Horizon

"Story based sci-fi shoot em' up action!"

Jason Parsons

"The Horizon"

← Firing tips

← Jump Drive Engines

Top-Down View

Executive Summary:

- *Horizon* is an exciting blend of 3D based arcade shoot em' up combat and narrative based storytelling set in a far flung corner of the universe.

- While most arcade shmups of the past were set in 2D, *Horizon* is a 3D shooter that allows for movement in all directions while retaining the frenetic pace of the shooters you remember.

- The player will also visit several space stations that allow them to upgrade their ship. These stations are also a place of intrigue and NPC characters that you can engage in conversation with. These conversations shape the story, and allow the player choices that will affect the outcome.

- NPC characters will not only interact with you while on each station, they will also relay information and story while you are in flight aboard your ship the Horizon.

- The frenetic pace of the colorful space battles, mixed with the complex and nuanced story, put the player squarely in the boots of a dashing pilot trying to defend themselves, and the universe, from wave after wave of enemy fighters.

- Your character has a secret. Only by making your way through the story and action levels will that secret come to light.

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The *Horizon* is an advanced attack ship outfitted with a special jump drive that will allow you to travel between deep space stations.
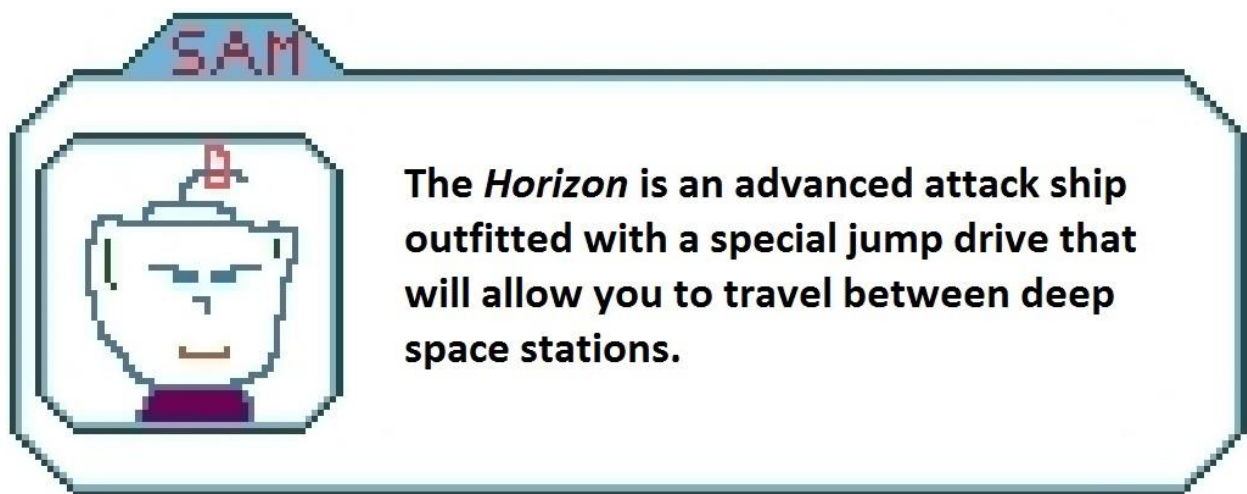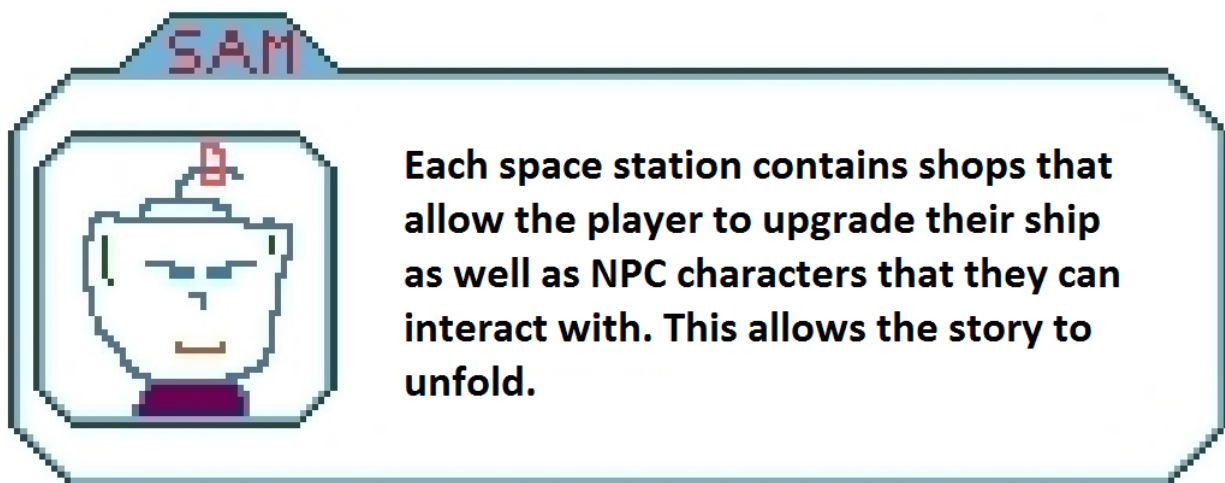
High Concept:

