

DAVE

ARTBOOK



DREADLOCKS

About the project

Dex is a 2D side-scrolling action-RPG set in a cyberpunk world and heavily influenced by William Gibson's Neuromancer. The game's origins date back to the summer of 2012, when it was conceived as a simple platformer with stealth elements by the lead designer of the game, Jan Jirkovsky. In September of that same year, lead artist Prokop Smetana joined the project and established the present visual direction for the game. The team officially joined Michal Cervenka and his company Dreadlocks in November, 2012, and thus formed the core of the Dex team. Over the course of its production cycle, several additional team members and external contractors and volunteers came aboard the project.

The team soon departed from its original "simple cyberpunk platformer" vision and started to shift to an open world, story-driven, action-RPG, with the platformer-style sidescrolling view becoming simply the chosen camera perspective, rather than the basis of gameplay.

Almost exactly a year after the official forming of the Dex team, in November, 2013, a Kickstarter campaign was launched, with the aim of raising £14,000. It raised £30,647. This gave the team a burst of new energy and a great morale boost. It also helped promote the project globally and allowed the team to expand. In August, 2014 – the day before the start of Gamescom in Cologne – Dreadlocks launched Dex on Steam Early Access, further expanding the community and the team. In September, 2014, Axel Droxler, former lead designer of Divinity: Original Sin, joined the project, helping to tie up all the loose ends and making a great contribution to Dex in the final months of finishing and polishing.

The full version of the game was released on May 7, 2015, and continues to receive updates, fixes, and extra content at the time of this publication. The current focus is on free DLC and the development of console ports.

Prague, Czech Republic, June 9, 2015



What is Cyberpunk?

The term "cyberpunk" was first used by American writer Bruce Bethke in his short story Cyberpunk from 1983. The story describes a group of "cybernetic punks" and presents them as a subcultural threat to the mainstream society. Bethke's cyberpunks manifest their resistance against the mainstream society through hacking and cybercrime, which makes them significantly more dangerous than their punk cousins from the 20th century.

The word "cyber" can be explained with reference to cybernetics, which is a science studying systems (both biological, social and artificial) and the transfer of information within them. It is closely connected with information, interaction and communication and as a result also with social control, which is one of the frequent motives of cyberpunk works.

"Punk" is a social phenomenon emerging in the 1970's as a successor of various Western underground cultures mixed with popularity of punk-rock music. It strives to shock and deconstruct social norms with emphasis on freedom of individual and opposition towards authorities. Punk is also frequently connected with anarchist ideas, anti-capitalism, promiscuous sex and recreational use of drugs.

The term "cyberpunk" puts the powerful system of technologically advanced society in contrast with the freedom of individual. The situation is well described with the phrase "high tech – low life" (advanced technology – miserable life). Cyberpunk introduces a vision of the world where technological advancement greatly surpasses the humane level of the society and technology thus becomes humanity's own whip instead of being a tool.

Dex – Our Heroine

When designing the appearance of our main protagonist, we wanted to establish a visually strong character that would resonate with cyberpunk aesthetics, without directly copying any particular work. As a core element, we chose a brown trench coat, which combined noir style, natural colors, a modern cut, and a practical design. The greatest challenge turned to be the blue hair, which – despite its color – needed to look natural and familiar.

For the character of Dex, we intentionally used the principle of tabula rasa – blank slate. We wanted players to be able to identify with her easily and to fill in the unknown details of her life from their own imaginations. In game development, this is one of the two most common approaches to character – the other is the opposite; that is, a well-defined, strong character is presented, whom the player might love or hate.

Dex

Young, restless middle-class girl who thinks about the meaning of life and her place in society. Out of the blue she is contacted by legendary hacker Raycast and finds herself being hunted by a squadron of elite soldiers, with no time to think or plan.















The world of Dex

The story of Dex takes place in the near future of 2037. The world is ruled by corporations more powerful than governments, and society is essentially divided into two factions – those who work for the corporations and those who fight against them.

