

CANYONS

by

Jimi Stine

609.458.5224
jstine@usc.edu
667 S. Carondelet St. Los Angeles, CA

EXT. OUTSIDE CANTIA - SUNSET

Wide-open plain of hard-packed desert, sun setting behind a distant cliff face. Talacan's first moon, Xola, is a massive purple crescent in the pink sky.

It's quiet save the sound of the wind until the guttural whine of a rig starting up cuts through the air. Several others follow suit, each sounding different from the last.

It's the start of a race and there is a hustle of activity as everyone gets ready.

We land on a third-person view of QUINN, 17, the player, in their rig. It's a hovering vehicle with patchwork body panels and an engine that seems far too large for the body it's attached to. It isn't running.

Their spotter, L33 (pronounced "Lee" when spoken), 22, is underneath.

L33

What the hell did you do to this thing?

QUINN

I used it, what do you think?

L33

Your definition of "use" is warped my friend, and so is this limiter.

QUINN

How bad?

L33

It's been worse.

There's a loud clank and L33 throws something off to the side from under the rig.

L33 (CONT'D)

Looks like you overclocked the turbo a bit too long yesterday. Just gimme a second. Enjoy that view you hate so much.

The player is in control.

Camera controls are taught, look, change perspective, look behind, etc.

"Look at GYA", 18, is the goal. Upon doing so she speaks up, attaching a helmet via some element that exposes her as an android.

GYA

You should really wear a helmet,
Quinn. You push your rig too hard.

L33

Don't listen to her! We all know
those androids can't be trusted!

Gya rolls her eyes and shakes her head. She turns her attention back to her rig, a gyrating nest of overlapping metallic circles.

L33 clammers out from underneath the rig and takes a step back. This is the first time we see him and his reverse-bionic form is striking. He was born a robot and has since replaced limbs with organic counterparts.

L33 (CONT'D)

Alright, now turn it over!

Button prompt to turn over the engines appears. When the player has done so the engine roars to life, spitting out a little extra something before settling into a lumpy idle.

QUINN

What was that?

L33

(jumping in, looking
behind them)

What was what?

QUINN

Something just flew out of the
exhaust. Whatever, we're starting!

A moment as Quinn flips some switches and a few more visual components come to life on their rig and the rigs around them. UI elements that can't be communicated on the body of the rig activate now as well.

L33

(banging on the side of
the rig)

Woo! Let's do this! These sunset
races never get old.

QUINN

You got the route?

L33

Coming up.

Navigation UI activates.

QUINN

(taking a deep breath)

Ok. Yeah. Let's do this.

The countdown begins and the player is prompted to hold their accelerate button. At the end of the count, the gravity locking mechanism that keeps racers in place is released and everyone takes off in a whirlwind of dust, light, and noise.

Set Piece Race 1: Slots - Pilots are Quinn and L33, Gya, MANU, 17, Quinn's rival, non-human, XAM, 18, lots of leather, incredible scowl, and KORBEN, 20, genius in the workshop, idiot everywhere else, always lovable.

The race begins in an open salt flat as it approaches what appears to be a sheer cliff face. As the player gets closer, however, canyon slots become visible and in they go.

During the race, L33 gives a variety of call-outs to Quinn as turns approach and other racers pass or are overtaken.

At the end of the race, everyone flies out of the canyons back out onto the flats. In the final straight:

L33

(yelling over the wind and engines)

Punch it Quinn! Let's see what that turbo's got left in it!

The player is prompted to hit the boost button, which sends them careening towards the finish line and well past the rig's speed tolerance.

After a beat, the afterburner abruptly cuts out, belching a cloud of black smoke in the process.

QUINN

(yelling)

I think I know what blew out the back on the starting line!

L33

Who needs a limiter when you're gonna win! We can make it!

Outcomes:

1st

Right after crossing the finish Quinn takes their hands off the controls and puts them straight in the air until the player steers again or until they and L33 do their signature we-just-won celebration.

Once everyone else has finished:

QUINN

(to Gya)

Hey look at that, no helmets, nooo problem.

L33

No helmets!

GYA

No more afterburner either huh?

MANU

That was some good racing, Quinn. You've gotten really good in the past few months. Maybe too good.

QUINN

Thanks Manu, we're trying over here.

L33

And oh how it *feels* good to be good.

2nd

Manu will come in first. While approaching the finish line:

QUINN

Come one...come on...

