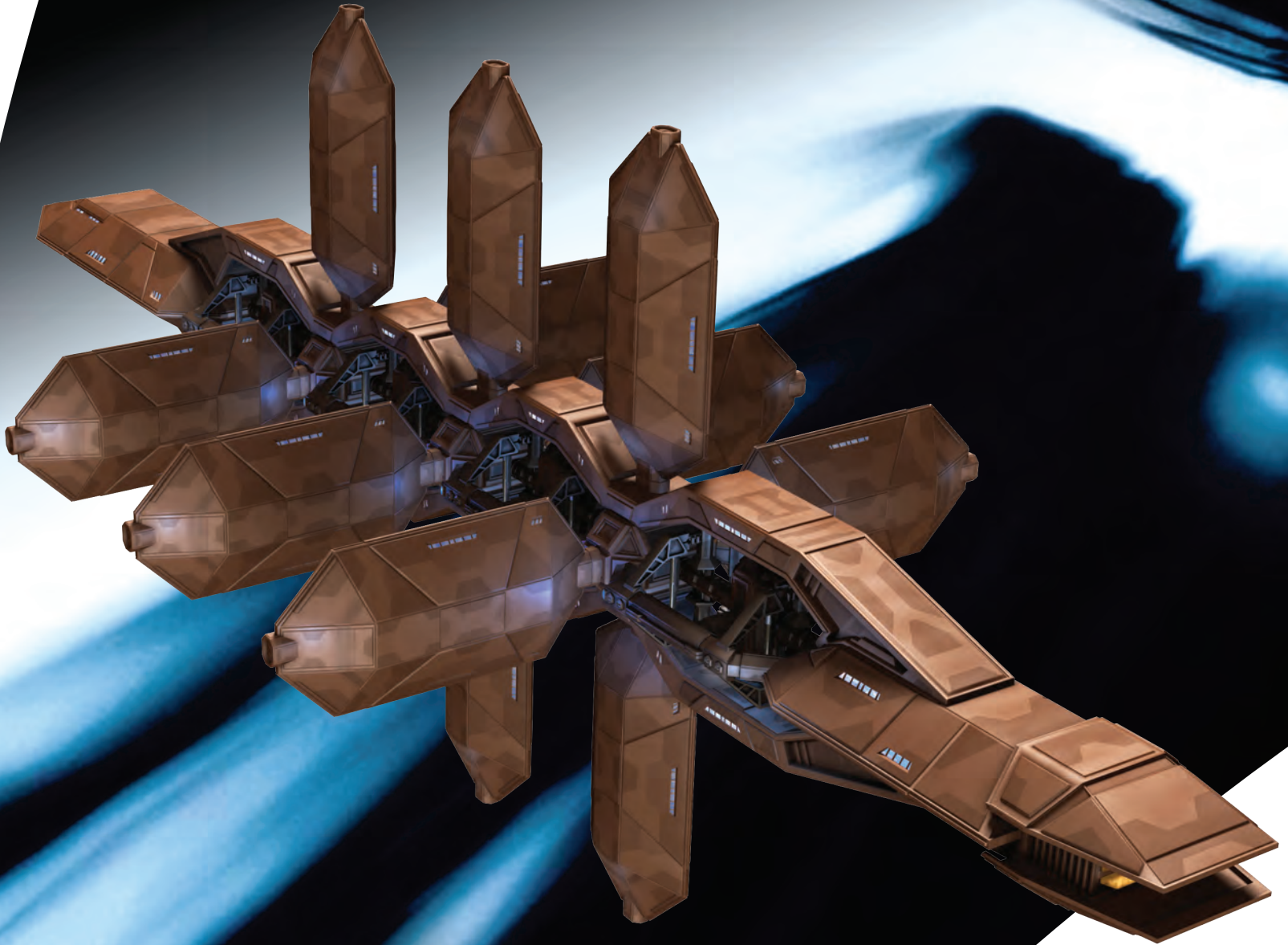


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SULIBAN FREIGHTER

TYPE: FREIGHTER

IN USE: 22nd CENTURY

LENGTH: 55 METERS

WEAPONRY: MINIMAL

SULIBAN FREIGHTER

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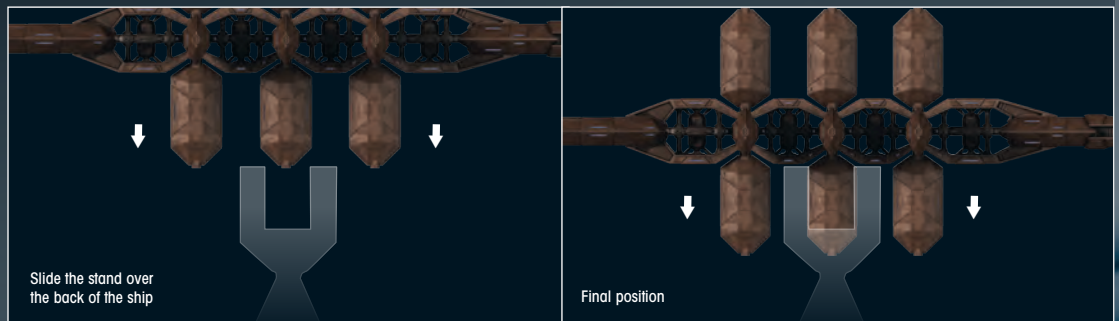
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SULIBAN FREIGHTER

SPECIFICATION



OPERATED BY: THE SULIBAN

TYPE: CARGO SHIP

IN OPERATION: 22ND CENTURY

LENGTH: 55 METERS (APPROX.)