Much like our current world, the world of Dex is full of contrasts. Luxurious skyscrapers can be found just blocks away from slums inhabited by the poorest of the poor. We kept this idea of contrast in mind when designing the layout of the futuristic metropolis Harbor Prime, and were also inspired by classic cyberpunk movies, games, and literature. In the city, you can find a Chinese quarter, slums, abandoned industrial spaces, and brothels,

as well as luxurious business districts, high-tech labs, and corporate headquarters.

We also strived for variety and contrast when designing the characters. In the main storyline and the numerous side quests, you can meet scientists, traders, and lawyers, as well as folks from the opposite side of the social divide: hackers, mercenaries, dealers, and numerous other street types.

Decker

Graying old gridrunner and veteran of street brawls and corporate runs. One day Decker packed his stuff, said, "I'm out of the game" to his compadres, and bought an old pub. Over the years he transformed it into a stylish underground lair called Fixers Hope. It is popular amongs hackers, cypherpunks, and hacktivists.



Tony

Young, enthusiastic hacker who once made his living by farming virtual currency in online worlds. Over the years he went from simple bot scripting to owning a massive server farm in the Chinese quarter. Apart from earning cash through services to hardcore online gamers, he sometimes provides "ass-covering" services during illegal operations and corporate runs. Yes, that's how he met Decker.





Raycast

Legendary hacker. No one has ever met him, but everyone has heard of him. Raycast has played a role in most of the major scandals and information leaks of the last decade.



Sewers

Life in the sewers below the city - what would you expect other than misfits hiding out from the world and gangs of smugglers conducting illegal operations?





Gangs

Numerous gangs and semi-illegal organizations operate in Harbor Prime. Most of the gangs are involved in the same types of activity – thefts, burglaries, smuggling, territorial wars, and illegal contracts. Gang outposts are typically found in the sewers and in the city outskirts.

Blitz



Slums

The real estate boom that took place in Harbor Prime in the 2020s was followed by stagnation. Most immigrants lost their jobs, many have joined street gangs, and some now occupy the half-finished concrete structures and industrial buildings that lie on the outskirts of the city.



Richmond

When someone ruins your life, blames you for what you haven't done, and then convinces you that you might actually be guilty of the acts, maybe you end up like Richmond. A succesful IT genius back in the day, he's now a paranoid freak living in a caravan in the scrapyard, protected by a DIY minefield with "Do Not Enter" signs.