While crossing the finish:

QUINN (CONT'D)

Gah!

L33

Damn! And Manure wins again. Could have been worse, though.

QUINN

I guess.

L33

Wow second really isn't good enough for you is it?

QUINN
Second place is the first loser.

L33
Losers.

QUINN
(sighing)
Whatever.

3rd
Gya will come in second.

While crossing the finish line:

QUINN (CONT'D)
Dammit!

L33
Hey I thought we raced well. We're
even podium finishers!

QUINN
Great, can you point me towards the
podium?

L33
Oh uhh...

Beat.

L33 (CONT'D)
I think we passed it.

4th
They cross the finish in silence. Then:

L33 (CONT'D)
Hey you alright over there?

QUINN
I don't wanna talk about it.

L33
I thought we had some pretty good
moves in there, I mean-

QUINN
L33...

L33
Okay okay, you go ahead and feel
bad for yourself. Over there.

5th

As they cross the finish line, Quinn slams the side of the rig.

QUINN
Unbelievable!

Beat.

QUINN (CONT'D)
Even Korben beat us. What the hell is wrong with me?

L33
Hey... so we got unlucky. It's not like we don't race every day. Someone's gotta come in last.

QUINN
Yeah but this isn't a game of canommbak. Luck has nothing to do with it.

Then, regardless:

XAM
Safe House everyone?

QUINN
Why not?

KORBEN
You wanna race back?

L33
You're on.

QUINN
I dunno, Korben, you sure those plates are gonna stick around for the ride?

Korben inspects his rig and his side plates are indeed far more mobile than they should be.

The others are stretching, cleaning themselves up and getting ready to head back to town.

KORBEN
Damn, I knew something was off. Don't wait up for me y'all, I'll have this fixed in a sec.

GYA

Oh we weren't planning on it.

And the others leave, the player is asked to follow them back to town.

L33

Let's get after 'em.

About half-way to Safe House:

QUINN

You catch the Maelstrom Cup trials last night?

L33

Nah, I can't stay up that late when we do these evening races or I'd probably have passed out halfway through. What'd I miss?

QUINN

Manu's uncle made it into the qualifying rounds on S'akeen.

L33

Think he'll actually make it into the Cup this time around?

QUINN

Well from what Manu says the guy's basically been doing nothing but train for the past 5 years.

L33

So have we! Hey, we should send a comm to the Commissioner to tell him we're ready.

QUINN

(chuckling)
Oh I already did.

L33

Good, good. You hit him up for free travel too?

QUINN

Obviously. Also threw in that you'd be needing an arm cannon, just in case.

L33

Thanks for looking out. But I've got all the firepower I need right here.

L33 flexes his organic arm.

QUINN

Can't your other arm lift like fifteen times as much?

L33

Sure, but this one has fifteen million more nerve endings which means I won't crush it to bits by accident every other day.

QUINN

Fair enough I guess.

Beat.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Anyway, the rest of the trials were pretty good too. One of the pilots from Badoori had their rig explode which was pretty intense.

L33

No kidding, Badoori rigs are insane, that explosion must have been massive. Driver get out in time?

QUINN

Yeah, just barely. Pretty impressive too because she started to fly as it was about to explode so she was able to ride the updraft on those massive wings Badoori have.

L33

Holy shit. I'll have to see if Esheck still has the broadcast or something.

QUINN

He'll have it. He's been saving those broadcasts for decades. I'm just hoping he and Hool have afterburners in stock...

The sun's gone down and the rigs' headlights blaze the way to town, a flicker of light on the horizon.

Once there, only one place is open...

E/I. SAFE HOUSE - NIGHT

Rigs can be heard slowing down, idling, and shutting off as they park outside Safe House and begin walking in. The player parks their rig nearby and is instructed to exit the vehicle for the first time.

They're pointed to the entrance to Safe House.

Once they enter, their next objective is to take a seat at the bar.

Once seated, we enter a sequence in which they can look around and various speakers, but cannot get back up.

Safe House is a garage/storage space/junkyard with a bar worked in. Behind the bar, a wide opening leads to the garage proper, and next to the bar is an opening with a conveyor belt leading from one space to the other.

The rest of the racers are sitting down at the long bar, behind which is ESHECK, 58, getting a few drinks together with his many arms. Save the racers, the place is empty.

ESHECK

Good to see everyone's back in one piece. How'd it go out there tonight? Korben keep his rig together this time?

