notoriety.

**1. SINGLE HOSTILE TARGETS**

Teaches the basics of combat by spawning a variety of single ships with low firepower and low-skill pilots.

- WAVE 1: DRAKE CUTTER X 1
- WAVE 2: ANVIL PISCES X 1
- WAVE 3: MISC PROSPECTOR X 1

**2. MULTIPLE HOSTILE TARGET**

Teaches how to engage multiple hostiles simultaneously by balancing offense and defense.

- WAVE 1: CONSOLIDATED MUSTANG X 2, ANVIL ARROW X 1

**3. TARGET PRIORITY**

Teaches the importance of prioritizing high-risk targets when dealing with multiple ships of varying classes.

- WAVE 1: ANVIL HORNET X 1
- WAVE 2: MISC PROSPECTOR X 2, ANVIL F7C HORNET X 1

**4. STEALTH SHIPS**

Teaches the specifics of combating stealth ships, first alone and then among other combatants.

- WAVE 1: ANVIL F7C-S HORNET GHOST X 1
- WAVE 2: AEGIS SABRE FIREBIRD X 1, MISC RAZOR EX X 2

**5. MISSILES & COUNTERMEASURES**

Teaches the threat of missiles and how to use countermeasures.

- Wave 1: [REDACTED]
- Wave 2: [REDACTED]

**6. MULTI CREW SHIPS**

Teaches how to combat multi-crew ships with large forward-facing weapons and multi-face shields.

- WAVE 1: [REDACTED]

**7. [REDACTED]**

Teaches how to deal with longer encounters against [REDACTED].

- WAVE 1: [REDACTED]

**8. [REDACTED]**

The final challenge, encompassing everything learned up to this point.

- WAVE 1: [REDACTED]

\*Waves are subject to change during development



**DEVELOPMENT**

Unlike ships and locations that come with definitive briefs, developing missions is a more fluid process, with the team experimenting to find the best mix of playability and challenge. Kay took us through the process:

Firstly, we start out with a paper design, planning the key points of the missions. At this stage, many ideas are considered but only a few make it past the first step.

The second step is what we call 'first playable,' where each mission is built to a point where all the major gameplay beats are playable but

some of the minor moments aren't finished yet.

The third step is 'gameplay complete,' where the mission is fully playable the whole way through. This is the point where we iterate on the experience to make it as good as we can.

Fourth is 'content complete.' Here, the mission has all kinds of different difficulties available and is offered by different organizations across different systems.

The fifth and final step is bug fixing and polish. This is where we fine tune the experience and kill all the bugs we find.



**RAISING THE BAR**

Ship Battles comes a point in Persistent Universe development with a significant focus on “raising the quality bar,” leading to much more iteration, polish, and requirements for additional functionality from up and downstream teams.

For example, new tech was created for comms notifications. “This allows us to play calls from the contractor as players progress to enable a much more immersive experience. This was only previously possible by a very outdated system that was unreliable and tricky to set up.”

The addition of comms notifications meant the team had to focus on the moment-to-moment details of a mission

“Figuring out the precise moment to play a notification or complete an objective led to an overall improvement in mission quality.”

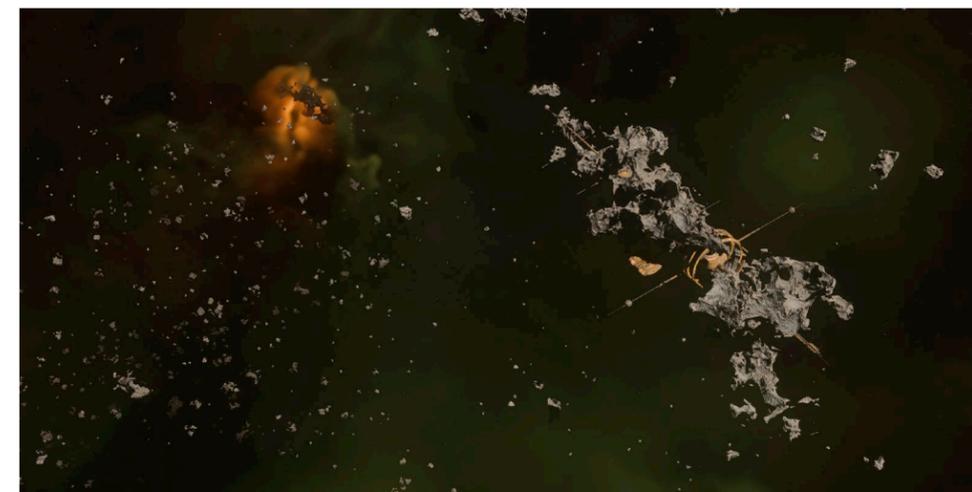
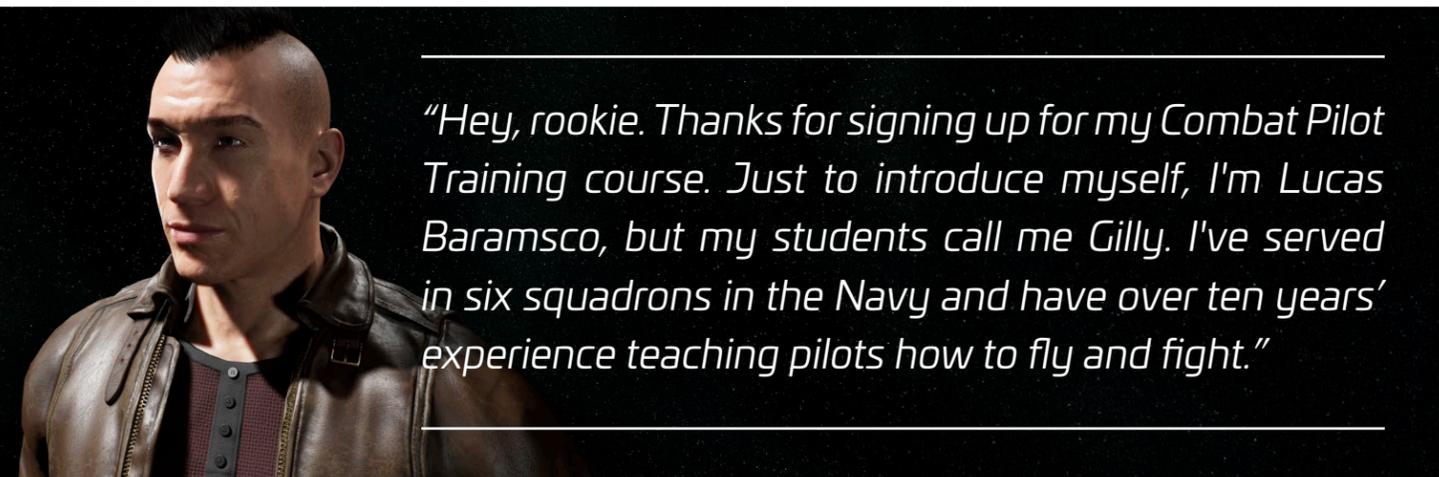
With the missions working, the content then entered the same testing phase as ships, locations, and all other content. This is kicked off with a Quality Assurance Test Request (QATR), a brief of sorts for the testers on what to look out for along with all the technical details of what’s happening in the background.