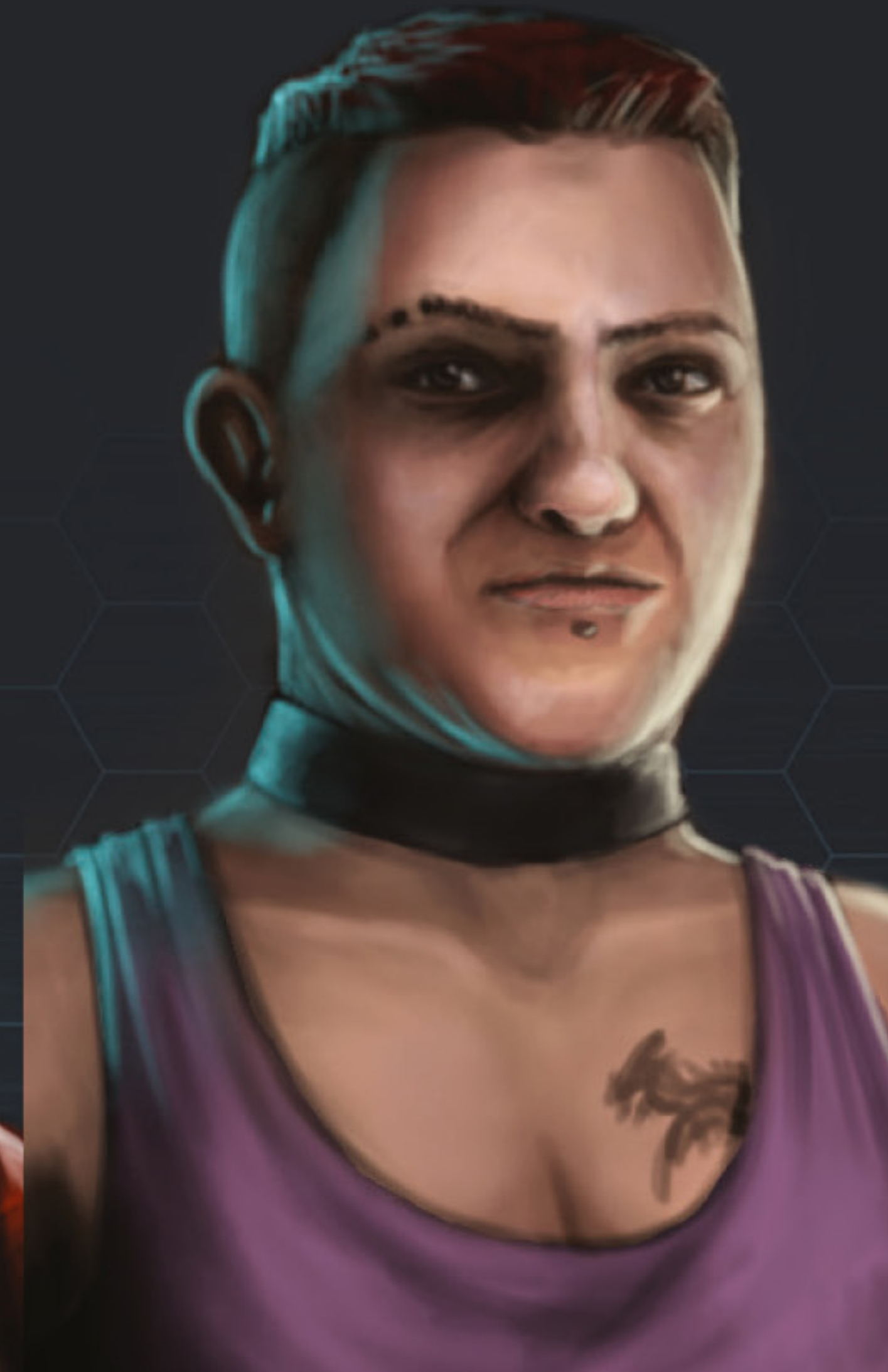
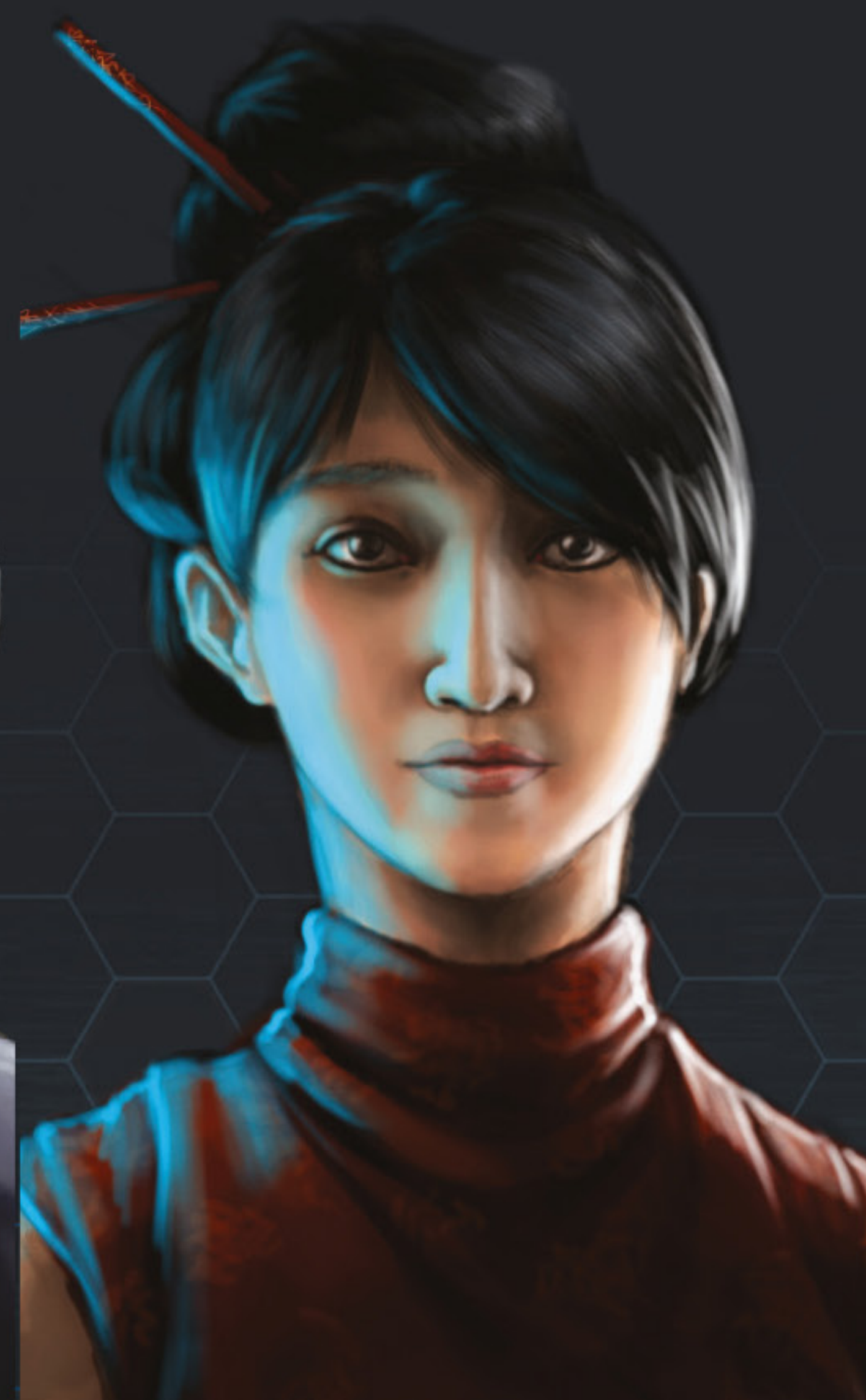
