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INSTALLATION:

When extracted, Steele Dawn requires around 220 MB of hard drive space for the game files. To install, extract the archive into your Unreal or Unreal Tournament directory. For Unreal Tournament, ensure that Oldskool Amp'd has been enabled. Additionally, Unreal and UT have their respective System files placed in subfolders:

- Maps\MapsUnrealMP and System\SystemUnreal for Unreal installations

- Maps\MapsUT99MP and System\SystemUT99 for Unreal Tournament installations

In order to finish the installation, move the files from the respective subfolders into main Maps and System folders, while deleting the unused equivalent for the other game.

PLAYING:

Steele Dawn supports Unreal upgraded to at least 225, Return to Na Pali version 226 and Unreal Tournament. To begin playing, you need to perform different steps dependent on the platform of your choice.

- On Unreal versions 225 and 226 as well as Return to Na Pali version 226, in order to play you need to type in a *console command*. This command differs a bit depending on which difficulty level you'd like to play on. To play the campaign, press

either Tilde (~) or Tab on your keyboard and type in: **open SD0_Intro_V2?difficulty=0** to start on easy difficulty mode. To play on higher difficulty modes, change the number **0** to **1** for normal difficulty, **2** for hard difficulty and lastly **3** for Unreal difficulty.

- On Unreal version 227, choose **New Game**, then select **Steele Dawn** from the list of campaigns available, as well as difficulty and, if you so desire, mutator choices and start the game.
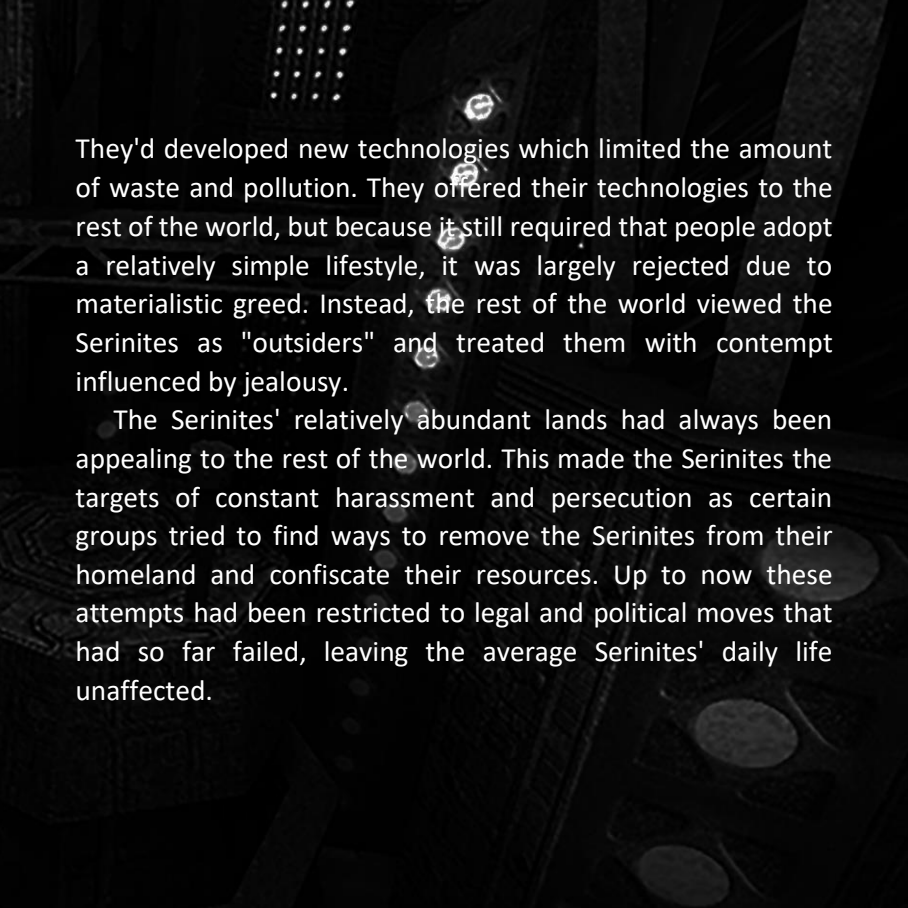
- On Unreal Tournament with Oldskool Amp'd enabled, choose **New Single Player Game**, then select **Steele Dawn** from the list of campaigns available, as well as difficulty and start the game. Mutators are accessible through earlier configuration of Oldskool.

DECADES BEFORE THE NA PALI INCIDENT

Year 2148

Brandon Steele was born on an Earth that was overcrowded and polluted. Natural resources were scarce. The stress was taking its toll on the human population. Over the past century there had been an ever increasing amount of crime and violence, among both small time criminals and large organized terrorist groups, and even governments. Entire countries had been torn apart and new ones formed. Governments were corrupt and most had become militant. A peaceful life was hard to come by in any part of the world.

But one people, the Serinites, had managed to find relative peace and comfort on their homeland they'd held for many generations. They had treated their land with care and respect.

They'd developed new technologies which limited the amount of waste and pollution. They offered their technologies to the rest of the world, but because it still required that people adopt a relatively simple lifestyle, it was largely rejected due to materialistic greed. Instead, the rest of the world viewed the Serinites as "outsiders" and treated them with contempt influenced by jealousy.
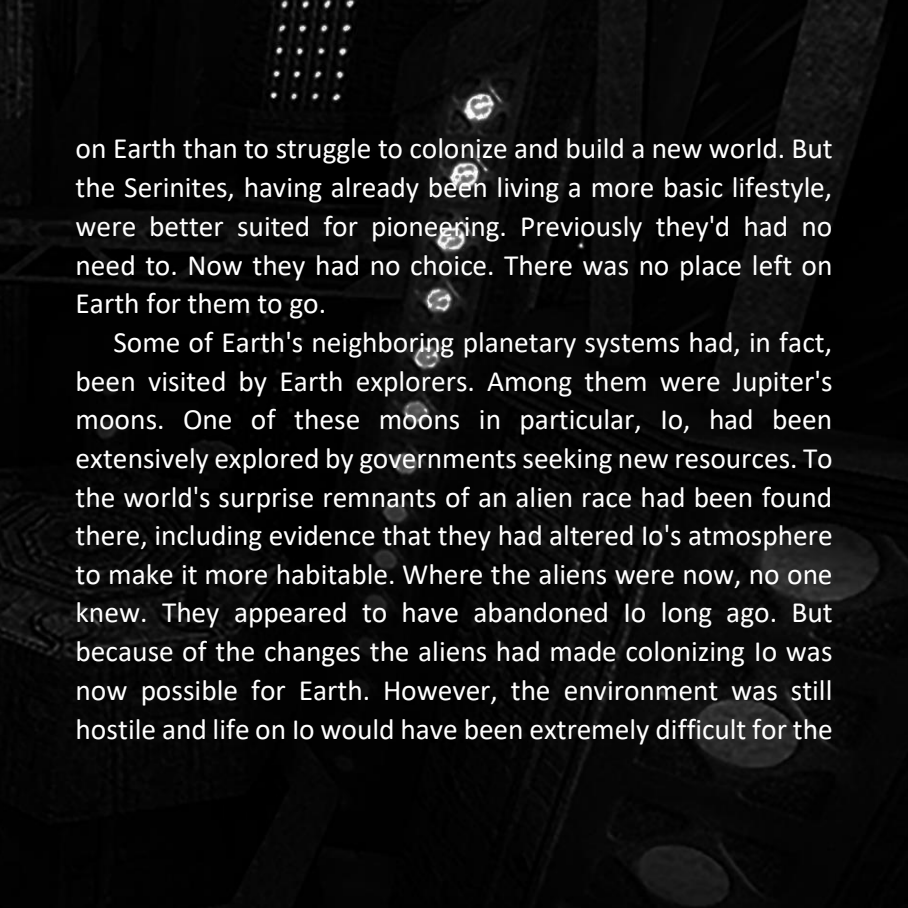
The Serinites' relatively abundant lands had always been appealing to the rest of the world. This made the Serinites the targets of constant harassment and persecution as certain groups tried to find ways to remove the Serinites from their homeland and confiscate their resources. Up to now these attempts had been restricted to legal and political moves that had so far failed, leaving the average Serinites' daily life unaffected.

Year 2153

Five year old Brandon, being a Serinite, had enjoyed a relatively happy childhood up to now, unaware of how soon that was all about to change.
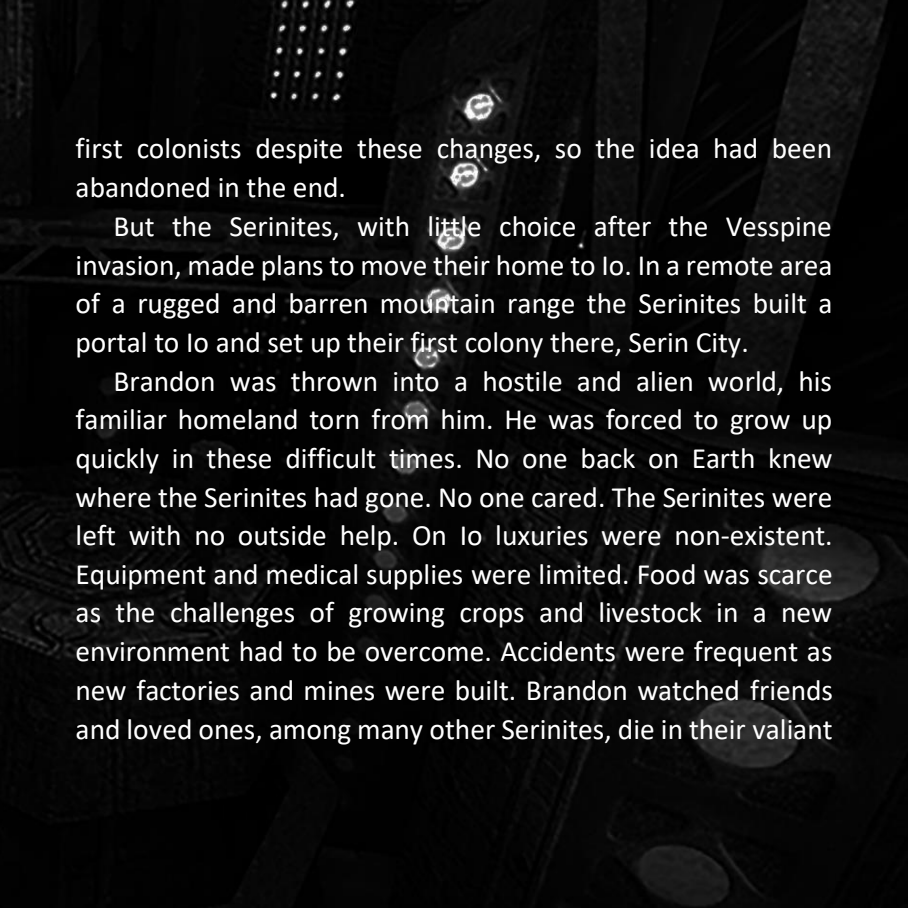
An ever increasingly powerful terrorist group, the Vesspines, had set its sights on the Serinite lands. Bound by no law or government this group had no intention of doing things fairly or legally. The Serinites, being a relatively peaceful people, were no match for the Vesspines' terrorist methods. It was all over very quickly and the Serinites had no choice but to flee their homeland.

Earth had long had the technology to travel to its neighboring planets within the solar system. These planets and their satellites would have been logical places for the overcrowded Earth to expand to and seek out new resources. But humans like the familiar so most found it easier to fight over what was left

on Earth than to struggle to colonize and build a new world. But the Serinites, having already been living a more basic lifestyle, were better suited for pioneering. Previously they'd had no need to. Now they had no choice. There was no place left on Earth for them to go.
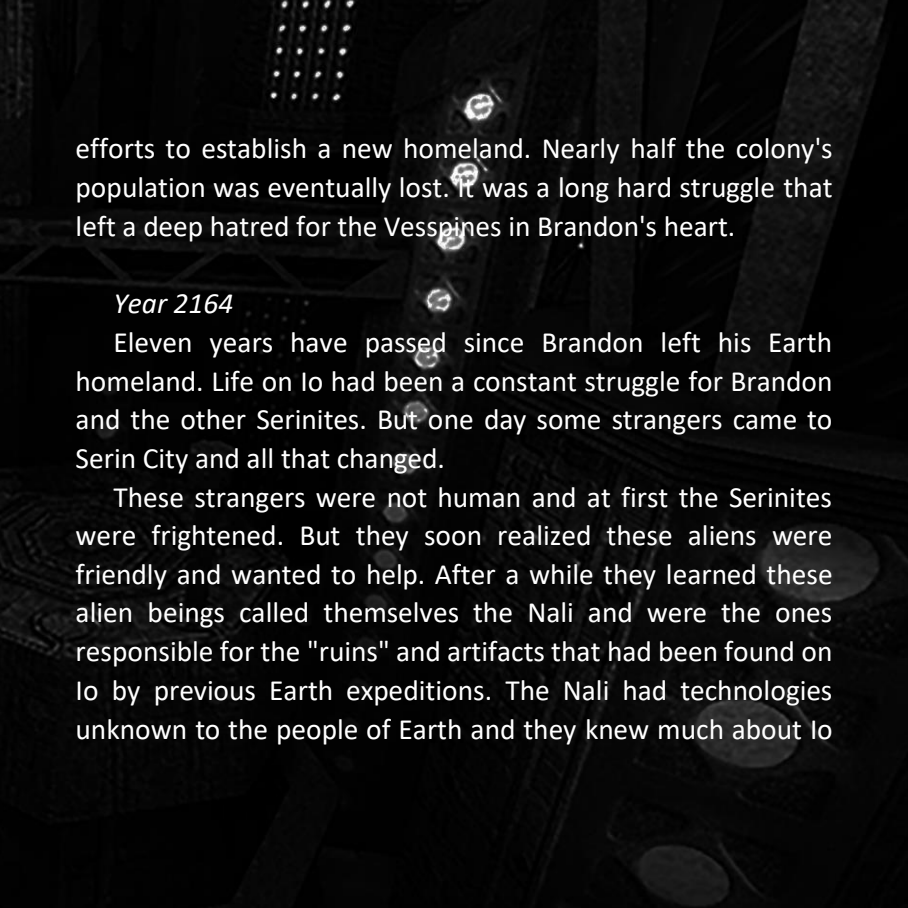
Some of Earth's neighboring planetary systems had, in fact, been visited by Earth explorers. Among them were Jupiter's moons. One of these moons in particular, Io, had been extensively explored by governments seeking new resources. To the world's surprise remnants of an alien race had been found there, including evidence that they had altered Io's atmosphere to make it more habitable. Where the aliens were now, no one knew. They appeared to have abandoned Io long ago. But because of the changes the aliens had made colonizing Io was now possible for Earth. However, the environment was still hostile and life on Io would have been extremely difficult for the

first colonists despite these changes, so the idea had been abandoned in the end.

But the Serinites, with little choice after the Vesspine invasion, made plans to move their home to Io. In a remote area of a rugged and barren mountain range the Serinites built a portal to Io and set up their first colony there, Serin City.

Brandon was thrown into a hostile and alien world, his familiar homeland torn from him. He was forced to grow up quickly in these difficult times. No one back on Earth knew where the Serinites had gone. No one cared. The Serinites were left with no outside help. On Io luxuries were non-existent. Equipment and medical supplies were limited. Food was scarce as the challenges of growing crops and livestock in a new environment had to be overcome. Accidents were frequent as new factories and mines were built. Brandon watched friends and loved ones, among many other Serinites, die in their valiant
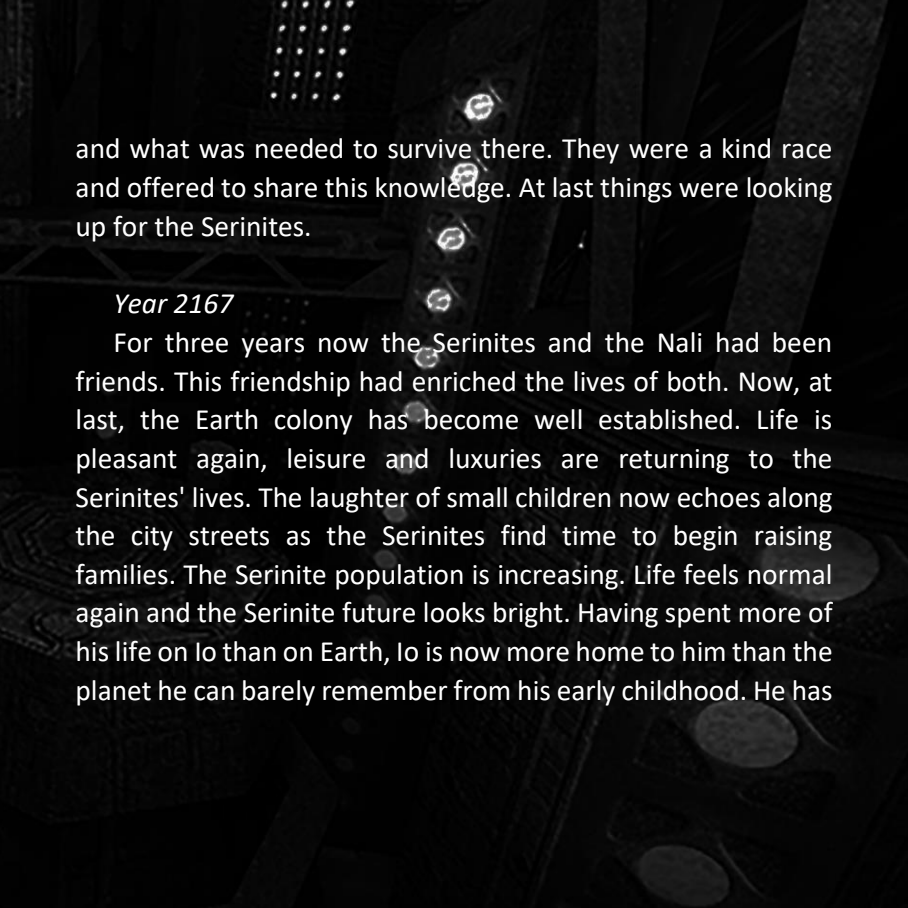
efforts to establish a new homeland. Nearly half the colony's population was eventually lost. It was a long hard struggle that left a deep hatred for the Vesspines in Brandon's heart.