As the team iterated and fixed issues, builds with varying amount of content (along with work from the rest of the PU teams) were created and published to the Public Test Universe (PTU), subjecting the missions to the sort of testing only possible in a live environment.

Once complete, the content was locked and added into the release build, which will be fully available in the Invictus Launch Week patch. Alongside the missions published in the latest patch, new modules were created to expand this type of content further, so stay tuned for updates and new missions in the future.

Kay leaves us with a message for the community preparing to take on the new content.

“Enjoy! Have fun unlocking the new and more difficult missions!”





# VEEN: FIGHTER PILOT'S GUIDE

Welcome, recruits! Alpha 4.1.1 is brimming with danger. So, regardless of how you make your living in the 'verse, it's a good idea to know how to get yourself out of trouble when it inevitably finds you.

Gilly's Training School missions, introduced in Alpha 4.1.1, put pilots in escalating combat scenarios that replicate the simple, difficult, and almost insurmountable challenges that

they'll face during their time exploring Stanton and Pyro.

Each mission can be tackled in any ship, but the approach for each classification is entirely different. So, to get some tips, we spoke to undoubtedly one of the most qualified pilots at CIG, Senior Lead Game Capture Artist Will Price.

A huge thanks to Will for sharing his knowledge.

## STARTER: RSI AURORA MR

Keep agile and try and avoid getting drawn into dogfights, team up with a wingman or join a bigger group. Equip some laser repeaters, like Attritions, on the extra hardpoints then use the weapon groups to wear down the shields using only the lasers, saving your ammo. Once the shields are down, engage with ballistics.

**WEAPONS:** Hurston Dynamics Attrition laser repeaters  
**LOCATION:** Hurston Dynamics Showcase, Lorville, Hurston



## LIGHT FIGHTER: ANVIL ARROW

This is all about evasion and outflying the enemy. I'd run full lasers: two Panthers and two Attrition-1s. Also, swap the shield generator for a Mirage, though you'll have to run the Contested Zones to find one.

**WEAPONS:** Klaus & Werner CF-337 Panther laser repeaters  
**LOCATION:** Galleria, Stanton Gateway, Stanton-Pyro Jump Point

**WEAPONS:** Hurston Dynamics Attrition laser repeaters  
**LOCATION:** Hurston Dynamics Showcase, Lorville, Hurston

**SHIELD GENERATOR:** Ascension Astro Mirage  
**LOCATION:** Pyro Contested Zone



**Will's Preferred Ship:** The Arrow doesn't do the most damage but is the most fun to fly, so that's almost always my go-to for combat.

## MEDIUM FIGHTER: DRAKE CUTLASS BLACK

Make sure you have a turret gunner to help deal with any pesky light fighters that can out turn you. My preference would be to switch out the two Mantis for another two Panthers - I don't want to have to go and rearm such a slow ship. Since you only get one shield, I'd aim to upgrade it to something a bit stronger, like a Rampart or a Haltur (if you can find one).

**WEAPONS:** Klaus & Werner CF-337 Panther laser repeaters  
**LOCATION:** Galleria, Stanton Gateway, Stanton-Pyro Jump Point

**SHIELD GENERATOR:** Basilisk Rampart  
**LOCATION:** Platinum Bay, Faithful Dream R&R, L2 Lagrange Point, Hurston  
**SHIELD GENERATOR:** Yorm Haltur **LOCATION:** Pyro Contested Zones



## HEAVY FIGHTER: ANVIL HORNET F7C MK II

Throw on the F7C Mk II nose turret with two M4as and change the Revenants out for M6as. If you can get hold of it, throw on the ball turret and add two M5as (you may need to rip this off a wrecked ship though).

**TURRET:** Anvil C5-173f  
**LOCATION:** Anvil Hornet F7C-M Mk II

**WEAPONS:** Behring M4a, M5a, M6a  
**LOCATION:** Centermass, Area18, ArcCorp



## MULTICREW: DRAKE CORSAIR

I'd leave stock, only change I'd make would be swapping the shield generator for a Parapet.

**SHIELD Generator:** Basilisk Parapet  
**LOCATION:** Dumper's Depot, Grim HEX



## E-WARFARE: RSI SCORPIUS ANTARES

I'd fly this as part of a bigger fleet and specialize in being annoying to the enemy. Change out two or all of the Panthers for XJ3 distortion repeaters to break the shields down ready for the EMP. Then, focus on suppression while others do the big damage.

**WEAPONS:** ASD DR Model-XJ3 Distortion Repeater  
**LOCATION:** Centermass, New Babbage, microTech



This information accurately reflects Will Perry's expert opinion, but only as of Patch Alpha 4.1.1. This may be likely to change in the future.



# BEHIND THE SCENES: DRAKE GOLEM

Under CEO Anden Arden, Drake Interplanetary has meticulously adhered to its brand tagline: Power to the People. While pre-Arden Drake was also known for empowering the underdog, the number of pirates somehow operating its ships caused no end of problems for the brand's marketing department. So, rather than barebones fighters and armored freighters, recent Drake vehicles have been built to enable pilots from all walks of life to be masters of their own careers and destinies. So, when planning the latest release, CIC's real-world developers would need to follow the approach of the UEE's fictional shipbuilders.

Enter the Golem, a ship that wholly embraces this approach by straddling the line between starter and industrial tool.

Development kicked off in October 2024 with an appropriately simple first brief.

- *Drake Starter Miner*
- *A barebones entry ship into the mining profession, cheap and basic in form and function.*