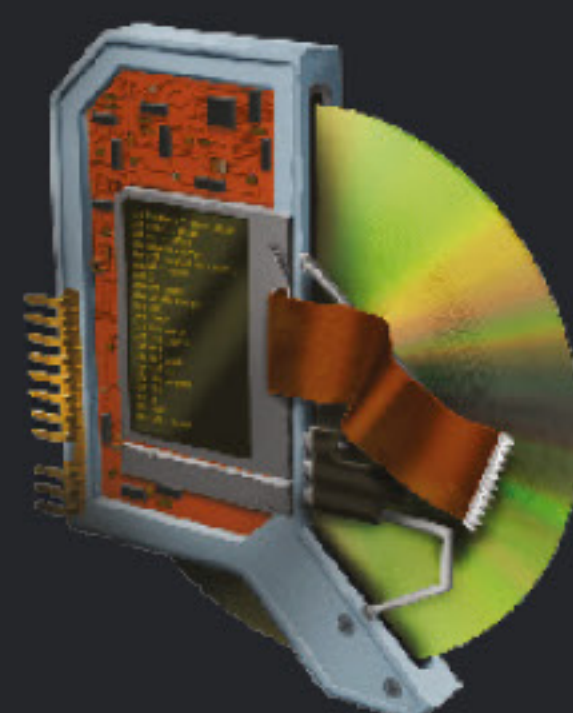