Year 2164

Eleven years have passed since Brandon left his Earth homeland. Life on Io had been a constant struggle for Brandon and the other Serinites. But one day some strangers came to Serin City and all that changed.
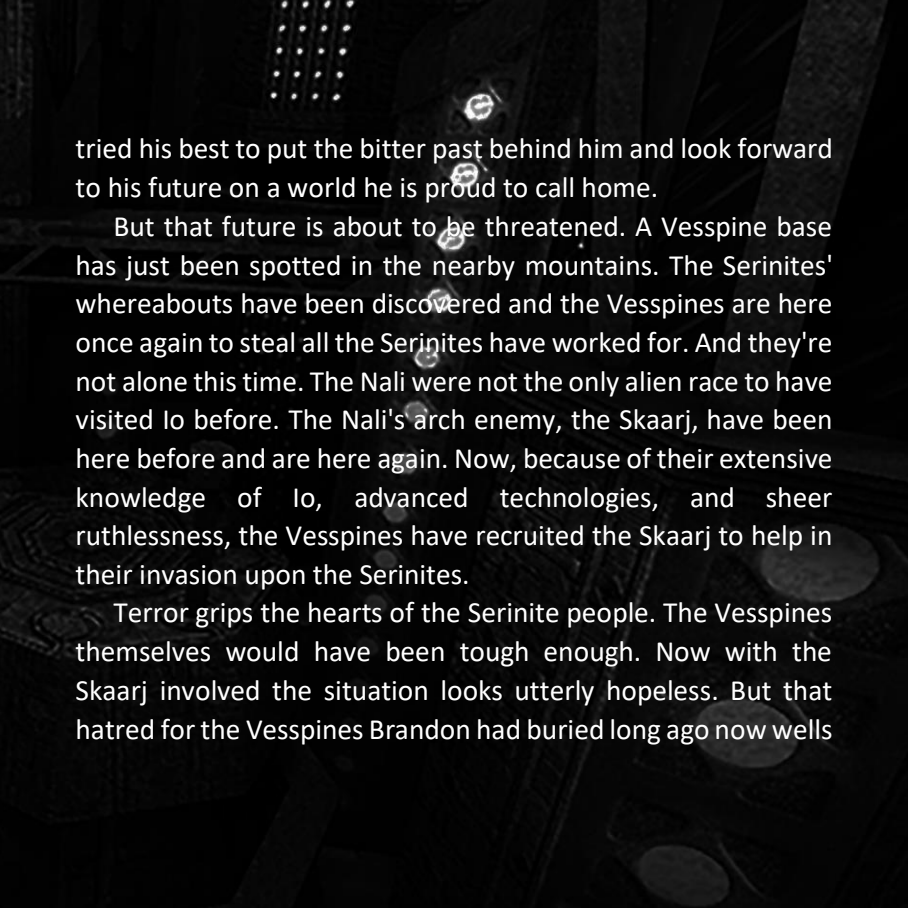
These strangers were not human and at first the Serinites were frightened. But they soon realized these aliens were friendly and wanted to help. After a while they learned these alien beings called themselves the Nali and were the ones responsible for the "ruins" and artifacts that had been found on Io by previous Earth expeditions. The Nali had technologies unknown to the people of Earth and they knew much about Io

and what was needed to survive there. They were a kind race and offered to share this knowledge. At last things were looking up for the Serinites.
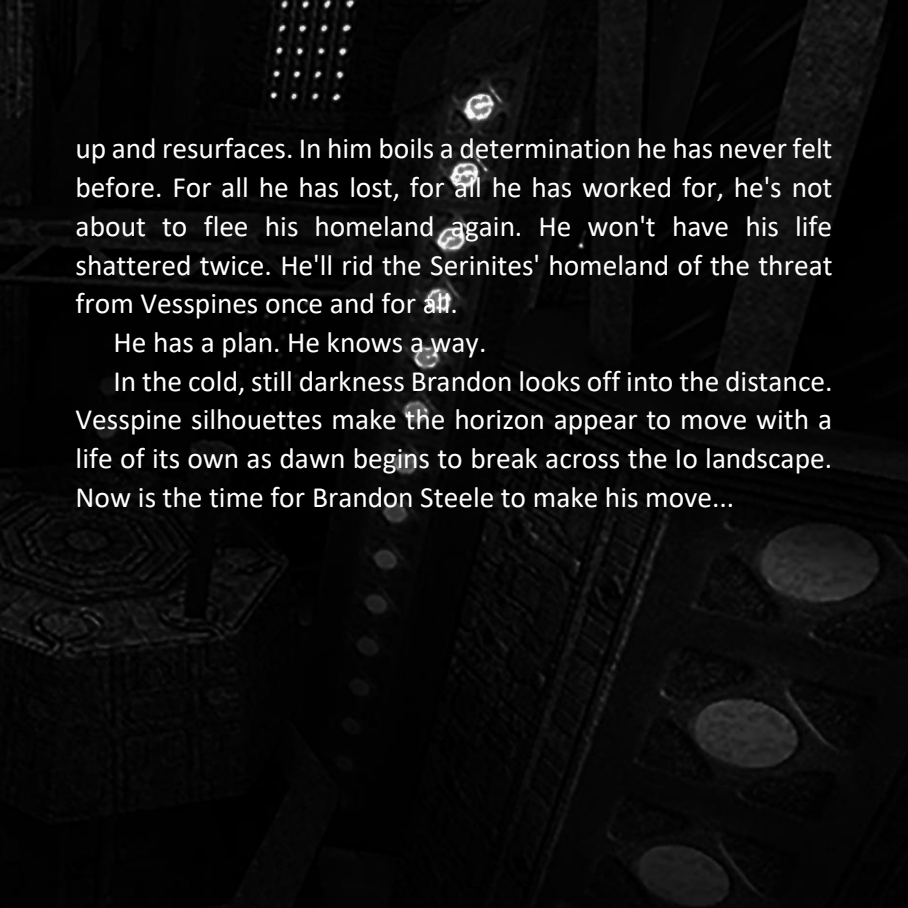
Year 2167

For three years now the Serinites and the Nali had been friends. This friendship had enriched the lives of both. Now, at last, the Earth colony has become well established. Life is pleasant again, leisure and luxuries are returning to the Serinites' lives. The laughter of small children now echoes along the city streets as the Serinites find time to begin raising families. The Serinite population is increasing. Life feels normal again and the Serinite future looks bright. Having spent more of his life on Io than on Earth, Io is now more home to him than the planet he can barely remember from his early childhood. He has

tried his best to put the bitter past behind him and look forward to his future on a world he is proud to call home.

But that future is about to be threatened. A Vesspine base has just been spotted in the nearby mountains. The Serinites' whereabouts have been discovered and the Vesspines are here once again to steal all the Serinites have worked for. And they're not alone this time. The Nali were not the only alien race to have visited Io before. The Nali's arch enemy, the Skaarj, have been here before and are here again. Now, because of their extensive knowledge of Io, advanced technologies, and sheer ruthlessness, the Vesspines have recruited the Skaarj to help in their invasion upon the Serinites.

Terror grips the hearts of the Serinite people. The Vesspines themselves would have been tough enough. Now with the Skaarj involved the situation looks utterly hopeless. But that hatred for the Vesspines Brandon had buried long ago now wells

up and resurfaces. In him boils a determination he has never felt before. For all he has lost, for all he has worked for, he's not about to flee his homeland again. He won't have his life shattered twice. He'll rid the Serinites' homeland of the threat from Vesspines once and for all.

He has a plan. He knows a way.

In the cold, still darkness Brandon looks off into the distance. Vesspine silhouettes make the horizon appear to move with a life of its own as dawn begins to break across the Io landscape. Now is the time for Brandon Steele to make his move...

NEW WEAPONS

Impact Hammer

Primary Fire: a quick, uncharged strike. Hold the button to release multiple strikes at the target at a rapid rate.

Secondary Fire: a charged attack

A tunneling tool used in mining and other industries, the Impact Hammer is a pneumatic crushing device capable of

pulverizing opponents every bit as easily as it shatters rock. It can be used in two ways: either hitting the target with repeated, rapid strikes or charging the device for a stronger single strike.

Shotgun

Primary Fire: A regular shot.
Secondary Fire: A more powerful double shot.

One of the most basic weapons ever, the trusty double-barreled shotgun is an easy to use and, as long as used from a short distance, very effective. Decent fire rate.

Quantum Acceleration Cannon

Primary Fire: A homing projectile that slows the enemy down

Secondary Fire: A damaging shot that causes the atomic particles of the target's body to heat up

The pinnacle of Terran engineering, this cannon wreaks absolute havoc in any target due to completely messing up their integrity on an atomic level. The enemies can be slowed down considerably, making stronger adversaries sitting ducks

completely vulnerable to Brandon's further attacks, however there is also an option to heat them up instead from within, even causing an explosion if enough damage is inflicted.

F3 Grenade Launcher

Primary Fire: shoots out a grenade
Secondary Fire: switches grenade types

This grenade launcher of Skaarj design can shoot out several types of grenades. The on-screen crosshair indicates which grenade will be launched:

The large yellow circle crosshair indicates a default grenade will be shot out: either exploding on contact with a live target, or automatically after some bouncing off of surfaces.

The red circle with three small dots indicates a trap grenade: it will explode only on contact with a live target. This can be used to set up traps for unsuspecting enemies, involving multiple grenades lying in wait, capable of tearing even the toughest enemies to shreds. Special caution needs to be observed so as not to walk in on one, as the grenades do not have a friend/foe

identification system. To them, Brandon is just another target to rip apart.

The three small circles indicate a mode in which grenades are automatically divided into small, explosive pieces before being shot out. This can be very effective against packs of small enemies.

The green biohazard symbol indicates usage of grenades filled with tarydium biosludge, a compound used also by the GES Bio Rifle.

Sniper Rifle

Primary fire: a standard shot
Secondary fire: activates the scope

This improved model of the Skaarj standard issue sniper rifle features a crosshair-equipped scope for maximum accuracy.

Minigun

Primary fire: a high-rate rain of bullets
Secondary fire: an even higher rate rain of bullets but with less accuracy

A classic design Terran minigun using the same type of ammunition as the automag pistols. It can turn targets into leaky, lifeless pieces of meat within seconds.

Dyatlov's Eightball Gun

Primary fire: launches a tactical nuclear missile at the target
Secondary fire: eschews the entire set of six barrels of the weapon which then launch all six available missiles before exploding as well.

Named after the Deputy Chief Engineer at the Chernobyl Power Plant, this repurposed Eightball Gun is much more dangerous than the standard-fare Stick of Six Fires. Now causing miniature nuclear explosions, its sheer destructive power has no match.

NEW ENEMIES

Vesspine Pirates

Human terrorists from the Vesspine Confederation, armed with the QA Cannon and a slew of cheesy one-liners. Shut them up with a well-aimed shotgun blast or a piece of their own QA medicine as soon as you see them.

Ravagers

Mature, predatory reptiles hunting in packs. Particularly dangerous if you threaten their young.

Dragonkin Krall

A subspecies of Krall significantly more resistant to fire and wielding lethal fire spells.

Lava Beasts

Titan shaped golems formed from magma. Upon being blown to bits, the pieces rise back as standalone smaller golems.

Skaarj Worshippers

Deadly Skaarj warriors capable of teleportation, casting rapid barrages of purple bolts and summoning creatures to their aid when wounded.

The Golden Blades

An elite squad of Skaarj warriors answering directly to the Overlord, Gal'Razik.

Captain Taylor

A high ranking soldier of the Confederation, Taylor is just as ruthless and amoral as he is deadly with his plasma-powered impulse rifle. He is the person that orchestrated the invasion on Seriate IV.

Gal'Razik

The Skaarj Overlord assigned by the Empire to ensure the success of the Vesspine invasion while maximizing tactical profits for the Empire. While Taylor is out for vengeance and profits, Gal'Razik's motivation is primarily to set up a foothold in the Sol System, in order to facilitate gaining ultimate dominance of the Empire in the region. A proud and cruel Skaarj through-n-through. His plasma bolts are deadly, his physical strength is unmatched and his personal shield makes him an invincible opponent.

NEW LEVELS

Escape from Vegra

The oldest colonist city on Seriate IV built by the first Earth settlers in 2148. Regular city with shops, bars, seedy motels, residential buildings. When the Pirates attack, Brandon must escape this city under siege. Burned out buildings, assault forces and more make this a formidable task.
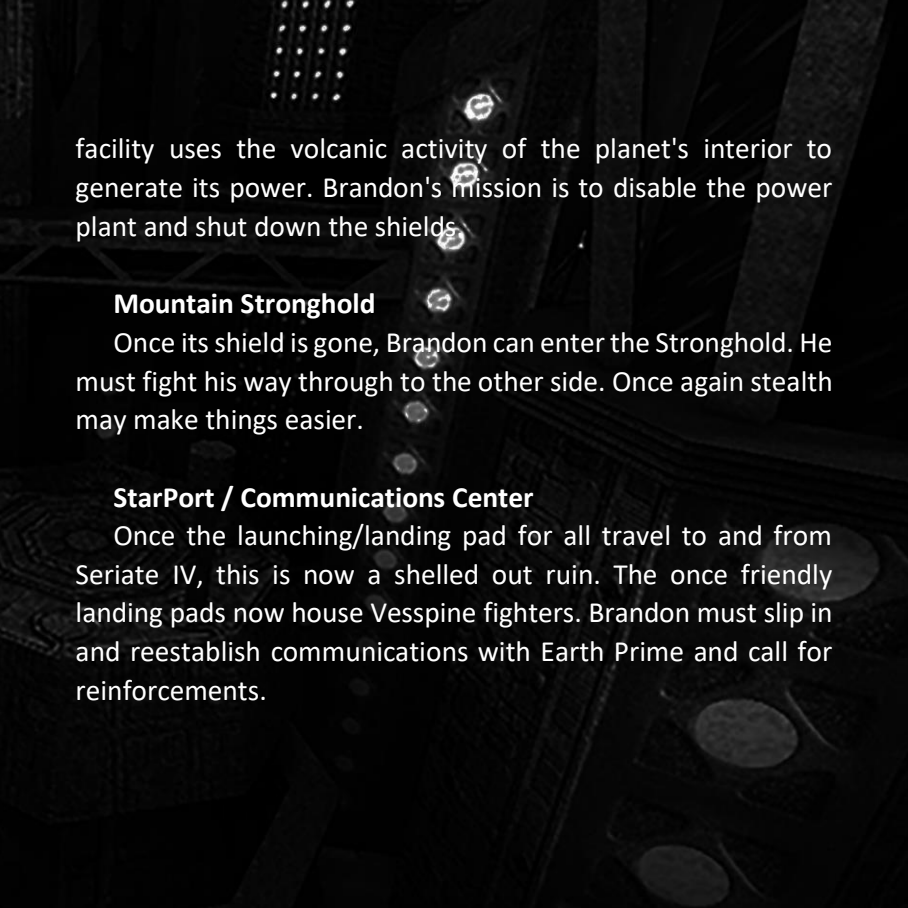
The Old Township

Outside Vegra, the oldest Nali town on the planet. Here Brandon must try and make contact with a quickly forming resistance movement. Stealth is very important since, once alerted to his presence, the Skaarj will stop at nothing to find him.

River Ruins

Outside the cities, these remnants are of an ancient Nali civilization. They are ancient underground ruins with rooms resembling tombs and ceremonial chambers. Barren red sand and rock desert above, cold and eerie below with a complex maze running along underground rivers and natural passageways. Once Brandon contacts the resistance, they lead him to their headquarters inside these ruins. However the Skaarj find them as well and he must fight his way out. He learns the Starport is located beyond the mountains. Unfortunately, a shielded stronghold lies between him and his ticket up to the ship of the invaders.

Lava Power Plant

Brandon learns that the Stronghold shield's energy source is from a power plant located deep within the mountain. This

facility uses the volcanic activity of the planet's interior to generate its power. Brandon's mission is to disable the power plant and shut down the shields.

Mountain Stronghold

Once its shield is gone, Brandon can enter the Stronghold. He must fight his way through to the other side. Once again stealth may make things easier.

StarPort / Communications Center

Once the launching/landing pad for all travel to and from Seriate IV, this is now a shelled out ruin. The once friendly landing pads now house Vesspine fighters. Brandon must slip in and reestablish communications with Earth Prime and call for reinforcements.

Planet Head

This is the main on-planet military base for the Vesspine terrorists. Brandon must slip in and stow away on a shuttle to the main ship. Stealth is a must.

The Jolly Roger

This is the main warship of the Vesspine Confederation and Skaarj Imperial Forces. Once on board, Brandon must reach engineering and switch the polarity on the reactors, blowing it sky-high. Once set, Brandon will have 10 minutes to find a way off of the ship.