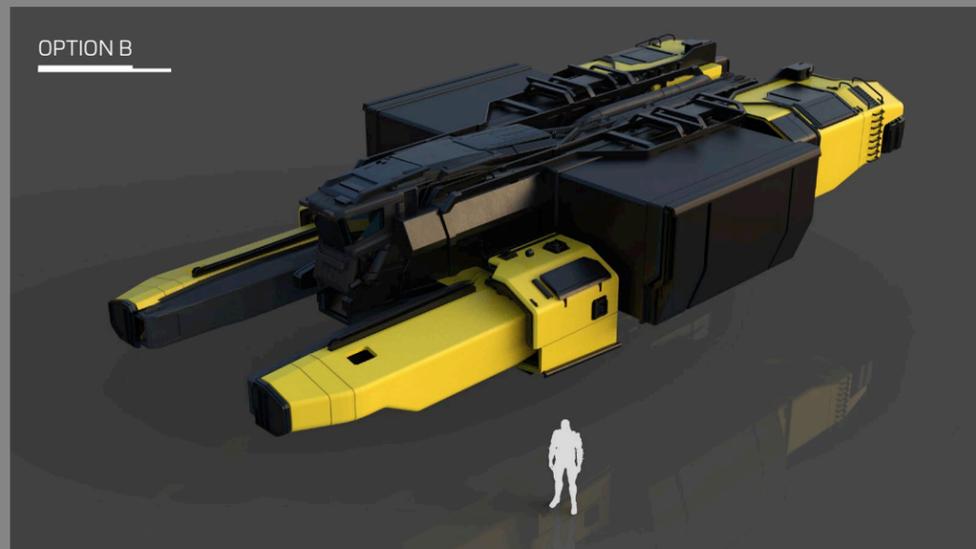
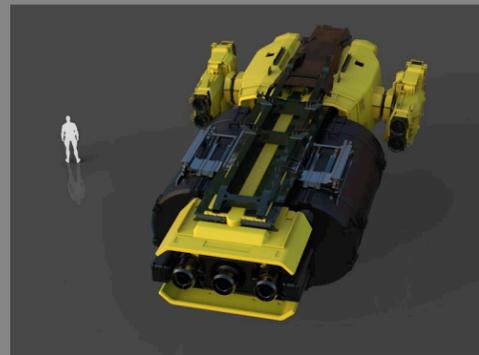
Additional details followed, specifying the ship would need to hold approximately 32 SCU of ore, use a bespoke mining laser 'weaker than the base Prospector,' and forgo any sort of onboard accommodation.

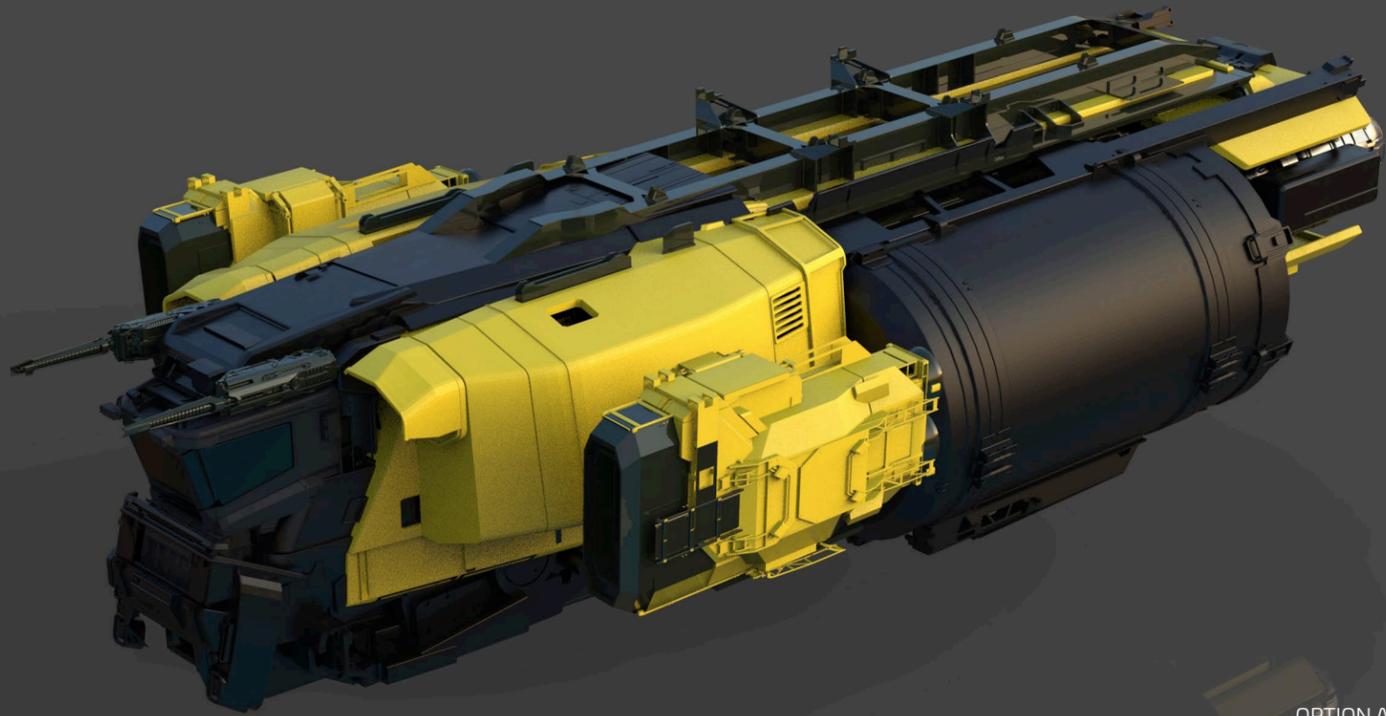
As a starter, Drake's first foray into rock breaking would have one major box to tick – enabling new miners to begin and progress a career. This no-frills approach is important for beginner industrial ships to allow pilots to focus on learning new mechanics and figuring out how they like to tackle their new job. With limited features to develop, the major focus of the Starter Miner was living up to the well-established and much-loved Drake aesthetic.

Before concepting began, a document of requirements was provided by *Star Citizen's* art director.

- *Think flying bin lorry/street sweeper*
- *Reuse as much of the existing Drake cockpit as possible*
- *Dev time to be spent on exterior*
- *Reuse landing gear/thrusters if possible*
- *As much exposed structure on the rear as we can*
- *Needs to feel like it can be bashed about and feel solid*

Considering the brief and design requirements, five potential directions were conceived, each embracing various Drake design cues.





OPTION A-2



The game directors requested four of the five concepts be refined, with 'D' being discarded. Each of the chosen designs referenced existing Drake ships, with the Cutter, Vulture, and Caterpillar featuring heavily.