PROPULSION: WARP AND IMPULSE

WEAPONRY: MINIMAL

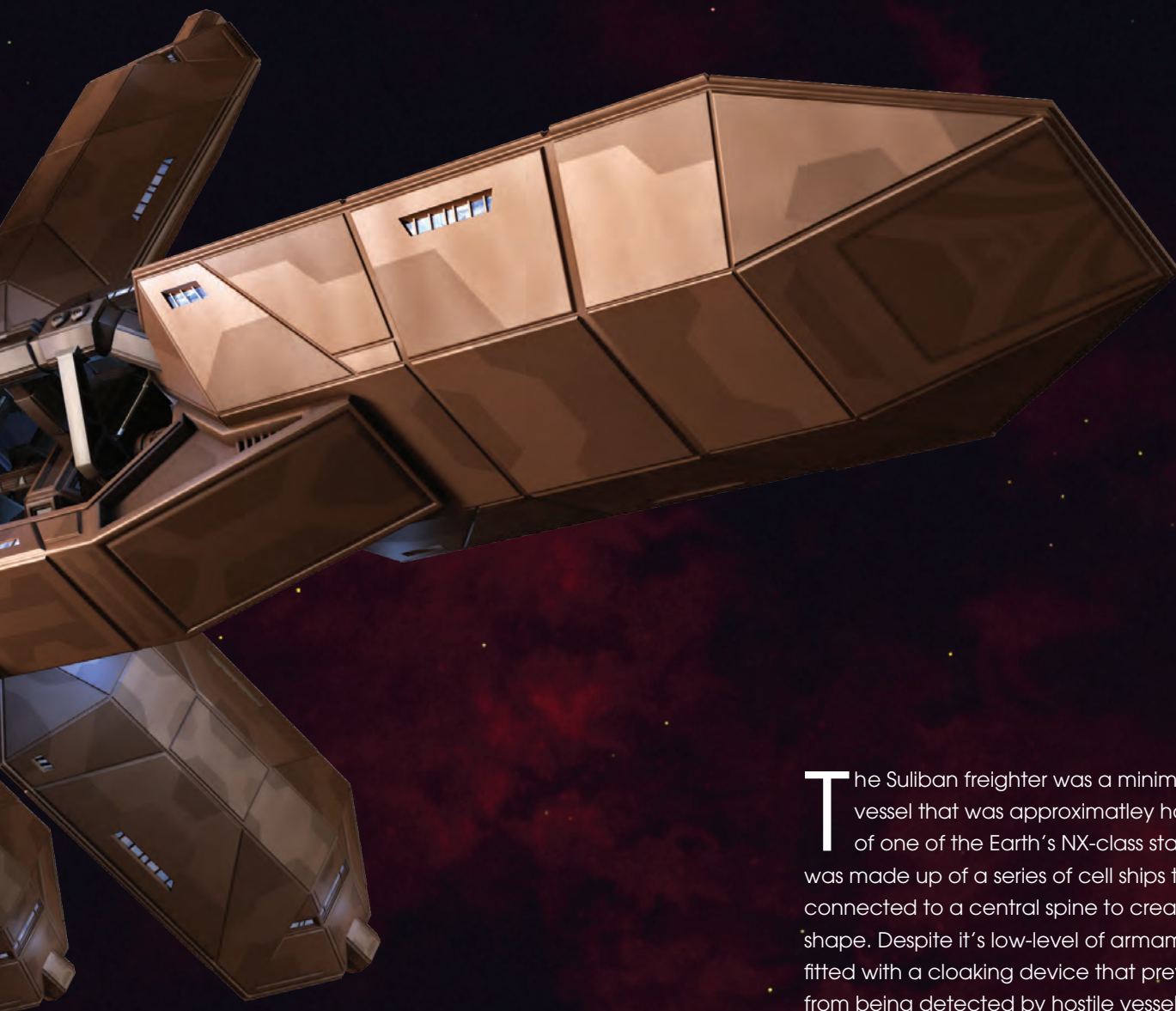




SULIBAN

FREIGHTER

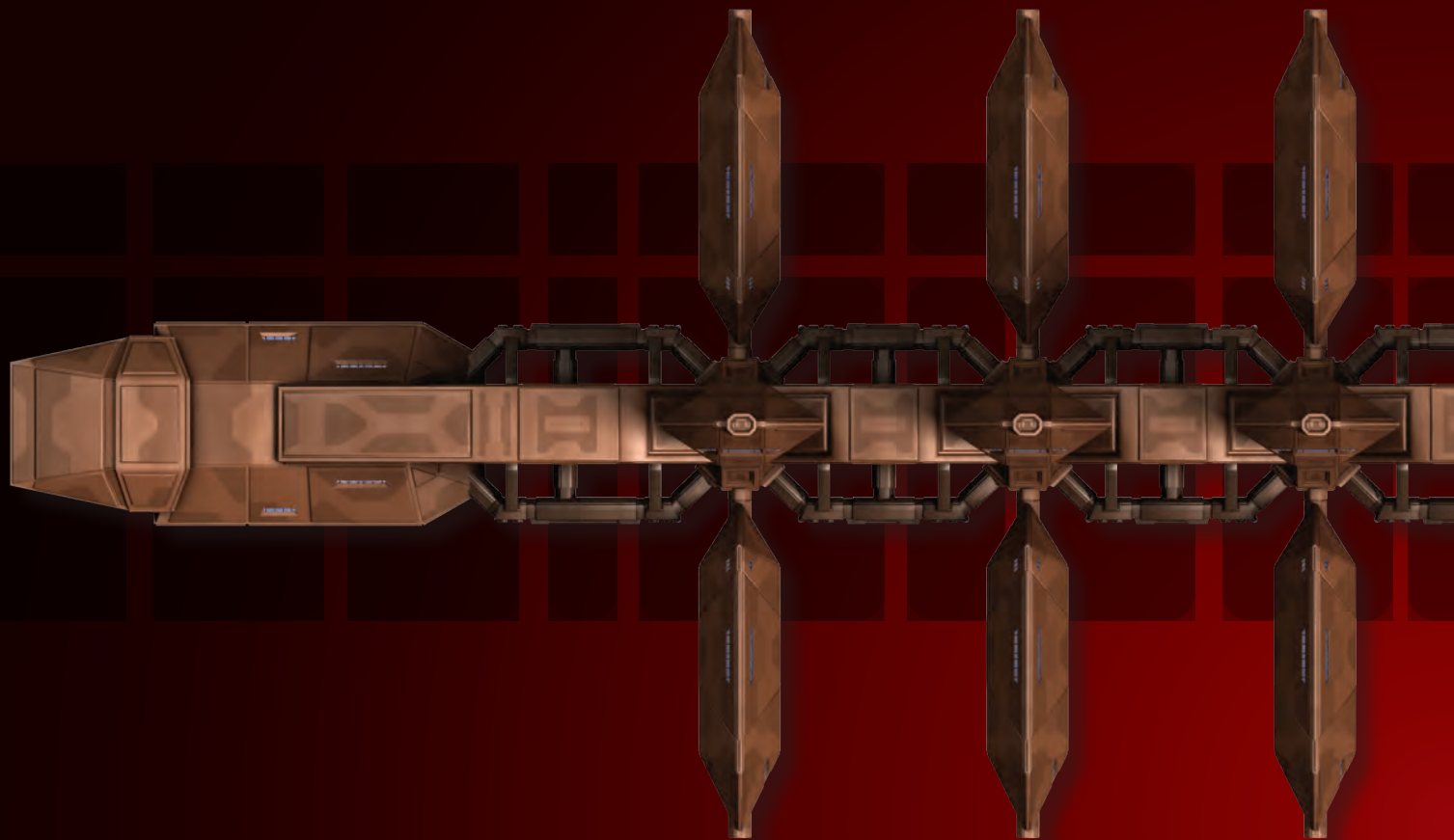
The Suliban operated lightly armed freighters that were equipped with cloaking devices.