CREDITS

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Crista Forest
Ryan Isenberg
Jim Semkiw
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Mikael Wahlberg
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Teque
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Yrex
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Special Thanks
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GamesHarder

Version 2.0
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Yrex

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Brandon Steele - Delacroix
Captain Taylor - SteadZ
Gal'Razik - Delacroix
Alvai - Regulus
Vesspines - Abel
Other Skaarj - Delacroix
TCA Central - Lisa

Female Nali (English) - Lisa
Female Nali (native) – Jigoku

COMMENTARY

1. Original Concept
2. Recruitment & Development
3. Reused Resources
4. A Word on the Nali
5. Timeline Notes
6. Closing Statement

(composed of portions by an unknown contributor, Steve Farrow, Crista Forest and T. Elliot Cannon)

(based on Emil Gustavsson's ending map from Spantobi)
(turned into personal standalone project called Spantobi after cancellation)
(based on ending map from Spantobi plus a portion of River Ruins)

ORIGINAL CONCEPT

[D] : What was Steele Dawn supposed to be? Why doesn't anybody in the Unreal community as it is now even remember Steele Dawn was a thing? That's a good question. Perhaps early on, upon choosing one's favorite game of choice and focusing on playing through its custom content, players tend to miss custom projects for other games most of the time. This is only natural, a person's attention can be stretched only so thin before one gives up and refocuses on things that really matter.
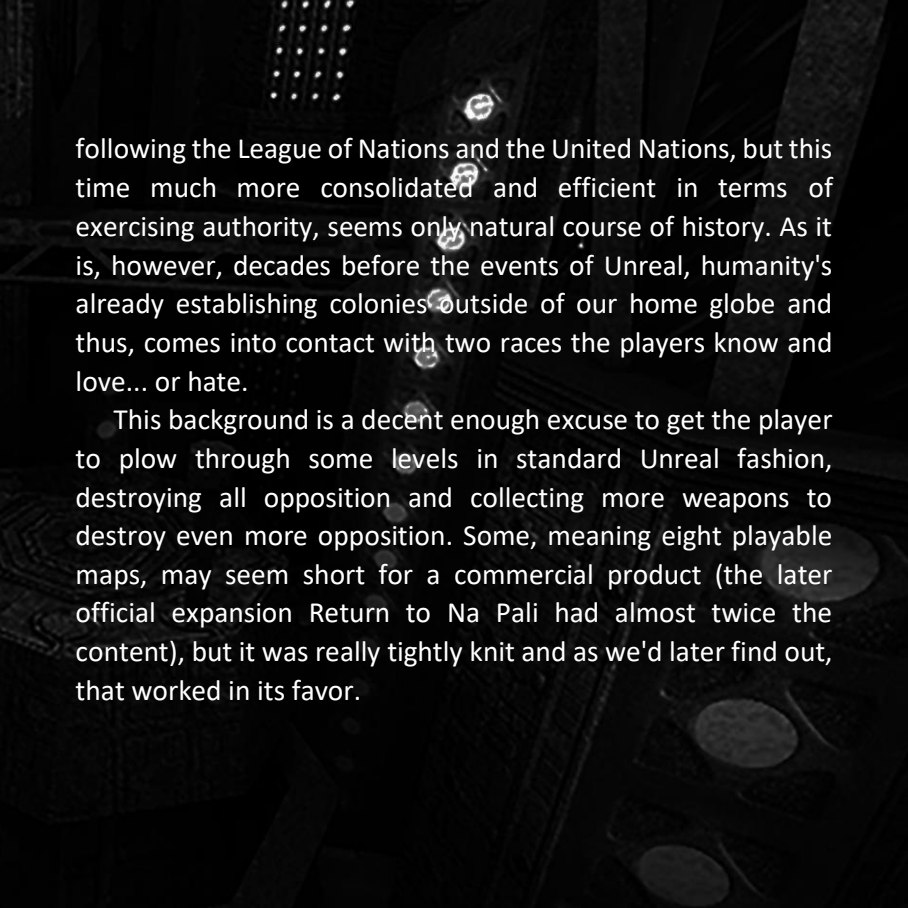
However, that tends to lead to confusion in some cases (why Atomic Pop's Panic 2 is titled that way when it's the only one for Unreal? Ah, the original was for Quake 2...) and fall into obscurity in other cases (Steele What? Level, huh? What did they ever make?), all the while missing the full picture.

And that is a genuine shame. Because, Level Infinity's legacy is indeed very impressive. In 1997, a year before Unreal's release, they were already active on the modding scene and the one release I've managed to track down as their team effort was a major one, a project for Duke Nukem 3D titled "Secrets of the Acropolis". A quick read through the Duke Nukem wiki leads to a number of matches already, Crista, Ryan, Neil, Nick and Jim who worked on Secrets all went back to take on this new Unreal project, Steele Dawn. Add some active Unreal modders on to that (Jeff Miner was an accomplished mapper and Jess Crable would later code the official expansion's backend) and it would seem we have a recipe for success.

Now, whether it was to be a commercial product or just a free release, that I am not sure. The way Leo(T.C.K.), the glorious fellow archivist and historian of the early years of the Unreal Engine, makes it look, listing it as one of the cancelled

expansions, strongly hints at a possible, but sadly abandoned commercial release. It certainly had the potential to become one and a successful one at that, not only because of the effort put into the product but also because back in that era it was much easier to commercially publish a licensed expansion (look no further than publications by Aztech New Media or WizardWorks) or even risk an unlicensed release (exhibit: Micro Star Software), so the possibility was indeed there, had it not been for the unfortunate cancellation.

The story concept for the mission pack falls neatly into the later canon of the Earth's nations being consolidated into the New Earth Government. The political unrest leads to the forming of new countries, including the ultra-pacifist Seriate and the antagonistic Vesspine group. Assuming that after a few decades this instability would've ended in the establishment of a third major global political body in the planet's history,

following the League of Nations and the United Nations, but this time much more consolidated and efficient in terms of exercising authority, seems only natural course of history. As it is, however, decades before the events of Unreal, humanity's already establishing colonies outside of our home globe and thus, comes into contact with two races the players know and love... or hate.

This background is a decent enough excuse to get the player to plow through some levels in standard Unreal fashion, destroying all opposition and collecting more weapons to destroy even more opposition. Some, meaning eight playable maps, may seem short for a commercial product (the later official expansion Return to Na Pali had almost twice the content), but it was really tightly knit and as we'd later find out, that worked in its favor.

However, be as it may, the campaign was silently cancelled. The Internet Archive's last snapshot of the Level Infinity webpage indicates that they were still actively developing the expansion and attempting to recruit more people. Perhaps, having failed at that, they silently cancelled the product and disbanded? At that point, over the course of 1998 and 1999, there was no shortage of Unreal content to play and new content was coming out practically on the daily, so the loss of one project didn't seem a major setback if you were going after new Unreal goodness to play.

To some of us, though, seeing such talented authors' work go to waste causes genuine heartache. Those were and still are some damn talented individuals and their work fully deserves to be experienced and appreciated. Even though our community has dwindled.

RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

[D] : To understand my mindset behind the decisions in terms of recruitment, one should first and foremost understand the specifics of working to restore and finalize an existing product as opposed to developing one's own from scratch. When deciding to deal with cancelled content, one has to balance a few key factors, them being:

- fidelity to original artistic vision of the now-absent creators,
- bug fixing and polishing the content,
- implementing quality of life improvements,
- creating new content to fill in the blanks or fulfill other purpose in regards of the project.

To deal with such an undertaking properly, one must first understand that while the first aspect takes priority, it isn't *absolute* and thus, other aspects shouldn't suffer from it. On the
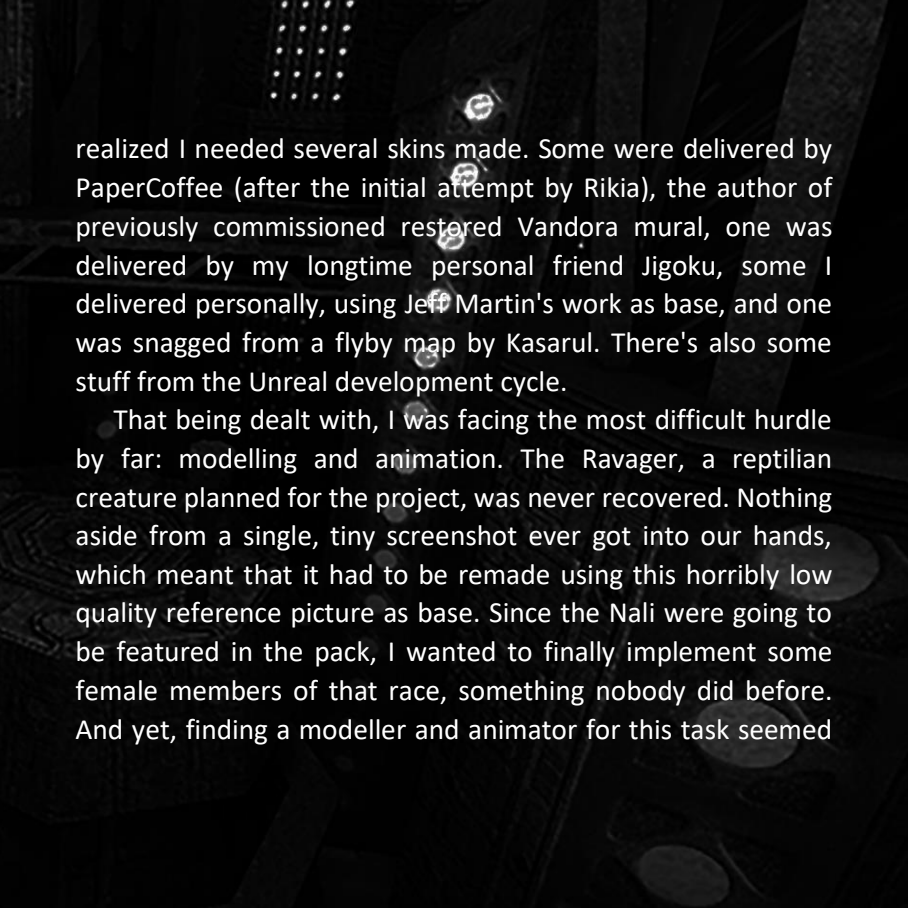
other hand, the same other aspects shouldn't be taken to extremes because this results in all but obliteration of the original vision.

This means that one central planner required to balance all of that needs to be present. Under normal circumstances, Leo(T.C.K.) who has recovered all of the Steele Dawn content and discussed the project at length with some of the original authors, would be the go-to person for that position. However, due to real-life commitments, he was unavailable. So why not Yrex? He streamed the whole cancelled content, showcasing it to the world for the first time in over two decades. He even fixed up a map where Leo couldn't. Why not him?

For whatever reason, he just didn't. Sure, he fixed the map, but on Leo's request. He streamed the maps. But that's where it ended... until I asked him to tweak that one map further. At that point, my reasoning was that given the messy state of the

recovery, the pack couldn't have been explored from start to finish. I was going to leave it at that after that and step back, for Leo to take over... except he then informed me of the fact that he cannot.
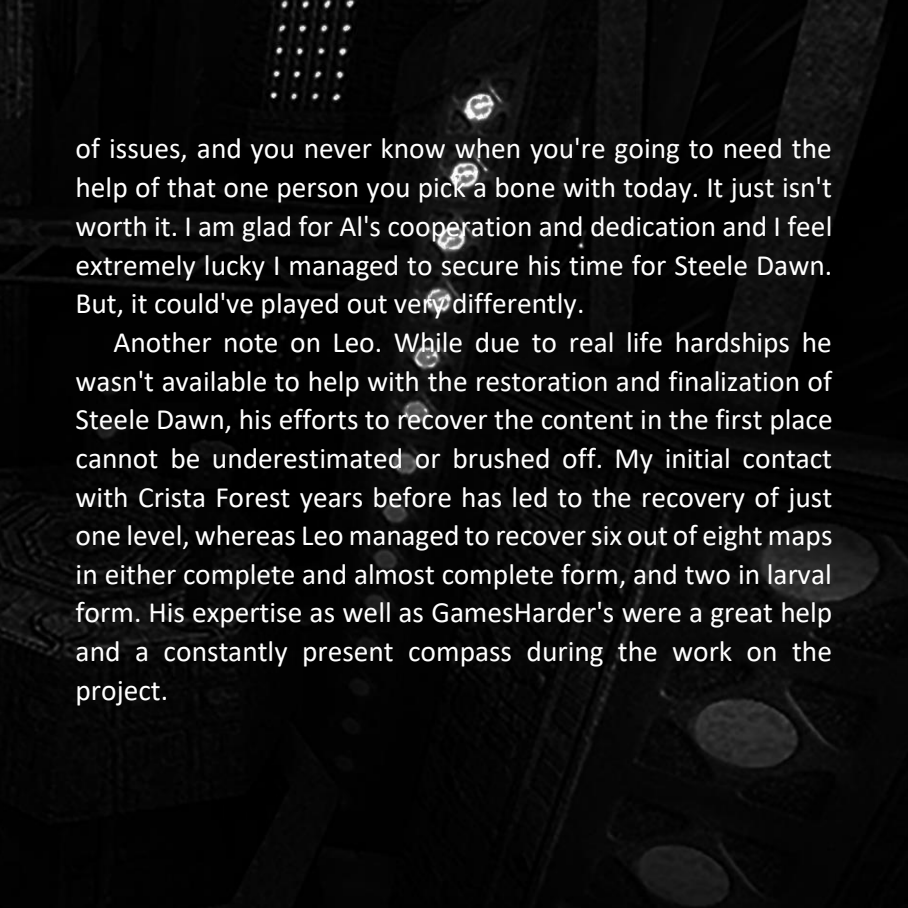
So that's when I decided to step up to the position of Project Lead. Having learned the hard way what not to do myself and what never to allow, I decided on maximum fidelity to original concepts, within reason, while taking into account some of the main hallmarks of the best of Unreal SP mapping projects. Within these limits, taking advantage of Yrex' momentum and his stellar work ethic (believe me, an almost constant weekly report with content delivered and not a single word of complaint marks what I consider absolutely stellar performance), I continued to issue task after task, focusing Yrex on working on the maps and code. With these two positions filled, as the project's scope gained much needed polish, I

realized I needed several skins made. Some were delivered by PaperCoffee (after the initial attempt by Rikia), the author of previously commissioned restored Vandora mural, one was delivered by my longtime personal friend Jigoku, some I delivered personally, using Jeff Martin's work as base, and one was snagged from a flyby map by Kasarul. There's also some stuff from the Unreal development cycle.

That being dealt with, I was facing the most difficult hurdle by far: modelling and animation. The Ravager, a reptilian creature planned for the project, was never recovered. Nothing aside from a single, tiny screenshot ever got into our hands, which meant that it had to be remade using this horribly low quality reference picture as base. Since the Nali were going to be featured in the pack, I wanted to finally implement some female members of that race, something nobody did before. And yet, finding a modeller and animator for this task seemed

daunting, even impossible. I approached two people first and unfortunately, was turned down. One person Leo suggested I ask, AlCapowned, was definitely capable and as it was to turn out later, to my luck, both available to help and willing to do so. Initially I had no hope of recruiting him for this. My unfortunate track record of mishandling multiple projects and personal disagreements on serious subjects have led to significant vitriol piling up - luckily, Al graciously agreed to set that aside and delivered both models in a very timely fashion, for which I am eternally grateful to both him and to Leo(T.C.K.) for recommending me to contact him. Let this however be a lesson to all who read this: gaming communities should be primarily used for gaming topics. If you see a serious real-life issue discussion brewing, perhaps it's prudent to remain quiet, especially if you're going to disagree. In today's extremely polarized society, serious arguments are to be had over plethora

of issues, and you never know when you're going to need the help of that one person you pick a bone with today. It just isn't worth it. I am glad for Al's cooperation and dedication and I feel extremely lucky I managed to secure his time for Steele Dawn. But, it could've played out very differently.

Another note on Leo. While due to real life hardships he wasn't available to help with the restoration and finalization of Steele Dawn, his efforts to recover the content in the first place cannot be underestimated or brushed off. My initial contact with Crista Forest years before has led to the recovery of just one level, whereas Leo managed to recover six out of eight maps in either complete and almost complete form, and two in larval form. His expertise as well as GamesHarder's were a great help and a constantly present compass during the work on the project.

That being said, I've had to make several creative decisions during the restoration process that were of my own vision and one of these was... casting voice actors for the lines spoken by the mission pack's character cast. Unlike Leo's project of restoration of Unreal PSX, also known as Rise of Jrath, which culled the concept of voice acting entirely despite evidence said voices were intended, I opted to have speech recorded even though there was no evidence it was intended. In my opinion, it was perfectly in line with how Unreal games and custom projects were shaping up to be. Had Steele Dawn been completed, it'd likely hit the shelves or the web in late 1999 or early 2000. That would have it compete with Return to Na Pali (having voiced portions of Prisoner 849 among others), Unreal PSX had it seen the light of day as intended (planned for 2000), or custom mapping projects of the early 2000s, Xidia: The Escape and Operation Na Pali. Having voice acting in seemed like

a natural course of action for a project that was meant to show up when VO in a game or a mod was all the rage.

There weren't a lot of roles to fill, given the compact size of the expansion and the story as I have written it based on what Level Infinity left behind. I've created two main antagonists for the project, Lord Gal'Razik of the Skaarj Empire and Captain Taylor of the Vesspine Confederation. On top of that, there was naturally the protagonist Brandon Steele, a civilian colonist and a Nali resistance soldier by the name of Alvai. The Vesspine terrorists also needed some chatter and there were a couple more singular lines that needed an assignment of their own. This doesn't seem a whole lot and yet it has proven a genuine challenge, up to the point I seriously considered cancelling the feature altogether. My initial picks for Brandon and Taylor did not deliver. Brandon's intended VA didn't even properly commit and Taylor's initial VA had a hardware issue that was going on

for long enough that I realized I need to either choose against voice acting overall or try reassigning the role. Ultimately, however, all has worked in Steele Dawn's favor.