OPTION B-2



OPTION E-2





OPTION C-1



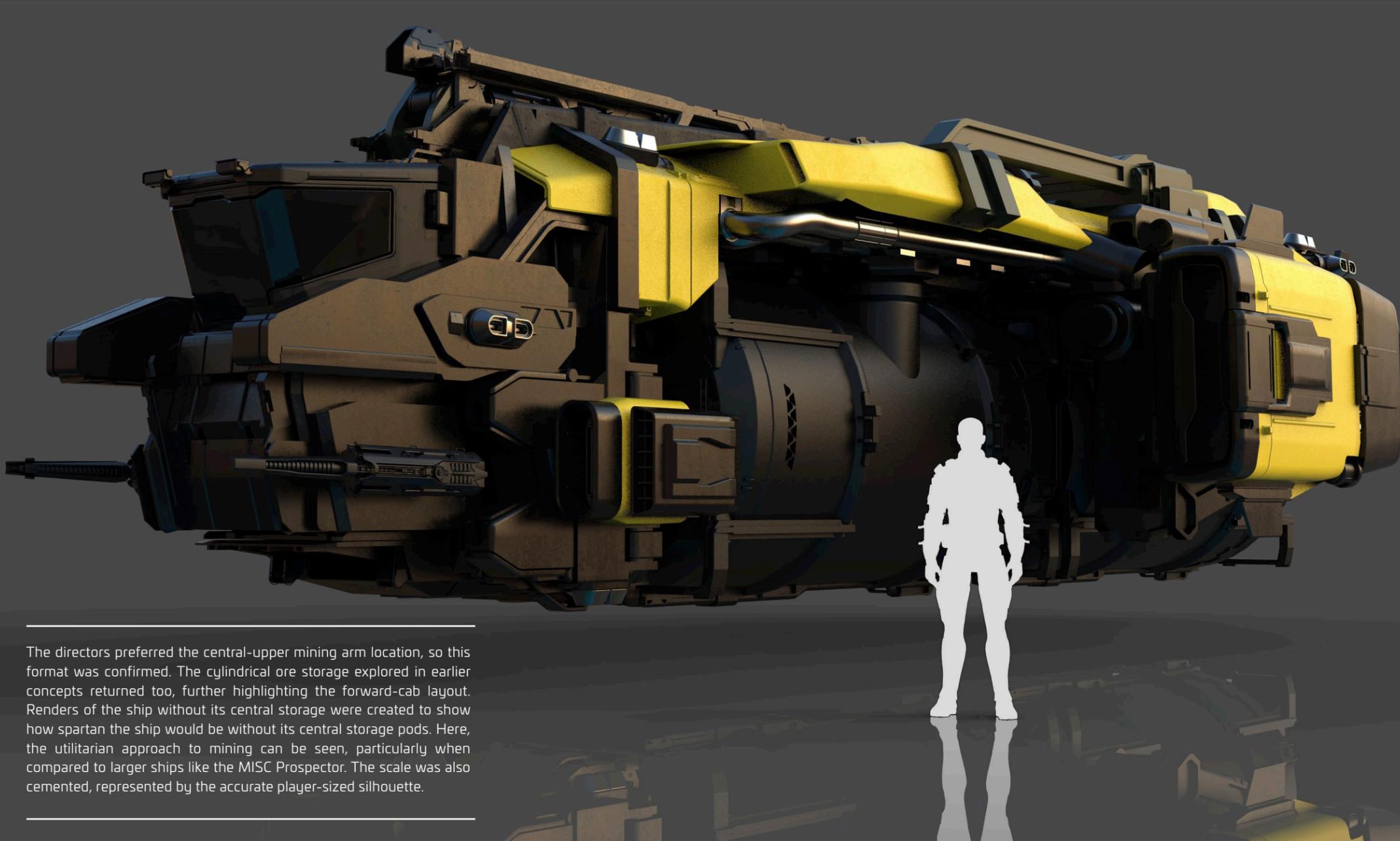
OPTION C-2



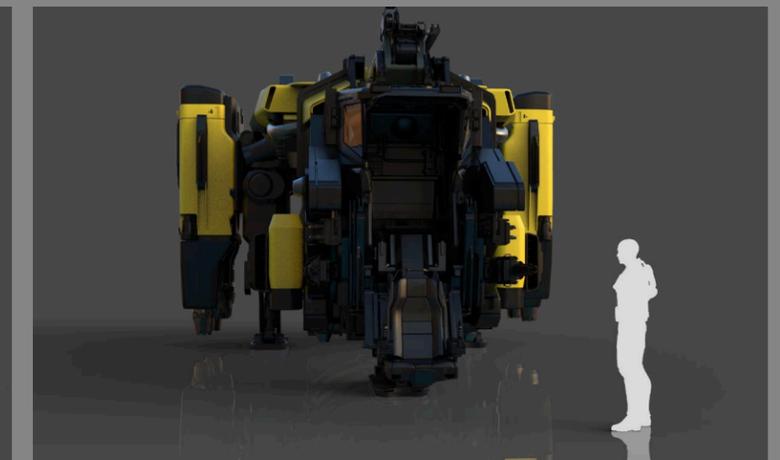
OPTION C-3

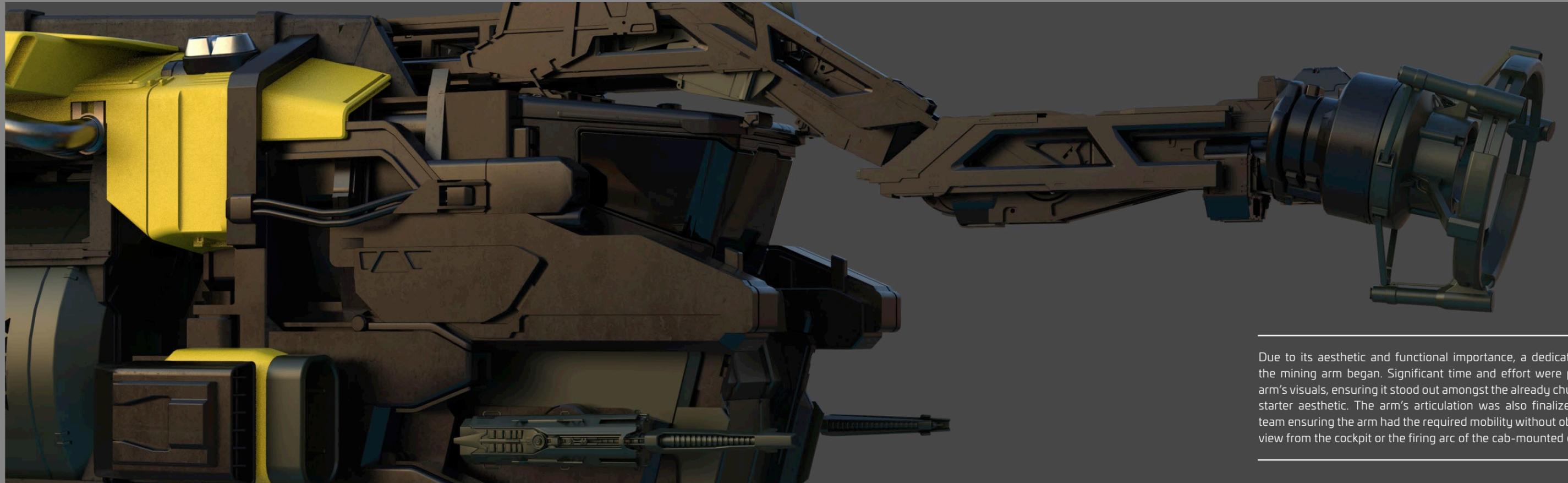


The cab-forward version C was preferred, so a further three options were created, exploring positions for the mining arm and widths of the exterior cladding, with a focus on the aesthetic established with the Cutter. Ore storage was also considered at this stage, with storage crates taking up the majority or the central hull.