KORBEN

(walking in)

Just had my plates come a bit loose, it's really not that big a deal guys.

MANU

It is if they fall off.

L33

Not like there'd be anyone behind him for them to hit though!

The group chuckles.

KORBEN

You're one to talk.

L33
Oh?

QUINN
Guys...

KORBEN
I remember when you used to race,
there's a reason you're just a
spotter now.

L33
You shut your f-

ESHECK
So! Can someone tell me who won so
I can get them something to drink?

If the player won:

QUINN
That'd be us, Esheck.

ESHECK
And here I bought extra slab
thinking it'd be Manu again, ha!

L33
Oof, I'm not going near that stuff
tonight, I'll just take a pull of
red, mixed.

QUINN
Make that two, Ill take the worm
too if it's still in there.

ESHECK
Let me see...

Esheck lifts one of the draft handles, pulling up a canister
of saffron colored liquid.

ESHECK (CONT'D)
Doesn't look like it, kid. Better
luck next time!

Esheck slides the canister back in and pulls it twice,
filling two glasses. He grabs two brittle looking tan sticks,
stirs them into each drink, and passes them to Quinn and L33.

MANU
I'll still take some slab, friend.

Manu slides a coin across the bar.

If Manu won:

MANU (CONT'D)

I'll have the usual, Eshseck.

ESHECK

Should have guessed. You all need to show this kid what's what. Maybe I'll have to drag my arms out there and do it for you! Ha!

MANU

I'd love to see you try, you old coot.

ESHECK

One of these days you will! And you'll regret it big time! Haha!

Then, regardless:

ESHECK (CONT'D)

I'll get that slab ready then, just have to unpack the crate some. Be back in a shake or two.

Esheck passes into the garage through the arch behind the bar and disappears.

Gya is sitting next to the player and is shooting her eyes all over the place. After a moment she speaks up, seemingly giddy.

GYA

Hohoho, guess who just got a message from Orlander?

L33

(to Quinn)

Why does anyone say that when they could just say "Hey, I got a message from Orlander"?

KORBEN

You did?

GYA

No, Kor. I did. He said they're racing down in the Basin later tonight and want us to show some face.

Gya's eyes and overall appearance relax as she disengages from her integrated comms interface (ICI).

GYA (CONT'D)

He said they "wanted some fresh meat to burn".

XAM

Eww what the hell? Orlander is so gross sometimes. You gonna go?

GYA

Absolutely.

Beat.

XAM

Oh wait really? Even I'm not so sure about this one.

GYA

It's not often we get to race anyone other than each other. I've been dying for a little variety around here and I'm not going to turn my nose up at the first chance I get for something different.

MANU

She's got a point there, I'm definitely in.

KORBEN

Why not? Quinn? L33?

L33 poses his first question in his normal voice, but each sequential "Quinn?" is in a new voice.

L33

Quinn? Quinn? Quiiiiiiiin? Quinn
Quinn Quinn?

QUINN

I don't know about this one. The Basin? At night? I'm just as bored around here as anyone else, but it doesn't seem like a great idea...

Esheck returns with a black crate of Slab. In a spare arm he carries HOOL, 142, a small but dense-looking non-human who is the town mechanic and parts dealer.

HOOL

If Quinn thinks it's a bad idea, whatever it is you're talking about, then it's probably a horrible, horrible idea.

The pair arrive at the bar and Hool jumps down onto a stool opposite the racers.

Esheck sets about preparing the slab. He grabs a jet black rectangle from the crate, places it in a press, squeezes down on it, and funnels the dark and now steaming liquid into a large mug. He passes it down to Manu.

QUINN

Thanks, Hool.

ESHECK

So, what's the idea?

GYA

Orlander challenged us to race him and his crew out at the Basin tonight.

HOOL

That *is* a horrible idea. I sincerely advise that you not attend that race.

GYA

Well I need to get out and race someone other than these losers.

The rest of the group begins to banter with one another at Gya's jab. After a beat the previously inert frame of a large holo-projector in the corner of the space flickers to life.

ESHECK

Hey shut it you hooligans! Looks like the MRC's sending out a special broadcast.

L33

(to Quinn)

Does he have that thing wired to only display MRC casts?

Quinn shrugs their shoulders as Esheck turns up the volume on the holo-projector.