The first role recorded was that of Gal'Razik's. I recorded that personally, extensively modifying the end result in Audacity so that it wouldn't sound like me any longer, but rather like someone quite a lot more terrifying. Ultimately, I also recorded Brandon's lines, this time without any modification, resulting in two different voices, hopefully different enough to not destroy the suspension of disbelief. SteadZ was kind enough to try working with me once again, voicing the part of Captain Taylor. His accent, British instead of the intended Australian (like the original VA choice), actually works in Taylor's favor, making him stand out of the cast significantly. The remaining roles were distributed among my longtime trusted friends who, aside from one, have little online presence in the gaming community, so if

anything, you'll likely maybe know just one. Regulus voices the Nali, Abel took upon himself to handle the Vesspine chatter and Regulus' Mom, Lisa, agreed to speak on behalf of the TCA in the ending. That was quite the journey to bring them all to the table and I think the result is worth it. Hopefully, you'll agree with me.

A trash-talking protagonist with a personality, which Brandon has become during project development seems very out of line when compared to the Prisoner 849 from the base game, who was given a voice in Return to Na Pali, but even still, stuck to intermission journals. I was warned by Mister Prophet that Brandon in his current iteration will no doubt divide the opinions within our community, not unlike Operative 046, the infamous ONPGuy. Although I intended to portray him with better acting skill than 046 was voiced by his voice actor, I think that this comparison made by Prophet indeed still stands. However, taking the risk that Brandon's voice or mannerisms

may divide, I still went ahead with it, to respect Level Infinity's legacy. All of their previous projects were for Build Engine games which featured trash-talking protagonists. So, while Brandon sticks out like a sore thumb when compared to 849, he definitely could shake hands with Lo Wang for instance. And to me, that is more than good enough. Thanks to this, at least to me, this feels more like a Level Infinity game.

However, let's go back to Yrex for a little bit. Aside from his tasks as the coder and mapper for this restoration project, he also gave it an unique flair as the musician. His tracks, reminding me of a cross between neon-retro-futurism and the Amiga demoscene, are an unique feature meant for players using the community patch 227 or UT99 patch 469 by the talented folks at OldUnreal. While the entire pack can be experienced on Unreal version 225 (Leo's personal request to me which I decided to honor), it's really meant to be played on 227, that's

the long and short. Not only there are much better visual effects, but also the vast majority of the soundtrack is replaced by Yrex' handiwork.

So, there you have it. Yrex, the true powerhouse thanks to whom you're enjoying this project, but also AlCapowned, PaperCoffee, Regulus and Lisa, Abel, SteadZ and yours truly, we are the main contributors to the community restoration of this expansion... however, it couldn't have been done without Leo(T.C.K.)'s and GamesHarder's initial research and most importantly, the expansion wouldn't exist now without the groundwork done by the Level Infinity team.

I, for one, would like to bow deeply in appreciation for the talent of all involved. I wouldn't be able to do this without you.

The actual development process was actually quite stable and things progressed at a regular pace. Yrex uses 227 as his
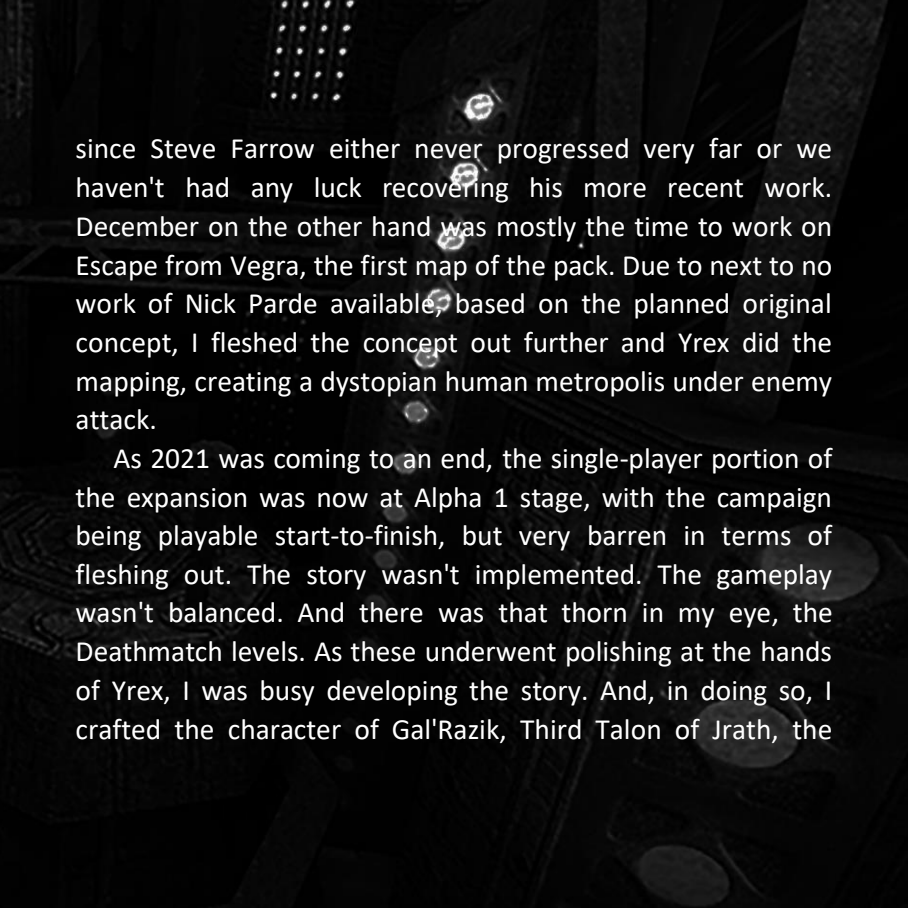
platform of choice and thus his workflow is much easier than of someone that is confined to the limitations of UnrealEd version 1.

The initial recovery took place on May 15, 2021. From that point, Leo has received a couple more archives and managed to port the codebase to 225. Around that time, on July 8, I became interested in the project and started asking questions about it. At that point, it was mere curiosity. On August 17, Yrex has made the initial brush recovery fixes. However, September 17 marks the date of the true start of the restoration project. The initial tasks Yrex completed for the project were: joining the segments of Starport into one map and restoring Jolly Roger to its complete form using Emil Gustavsson's personal rendition Spantobi as base for the content missing from JR. Further fixes to some of the levels followed and the codebase was next. We reused the Worshipper boss from the currently halted Episodes

project. Kudos to Bleeder<NL> for the original work on this, by the way. While Yrex was finalizing the basic construction of Starport, Planet Head and River Ruins, I set out to prepare a skin variant for Taylor as well as glyphs for the intended puzzle mechanism.
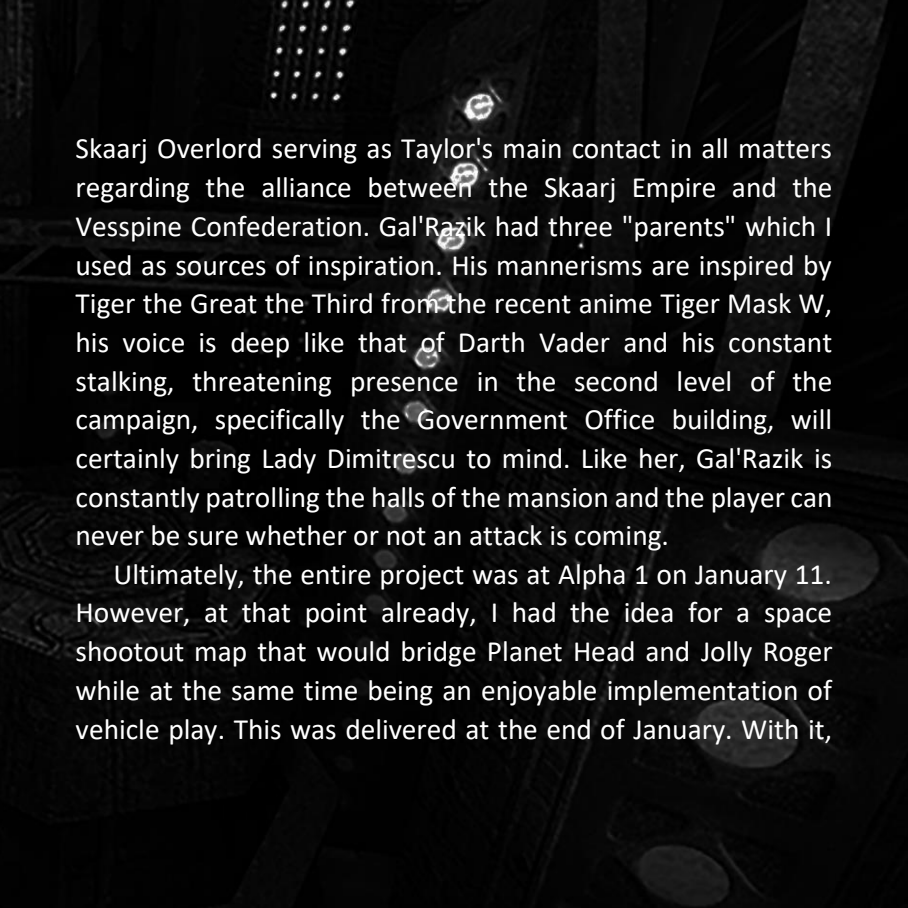
As October was coming to an end, Leo pointed out that there were some differences in the earlier versions of the original recovered maps... and I don't mean a larger degree of incompleteness that comes with the territory. No, there was actual stuff cut during map development, even if miniscule. After a couple hints from Leo and my own examination after that, these items were all restored. That involved Vegra, River Ruins, Lava Plant, Mountain Stronghold, Jolly Roger and the DM map Facility.

At the very end of November, Yrex sent me the very first version of his take on Old Township. This map had a lot missing,

since Steve Farrow either never progressed very far or we haven't had any luck recovering his more recent work. December on the other hand was mostly the time to work on Escape from Vegra, the first map of the pack. Due to next to no work of Nick Parde available, based on the planned original concept, I fleshed the concept out further and Yrex did the mapping, creating a dystopian human metropolis under enemy attack.

As 2021 was coming to an end, the single-player portion of the expansion was now at Alpha 1 stage, with the campaign being playable start-to-finish, but very barren in terms of fleshing out. The story wasn't implemented. The gameplay wasn't balanced. And there was that thorn in my eye, the Deathmatch levels. As these underwent polishing at the hands of Yrex, I was busy developing the story. And, in doing so, I crafted the character of Gal'Razik, Third Talon of Jrath, the

Skaarj Overlord serving as Taylor's main contact in all matters regarding the alliance between the Skaarj Empire and the Vesspine Confederation. Gal'Razik had three "parents" which I used as sources of inspiration. His mannerisms are inspired by Tiger the Great the Third from the recent anime Tiger Mask W, his voice is deep like that of Darth Vader and his constant stalking, threatening presence in the second level of the campaign, specifically the Government Office building, will certainly bring Lady Dimitrescu to mind. Like her, Gal'Razik is constantly patrolling the halls of the mansion and the player can never be sure whether or not an attack is coming.

Ultimately, the entire project was at Alpha 1 on January 11. However, at that point already, I had the idea for a space shootout map that would bridge Planet Head and Jolly Roger while at the same time being an enjoyable implementation of vehicle play. This was delivered at the end of January. With it,
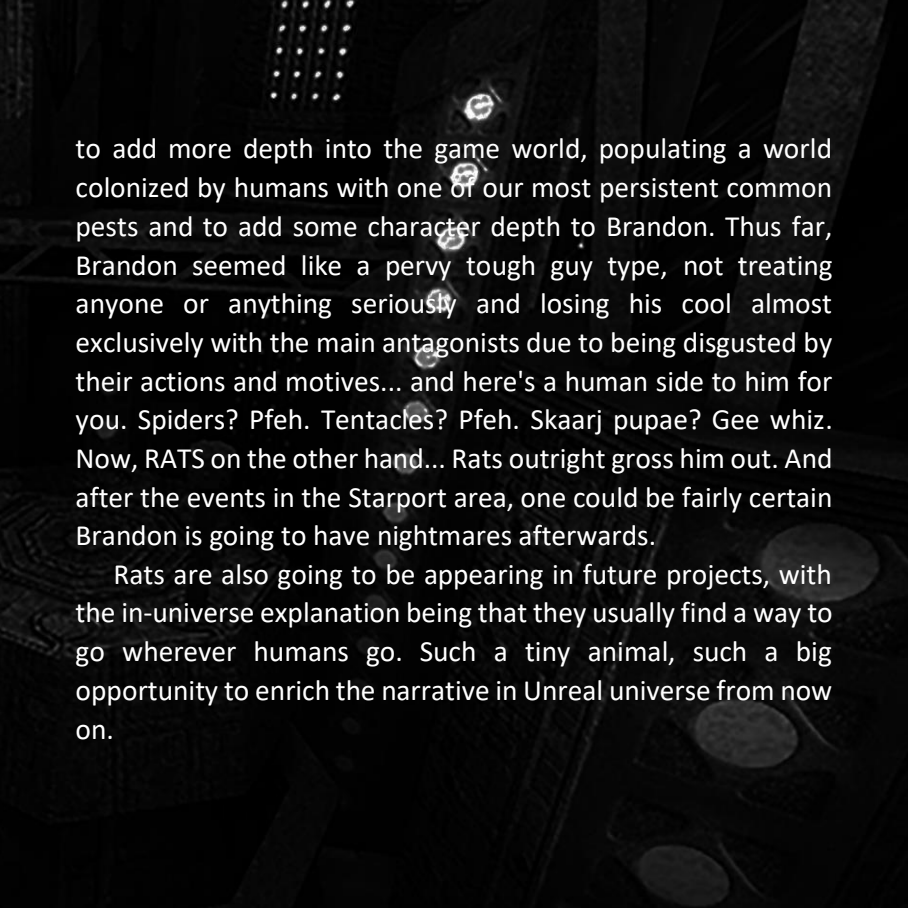
Yrex hopefully managed to set the golden standard for vehicle play in Unreal SP packs. In my opinion - he definitely did.

Overall, February has turned out to be the month of the most fervent crunch. Gameplay balance was more properly implemented, Yrex has made an intro cutscene and the ending was now finished as well. The voices have all been recorded and AlCapowned delivered the two fully animated models needed for the project. I crafted the avatars for the voice-over events and a large part of Yrex' musical portfolio was selected to become the soundtrack on the 227 platform.

Ultimately, in March, the remaining bugs were finally dealt with and the storyline was fully implemented. While I left that to Yrex, I realized that one thing was missing and that was the inconsistency of the setting according to the story (Io, the moon of Jupiter) and the skybox throughout the campaign. With a nearby planet this big, the skybox never showed that. So, I
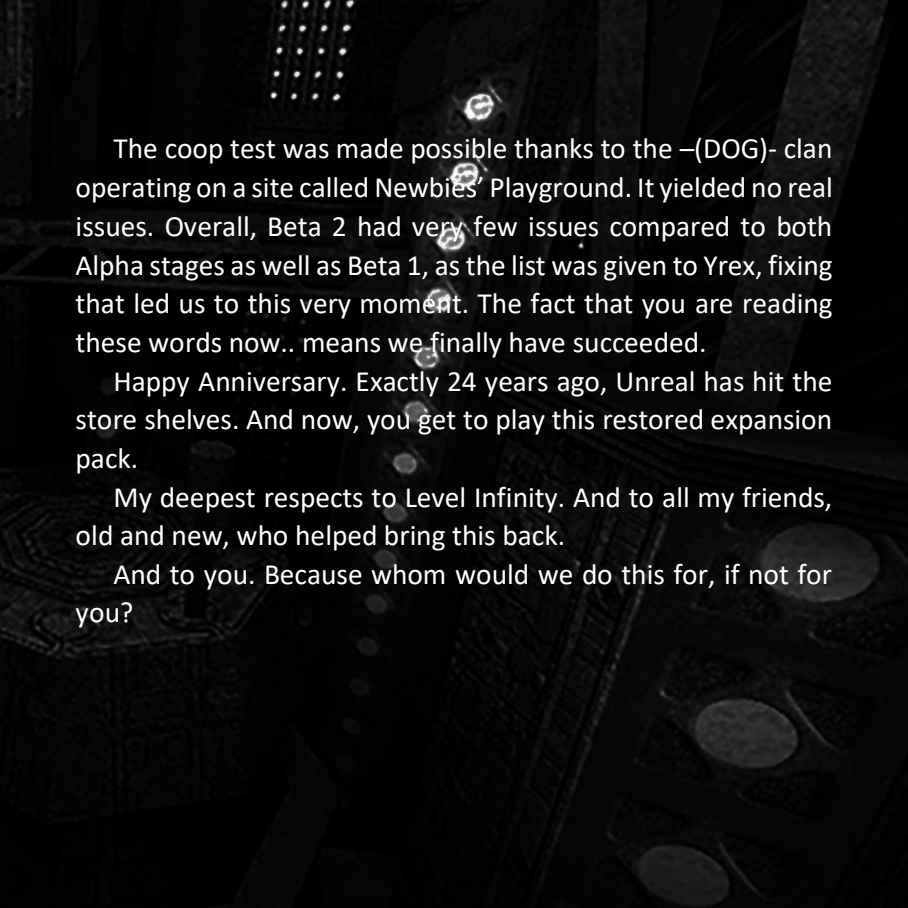
contacted SteadZ for help on the matter and he delivered swiftly. Huge thanks for that, as it allowed us to avoid breaking so very important immersion. Jigoku, who helped co-author Gal'Razik's skin before, voiced the native quips for the female Nali. Finally, all the bits and pieces that were missing prior, and lack of which only became jarring after the most serious issues no longer stopped us from seeing them, could be fixed.