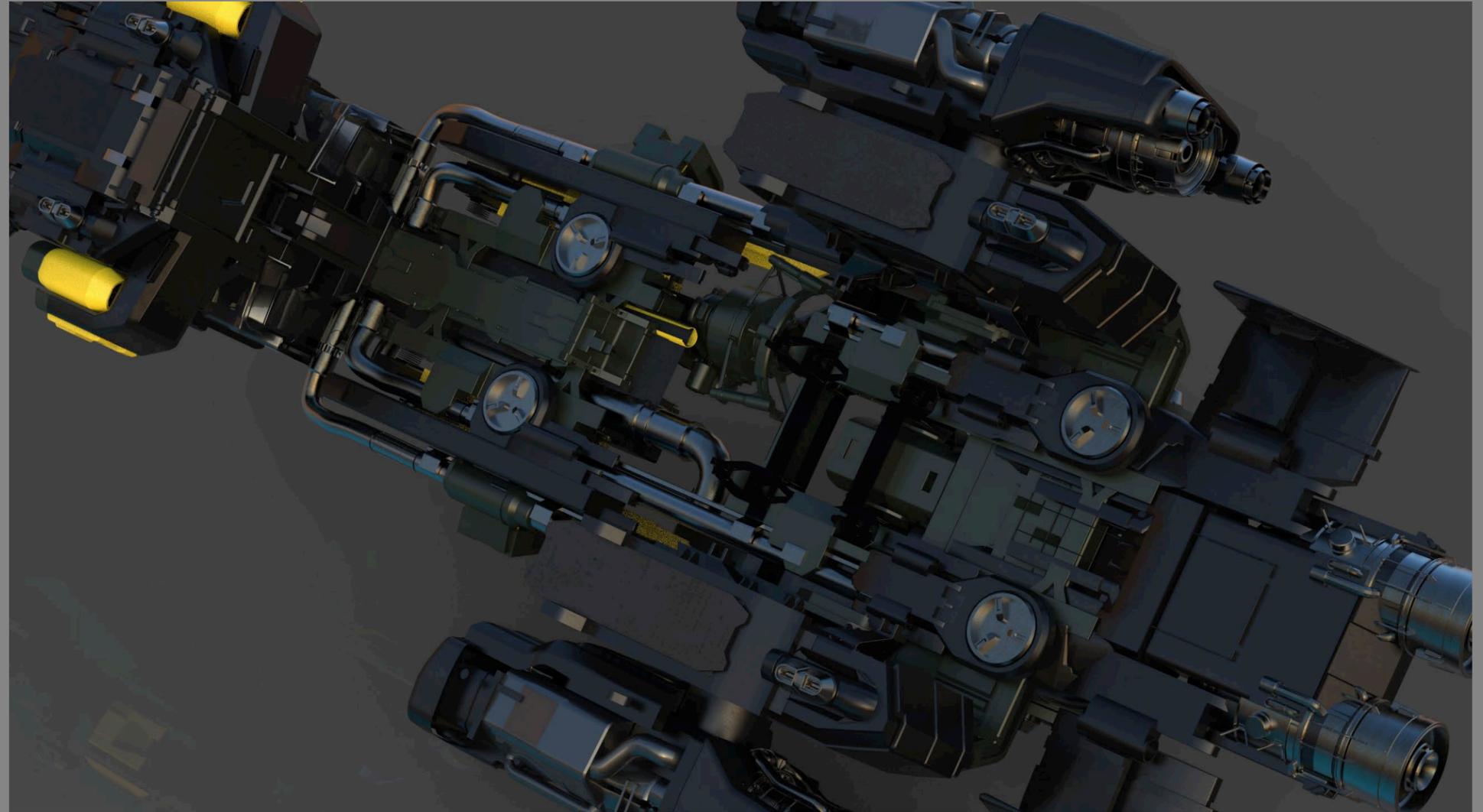
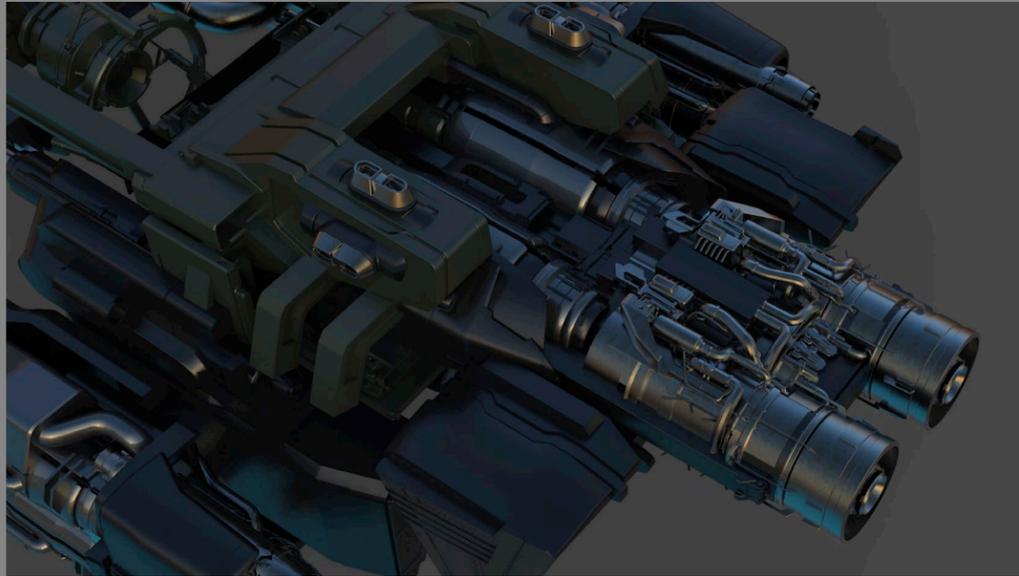
The directors preferred the central-upper mining arm location, so this format was confirmed. The cylindrical ore storage explored in earlier concepts returned too, further highlighting the forward-cab layout. Renders of the ship without its central storage were created to show how spartan the ship would be without its central storage pods. Here, the utilitarian approach to mining can be seen, particularly when compared to larger ships like the MISC Prospector. The scale was also cemented, represented by the accurate player-sized silhouette.





Due to its aesthetic and functional importance, a dedicated pass on the mining arm began. Significant time and effort were put into the arm's visuals, ensuring it stood out amongst the already chunky Drake-starter aesthetic. The arm's articulation was also finalized, with the team ensuring the arm had the required mobility without obscuring the view from the cockpit or the firing arc of the cab-mounted guns.





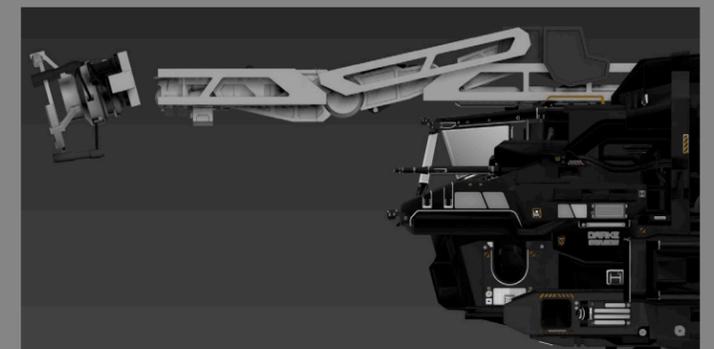
A full pass of the ship's chassis and under-cladding detail was undertaken, including structural elements of the damage pass, which would be completed fully during engine implementation. This involved the ship's chassis, engines, fueling and cooling systems, and other component details only visible when the external cladding is removed.