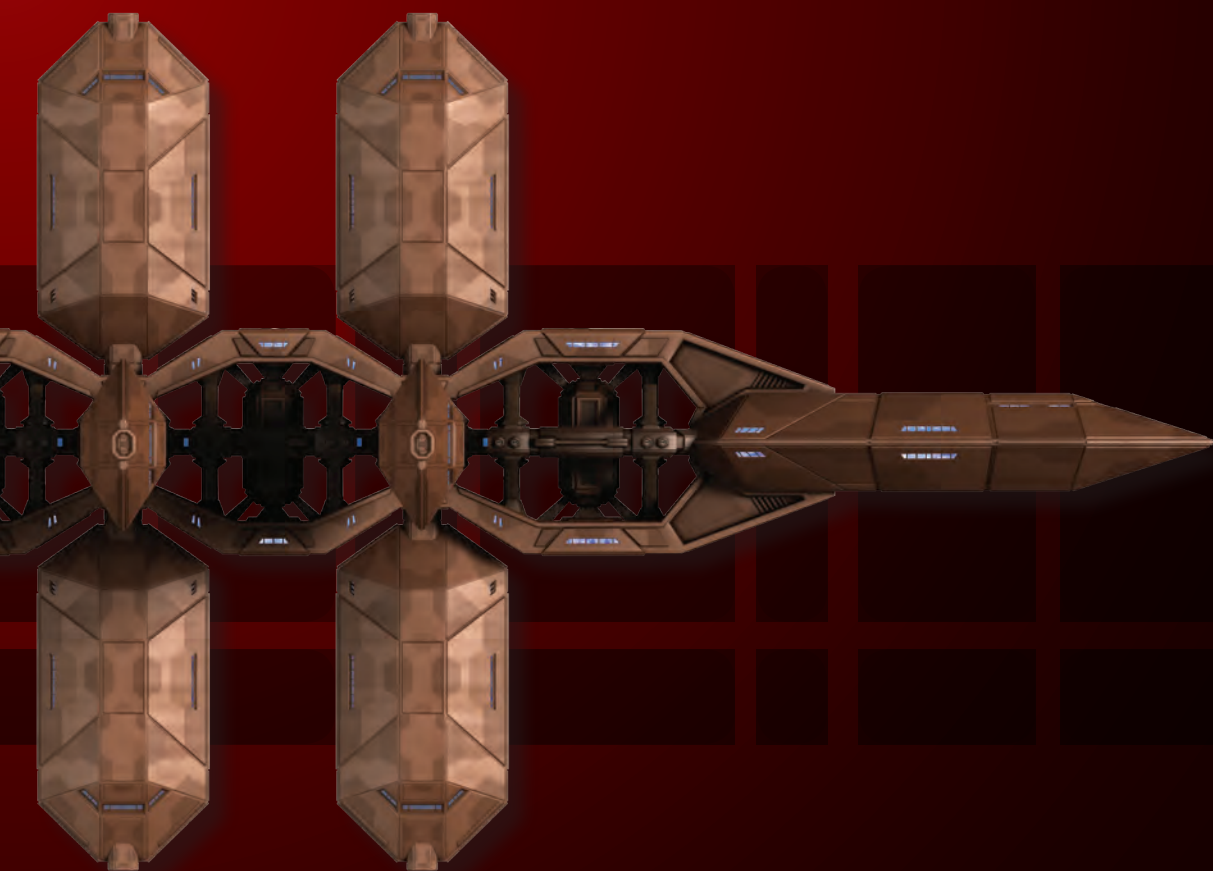


The Suliban freighter was a minimally armed vessel that was approximately half the size of one of the Earth's NX-class starships. It was made up of a series of cell ships that were connected to a central spine to create a cross shape. Despite its low-level of armaments, it was fitted with a cloaking device that prevented it from being detected by hostile vessels. It was also fitted with transporters. Vessels of this kind were also used for recovering salvage, following up on reports from cell ships.

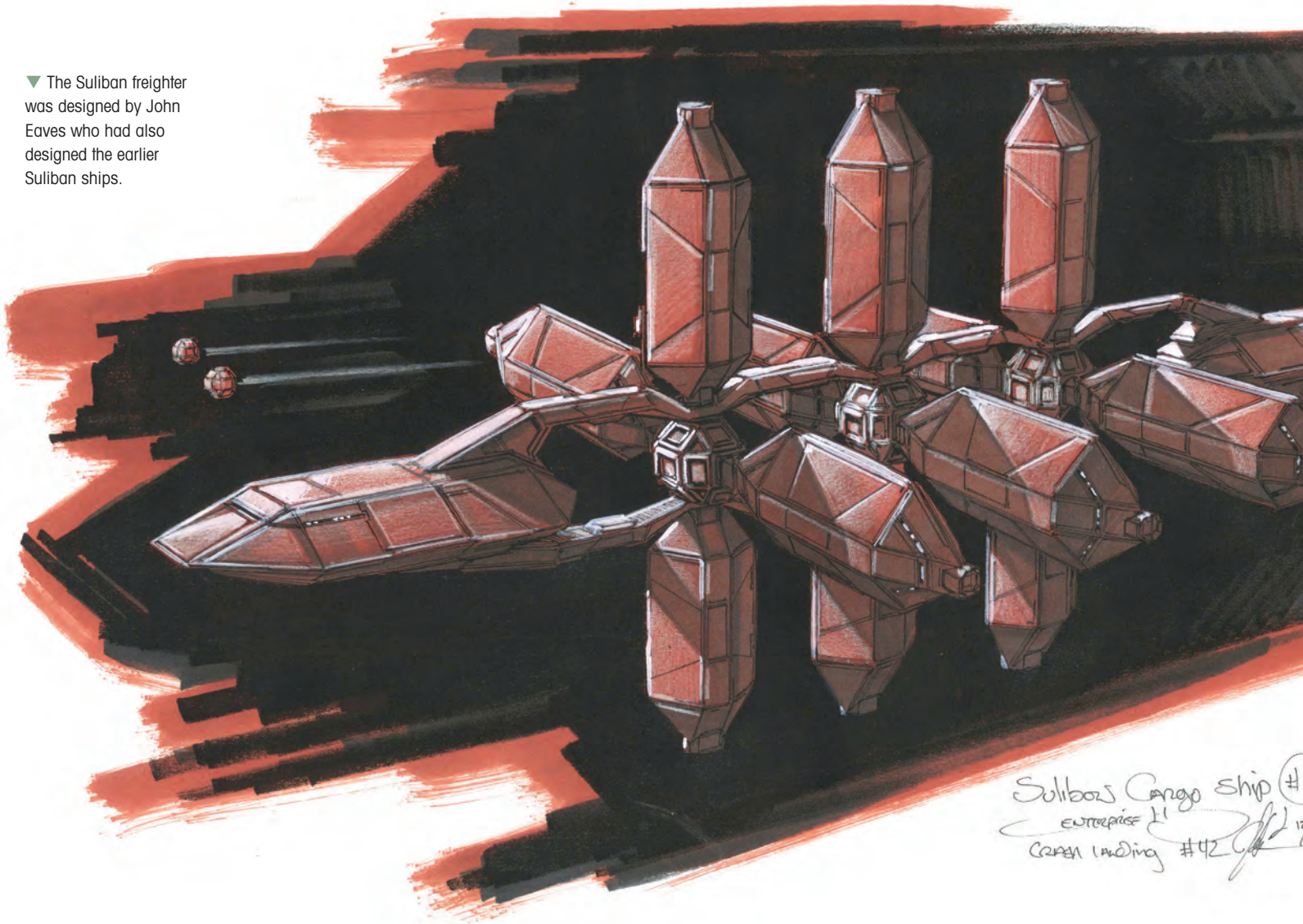


► The crew of the *Enterprise* NX-01 encountered a freighter when they both laid claim to a mysterious ship that appeared to be from the future. The commander of the Suliban ship claimed it was salvage that had been detected by a Suliban cell ship.