Combining space combat and story-drive narrative, *Horizon* is the story of one pilot's search for hope in a universe at war with an implacable enemy. This enemy threat comes at our hero in wave after wave of space warfare. Only through the use of an experimental jump drive is the Horizon, a fast attack ship, able to get away to safe harbour aboard any number of deep space stations. However, these stations are filled with a variety of eccentric and sometimes shady characters that will complicate life for our hero.

Genre:

Similar to games such as *Project Sylpheed*, *Wing Commander*, and *Freespace*, *Horizon* is a 3D space shooter with roots in 2D shoot em' ups such as *Blazing Lasers*. However, a focus on story and narrative bring a complexity not normally found in these more action-based games.
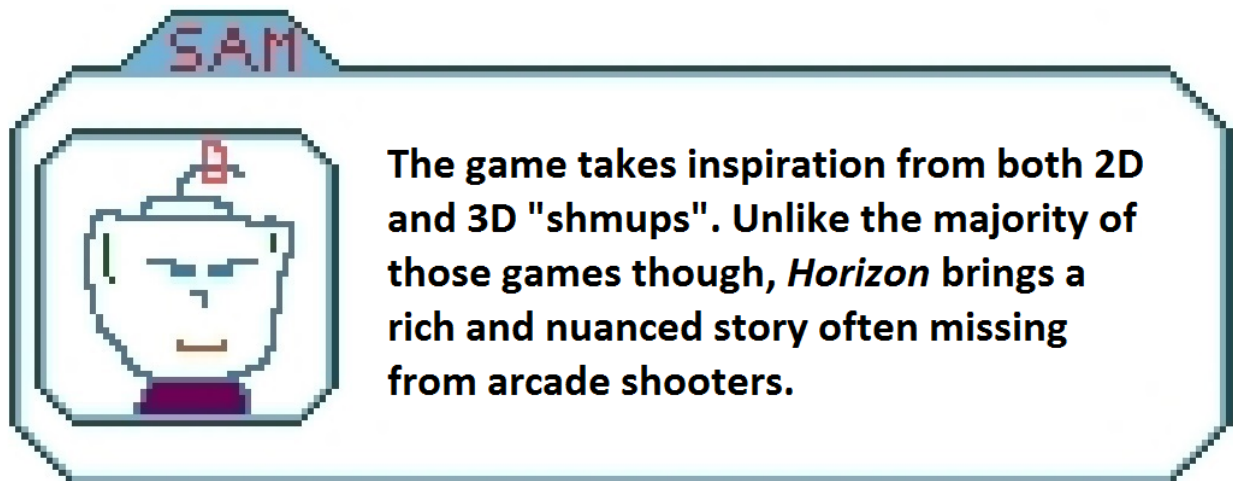
Hooks:

- **Colorful combat scenes** filled with enemies, laser fire, space anomalies, and NPC chatter put the player directly in the heart of a war story where the player's decisions both in and out of combat determine the hero's fate.

- **Humorous, thoughtful, and nuanced story** pulls the player in and gets deeper the further the player progresses. Your interactions with NPC characters affect your ability to upgrade your ship, and will eventually reveal secrets that will be revealed only to the most skilled players.

- **Mixture of 3D combat and 2D station excursions** bring a diverse set of experiences for the player to discover.