Taijo

Famous district in the Chinese quarter that offers affordable restaurants, cheap sex, and free sleeping spots on the streets. Tolerated by local police. If you want to get out of the public eye, Taijo is the ideal hideout. But it is dangerous for exactly the same reason - many criminals on the run find temporary safehouses here.







Black Clinic

Semi-legal clinic of Dr. Niles. Neutral territory for all gangs in the neighborhood and destination of choice for punks looking to get cheap medical care with no questions asked, and all grades of implants. Niles is not exactly the friendliest fellow, but he is a fair guy. And yeah, he has a fetish for implants and all things bio-mechanical.

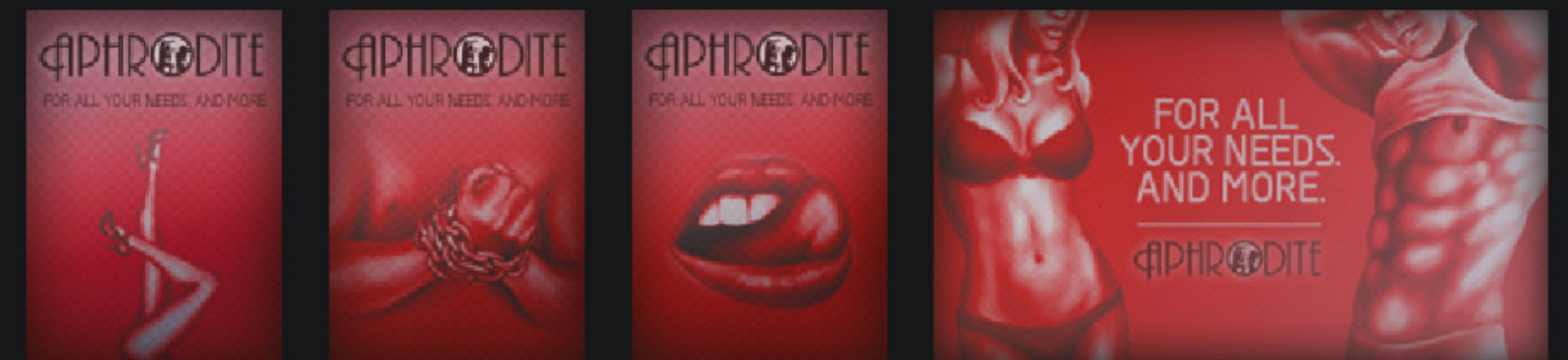


Aphrodite

Luxurious brothel for both male and female clients. The interior is dominated by statues of Adonis and Aphrodite. Unlike its competition, Aphrodite offers "companions" modified with high-end augmentations (for enhanced sexual experiences) as well as so-called "flesh-and-bloods" for real connoisseurs.

Lily

Founder and owner of Aphrodite. Enterprising, tough, and charming. The type of a woman who can get a man with a blink of an eye.





Nightingale

Bar and cabaret decorated in early 20th-century style. Perfect spot for loners, nostalgia freaks, and blues fans.

Camilla

Hardcore fan of Barbara. You know the type - posters all around her room, owns all of her idol's albums, collects tickets from all her local concerts. Camilla is not a teenager, though - she is in her thirties, and her fascination for Barbara does not seem to be losing steam. In fact, she recently started a new blog about Barbara.



Barbara

Aging singer from the American south. Her singing career followed the classic path: started playing guitar in small towns, formed a band, paid her dues, started cutting albums, and eventually began doing concert tours around the world. However, fame and glory do not last forever, and in recent years Barbara has been playing in no-name pubs and bars, passing the hat for pay. Career could use a major shot in the arm.



Highrise

Upscale business and office district of Harbor Prime. Many international megacorps have their headquarters here.



EchoCorp

Prestigious manufacturer of devices and implants related to sound, hearing, and voice - speakers, microphones, artificial vocal cords, hearing aids, etc. EchoCorp is one step ahead of its competition in both quality and price.

Panacea Panacea

The world's largest pharmaceutical company, it transformed from a small startup to a huge global corporation over the last decade. Currently Panacea is the largest supplier of stimulants and combat-use chemicals for armies of the Western world.





Miranda

Experienced lawyer and prosecutor who handled the case resulting in the takeover of Redwood-Watts by Samio Industries.

BioFarmTech

World's largest organic food producer. One of the last megacorps to retain an "ethical" image in the eyes of the public and media, thanks to its animal welfare programs and employee benefits.

BioFarmTech



Samio Industries

International megacorp focusing on IT systems for banking, industry, and government. Just a few years ago, before the latest economic crisis, Samio had over fifty thousand employees around the globe.