▼ The Suliban freighter was designed by John Eaves who had also designed the earlier Suliban ships.



DESIGNING THE

SULIBAN FREIGHTER

The Suliban freighter was made up of existing ships that were combined in new and interesting ways.

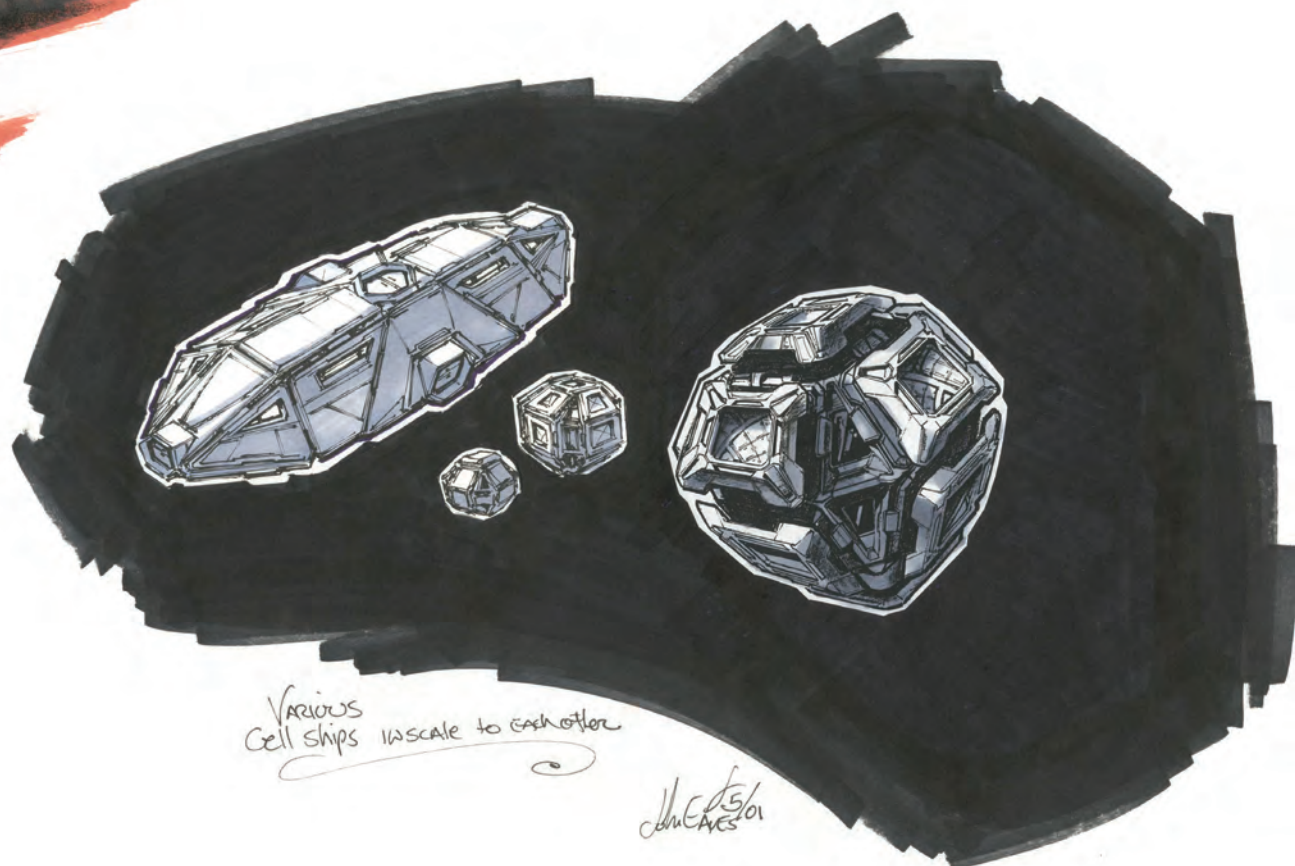
The Suliban ships had always been designed to be modular. The idea was that small cell ships would combine with one another to create something larger. In *ENTERPRISE*'s pilot, that had manifested itself in the form of a massive helix that was made up of hundreds of smaller cell ships. So, when

concept artist John Eaves saw that the script for 'Future Tense' called for a Suliban freighter, he pulled out his drawings of the existing cell ships to see how he could use them. As he explains, the cell ships came in two shapes, "There's one I always think of as being like a STOP sign. Then the other one is

more of a lozenge shape."

Since the Suliban's ships were modular, his first thought was that the Suliban freighter would basically be a frame that was then filled up with the smaller ships, which would carry the cargo. He produced two concepts that worked along these lines. In the first

▼ Eaves started work by looking at the existing designs for Suliban ships. His idea was that the freighter would combine them to make a new ship.

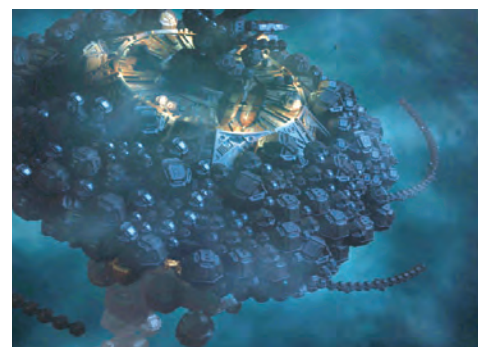


concept a single 'spherical' cell ship became the head unit, while the back part of the ship was made up of the lozenge-shaped versions. The second concept was much wider and had lozenge-shaped ships stacked on either side of a central frame.