April was the month of the most fervent beta testing. Here, I would like to give my deepest thanks to Aspide, SteadZ and Mr. Prophet. Their test playthroughs and subsequent feedback was paramount to fixing many of the expansion's still present bugs, including compatibility with UT99. Yrex has applied most of the fixes throughout the month, ultimately ending the process on May 9th. Meanwhile I managed to find another resource for implementation: the regular, terran common rats as presented in the Wheel of Time. This small addition served two purposes:

to add more depth into the game world, populating a world colonized by humans with one of our most persistent common pests and to add some character depth to Brandon. Thus far, Brandon seemed like a pervy tough guy type, not treating anyone or anything seriously and losing his cool almost exclusively with the main antagonists due to being disgusted by their actions and motives... and here's a human side to him for you. Spiders? Pfeh. Tentacles? Pfeh. Skaarj pupae? Gee whiz. Now, RATS on the other hand... Rats outright gross him out. And after the events in the Starport area, one could be fairly certain Brandon is going to have nightmares afterwards.

Rats are also going to be appearing in future projects, with the in-universe explanation being that they usually find a way to go wherever humans go. Such a tiny animal, such a big opportunity to enrich the narrative in Unreal universe from now on.

The coop test was made possible thanks to the –(DOG)- clan operating on a site called Newbies' Playground. It yielded no real issues. Overall, Beta 2 had very few issues compared to both Alpha stages as well as Beta 1, as the list was given to Yrex, fixing that led us to this very moment. The fact that you are reading these words now.. means we finally have succeeded.

Happy Anniversary. Exactly 24 years ago, Unreal has hit the store shelves. And now, you get to play this restored expansion pack.

My deepest respects to Level Infinity. And to all my friends, old and new, who helped bring this back.

And to you. Because whom would we do this for, if not for you?

MAP COMMENTARY

Introduction (by Yrex)
Using work of Nick Parde and Emil Gustavsson.

[D] : As the primary heavy-duty work on restoration and finalization of the expansion was essentially complete, I asked Yrex to deliver a short intro cutscene so that the player knows why all of a sudden Brandon wakes up in that bed and in the middle of a warzone. I crafted the concept behind it so that the player feels at least a faint sense of attachment to Vegra, which was a place where Brandon lives and works. It also paints the picture of a mixed society, with Terrans and Nali living as neighbors. Betcha that four-armed bartender heard plenty stories from Brandon as the guy spent his evenings there, drinking more than one beer. :-)

Escape from Vegra (by Yrex)
Using work of Nick Parde and Crista Forest.

[D] : Ah, the first map of the campaign proper. We never got to recover it at all save for a larval-state beginning by Nick Parde. So, based on the description, I asked Yrex to craft a seedy, futuristic metropolis under enemy attack and I gave him almost free reign over the level, asking only that the basic features from the short description make an appearance. Yrex really came through, with but one thing missing: a setting in which he'd meet one of the two main antagonists and masterminds behind the attack on Vegra: the Vesspine Confederation terrorist, Captain of the Jolly Roger starship, Taylor. Aiming to feature the Level Infinity mappers' work in the pack, we implemented Crista Forest's deathmatch map Flux as the arena for this climax. Being

an industrial setting, it is meant to represent the place Brandon was trying to make a living in, before everything went to hell.
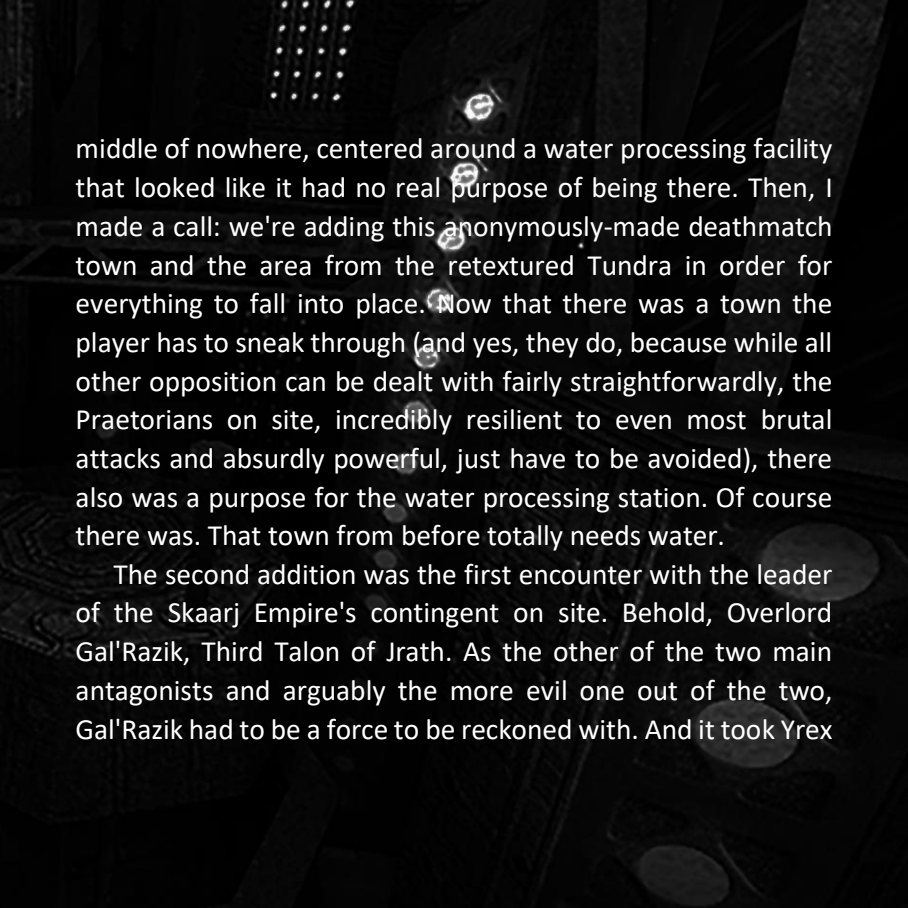
Old Township (by Yrex)

Using work of an unknown contributor (previously believed to be Eric Boltjes, but he denied having made the level at all), Elliot Cannon, Crista Forest and Steve Farrow.

[D] : This level by Yrex contains a lot more content from other mappers and there was a lot of filling-in and maintenance required than in the case of Vegra. The initial recovered level skeleton comes from Steve Farrow, author of such work as Liberation of Na Pali Episode 1, however it was a very raw outdoor layout with a couple buildings and no real town part so it would've required significant work in order to meet the original concept's demands. Initially Yrex fleshed out only the

Farrow portion, turning the buildings into proper places for exploration and giving them specific purposes: rudimentary living quarters, water purification and processing station, religious structure and... that would be it, if not for my idea to include Crista Forest's Mansion deathmatch level as a place with two simple puzzles, hiding a secret that directs the player to the next level. It was simple and it got the job done, however it has to be admitted that Yrex, being the terrain master that he is (on top of being an accomplished mapper overall), really made a beautiful level out of it.
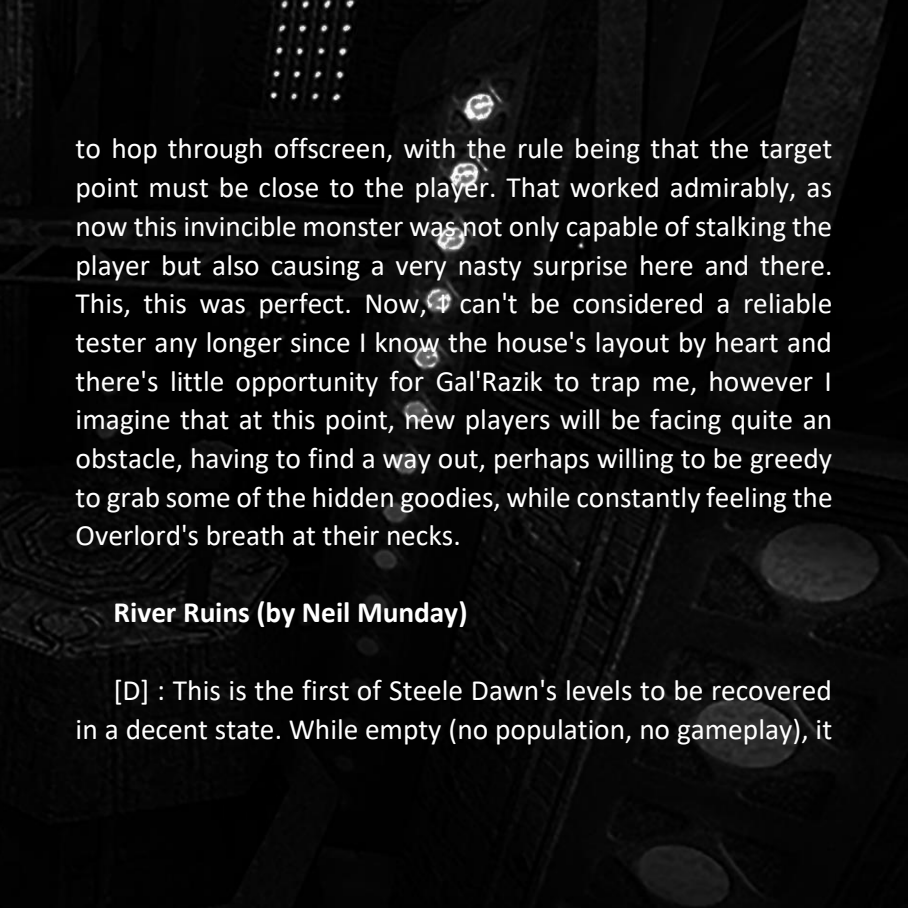
However, at that point, it was clear that something was still missing. We had a really unfinished Deathmatch level with a Nali town aesthetic lying around, and that fantastic unique retexture of Tundra by Crista Forest... and then it dawned on me. For an "Old Township", Farrow's level just wouldn't do. It wasn't a town at all. If anything, it was essentially a couple buildings in the

middle of nowhere, centered around a water processing facility that looked like it had no real purpose of being there. Then, I made a call: we're adding this anonymously-made deathmatch town and the area from the retextured Tundra in order for everything to fall into place. Now that there was a town the player has to sneak through (and yes, they do, because while all other opposition can be dealt with fairly straightforwardly, the Praetorians on site, incredibly resilient to even most brutal attacks and absurdly powerful, just have to be avoided), there also was a purpose for the water processing station. Of course there was. That town from before totally needs water.

The second addition was the first encounter with the leader of the Skaarj Empire's contingent on site. Behold, Overlord Gal'Razik, Third Talon of Jrath. As the other of the two main antagonists and arguably the more evil one out of the two, Gal'Razik had to be a force to be reckoned with. And it took Yrex
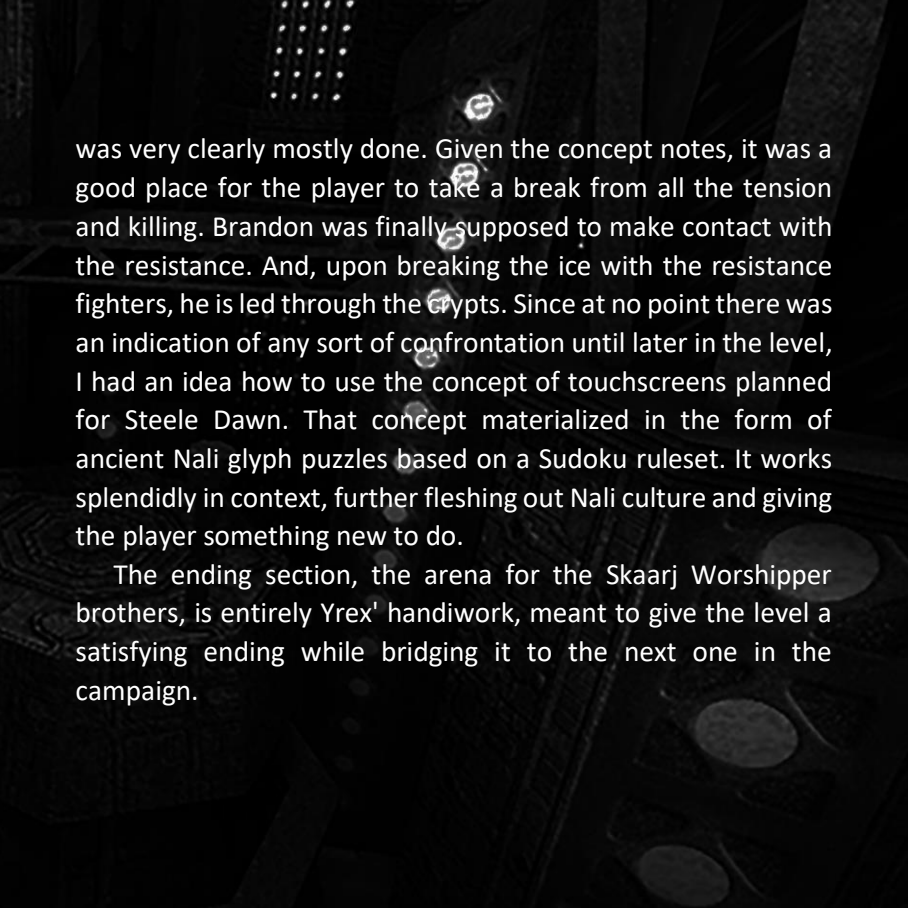
several tries to get this right, seeing as apparently, I've been requiring something seemingly impossible for the engine. Gal'Razik was supposed to be invulnerable, incredibly powerful in terms of both physical attacks and projectiles, slowly but deliberately *walking* towards the player and ruthlessly stalking his prey through the halls of the mansion, not letting up for a single second. This was supposed to be comparable to the Resident Evil games, in which antagonists such as Mr. X, the Nemesis or Tall Boo-- err, Lady Dimitrescu were constantly pursuing the players, giving them little chance to rest and collect their thoughts. And that, that was the hardest part. The way Yrex explained this to me, in order to properly patrol an area, the AI is supposed to have enough space... and let's be frank, Crista's Mansion is horribly cramped. No matter what Yrex did, Gal'Razik just wouldn't follow Brandon after losing sight of him for a few seconds. Then, I had an idea. Add points for Gal'Razik

to hop through offscreen, with the rule being that the target point must be close to the player. That worked admirably, as now this invincible monster was not only capable of stalking the player but also causing a very nasty surprise here and there. This, this was perfect. Now, I can't be considered a reliable tester any longer since I know the house's layout by heart and there's little opportunity for Gal'Razik to trap me, however I imagine that at this point, new players will be facing quite an obstacle, having to find a way out, perhaps willing to be greedy to grab some of the hidden goodies, while constantly feeling the Overlord's breath at their necks.

River Ruins (by Neil Munday)

[D] : This is the first of Steele Dawn's levels to be recovered in a decent state. While empty (no population, no gameplay), it
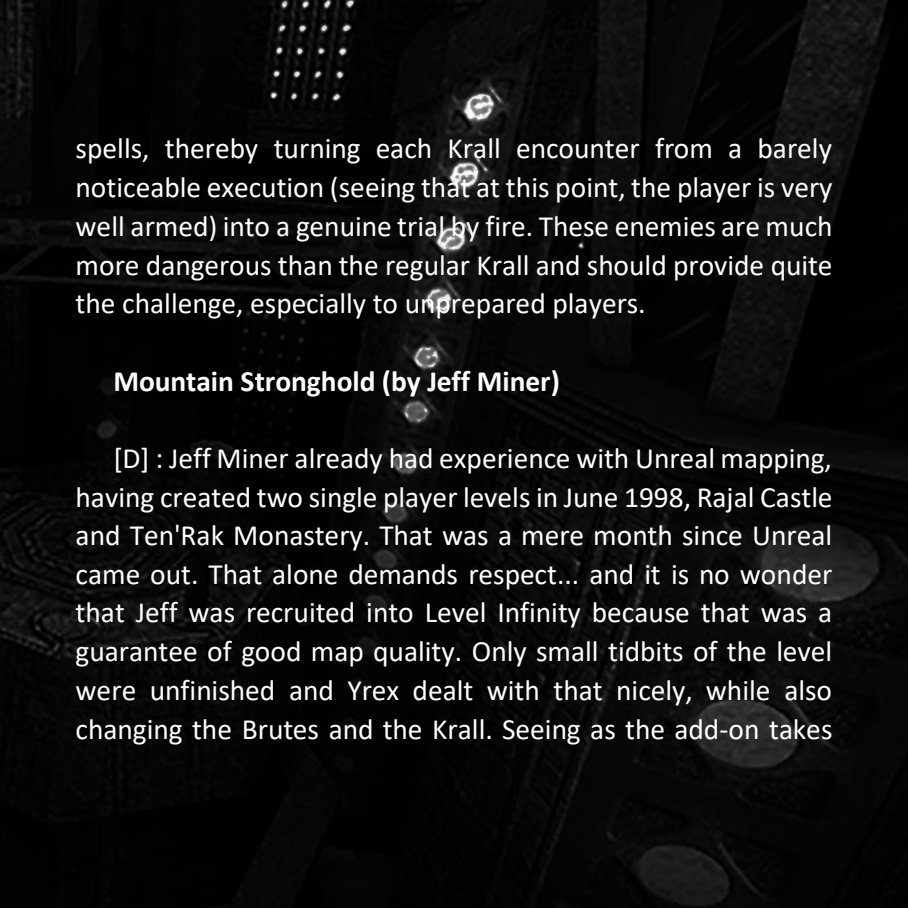
was very clearly mostly done. Given the concept notes, it was a good place for the player to take a break from all the tension and killing. Brandon was finally supposed to make contact with the resistance. And, upon breaking the ice with the resistance fighters, he is led through the crypts. Since at no point there was an indication of any sort of confrontation until later in the level, I had an idea how to use the concept of touchscreens planned for Steele Dawn. That concept materialized in the form of ancient Nali glyph puzzles based on a Sudoku ruleset. It works splendidly in context, further fleshing out Nali culture and giving the player something new to do.