A dashing humanoid alien with ash-blue skin and amber eyes, JORU SAAK, 52, Commissioner of the Maelstrom Racing Commission (MRC) is standing on the deck of an impressive looking star-cruiser.

*** THE FINAL CHASE, MANY MOONS LATER ***

The following takes place at the end of the game as the final playable sequence.

INT. HULL OF MECHANIL 5 TEAM SHUTTLE - SUNSET

CUTSCENE

Quinn, L33, Drea, Obin, and Gardera hurtle through Talacan's atmosphere.

Punching through the clouds, they spot Joru's command frigate, and in the distance, smoke.

GARDERA

Thalan...

As they get closer to the smoke we spot a posse of MRC enforcers leaving Cantial after having ransacked the now-burning M5 HQ and making off with evidence that could topple the Maelstrom Racing Commission and Joru Saak.

DREA

There they are! We're gonna have to drop in.

L33 looks from Drea to the rigs, then back to Drea. The vehicles are facing the front of the shuttle, but the loading bay ramp opens from the rear.

L33

Backwards??

DREA

(grinning)

It's easier than you'd think. Just remember to punch it while you're falling.

QUINN

Holy shit.

DREA

Obin, lower the loading platform on my mark!

OBIN

Got it!

DREA

Gardera, bring us in as low as you can right behind those bastards.

GARDERA
Will do, Cap.

Drea puts on her helmet and flicks on the transmitter.

DREA
(over transmitter)
And G, once we're down, circle back
for Thalan in town.

Beat.

DREA (CONT'D)
Hopefully he didn't get any heroic
ideas at the last minute.

L33 gives Quinn a nervous look as the two clamber into their rig. Drea gets into her own with a lithe jump. Obin moves to a large lever at the opposite side of the bay, hand at the ready.

PLAYABLE

DREA (CONT'D)
Start her up! Ready...

Player starts their rig.

DREA (CONT'D)
Pull it, Obin! Quinn, follow my
lead!

Obin pulls the lever and the landing ramp opens. Light pierces the loading bay.

DREA (CONT'D)
For Togue!

She punches it and her rig jerks backwards off the ramp and into the billowing dust behind.

Player reverses, and off the ramp they go.

	QUINN	L33
Hold on!		Ahhhhh!!!

As they hit the ground, they maintain forward momentum from the shuttle and can easily follow Drea as she makes for Joru's enforcers. In the distance, Joru's ship looms like a mountain.

L33 (CONT'D)
 We gotta catch up! If they get to
 the frigate before we stop them
 it's over!

Beat.

L33 (CONT'D)
 Punch it!

As soon as the player uses their boost for the first time it stays on permanently for the rest of the sequence. However, even if the rig begins to lose parts, it does not slow down.

QUINN
 Ah shit!

L33
 What?!

QUINN
 Afterburner's jammed, it won't cut
 off!

L33
 Ah *shit!*

Beat.

L33 (CONT'D)
 Well don't pretend like you weren't
 gonna floor it anyway!

As they catch up to Drea:

DREA
 There's a lot of 'em. I'd guess the
 runner in second position has the
 intel. Hell of a rig they're in
 too. I'm gonna slow those assholes
 down. Get up alongside him and grab
 the disc. Take him out if you have
 to.

QUINN
 Copy that! And good luck.

DREA
 Don't need it, but thanks anyway,
 kid.

Drea's rig finds another gear and shoots forward.

L33
Highlighting second rider.

The targeted rider takes on a red outline.

QUINN
Got it. Let's do this.

Player must weave their way through the other enforcers and make it to the head of the pack.

Once near the front, they see Drea make some ground ahead of the rest of them. Time slows. She pops her handbrake and swerves sideways in front of the lead enforcer. The enforcer tries to swerve around but doesn't quite make it, clipping the end of Drea's rig and launching itself into a cloud of dust, smoke, and fire.

The player passes the wreck still in slow-motion, it's not pretty. Once they're past it, we resume normal speeds.

QUINN (CONT'D)
Drea!

DREA
(through static)
Just get the damn disc! Get the-

Her voice is cut off by the sound of another explosion.

QUINN
No!

L33
Quinn we gotta focus! He's getting away!

The second enforcer was slowed, but managed to escape the wreck in front of them in one piece.

A crackling sound comes over the transmitter, followed by an all too familiar voice.

JORU
(laughing)
You got what you deserved, Drea Arnok.

QUINN
Joru!