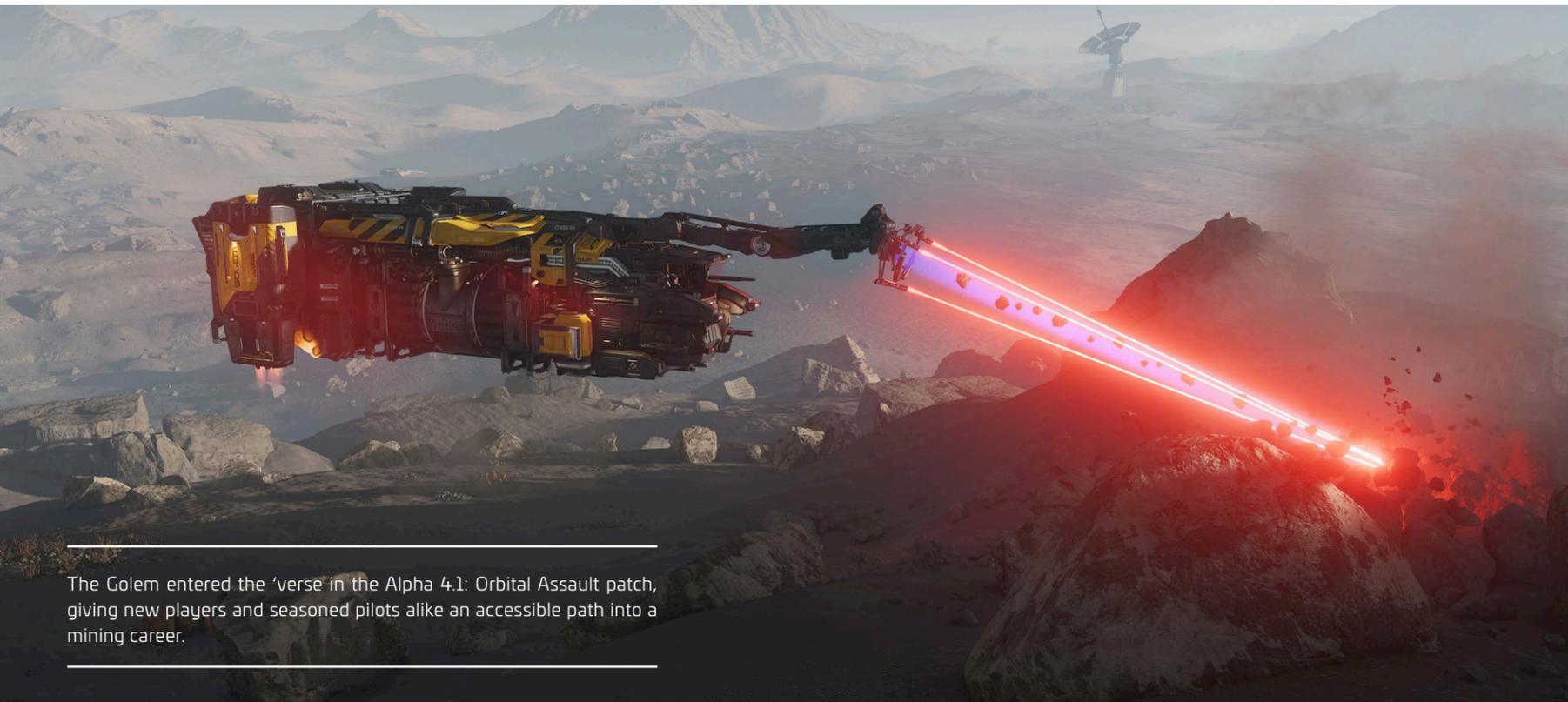
The Starter Miner was then handed over for a branding and decal pass – a seemingly small stage in the pipeline but one that makes a significant difference to overall appearance and realism. Drake livery was applied alongside wear and lighting passes. The base color was also finalized to bring it in line with the yellow used by Drake’s recent industrial releases: the Vulture, Mule, and Ironclad.



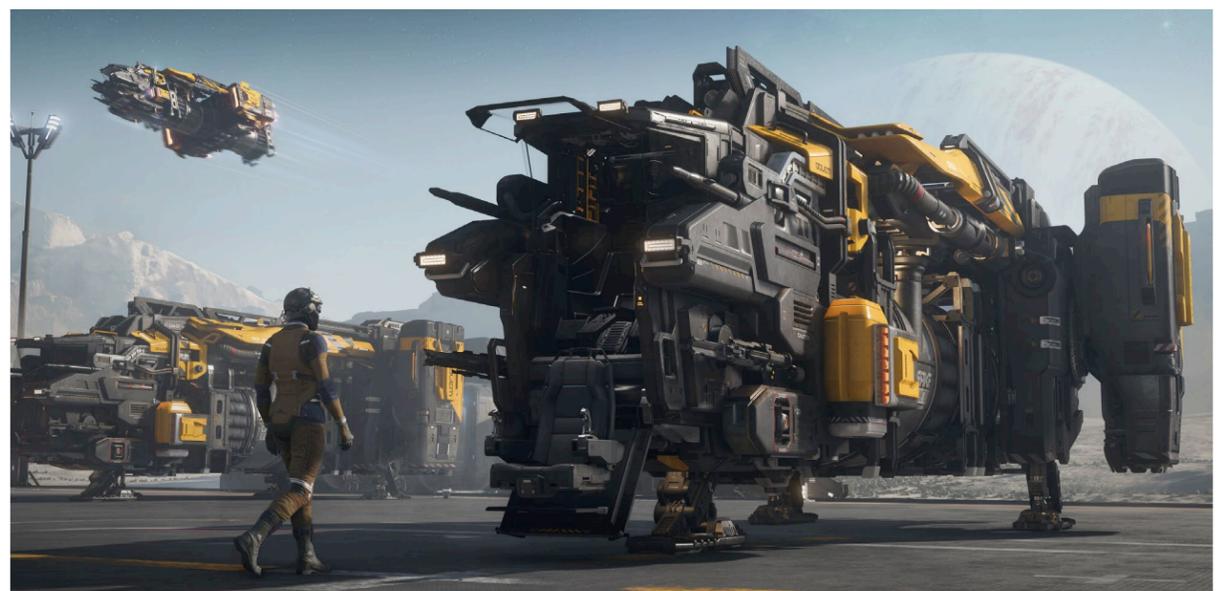


With the ship complete, it was handed over for implementation into StarEngine. Once in-engine, CIG's Marketing Art team could begin creating the visuals used to share the new ship with the community. The Narrative team's pass was also completed around this time, and the Drake Starter Miner was officially named the Golem.





The Golem entered the 'verse in the Alpha 4.1: Orbital Assault patch, giving new players and seasoned pilots alike an accessible path into a mining career.