The ending section, the arena for the Skaarj Worshipper brothers, is entirely Yrex' handiwork, meant to give the level a satisfying ending while bridging it to the next one in the campaign.
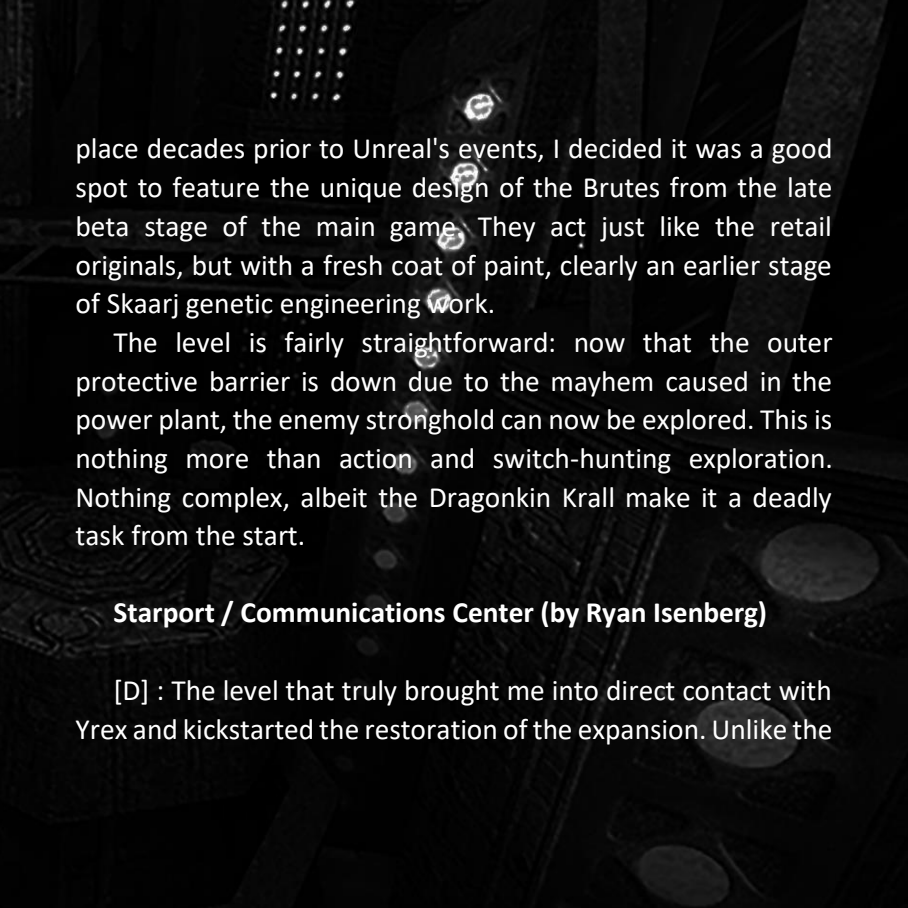
Lava Power Plant (by Crista Forest)

[D] : This fourth level of the campaign was recovered first (and way before the main recovery of the add-on itself, a decade ago) and was largely complete from start to finish. Yrex had to flesh out just some quirks, restore some minor cut elements and implement some of the new baddies. The Skaarj pupae were replaced by a completely different pest altogether, the Lava Beasts were implemented for two encounters and the Ravager makes another appearance. This was however a good chance to implement a concept of my own, namely completely replace the regular Krall featured here and in the next level with a subspecies way more fitting to the specifics of this location. The skins come from a little-known flyby level called Malus Keep by Kasarul and feature green, more-or-less armored, draconic Krall. On my request, Yrex gave them the ability to cast dangerous fire

spells, thereby turning each Krall encounter from a barely noticeable execution (seeing that at this point, the player is very well armed) into a genuine trial by fire. These enemies are much more dangerous than the regular Krall and should provide quite the challenge, especially to unprepared players.

Mountain Stronghold (by Jeff Miner)

[D] : Jeff Miner already had experience with Unreal mapping, having created two single player levels in June 1998, Rajal Castle and Ten'Rak Monastery. That was a mere month since Unreal came out. That alone demands respect... and it is no wonder that Jeff was recruited into Level Infinity because that was a guarantee of good map quality. Only small tidbits of the level were unfinished and Yrex dealt with that nicely, while also changing the Brutes and the Krall. Seeing as the add-on takes
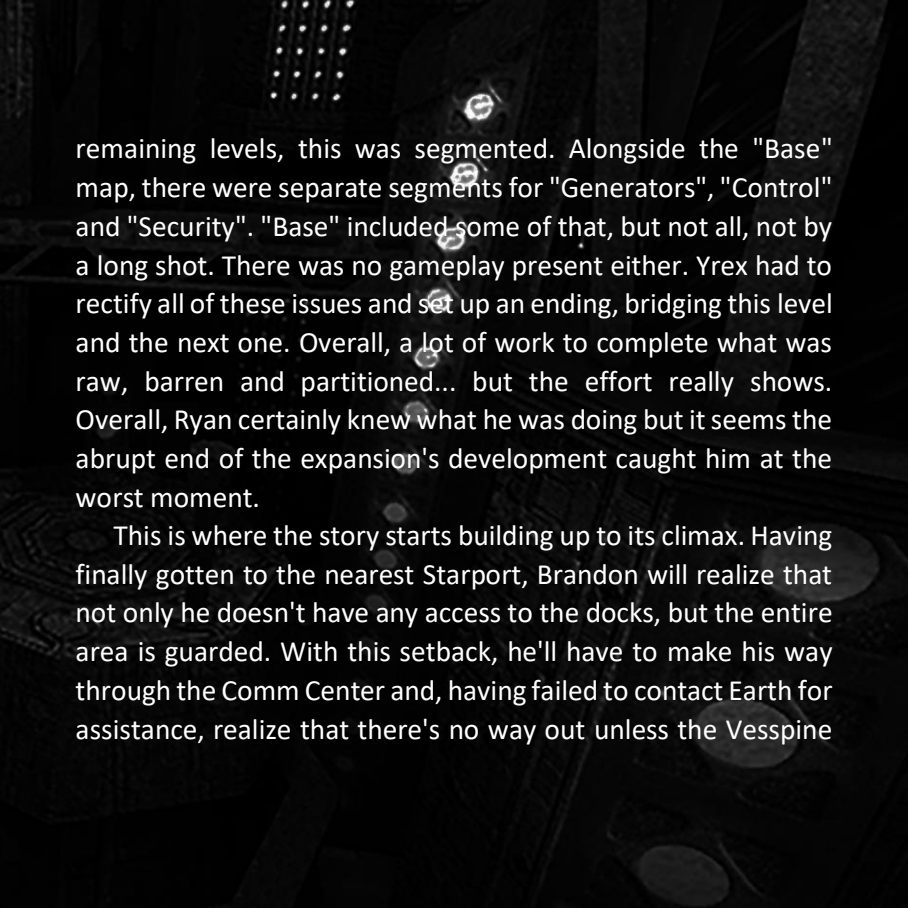
place decades prior to Unreal's events, I decided it was a good spot to feature the unique design of the Brutes from the late beta stage of the main game. They act just like the retail originals, but with a fresh coat of paint, clearly an earlier stage of Skaarj genetic engineering work.

The level is fairly straightforward: now that the outer protective barrier is down due to the mayhem caused in the power plant, the enemy stronghold can now be explored. This is nothing more than action and switch-hunting exploration. Nothing complex, albeit the Dragonkin Krall make it a deadly task from the start.

Starport / Communications Center (by Ryan Isenberg)

[D] : The level that truly brought me into direct contact with Yrex and kickstarted the restoration of the expansion. Unlike the

remaining levels, this was segmented. Alongside the "Base" map, there were separate segments for "Generators", "Control" and "Security". "Base" included some of that, but not all, not by a long shot. There was no gameplay present either. Yrex had to rectify all of these issues and set up an ending, bridging this level and the next one. Overall, a lot of work to complete what was raw, barren and partitioned... but the effort really shows. Overall, Ryan certainly knew what he was doing but it seems the abrupt end of the expansion's development caught him at the worst moment.

This is where the story starts building up to its climax. Having finally gotten to the nearest Starport, Brandon will realize that not only he doesn't have any access to the docks, but the entire area is guarded. With this setback, he'll have to make his way through the Comm Center and, having failed to contact Earth for assistance, realize that there's no way out unless the Vesspine

Confederation forces are dealt with. Thus, his next objective is their nearest outpost.
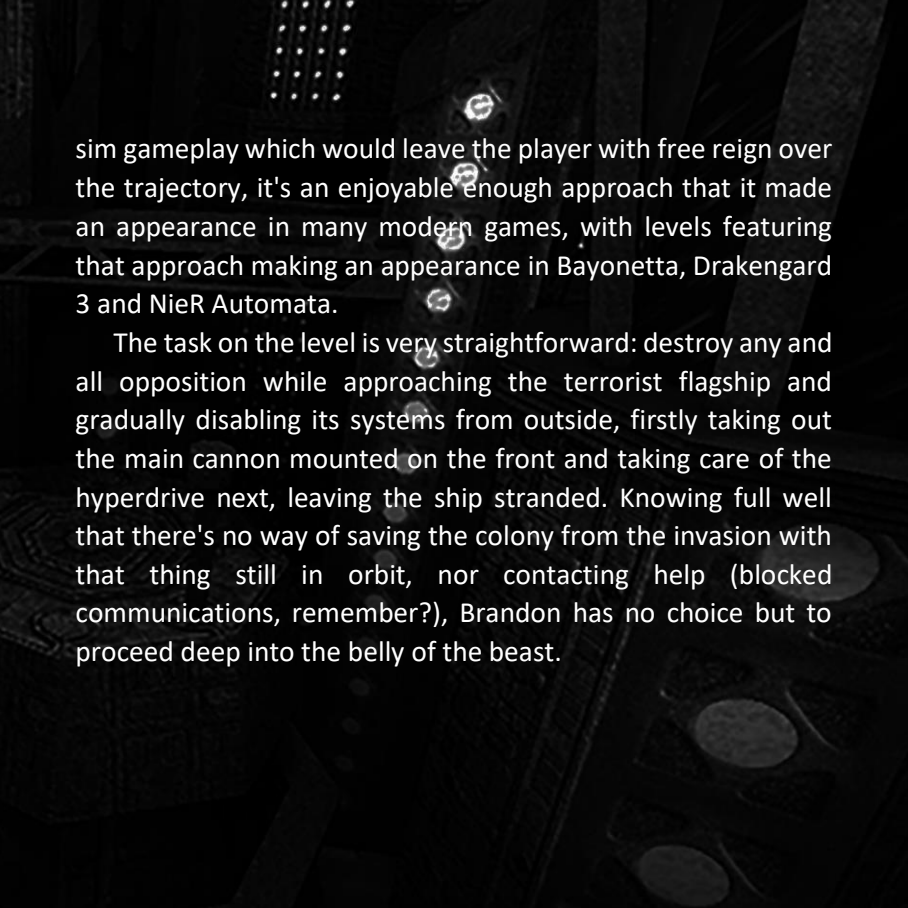
Planet Head (by Jim Semkiw)

[D] : The outpost of the terrorists was recovered in its entirety, save for a proper connection with the previous level, but it turned out to be very barren. Jim certainly had the patience to work with the editor, but like Neil and Ryan before him, he just didn't have the time to implement any gameplay. Yrex rectified all of that admirably.

The base is the last location on Io's surface that Brandon goes through. In there, he finally finds a way off the moon. The terrorists (with scant assistance from their Skaarj "allies") don't plan to make it easy for him to leave, though.

Orbital Fray (by Yrex)
Using work of Emil Gustavsson

[D] : This very level right here was my personal idea, a way to perfectly bridge the ending of Planet Head and the start of Jolly Roger, the vessel commanded by Captain Taylor. At its core, it's the ending map of Spantobi: Unexpected Threat (which was a standalone personal release of reworked Jolly Roger after the pack's cancellation), featuring the outside of the ship. I saw it as an opportunity to hopefully implement a proper golden standard of aerial combat. The gameplay at its core is that of a rail shooter with the ability to dodge attacks rather than having to shoot down every projectile, giving the player ample opportunities to attack enemies and dodge their shots while not worrying at all about the trajectory, with everything else being scripted. While not as demanding and complicated as a space-
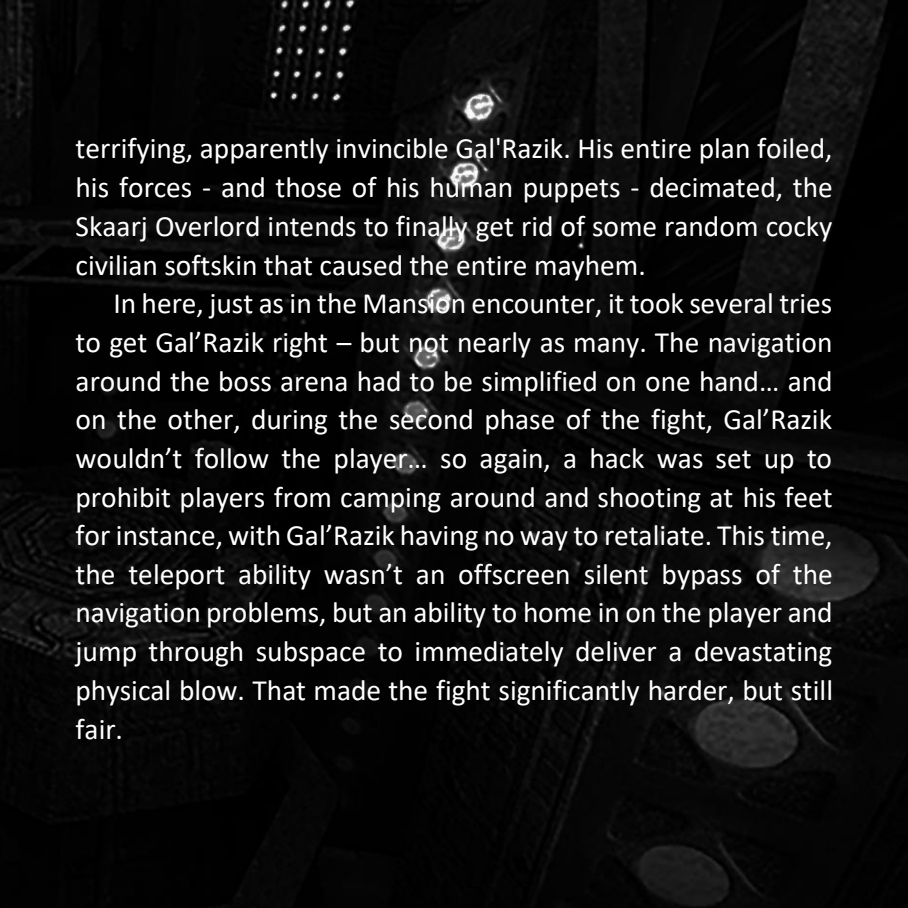
sim gameplay which would leave the player with free reign over the trajectory, it's an enjoyable enough approach that it made an appearance in many modern games, with levels featuring that approach making an appearance in Bayonetta, Drakengard 3 and NieR Automata.

The task on the level is very straightforward: destroy any and all opposition while approaching the terrorist flagship and gradually disabling its systems from outside, firstly taking out the main cannon mounted on the front and taking care of the hyperdrive next, leaving the ship stranded. Knowing full well that there's no way of saving the colony from the invasion with that thing still in orbit, nor contacting help (blocked communications, remember?), Brandon has no choice but to proceed deep into the belly of the beast.

The Jolly Roger (by Emil Gustavsson)

[D] : This is the last hurrah, the final level of the Steele Dawn expansion, later reworked by the author and released as standalone under the name of "Spantobi: Unexpected Threat". While any missing geometry and detailing were ported by Yrex into the original, its original texturing was kept (or restored) wherever possible, very early into the restoration project. As we were nearing completion of our work, I realized that we were missing some pieces to mesh well with the now-written story... and so, the docking bay was largely expanded and an entire sequence implemented on both floors. On the bottom, where the player first appears, the aim is to now kill all the enemies sent to get rid of the intruder and topside, after getting the player to plow through the entire vessel - while finally finding and killing the villainous Taylor - awaits a rematch with the

terrifying, apparently invincible Gal'Razik. His entire plan foiled, his forces - and those of his human puppets - decimated, the Skaarj Overlord intends to finally get rid of some random cocky civilian softskin that caused the entire mayhem.
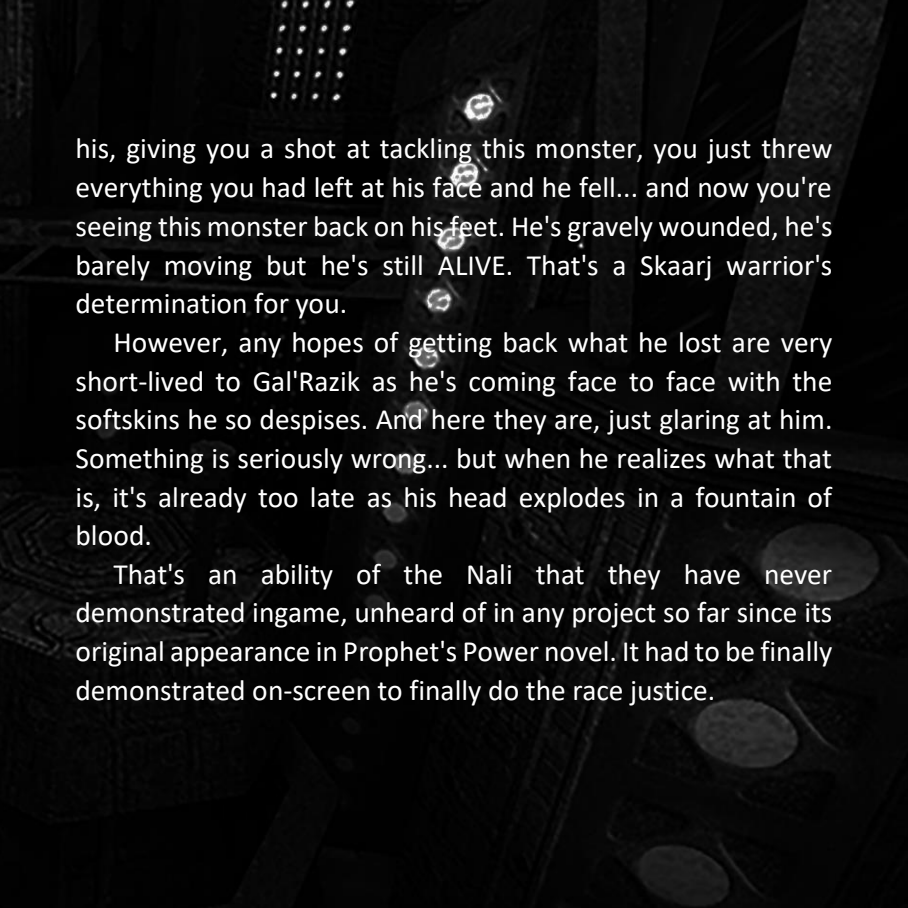
In here, just as in the Mansion encounter, it took several tries to get Gal'Razik right – but not nearly as many. The navigation around the boss arena had to be simplified on one hand… and on the other, during the second phase of the fight, Gal'Razik wouldn't follow the player… so again, a hack was set up to prohibit players from camping around and shooting at his feet for instance, with Gal'Razik having no way to retaliate. This time, the teleport ability wasn't an offscreen silent bypass of the navigation problems, but an ability to home in on the player and jump through subspace to immediately deliver a devastating physical blow. That made the fight significantly harder, but still fair.