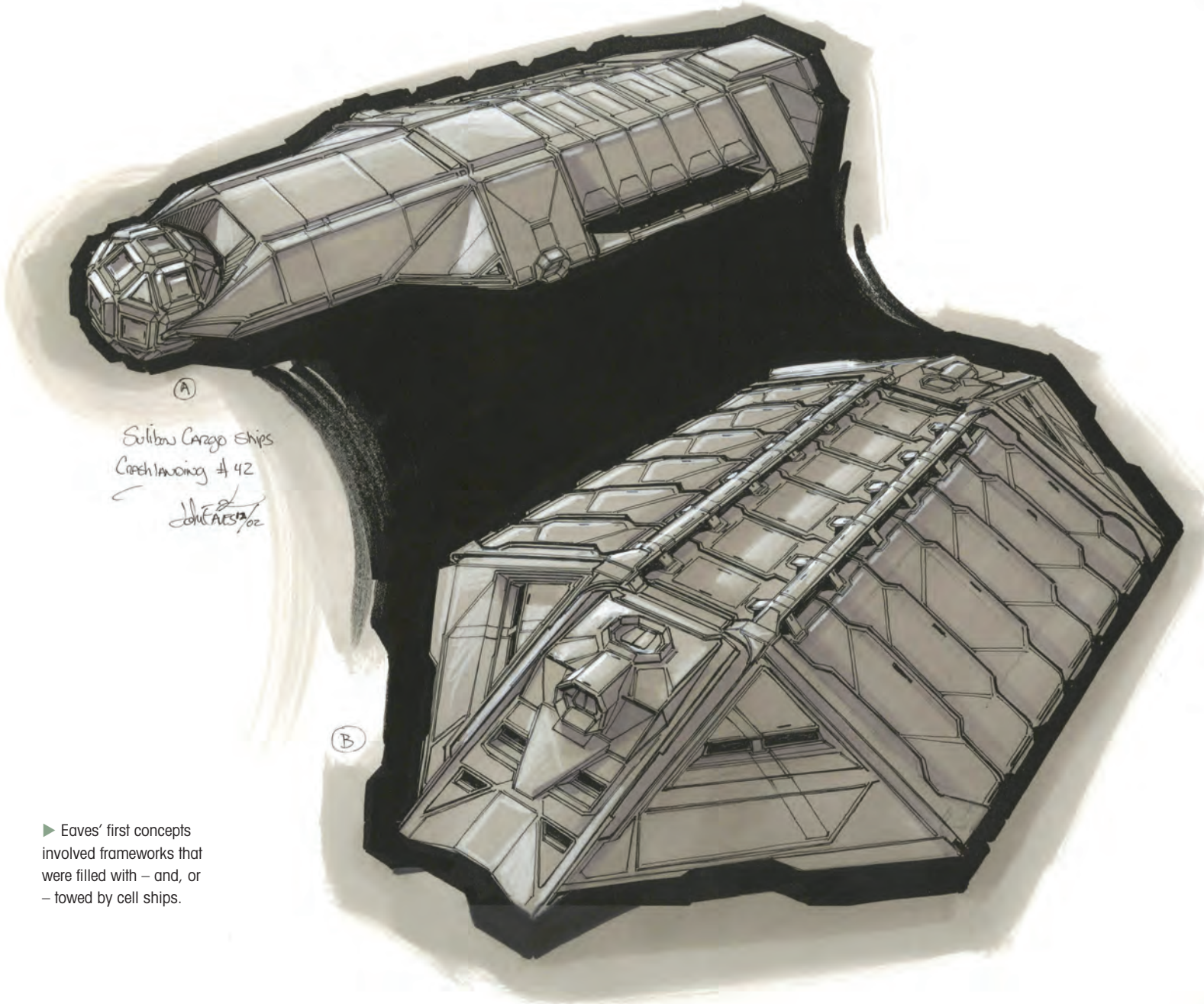
These drawings went to the producers, but they were rejected. "They wanted something more like the conventional freighters we'd seen," Eaves says, "like the *ECS Fortunate*. They asked for a

truck that was hauling stuff. That was always how we seemed to go with freighters, right back to the Cardassian one I did for *DEEP SPACE NINE*. That works out well because you can immediately see it's a freighter."

For the next round of drawings Eaves produced an open framework with a head unit and a long spine that supported a series of cargo modules. He abandoned the idea of using the existing cell ships in favor of more



▲ Eaves thought about making the ship by combining the existing cell ships, which was something that had been done for the Suliban helix in 'Broken Bow.'



► Eaves' first concepts involved frameworks that were filled with – and, or – towed by cell ships.

conventional cargo units. “I gave them the little docking ports that are on all the Suliban ships. As long as I had that and the Suliban color, I figured I could do what I wanted.”

However, when Eaves presented this design, the producers told him they felt the pendulum had swung too far.

“They thought that looked too spindly and was too far away from the other Suliban designs,” he remembers. “So they asked me to look back at the helix

and make it look more Suliban.”

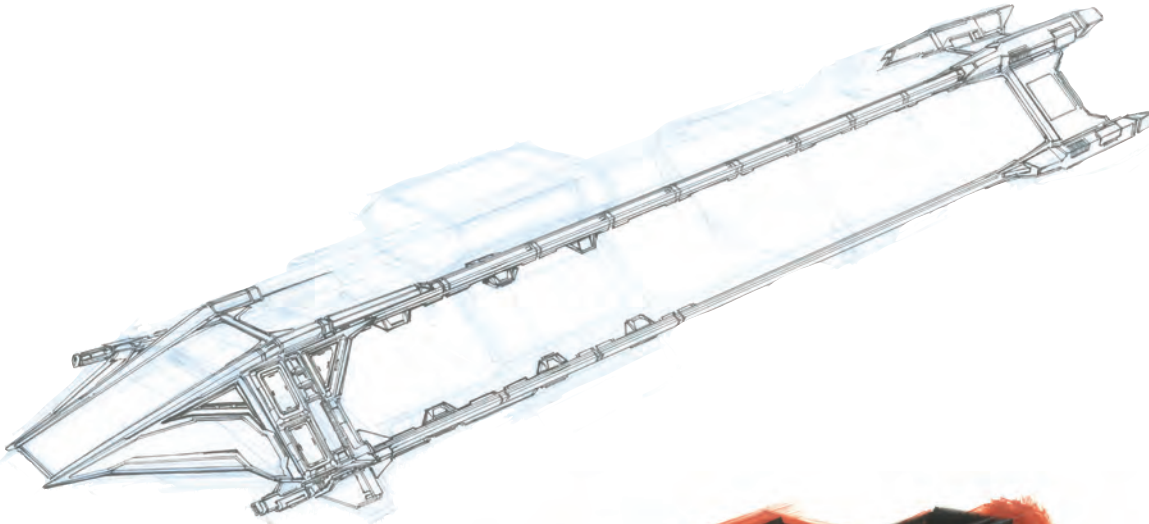
The fourth concept that Eaves produced used a series of the lozenge shaped ships which were connected to one another in a cross with the ‘spherical’ cell ships in the middle. The whole thing was held together by a frame that created a spine.