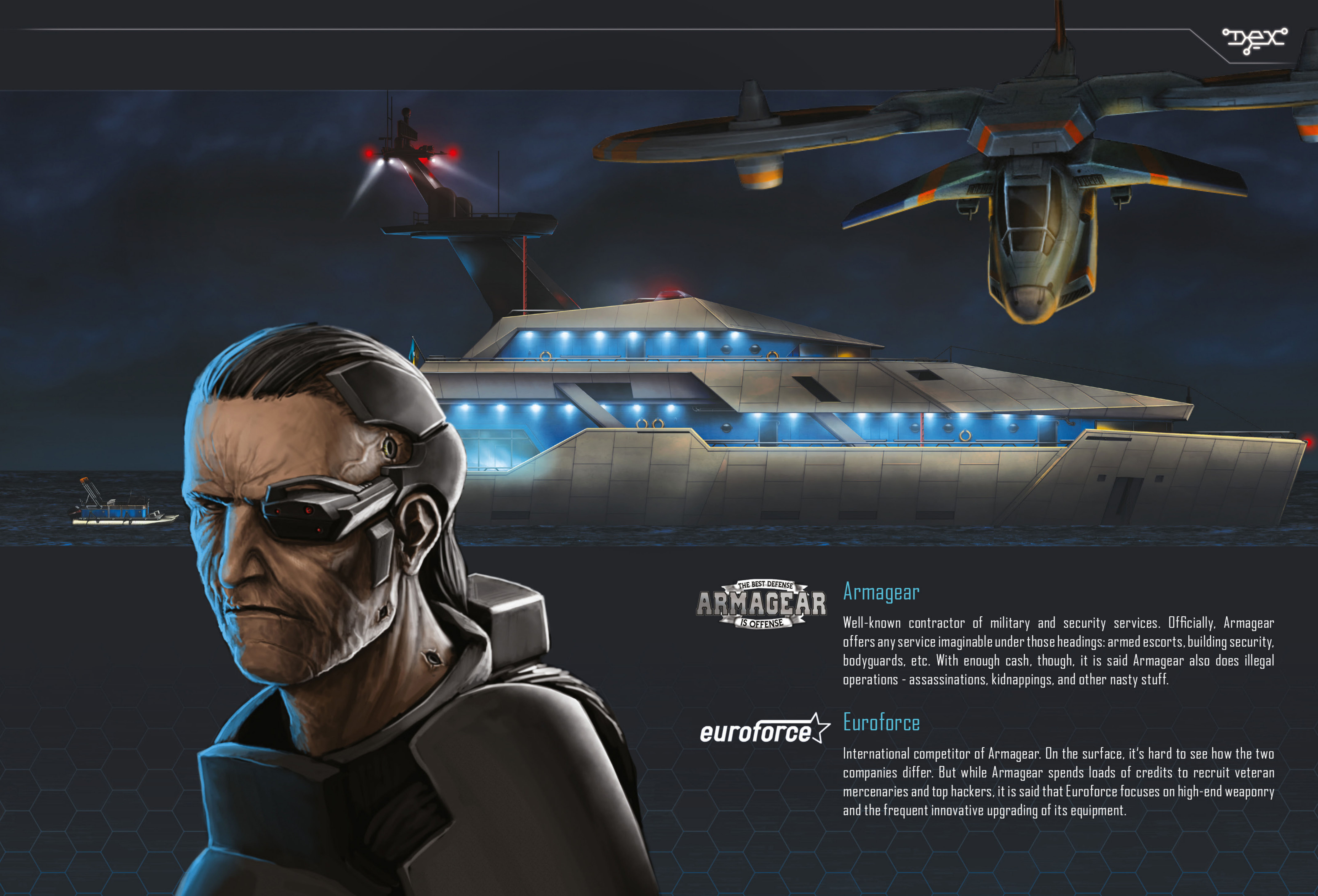
Ichor Corp

The closest competitor to Samio. Ichor focuses on research, analytical software, and weapon tech for military use.