The Ending (by Yrex)
Using work of Emil Gustavsson and Neil Munday

[D] : The ending cutscene was initially taken straight from Spantobi. Emil's cutscene involved a small vessel going in the direction of the globe right before the ending. And that was kept, now with the addition of dialogue between Brandon and the institution directly responsible for providing assistance to Terran colonies at large, the Terran Colonial Authority. After that, new stuff follows, firstly credits rolling, then a post-credits scene set in River Ruins, demonstrating how the cruel, ruthless Gal'Razik finally gets his just desserts.

This scene was, at least to me personally, crucial to implement. First off, I wanted to demonstrate Gal'Razik's sheer endurance and will to live. Think about it - you had sheer dumb luck that a Nali managed to disable that damn personal shield of

his, giving you a shot at tackling this monster, you just threw everything you had left at his face and he fell... and now you're seeing this monster back on his feet. He's gravely wounded, he's barely moving but he's still ALIVE. That's a Skaarj warrior's determination for you.

However, any hopes of getting back what he lost are very short-lived to Gal'Razik as he's coming face to face with the softskins he so despises. And here they are, just glaring at him. Something is seriously wrong... but when he realizes what that is, it's already too late as his head explodes in a fountain of blood.

That's an ability of the Nali that they have never demonstrated ingame, unheard of in any project so far since its original appearance in Prophet's Power novel. It had to be finally demonstrated on-screen to finally do the race justice.

Yrex really came through with this cutscene. It's the perfect ending for the project IMO. Brandon called for help for the colony and the aggressors are all dead, even if the Vesspine Confederation and the Skaarj Empire still exist out there, invasion of Seriate IV has turned out to be a failure giving their victims a much-needed ray of hope.

The DM Maps (by Various Authors)

[D] : Two main DM levels were 100% planned for the expansion. These being Michael Wahlberg's 'Facility' and the anonymous, erroneously attributed to Eric Boltjes, 'Town'. Leo is of the opinion that Crista Forest's Flux was initially planned for Steele Dawn as well, however while I'm not so certain of that, as time has shown, I chose to include it anyway. Joe Wilcox, also known as Dr. SIN has developed a level of his own, called

"Shoots and Ladders". That being said, giving the expansion an extensive array of Deathmatch levels seemed like the natural course of action, so there's quite a bit more, all of them listed below.

DM-SD-CosmicSmackArena by Steve Farrow

[D] : A previously standalone level from Farrow's modest but nice mapping portfolio, Cosmic Smack Arena is a Skaarj-themed large location with a decent flow. The expansion's new weapons have been included to set it apart from the original.

DM-SD-Facility by Michael Wahlberg

[D] : An original DM arena developed specifically for Steele Dawn, the current version includes also the area cut from the early versions of the map, as well as the expansion's weaponry.

DM-SD-Flux by Crista Forest

[D] : A previously standalone level allegedly developed with Steele Dawn in mind anyway, this version has the new toys meant for the expansion... and it's also implemented as the final portion of Vegra the player explores.

DM-SD-GrooveMachine by Steve Farrow

[D] : Another previously standalone level from Farrow's mapping portfolio. An industrial location very similar to Wilcox' 'Shoots and Ladders', therefore fitting well into the pack. As before, SD weapons were a must and thus have been implemented.

DM-SD-Mansion by Crista Forest

[D] : The original version of the Mansion before its transformation into the final portion of Old Township. This version offers SD weapons unlike the original.
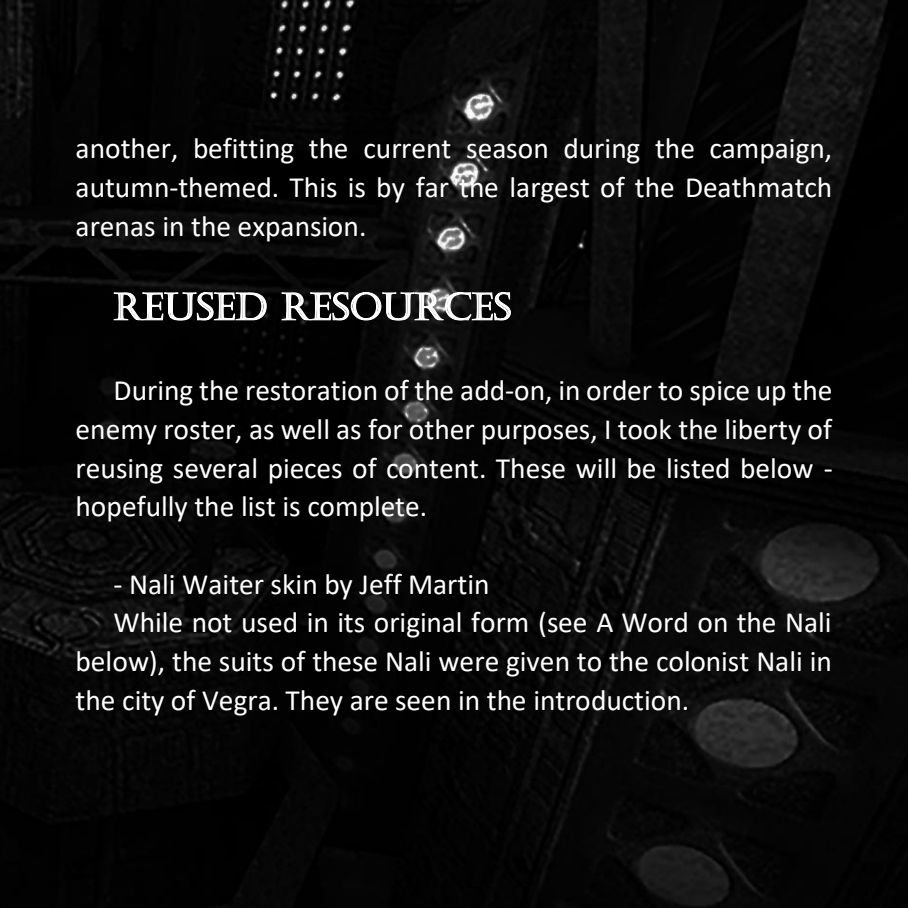
DM-SD-ShootsLadders by Joe Wilcox

[D] : This little level by Joe, then known as Dr. SiN was a testing ground for their ladder mechanic planned for the add-on. While the mechanic itself was scrapped and recoded from scratch by Yrex (as well as the level layout being fully finalized), we decided to keep the level in.

DM-SD-Town by Yrex

Using work of an unknown contributor (previously believed to be Eric Boltjes, but he denied having made the level at all), Elliot Cannon and Crista Forest.

[D] : This large-scale level set in a SkyTown-themed setting is an amalgamation of several items fleshed out into a level that works splendidly both on its own as a deathmatch arena and as the introductory portion of Old Township in the single player campaign. Initially, there were two separate started layouts, very barren (and one with a bright, winter-themed terrain setting), ergo I had asked Yrex to combine them into a single level. However, there was one more thing left behind that was a significantly cut-down version of Elliot Cannon's Tundra, as retextured by Crista Forest. That was attached to the level as well, upon restoration of the cut-off bits from the original Tundra. This level comes in two variants, one winter-themed,
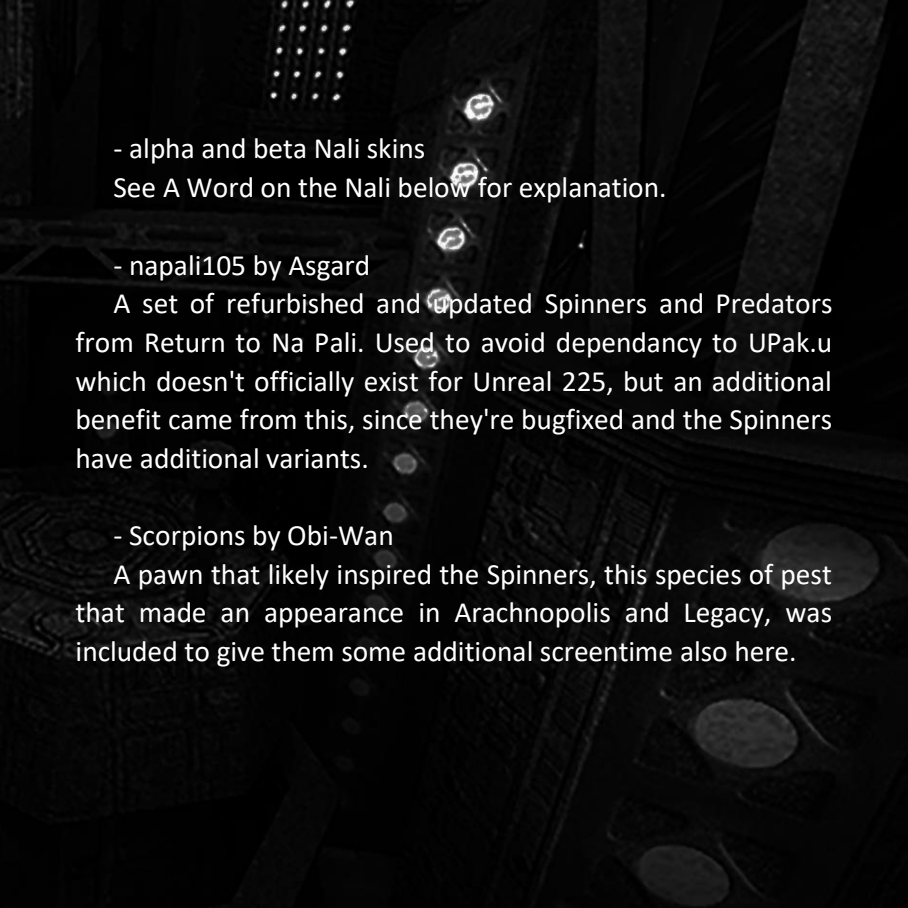
another, befitting the current season during the campaign, autumn-themed. This is by far the largest of the Deathmatch arenas in the expansion.

REUSED RESOURCES

During the restoration of the add-on, in order to spice up the enemy roster, as well as for other purposes, I took the liberty of reusing several pieces of content. These will be listed below - hopefully the list is complete.

- Nali Waiter skin by Jeff Martin
While not used in its original form (see A Word on the Nali below), the suits of these Nali were given to the colonist Nali in the city of Vegra. They are seen in the introduction.
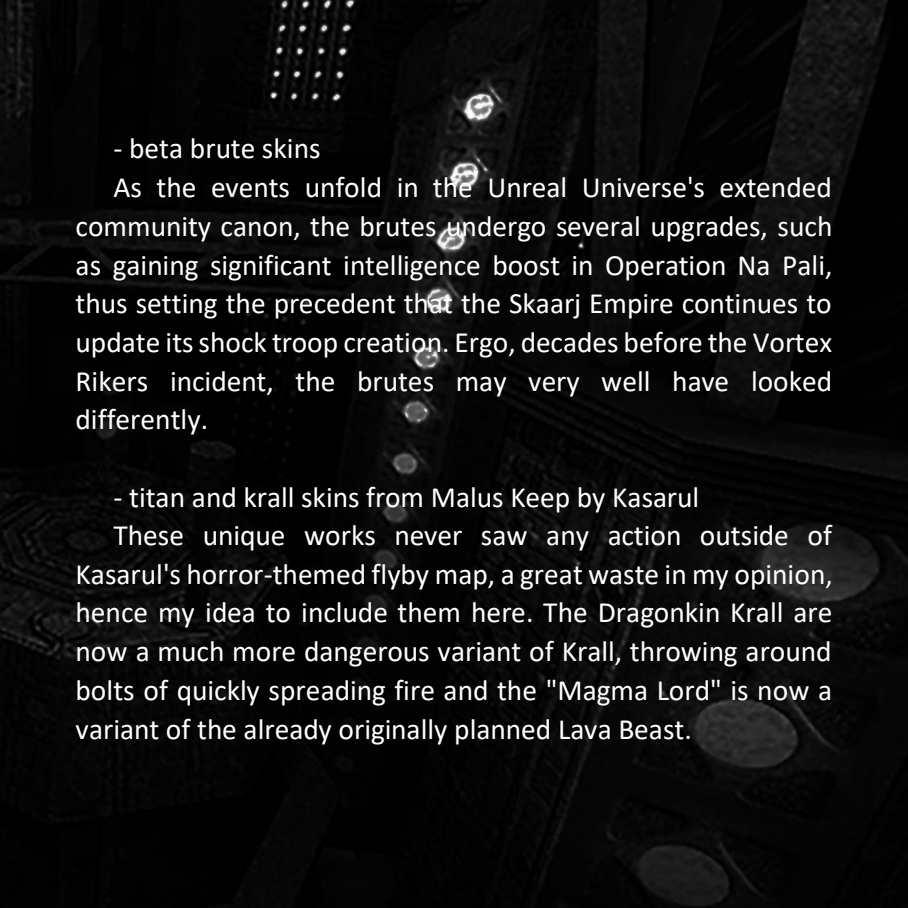
- alpha and beta Nali skins
See A Word on the Nali below for explanation.

- napali105 by Asgard
A set of refurbished and updated Spinners and Predators from Return to Na Pali. Used to avoid dependancy to UPak.u which doesn't officially exist for Unreal 225, but an additional benefit came from this, since they're bugfixed and the Spinners have additional variants.

- Scorpions by Obi-Wan
A pawn that likely inspired the Spinners, this species of pest that made an appearance in Arachnopolis and Legacy, was included to give them some additional screentime also here.
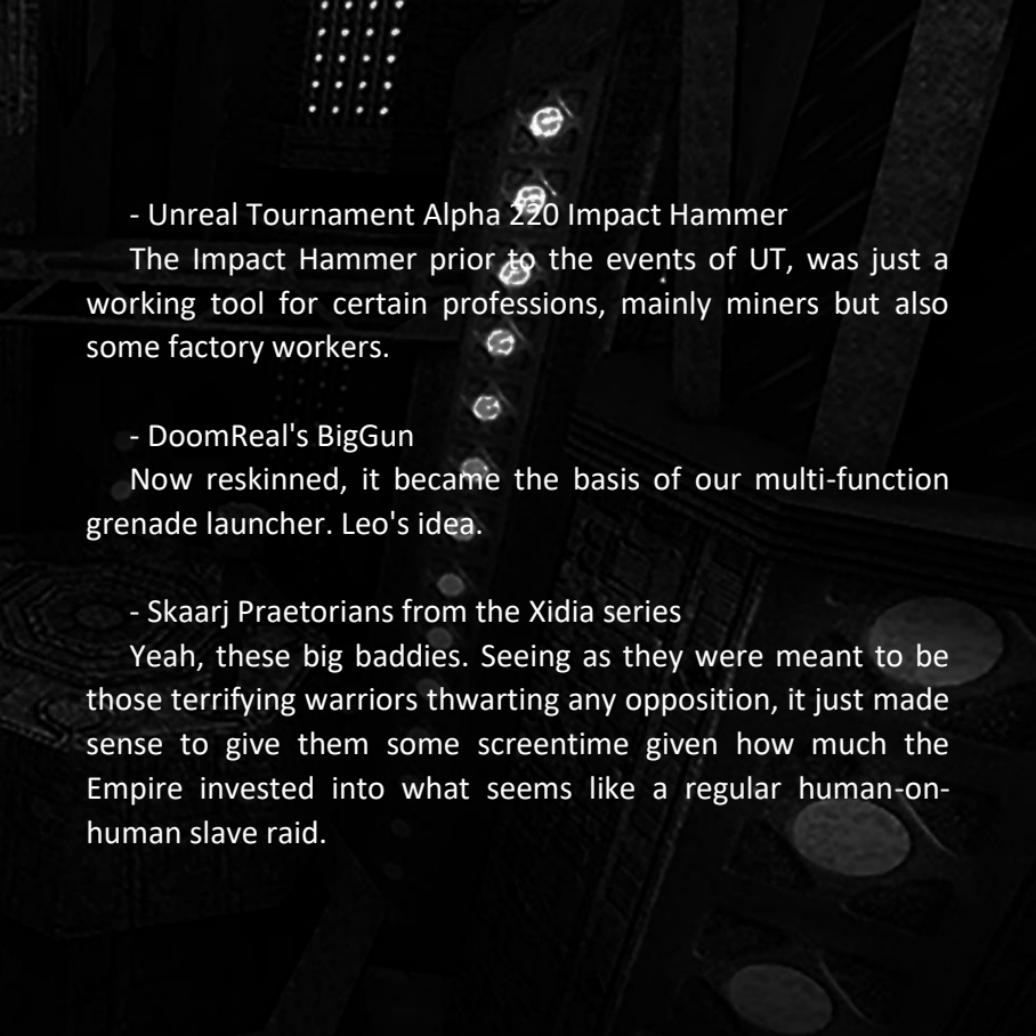
- beta brute skins

As the events unfold in the Unreal Universe's extended community canon, the brutes undergo several upgrades, such as gaining significant intelligence boost in Operation Na Pali, thus setting the precedent that the Skaarj Empire continues to update its shock troop creation. Ergo, decades before the Vortex Rikers incident, the brutes may very well have looked differently.