“I actually did a sketch where they were ‘helixed’ a little bit,” Eaves laughs, “but it started to look real complicated and I remembered how long it took to

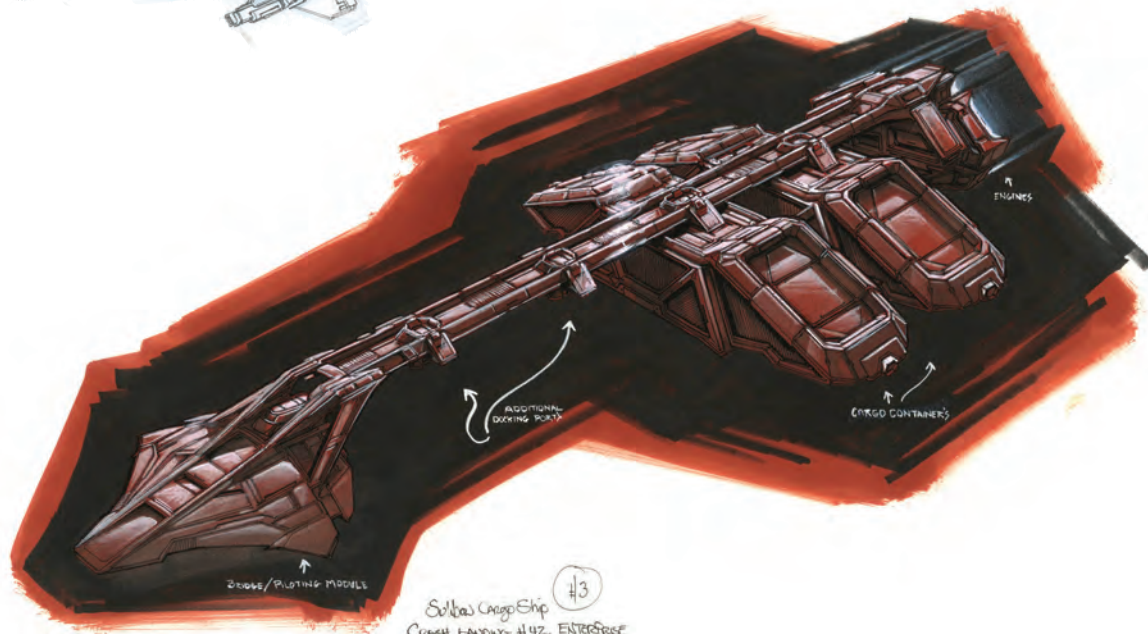
get the helix approved so I opted out of that pretty quickly!”

Eaves then passed his sketch on to Eden FX, where the model was built by Pierre Drolet. At this point the design underwent some major revisions, as the VFX team eliminated the cell ships in the middle that held everything together.

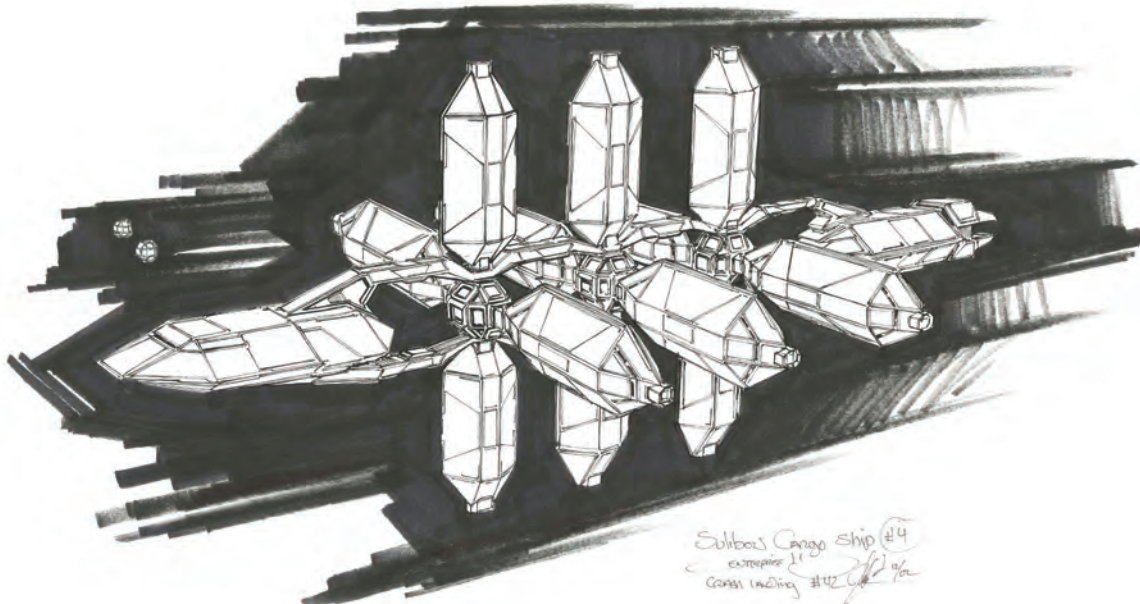
“There was quite a bit of difference between my drawing and the version that appeared on screen, but what they came up with looked pretty cool.”



◀ After the initial design was rejected, Eaves looked at a more conventional style of freighter, with an open frame that would contain pods.



◀ Eaves suggested using the established Suliban color scheme so that it was obvious who was operating the ship.



◀ For the final design, Eaves reverted to something that combined the cell ships. In this version, there were 'spherical' cell ships running through the center.



FUTURE TENSE

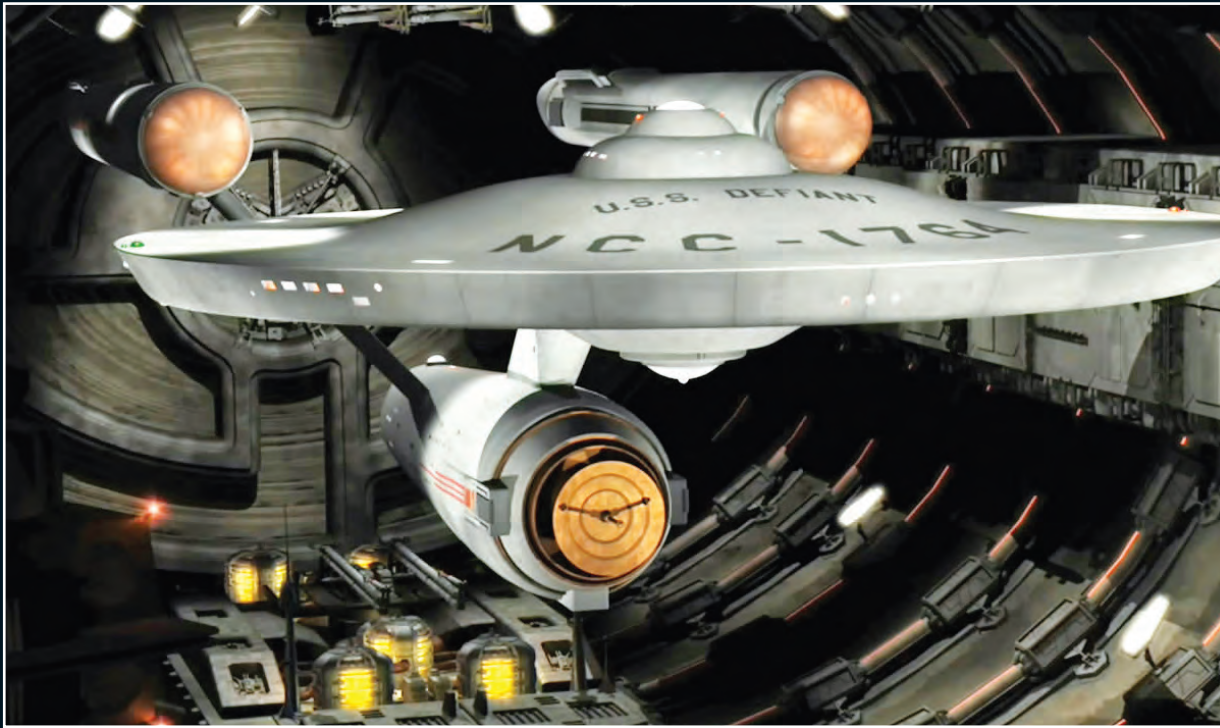
In ENTERPRISE's second season the crew encounter a mysterious ship from the distant future, but in the first pitch that ship was very familiar.