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Each space station contains shops that allow the player to upgrade their ship as well as NPC characters that they can interact with. This allows the story to unfold.

Gameplay Highlights:

- Vast numbers of enemies and laser fire on screen to give the player the sense of being in an **action-packed battle against an ever present danger**.

- Pop up conversation boxes will appear while you battle to relay information from your fellow pilots to **further the sense of immersion**.

- **Your choices** during conversations with NPC characters progress the story in new and interesting ways with each playthrough.

- Your ship, **the Horizon**, can be upgraded at any of the space stations you encounter. Stations can be reached through jump gates that can be accessed after surviving a certain amount of time during the action levels of the game.

- **Colorful characters and rich dialogue** peppered with humour keep you engaged in both the story and the battle, and make you the player want to continue progressing through the game.

- Your character **holds a secret**. Only through progressing the story will that secret be revealed.

- Space is vast and unforgiving. Your **reflexes and concentration will be tested**. However, success will be rewarded, and the game is never unfair.

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The game takes inspiration from both 2D and 3D "shmups". Unlike the majority of those games though, *Horizon* brings a rich and nuanced story often missing from arcade shooters.

Technology Highlights:

- *Horizon* is being developed in the Unity3D game engine using industry standard techniques and practices.

- 2D sprites are created using GraphicsGale, while 3D assets are being created using SketchUp and Blender. These powerful tools will allow all of the games art assets to **pop off the screen**.

- The programming is being done in C# following **reusable object-oriented design principles**, while source control is handled by Git.

Concept Art:

"The Horizon"