- titan and krall skins from Malus Keep by Kasarul

These unique works never saw any action outside of Kasarul's horror-themed flyby map, a great waste in my opinion, hence my idea to include them here. The Dragonkin Krall are now a much more dangerous variant of Krall, throwing around bolts of quickly spreading fire and the "Magma Lord" is now a variant of the already originally planned Lava Beast.

- Unreal Tournament Alpha 220 Impact Hammer

The Impact Hammer prior to the events of UT, was just a working tool for certain professions, mainly miners but also some factory workers.
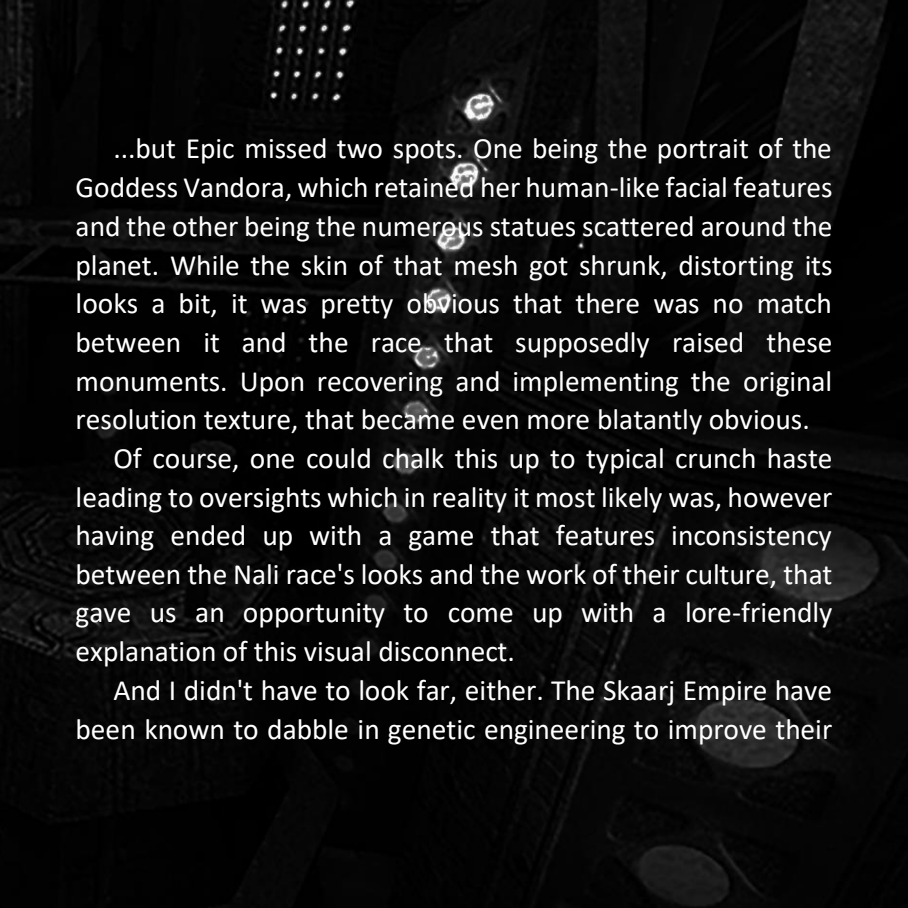
- DoomReal's BigGun

Now reskinned, it became the basis of our multi-function grenade launcher. Leo's idea.

- Skaarj Praetorians from the Xidia series

Yeah, these big baddies. Seeing as they were meant to be those terrifying warriors thwarting any opposition, it just made sense to give them some screentime given how much the Empire invested into what seems like a regular human-on-human slave raid.
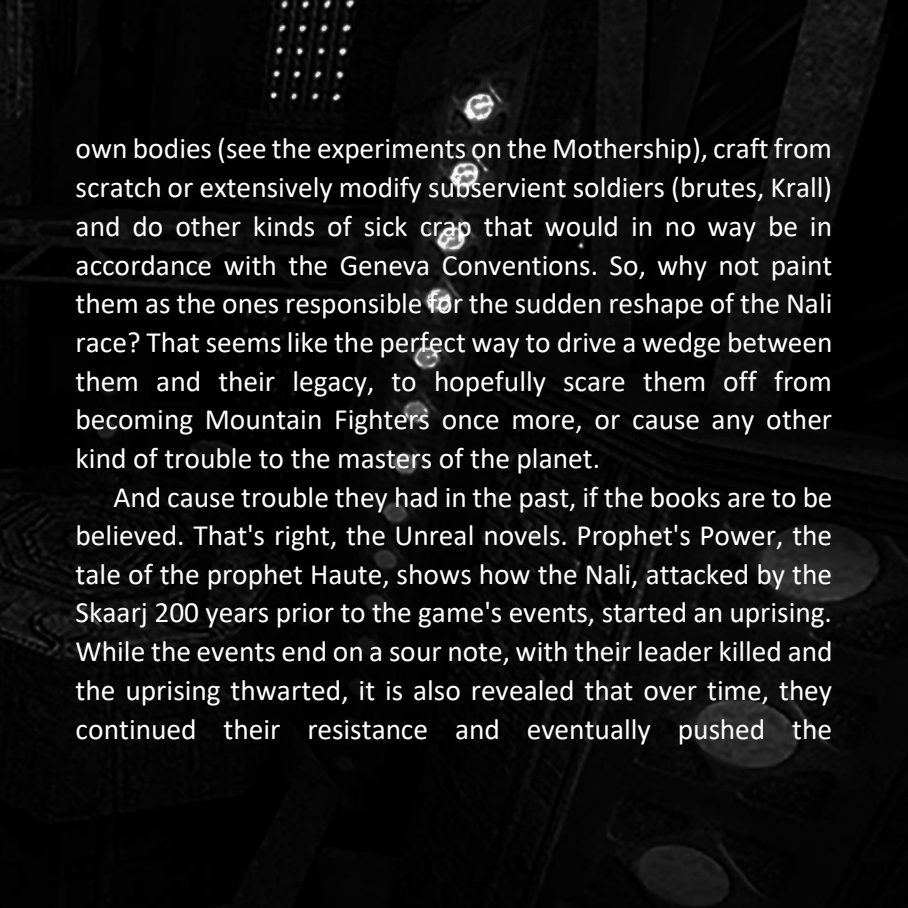
A WORD ON THE NALI

[D] : The first thing the player undoubtedly notices the moment they launch Steele Dawn is that the Nali look completely different than those seen in Unreal. Their facial features are completely different, much more similar to that of Terrans and their language (everything that isn't covered by the automatic translator or outright spoken in English because the Nali in question knows our language) is completely different to that of the Nali of Na Pali. Well, that's how they consistently looked like and sounded like throughout the entire period of development of Unreal, until sometime after March 1998. Not even two full months before the release date, they underwent a drastic redesign that made them look less human and more alien, and their language was changed as well. The beta Nali were scrubbed out of Unreal as if they were never there...

...but Epic missed two spots. One being the portrait of the Goddess Vandora, which retained her human-like facial features and the other being the numerous statues scattered around the planet. While the skin of that mesh got shrunk, distorting its looks a bit, it was pretty obvious that there was no match between it and the race that supposedly raised these monuments. Upon recovering and implementing the original resolution texture, that became even more blatantly obvious.
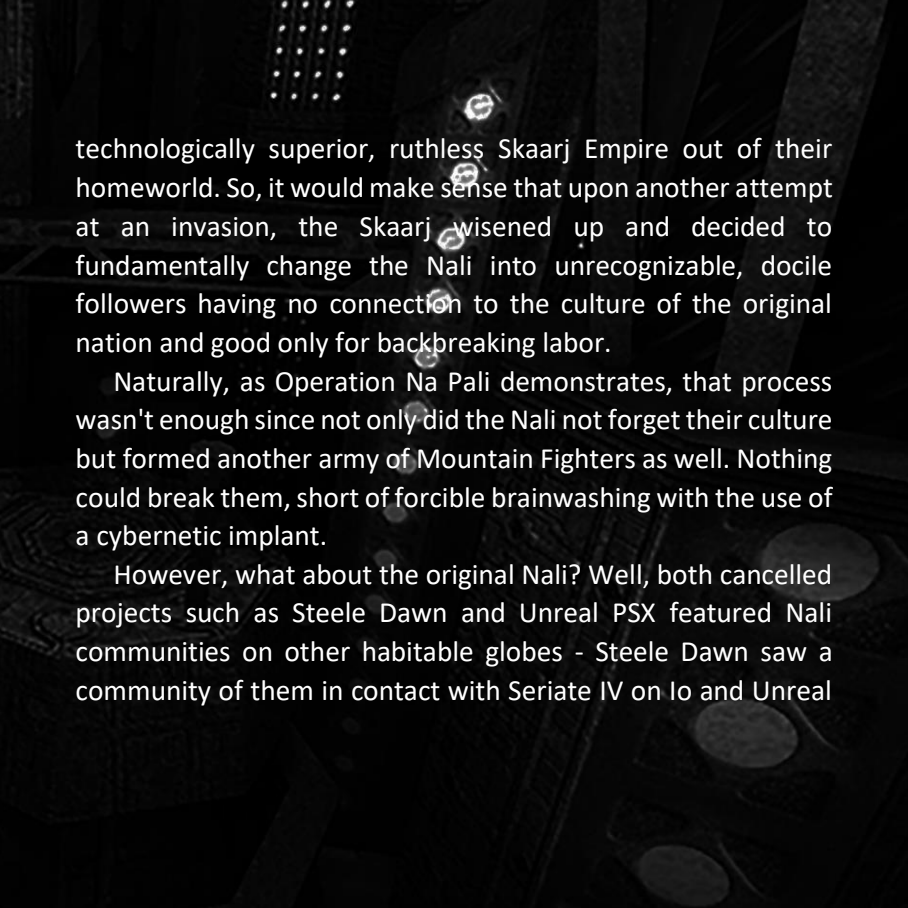
Of course, one could chalk this up to typical crunch haste leading to oversights which in reality it most likely was, however having ended up with a game that features inconsistency between the Nali race's looks and the work of their culture, that gave us an opportunity to come up with a lore-friendly explanation of this visual disconnect.

And I didn't have to look far, either. The Skaarj Empire have been known to dabble in genetic engineering to improve their

own bodies (see the experiments on the Mothership), craft from scratch or extensively modify subservient soldiers (brutes, Krall) and do other kinds of sick crap that would in no way be in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. So, why not paint them as the ones responsible for the sudden reshape of the Nali race? That seems like the perfect way to drive a wedge between them and their legacy, to hopefully scare them off from becoming Mountain Fighters once more, or cause any other kind of trouble to the masters of the planet.
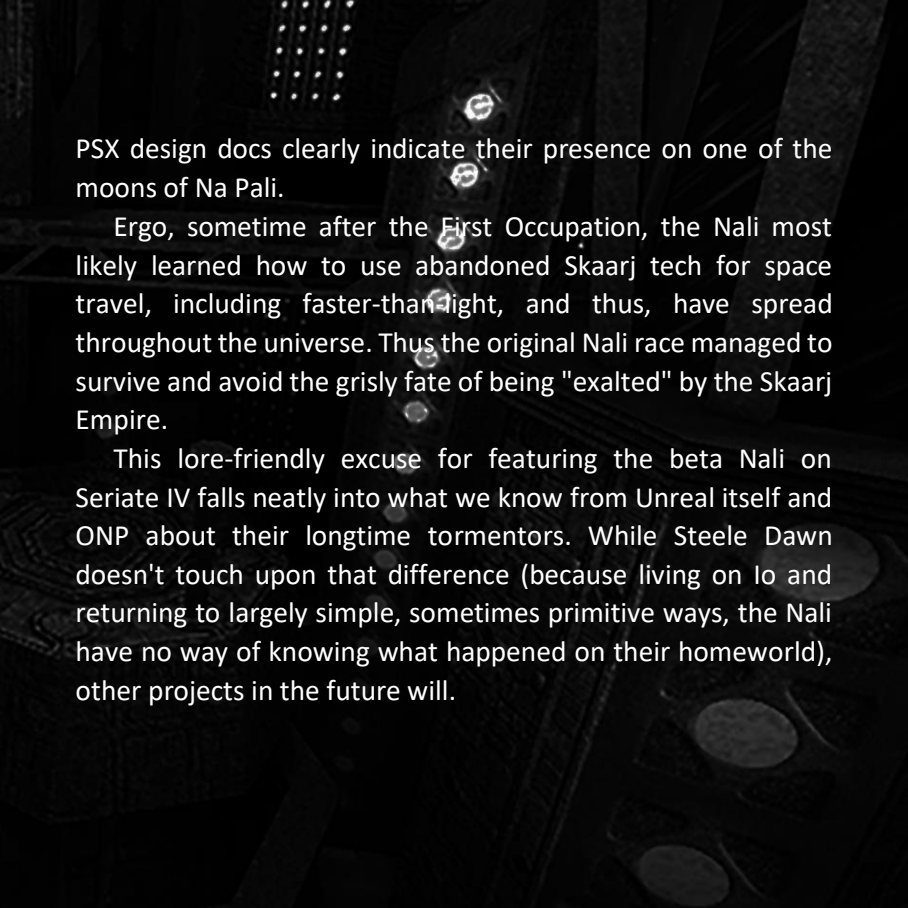
And cause trouble they had in the past, if the books are to be believed. That's right, the Unreal novels. Prophet's Power, the tale of the prophet Haute, shows how the Nali, attacked by the Skaarj 200 years prior to the game's events, started an uprising. While the events end on a sour note, with their leader killed and the uprising thwarted, it is also revealed that over time, they continued their resistance and eventually pushed the

technologically superior, ruthless Skaarj Empire out of their homeworld. So, it would make sense that upon another attempt at an invasion, the Skaarj wisened up and decided to fundamentally change the Nali into unrecognizable, docile followers having no connection to the culture of the original nation and good only for backbreaking labor.

Naturally, as Operation Na Pali demonstrates, that process wasn't enough since not only did the Nali not forget their culture but formed another army of Mountain Fighters as well. Nothing could break them, short of forcible brainwashing with the use of a cybernetic implant.

However, what about the original Nali? Well, both cancelled projects such as Steele Dawn and Unreal PSX featured Nali communities on other habitable globes - Steele Dawn saw a community of them in contact with Seriate IV on Io and Unreal

PSX design docs clearly indicate their presence on one of the moons of Na Pali.

Ergo, sometime after the First Occupation, the Nali most likely learned how to use abandoned Skaarj tech for space travel, including faster-than-light, and thus, have spread throughout the universe. Thus the original Nali race managed to survive and avoid the grisly fate of being "exalted" by the Skaarj Empire.

This lore-friendly excuse for featuring the beta Nali on Seriate IV falls neatly into what we know from Unreal itself and ONP about their longtime tormentors. While Steele Dawn doesn't touch upon that difference (because living on Io and returning to largely simple, sometimes primitive ways, the Nali have no way of knowing what happened on their homeworld), other projects in the future will.

TIMELINE NOTES

[D] : Unreal and Return to Na Pali take place in 2214-2215 A.D. In multiple messages across these campaigns, it's obvious that it's considered first contact with both Nali and Skaarj, as many people didn't know anything about them prior to the encounters that led to their deaths.

Meanwhile, the Serinites (human colonists living on Seriate IV) have come into contact with the Nali in 2164 and the Skaarj in 2167, on the moon Io, as per Steele Dawn's backstory from the project website. Ergo, to maintain continuity with official content, this actual first contact was made classified information by the government. Hard Crash novel and the community edition of Unreal PSX have the Inuit Corporation well aware of both races existing and accounted for in this sector, so if continuity is to be maintained, only Inuit personnel

involved in projects taking place in Skaarj-controlled territory, government's intelligence and military branches are the ones aware of true first contact (2164 and 2167), whereas the general public is none the wiser.

CLOSING STATEMENT

[D] : For a short campaign of only eight levels, there was a lot of work to be done in order to make the expansion a fully-fledged proper quality product. From finalization of maps to implementing gameplay, finishing or recreating resources and writing an actual story, that took significant time and resources. While it all turned out to be possible and it gave me a chance to reconnect with the Unreal community and get more involved, there were times when I thought that maybe I should give up on a feature or two. At times, I was concerned as to whether or not

I am asking people for too much. The added pressure was also to respect the original creative vision wherever possible. In my opinion, even with the liberties I sometimes took, I believe that for the most part my fellow teammates and I have succeeded. I humbly present to you, Unreal: Steele Dawn - Community Edition. Kindly, do enjoy.

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Coop server administrators: if you encounter bugs and intend to fix them by yourselves, please don't break platform compatibility. Also, please provide the fixes to our team along with the changelog.