THE SULIBAN FREIGHTER makes its first appearance in the episode 'Future Tense,' a story that is peripherally part of *ENTERPRISE*'s temporal cold war storyline. The episode was written by Mike Sussman, who reveals that when he first came up with the idea, it had very definite ties to the original series. "The *U.S.S. Defiant* disappeared in 'The Tholian Web,'" he explains. "It went into 'interphase' and nobody knows where it went. What if it went back in time to the 22nd century? My idea was that the *Defiant* would appear in Archer's time, and it would be up to Archer to keep it out of the hands of the 22nd century Tholians, who would want to reverse-engineer it and get all the future technology out of it. Meanwhile, Archer and the

gang would get some tantalizing glimpses of their own future. Ultimately, the *Defiant* would be taken away by the time police before anybody really got their hands on it and it contaminated the timeline too much."

Sussman worked up the idea into a rough story outline, which he pitched to executive producer Brannon Braga. "Brannon said 'It's a cool idea, but it doesn't really work,'" Sussman recalls. "He had two concerns: one, if Archer sees and boards a double of Captain Kirk's ship isn't that going to cause problems for continuity? The other point, which I kind of disagreed with, was that if you were going to see a *Constitution*-class ship he thought the audience would want it to be the *U.S.S. Enterprise*."

▲ In the episode 'Future Tense' Archer and his crew are amazed to discover that the future pilot had human and Vulcan DNA. In the 22nd century this was almost unthinkable, but of course, the audience know what is coming.



◀ Mike Sussman's original idea for the episode was that when the *U.S.S. Defiant* had fallen into interphase in the original series, it had fallen through time and emerged in the 22nd century. At the time, Brannon Braga rejected the idea, but it was revived in the fourth season for the two-part story 'In a Mirror, Darkly.'

"To be honest," Sussman continues, "it would have been incredibly expensive to produce – on the scale of 'Trials and Tribble-ations.' So Brannon said, you can't make this a TOS ship. I was like 'Yeah, you're absolutely right.' Then Brannon suggested making it another ship – a time ship from the 31st century."

TEMPORAL COLD WAR

Sussman went back and reworked the story. "We had the notion of time travel but had to work out how the temporal cold war could play into that," he recalls. "That was the starting point for this but there wasn't a grand plan for the Temporal Cold War that we would have to fit into. It wasn't a case of 'Gosh, we need another temporal cold war storyline.' It was more, 'We're doing 26 of these a year,' which is unheard of in today's TV landscape, 'have you got any ideas for stories?'"

His original idea would have revolved around the joy of seeing elements from the original series, now he focused on where the ship was from. That mystery extended to its pilot, whose charred corpse Archer finds at the controls. When Phlox examines the body, he declares that it is essentially human, but also has DNA from a number of different species, including Vulcan.

"This was part of a deepening mystery," Sussman says. "It put the regular *STAR TREK* viewer

a little ahead of Archer, Phlox and T'Pol, which I liked. We had Archer reacting with shock at the idea that this mostly human person had Vulcan DNA. And according to Phlox, this Vulcan ancestor would have gone back a couple of hundred years. It was a way to get out some very interesting exposition. The audience is already thinking, 'This is somebody from the future' even though Archer and T'Pol aren't sure yet. I loved that."

It also gave Sussman the opportunity to clarify some things about the 22nd-century relationship between humans and Vulcans.

"I always wanted to explore whether there had been any other Vulcan/human hybrids," he says.

▼ Braga could see problems if Archer visited a *Constitution*-class ship, but he liked the idea and suggested that instead of the *U.S.S. Defiant*, the *Enterprise* encountered a 31st-century ship.





▲ In the revised story, the Enterprise crew brought a small ship onboard. After they cut their way in, they find a charred pilot sitting at the controls.

"I thought maybe this was kind of an interesting place to establish that no, it's kind of been impossible: Vulcans and human aren't readily compatible when it comes to mating. Which makes Spock and the other hybrids we see in the future, all the more interesting. It also gave me some fun moments for T'pol and Archer as they discuss the possibility of humans and Vulcans reproducing and where would that go. Again, the audience is way ahead. We're already thinking about Spock. So it was kind of a subtle nod to the future that the viewer knows is coming although the characters are in the dark about it."

▼ At one point, Sussman suggested that a version of the mystery pilot appeared to retrieve his own body, leaving the crew deeply perplexed.