JORU
And I'll see you two in hell.

The rig ahead spools up with a long whine.

L33

Quinn!

QUINN

I see him, dammit, I'm working on it.

Joru's rig finishes spooling and hurtles off in a strange silence. A clap of the sound barrier breaking sounds off a moment later.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Shit!

L33

Quinn I'm gonna pull the limiter!
Brace!

QUINN

Wait that'll blow us-

With a mechanical shunt the rig lurches and slows for a beat, then launches forward in a burst of speed unlike anything the player's experienced yet. A moment later and a crack of thunder tells us we're now moving faster than the speed of sound.

Joru's rig comes into view, the frigate ahead is getting larger.

Slowly but surely Joru's rig gets closer and closer, the dust cloud in its wake shrinks.

The player pulls up alongside Joru and there's a crack of a slug launcher followed by the ricochet of the round bouncing off the rig's side panel.

L33

Fuck's sake! Ram him Quinn!

More rounds make contact with the rig, and the player must slam into the side of Joru's rig three times. With each slam they lose some ground and have to catch back up. Joru's rig begins to smoke more and more, but so does their own.

After the first slam.

JORU

You crazy son of a bitch you'll
kill us both!

L33
Hit him again!

After the second slam.

QUINN
Eat shit, Joru!

L33
It's working! One more should do
it.

Beat.

L33 (CONT'D)
Unless we blow up first!

With the third slam Joru's rig wobbles then rapidly falls out of alignment. In an instant its nose hits the dirt and disappears from view as we continue to hurtle forward. Quinn and L33 share a cheer.

L33 (CONT'D)
We got him! We fucking got him!

QUINN
L33 I've got no breaks! I can't
stop! How the hell do we stop?!

And indeed the break button does nothing. Even letting go of the controller itself won't slow the thing down, though the player can steer in a limited capacity.

L33
I've got an idea.

L33 holds up his mechanical arm and a flat metal blade snicks out of it.

QUINN
What are you gonna do?

L33
You don't wanna know!

QUINN
L33!

L33 jams his arm into the heart of the rig and there's a loud hiss as a liquid of some kind shoots from the heart of the machine. They begin to slow as the sound of the engine winds down, coughing and sputtering.

L33 screams in pain as he pulls his mechanical arm back. There's nothing left but a red-hot stump of biometal slag.

The rig continues to lose speed, but is increasingly hard to steer. The player can counter its kicks for a few moments, but eventually it becomes too much, and they lose control.

The rig swerves and abruptly begins to roll sidelong for what seems like an eternity. It's ugly. It hits a dune and skips up, then lands hard.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. TALACAN DESERT - DUSK

CUTSCENE

From a great distance we see the whole string of events winking in the dark. Cantial bright red and orange with spreading flames, another, smaller fire spewing blue-black smoke from Drea's wreck, more smoking wrecks of other enforcers, Joru, and Quinn and L33. The frigate stands over all.

INT. MECHANIL 5 TEAM SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

GARDERA

Oh no. Oh no no no.

THALAN

Let's get down there.

EXT. TALACAN DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

PLAYABLE

QUINN

(groaning)

L33?

Beat.

QUINN (CONT'D)

L33? Where are you?

L33

Right behind you, dummy.

Quinn staggers to their feet. Their left arm hangs limp at their side. Player must go to L33 and help them up.

Beyond them the M5 shuttle lands.

QUINN
L33, I can't feel my arm.

L33
Me neither, pal.

L33 holds up their melted stub of an arm and the two share a tired laugh.

Gardera, Obin, and Thalan run up.

GARDERA
Quinn, L33 are you two ok?

QUINN
Not really, but yeah. Ok enough.
Did Drea make it?

The others slump. Obin shakes his head. Quinn falls back to the ground.

L33
What about Joru?

THALAN
Wait, Joru's here?

OBIN
I heard it all over the comms.
Yeah. He was, anyway. Not much left
of him now.

QUINN
So the evidence is...?

GARDERA
Right here.

Gardera holds up a battered looking holo-disc case.

GARDERA (CONT'D)
Beat to all hell, but Thalan should
be able to get the intel off.
Right?

THALAN
Can't make any promises, but yeah.
Probably.

OBIN
Come on, let's get the hell out of
here.

Gardera, Obin, and Thalan help up Quinn and L33 and the five of them stumble back to the ship.

FADE TO BLACK.

EPILOGUE

TBD...