Orion Tours

Travel agency founded in early 2020s. Orion Tours started by offering expensive space flights for the richest of the rich who could afford to pay "astronomical" fees for a few hours of orbit in a private shuttle. The last few years have seen competition increase, and nowadays Orion Tours offers flights for all classes. Their offerings include "Around the Earth," "Moon Landing," and "14-day Orbit Spa" programs.



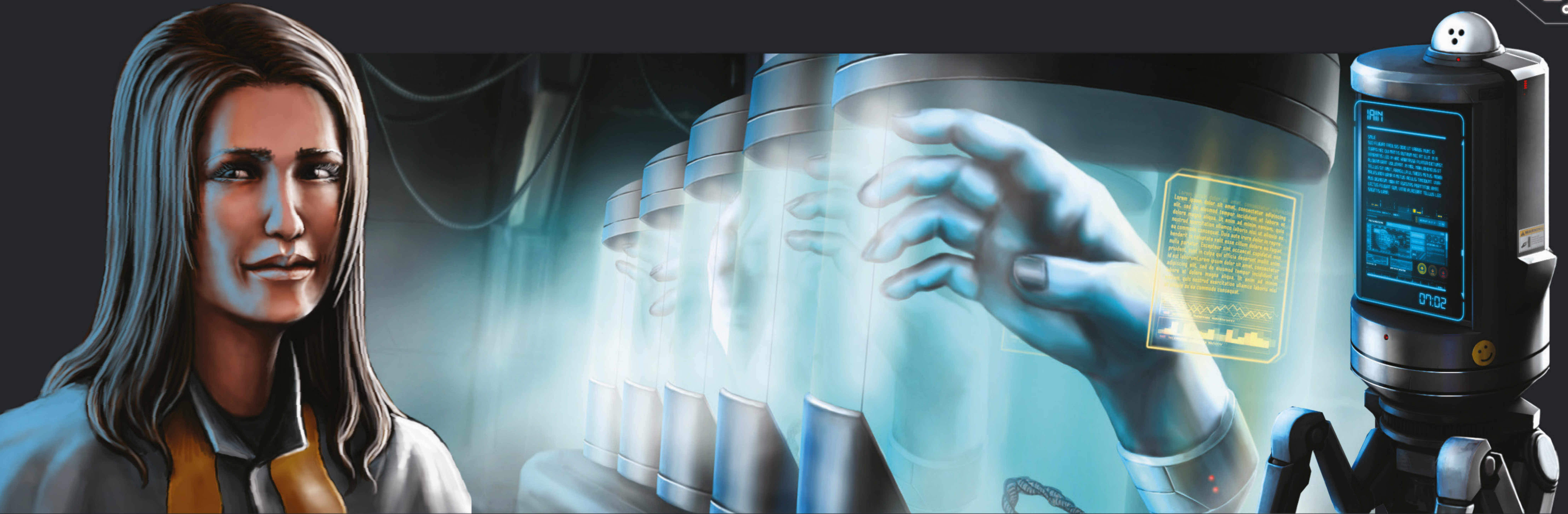
Armagear

Well-known contractor of military and security services. Officially, Armagear offers any service imaginable under those headings: armed escorts, building security, bodyguards, etc. With enough cash, though, it is said Armagear also does illegal operations - assassinations, kidnappings, and other nasty stuff.