# ONE MEMORY AT A TIME

BY PHILLIP WALL

I don't know what time it is, but the strength of the artificial lights suggests it's night. I'm lying on my back looking up at a screen. The words are blurred, so I sit up and reach for my glasses.

Everything comes into focus but my head screeches with pain.

"Hi Pascal, I'm Dr. Brode. How are you feeling?"

I immediately recoil, pushing myself away from the voice. My hands scramble for something – anything – and find themselves clutching a metallic tray. She lifts her hands up defensively and takes a cautious step closer.

"It's okay, you're safe Pascal. I'm not going

to hurt you. What you're experiencing is a completely normal response to regeneration."

My veins are coursing with adrenaline. It feels like this woman wants to hurt me and I have to defend myself. But that's not true. I take a moment, look her up and down, and breathe. She's a doctor. It's okay.

Slowly I lower the tray, eyes still scanning her warily.

"Good, that's good," she relaxes as I do, eyes returning to the datapad she's holding in her hand.

She quickly runs through a series of checks. Once she's satisfied, she looks back at me.

"What was the last thing you remember?"

My head's still swimming, like I've been pulled from a dream. Then, I answer:

"I was about to start a job. Hauling."

She looks down at the datapad and makes a motion.

"Right. So you're a pilot? I don't have an occupation written down here."

That makes sense. When you're a smuggler you don't tend to declare it on medical forms. I nod and she continues.

"What else do you remember?"

Everything's a blank. I close my eyes and rub my temples in frustration.

"Not much," I mutter.

Glancing down once again she checks the information. Her thick, curly hair wobbles with the movement.

"It looks like your last imprint was over a month ago so experiencing this level of temporal dissonance would be expected. We really encourage getting a new imprint at least once a week to help reduce gaps in memory."

The mobiGlas on her wrist hums melodically. Her eyes briefly dart to it before she deftly silences the alert.

The melody triggers something in my head and in an instant I'm transported back.

*It's just fragments and blurs, but I can hear a notification melody subsiding.*

*Something hits the side of my head – a sharp sting. Takeo's finger flicking my ear. He wickedly grins at me taking a seat in the chair next to me.*

"Asshole," I mutter.

*"Just making sure you're still with us," he pulls his console into position before adjusting a few strands of his jet-black hair that had fallen out of place during his nap.*

*He clears his throat before speaking.*

*"Now, did everyone make sure to get imprinted before leaving?"*

*Various forms of confirmation echo through the cockpit.*

*"Good, that shit's expensive, but it's worth it."*

*His words begin to trail off, or maybe I stop listening. It seems like everyone's still talking but I can't quite understand what they're saying. Then someone mentions money.*

*"Look, all I'm saying is: we need another job – a big one – if we're gonna keep running together."*



*More chatter. It rises and falls like the crest of wave.*

*"...you're gonna need a lot if you ever wanna move out of that shithole hab..."*

*I hear Jules laugh from behind and feel myself blush.*

*Glancing over my shoulder I see her. She sits behind us with her arms folded, emphasizing her short, stout physique. She stares back firmly, her tight, practical bun of blonde hair unmoving.*

*A mechanism whirls and she disappears from view, her voice comes through over comms.*

*"Hey Takeo, what are you gonna do with your cut of the creds? Finally get a haircut?"*

*I stop chuckling when I see his menacing glare.*

*"Maybe I'll take you out on a date, Jules," Takeo winks at me slyly.*

*"Well, it better be an expensive one," she replies.*

*Another voice cuts through from the back of the cockpit. River stands in the doorway, arms stretched above her head.*

*"Sounds like a great idea. A real surefire way to break up the crew."*

The crew. The words churn in my stomach and the world seems to shrink around me. The doctor pays me no attention, still fixated on her datapad.

"I have another patient to see now. Your vitals are all reporting back as within the expected parameters, and you thankfully avoided any major physical echoes, so any feeling of discomfort you have should pass." Without looking at me again, she taps away on the datapad whilst moving towards the door.

"Hey, er- has anyone else come in recently?" My words come out unsteady.

She pauses for a moment, glancing over her shoulder.

"I'm unable to discuss other patients' records with you, but considering what's happening currently – you should consider yourself lucky. Take care." The doors close behind her and I become aware of how cold the room feels.

My skin shivers. What the hell happened during the haul?

I stand up suddenly, filled with a feverish energy and scramble for my belongings. I throw on my clothes and stumble out of the doors.

Wandering through the hospital, I flick through my contacts: River, Jules, Takeo. I try calling each of them, but the comms fail to connect. I hear fractured sentences from crowds of people standing around the front desk. Everyone seems angry.

"Imprint no longer viable—"

"My son hasn't come back—"

"What are you doing about this?"

My heart pounds and I force myself into the elevator. After reaching the bottom, I stumble outside.

The neon lights of Area18 immediately overwhelm me. The typical obnoxious advertisements and invasive holograms are strangely silent as all available screens have been tuned to the breaking news: regen is failing.

My head begins to spin and I try to move on. Turning a corner, I squint at a sudden flash of blue light.

*My index finger is getting tired. Gently I release the trigger, the blue light of the tractor beam fading-out-of-existence-and-the-cargo-landing in the back of the ship with a dull thud. I shake my hand out and let out a sigh.*

*"The way you're grunting, you'd think you did all the heavy lifting around here," River walks past me, spinning her multi-tool playfully.*

*The multi-tool continues to roll in her hand, increasing from a gentle spin to the speed of a turbine.*

*Now I'm standing beside her, the cargo door folding up behind us.*

*I decide to tidy up the cargo. Maybe it's because I'm tired or I'm not paying attention, but my aim is completely off. I end up flinging the lid off the crate and it slams against the wall with metallic clang.*

*I curse loudly. I can already hear the footsteps from the crew as they come running.*

*"Jesus, what happened?" Takeo calls out to me from afar. I glance to my side and see River's eyes squinting with intrigue.*

*"Everything's fine, I just misfired. I can put the lid back on in a sec," I yell back.*

*"Holy shit," River says slowly. She pushes past me and glimpses into the now exposed container.*

*The doors to the bay slide open and Takeo rushes through.*

*"Oi! Don't even think about it River! We have one rule remember? We never look at the—" He stops mid-sentence, his jaw slackening.*

*I turn to the cargo and finally see it. My skin stands on end as an unnatural chill fills the air.*

*I clutch my chest and let out a guttural groan. That feeling of loss and longing I felt only moments ago is replaced by something else. I can feel my heart pounding in my throat. Blood pulsing through my veins. Slamming my palms against my head, I mutter to myself to get a grip.*



I head home, my head still spinning. Stepping into my hab, there's a coldness to it that makes it feel sterile and unfamiliar.

Grabbing a book from the shelf, I flick through it absentmindedly until my mobiGlas rings abruptly.

Bits and Pieces repair shop. Voice only.

I answer.