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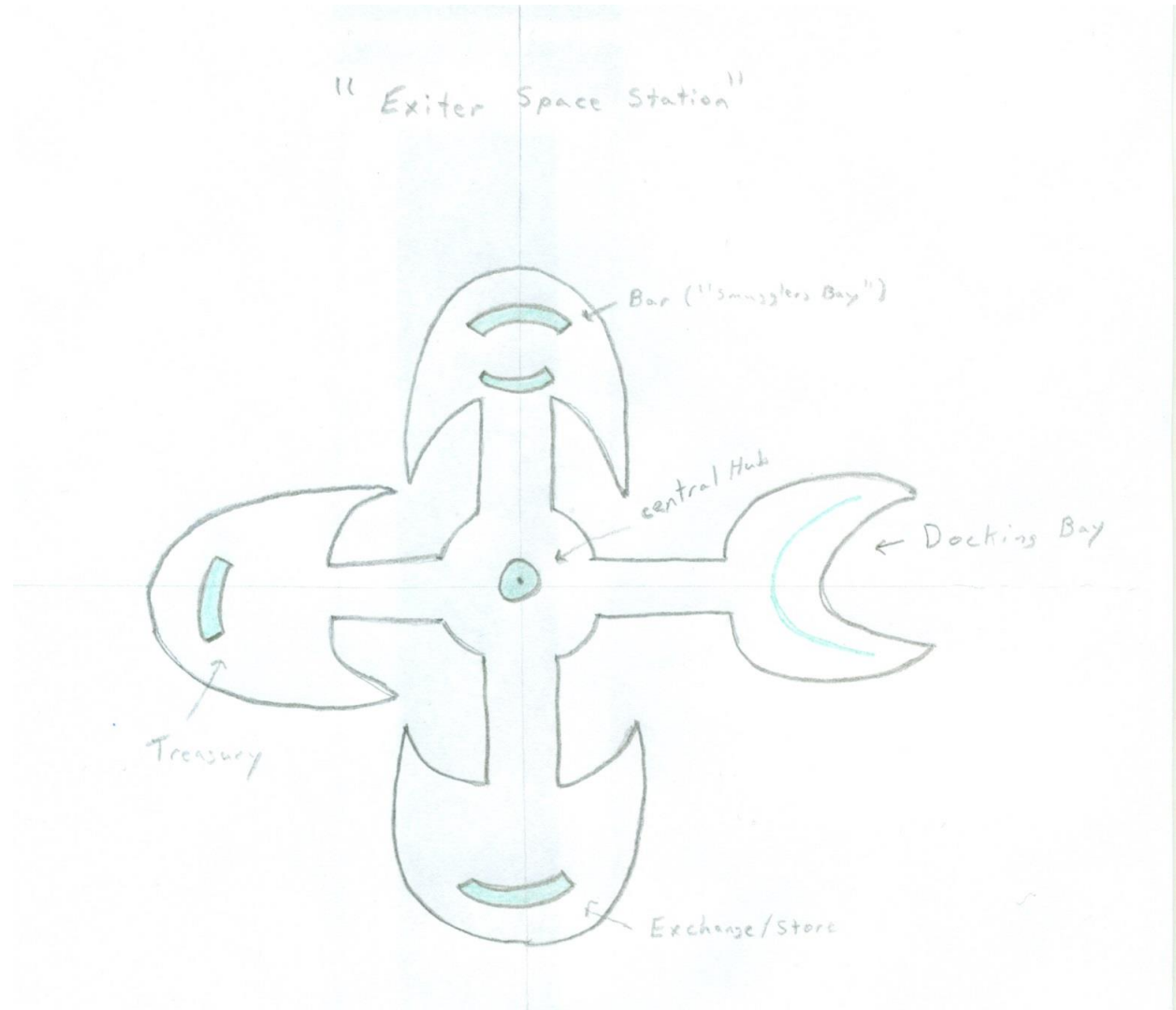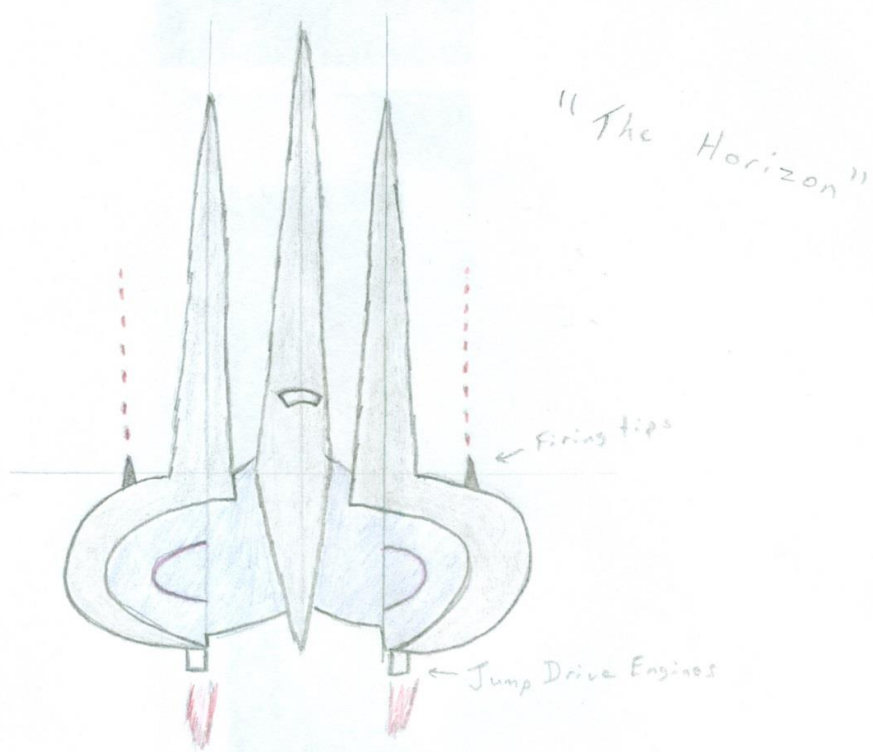