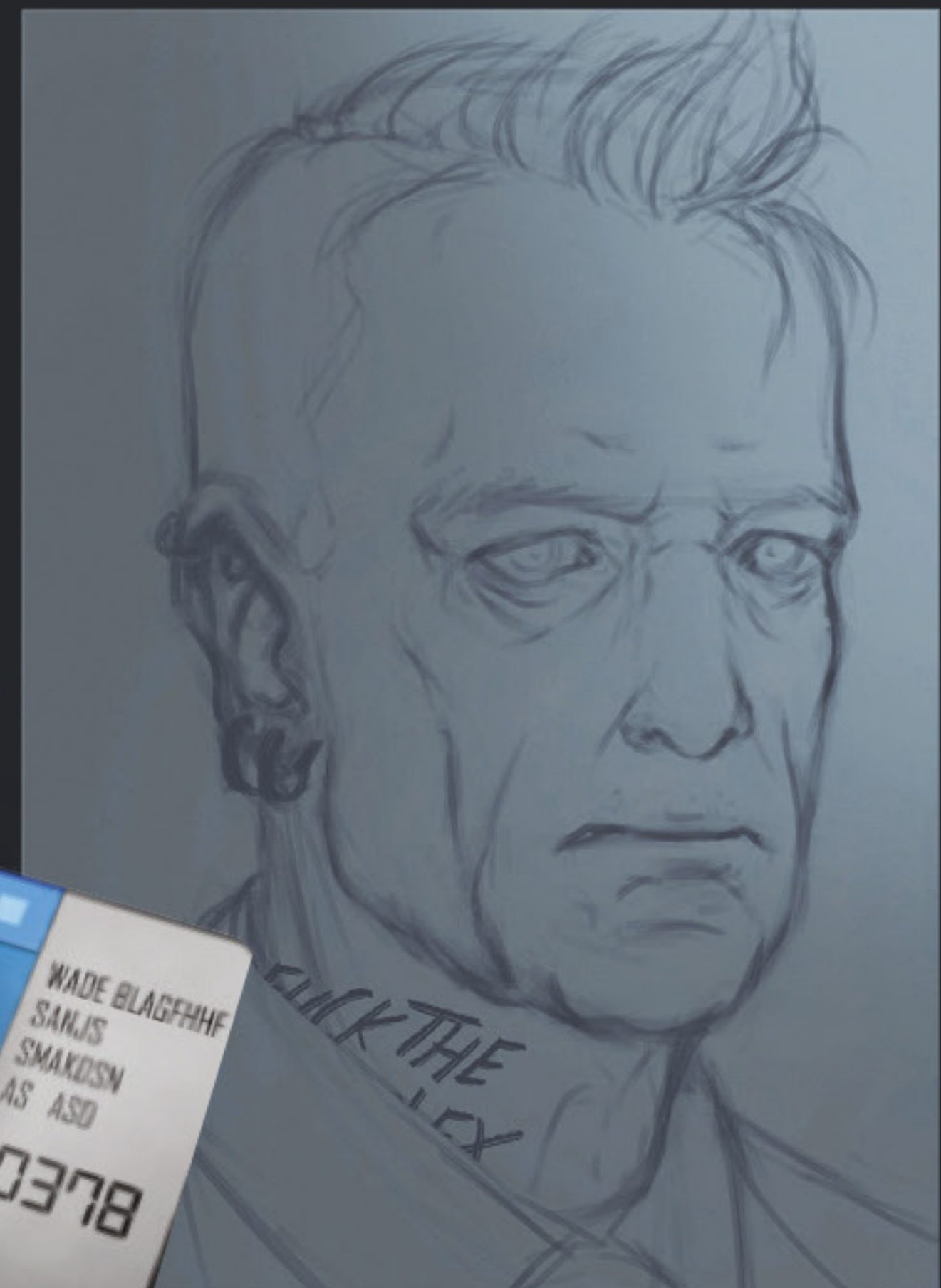
Euroforce

International competitor of Armagear. On the surface, it's hard to see how the two companies differ. But while Armagear spends loads of credits to recruit veteran mercenaries and top hackers, it is said that Euroforce focuses on high-end weaponry and the frequent innovative upgrading of its equipment.



Redwood-Watts

IT research complex and huge data storage facility built by Ichor Corp and taken over by Samio Industries after a famous security scandal. It employs over five hundred top scientists, and its premises are guarded by a battalion of security personnel from Armagear. Rumors say that the digital security systems of Redwood-Watts have never been breached by any hacker.



Underwater labs

A collection of underwater experimental labs headed by Dr. Carl Hammond. The labs employ hundreds of scientists, most of whom live in futuristic habitats resembling humankind's early visions of extraterrestrial colonies.







Space station

The first long-term space residence in Earth's orbit to offer private apartments for long and short-term rental. Built in 2024, it also includes spacious entertainment, commercial, and office spaces.