A gruff voice on the other end:

"Welcome back, Pascal. So, I think you still owe me something."

My mind reels, trying to place the voice... trying to place the meaning. He knows me somehow, so I decide to play along.

"Yeah. Sure. Let's talk about it in person."

I hear him take a long drag on a cigarette

before he replies.

"Alright. Let's talk then."

One shuttle ride later and the shop is exactly what you would expect from a place called Bits and Pieces, a small slot of a building full to the brim with machinery and parts – none of them looking operational. As I enter through the door, the sharp smell of grease and oil hits my nostrils.

*We're in the living quarters of the ship, or somewhere similar at least. River's sat at the table with the contents of some machine laid out in front of her, oil covering the table and her hands.*

*I hear a cacophony of voices swirling around the room.*

*"As far I'm concerned nothing's changed."*

*"The money's too good to turn this down. Besides, what are we supposed to do with them?"*

*"We should go to the Advocacy, or hell even a—"*

*"Yeah, like that's an option. May as well just turn ourselves in along with 'em."*

*"Would you just shut up? You're making this much harder than it needs to be."*

*"You didn't have a problem with it before."*

*"We didn't know what was in it before!"*

*The conversation stops. There's a silence, heavy as lead that fills the room. They're all against me.*

*Then I'm against the wall, Takeo's hands gripping the collar of my shirt.*

*"Shut your mouth and do your fucking job."*

*I catch a glimpse of the rest of our cargo. They're all filled with the same thing: people. Frozen people.*



The bodies in the cargo hold; we were transporting people.

I tried to confront them, but they wouldn't listen. I tried to make them listen. I really did.

"Be with you in two seconds, make yourself comfortable," the voice says from the back of the shop.

Did I do something? Did I kill them? There's no way I could have gone along with this, but murder? No. That's not me.

The door at the back of the shop squeaks open as a man glides through. He plants himself into the chair behind the counter, then reaches for a cigarette. Something about that movement and the smell of stale smoke causes his name to float to the surface: Dario Grimshaw.

As he lights it, he glances up at me. His piercing

green eyes study me for a moment. He casually brushes back his jacket to get to a pocket, revealing a sheathed pistol on his waist. He strikes the flint of the old lighter as I look at the gun. The sparks erupt like a muzzle flash.

*Another flash accompanied by the deafening sound of a gunshot. Then another.*

*He looks up at me with those green eyes, pistol pointing towards me. Three bodies litter the floor of the cargo bay. River. Takeo. Jules.*

*"Sorry, pal."*

*The muzzle flash is the last thing I see.*

A sudden rage overtakes me. I slam my hands on the counter causing the shattered contraptions on his desk to rattle.

"What the hell did you do, Dario?" My voice booms throughout the tiny shop.

"Settle down, Pascal. I'm only doing what you asked me to."

I step back, my heart pounding with anger and fear.

"Now, just take a seat," he opens a drawer on his desk, his fingers shifting through the cluttered contents.

I do as he instructs.

"Jeez, you really are a handful," he shakes his head as he places a small black box on the desk.

Running his finger across its surface, it suddenly lights up, a holographic recording appearing above it.

It's the cargo bay of our ship.

*It feels like a dream. Or like watching a vid that*

*someone's made about you. It's me, but it's not me.*

*I'm walking through the cargo bay with Dario behind me. He's holding a small assault rifle, glancing around cautiously.*

*"These the icicles?" His gruff voice says, glancing at the surrounding containers.*

*I nod in response.*

*"I'll signal the alarm now. It'll look like you've sealed the other doors so they'll come through that door there," I say, pointing to the connecting doors.*

*Dario positions himself behind one of the containers, lying in wait. I slam my hand into the thick button on the wall, causing the room to cascade into darkness. I start screaming for help. I seem scared. A light illuminates the cargo bay with flashes of red as it alternates on*

*and off, casting brief shadows.*

*The doors at the far end of the cargo bay slam open suddenly. River rushes through, submachine gun in hand. She glances around and sees me standing by the alarm. She opens her mouth to speak, but by then it's too late.*

*A deafening screech obscures the audio of the recording for a moment – a combination of the bullet being released from Dario's gun and River's blood curdling cry.*

*She falls to the floor in a series of disjointed frames, the red light briefly illuminating her pained face and twisted body. And then again as her crumpled body lays on the floor. The crimson light continues to flash on and off. In between these flashes, I see it all unfold. Takeo and Jules enter, and Dario takes them out methodically, one at a time.*

*I press the button again and the red light stops.*

Tears hit the inside of my glasses. In between stifled fits of anger and sobbing, I manage to speak:

"What the hell is wrong with me? How could I do this?"

Dario lights another cigarette and leans forward.

"Just keep watching, you haven't even got to the good part yet."

I remove my glasses, wiping the tears away as I return to the recording. In the holo, Dario is walking over to me.

"Jeez. What a mess."

*I look different. Strange. Composed.*

*It'll be okay. They all have imprints."*



*I say solemnly. I see myself run my hands through my hair. I remove my glasses, fold them up, and place them in my pocket.*

*"Then why bother having me ghost them?" Dario asks, a hint of amusement in his voice.*

*"...because I want to give them another chance. They're not bad people, they just needed the money. They'll make the right choice this time. I know it."*

*Dario chuckles to himself.*

*"Can't say this won't hurt."*

*He raises his weapon to my head.*

*"Sorry, pal."*

---

The recording stops.

I sit there in disbelief, still staring at the table. Dario blows a plume of smoke towards me.

*"They didn't regen," I say quietly. "They're not coming back."*

I don't remember how I made it home after that, but soon I'm drifting through my apartment, picking up objects and putting them down without any purpose. It doesn't feel real. After watching that recording, I don't feel like myself, I feel like two people. Fractured.

Or maybe that's just what I tell myself to stop myself from feeling guilty.

That I wasn't the person who did all those things in the recording.

Days, weeks, maybe even months pass. My existence withering away inside this apartment as I barely sustain myself on cheap meals and booze. I live in a hovel of filth and decay. It's what I deserve.

Until I decide I don't deserve it anymore.

I begin to clean. Obsessively. I bleach every floor, every surface. I shake down every book, double check every compartment, search every place I can think of, in an attempt to remove any trace of what I've done from my life. I pay Dario the credits I owe him, and then I erase the transaction and all records of the comms between us. It's like I never knew him and, more importantly, I'll never be able to find him again.

Once I'm satisfied, I head outside, finding a suitable balcony. I climb onto the railing and gaze down at the traffic below. I start to drink, placing the empty bottles beside me, one by one, watching the hypnotic grids of lights as they draw me closer, and closer.

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I don't know what time it is, but the strength of the artificial lights suggests it's night. I'm lying on my back looking up at a screen. The words are blurred, so I sit up and reach for my glasses.

Everything comes into focus but my head screeches with pain.

*"Hi Pascal, I'm Dr. Plath."*

I take a moment, look her up and down, and breathe.

*"What was the last thing you remember?"*