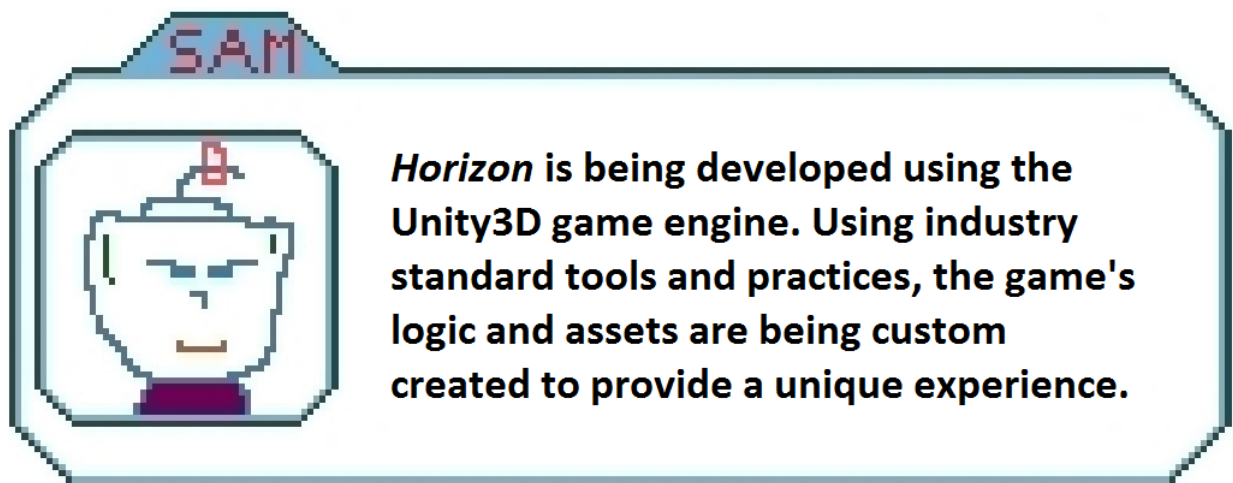
Top-Down View
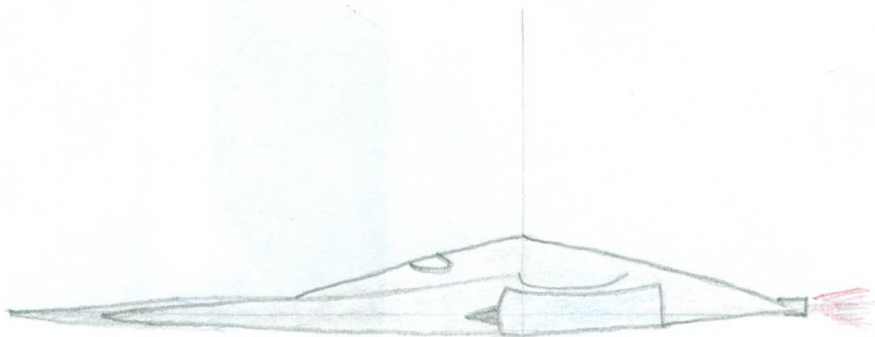
Side-Profile View

Hardware:

The game is targeting for the PC and Mac OS platforms. Any modern desktop or laptop should be able to run the game. Thanks to the Unity3D engine, the game's graphics and performance can be scaled if the player's hardware is unable to run the game at the highest graphical settings.

Current Status:

- Concept art for the ships, space stations, characters, and dialogue boxes have been created, and some of the game's sprites have been authored (as can be seen in this document).

- A rough outline treatment of the story and characters is in place and will be fleshed out in the coming week.

- Development on the rest of the art assets and the main gameplay loop will follow over the coming weeks.

Development Team:

The game is being developed by Jason Parsons as a single-developer team. Jason is in his final semester at Dalhousie University and will be graduating with a degree in Computer Science and a specialization in Artificial Intelligence and Intelligent Systems. During his time at Dalhousie, Jason participated in the university's cooperative education program, including 3 years spent as a software engineer in the software and simulation cell for the navy as an embedded contractor programming in C++. He brings a lifelong passion for video games and science fiction to this project.

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Horizon is being developed using the Unity3D game engine. Using industry standard tools and practices, the game's logic and assets are being custom created to provide a unique experience.
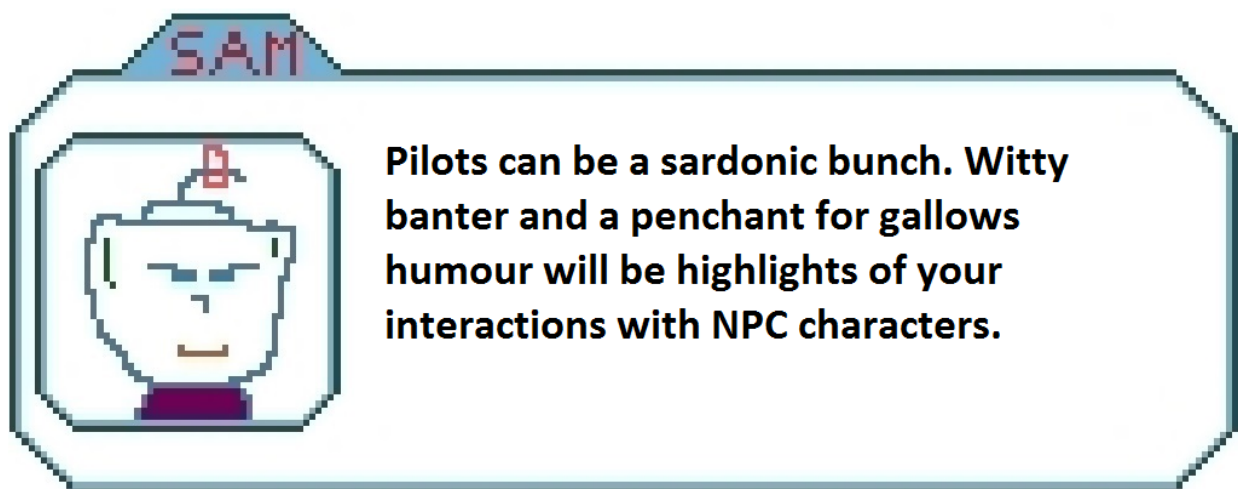
Budget:

The game engine, art creation tools and labour are being provided free of charge.

Schedule:

- The game will be presented to the public in late November/early December. Final delivery of the game and documentation will be on December 5th, 2018.

- Creation of art assets, characters, and story has begun and will likely take a week or two to complete.

- The creation of the main gameplay loop and logic will take place alongside the creation of the art assets. This will take anywhere from 4-5 weeks to complete. Following the rapid prototyping philosophy of Agile development, the game will be tested at every phase and all during the creation life cycle to ensure the game is always in a buildable and playable state.

- QA testing will occur during the last week or two of development.

Competition:

Horizon currently has no competition in the marketplace that we know of at this time. Previous games in the shoot em' up genre focused on action to the exclusion of story in most cases therefore, we don't see any past or present competition for our game.

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Pilots can be a sardonic bunch. Witty banter and a penchant for gallows humour will be highlights of your interactions with NPC characters.

Backstory:

As far as you know, you've been a fighter pilot all your life. Moving from system to system, forging temporary alliances, but never finding a home. The battle with our enemy continues unabated with no end in sight. Through your travels you've harboured a desire to settle down after the war ends. However, a long-held secret may prevent that, despite the outcome of the ongoing battle. The gravitational pull of your previous choices in life have led you to a new and far-flung edge of the universe. Perhaps here you'll finally find the peace that has eluded you all these year. The enemy and your own penchant for self-destruction however, will continue to stand in the way. Only your choices from here on out can change the course of the war, and the course of your life.

Objective and Story Progression:

The game alternates between action sequences in space aboard their ship the Horizon, and story-based sequences aboard a variety of space stations. These stations can be reached through the use of jump gates which become active once the player has survived the various action sequences for a varying amount of time. The goal of these action sequences, beyond survival, is to shoot down as many enemy fighters as possible in the time allotted. A better score during these levels will allow the player to purchase better upgrades once they safe harbour.

As the player engages with NPC characters aboard the space stations, the story will unfold according to the dialogue choices the player makes. It will not be immediately obvious which of these characters are friend or foe, nor is it made clear at the start why the enemy is attacking. As the player progresses through the story, these details will start to fill in. However, there is one secret that the main character holds that will require the player to reach the end of the game.

Characters:

Main character/Hero: Our hero hasn't yet been given a name. This may be left ambiguous so that the player can graft their own persona onto the character and further personalize the story for themselves. The character is well-liked among some fellow pilots, and distrusted and disavowed by others. The character's personality is the sum total of all the decisions the player makes throughout the game.

Sam: A fellow pilot and the hero's closest friend. Sam is the sardonic best friend who will always tell it like it is, even if it sometimes hurts your feelings. Fiercely loyal, and a great pilot with no hidden agendas, that will feed the hero information as the game progresses.

The administrator: All seeing, all knowing. The administrator will keep you apprised of the status of the war, and be all too willing to let you know when you fall short of your duties.

> "This is a war universe.
>
> War all the time.
>
> That is its nature."
>
> — William S. Burroughs