BIGGER ON THE INSIDE

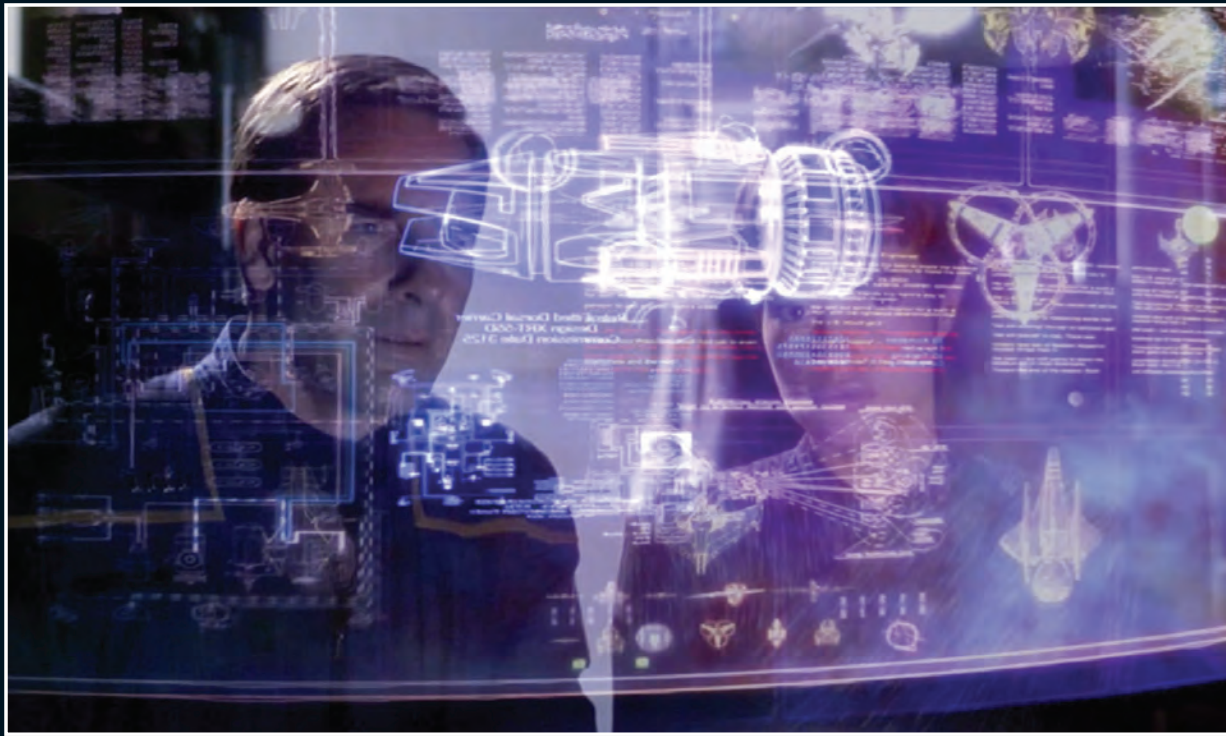
The other new element was the ship from the future. The writing staff decided that it shouldn't look like anything that had been seen before, and should have some incredible capabilities

thanks to a certain amount of weird advanced technology that would alter history if the Suliban or the Tholians got hold of it. The nature of that technology was a little vague. Sussman thought they could give it bio-neural circuitry and say that it could reach warp 21. But he was concerned that apart from referring to these things in dialogue there was nothing about the ship that would make the viewers think, 'Oh this is cool. We haven't seen this on *STAR TREK* before'

"I was writing the scene where they're exploring the ship," Sussman recalls. "They were finding very boring, dry technical reasons to explain how advanced the ship was. I began thinking, 'What if it was bigger on the inside than it was on the outside?' That was certainly something we hadn't seen on *STAR TREK* before. It was just me, out of desperation, trying to come up with some cool technology for the ship to have that the viewer would think was cool. That evolved into a fun scene where they drop a wrench into a hatch they find and they don't realize how far it goes. And then they're climbing down and then it became a cute little 'Doctor Who' homage. I think that wasn't over the top but that's where that came from."

Sussman was able to use an element from the first season to definitively answer the question of where the ship had come from. In 'Shockwave' the time-travelling Daniels had been killed (although thanks to time travel, he would later return) leaving a database from the future in his quarters. Archer and T'Pol open up the quarters and use it to look for records of the mystery ship. "It was just a fun little leftover element of Daniels'





◀ In the episode 'Shockwave', Daniels had left a database from the future behind in his quarters. Sussman realized that Archer and T'Pol could use it to prove that the mystery ship was from the future.

story," Sussman says. "It fit very nicely into this. It gave us a way to confirm that the ship was from the future. We're really pushing T'Pol into the role of Dana Scully in this scene. She's seen so much evidence supporting time travel yet she's still refusing to believe in it. This may be the episode where she finally tamped down her scepticism about time travel since there seemed to be so much evidence of it. It would have been nice if she had been able to come up with a more Scully like explanation of what was going on. The idea that alien races were trying to maybe gaslight us by making us think they were from the future. *Enterprise* ran into so many races from the 22nd century that were so much more advanced than humans were, it's not so hard to believe that they would fall for a gag like that."

THOLIANS

The core of the story idea had always involved *Enterprise* trying to stop some hostile forces from getting their hands on the ship's advanced technology. "I was told that one of the parties would be the Suliban," says Sussman. "That made sense because we were tying it into the Temporal Cold War. We thought, wouldn't it also be cool if there were some third party we also had to hold off. And we were simply overpowered by all these much stronger groups and we don't really

want any of them to get this ship. So who can we trust? Can't we stop either side? Should we give it to one side and not the other? I think a lot of *STAR TREK* stories have the crew caught between two warring parties. That's a cliché that we try not to do too often. But in this case I was mandated to do it and embraced it.

"When the *Defiant* went away, the Tholians went away. It was up to me to come up with the other race. I started thinking who could it be? I've always hated having to make up alien races," he admits. "If you are going to believe in the *STAR TREK* universe as a real place, surely we would have seen some of the familiar races at an earlier time. So I was thinking about who it could be that we've already seen, to keep the *STAR TREK* universe consistent and believable to people like me who are fans who like to pretend it's a real place."

Sussman soon realized that there was no reason why he shouldn't use the Tholians.

"I remembered that we'd implied that the Tholians were part of the Temporal Cold War from the very beginning," he says. "We mention Tholia in the pilot. There's a word that gets translated, or attempted to be translated, by Hoshi. So there was precedent for the Tholians having something to do with the Temporal Cold War, even though we've never seen that they were a part of that. It



▲ Sussman wanted to illustrate that the ship had advanced technology, so in an homage to the TARDIS from 'Doctor Who' he decided to make it bigger on the inside than on the outside.

was kind of a delight to realize we'd already hinted at them anyway, so why not use them? The Tholians are mysterious and we weren't going to get to know too much about these creatures anyway. And there was no objection from my superiors."

As a lifelong fan, Sussman was delighted to have the opportunity to revisit one of the most memorable but mysterious alien races from the original series.

"We hadn't seen the Tholian's in 30 or 40 years at this point. I didn't know if we'd ever see them



► When Trip powers up the ship's emergency beacon it sends out a subspace distress signal which attracts the attention of the "time police," who ultimately retrieve the ship and its pilot.

again, but in many ways it was a great tease for this alien race, which I've always loved since watching the 'Tholian Web' on syndicated TV back in the 70s."

SEEING THE FUTURE

Sussman says that making what could have been an entirely forgettable race into something familiar not only added spice to the episode by exciting the viewers, but also inspired the production team.

"That was embraced, certainly by my showrunners, but also by everyone working on the show. The art department had great fun reimagining those ships. There was even a moment or two where I thought we might get to see the Tholians again. I pitched to Brannon that we see them on the viewscreen, and then we would see another version of what we saw in the '60s, which he didn't have a problem with. But at this point the problem was that it was another expensive show, and we were already over budget," he explains. "I think they really wanted a little more time to do some research, and do it the right way."

However, Sussman was delighted that he got to the opportunity to reveal a few details about the Tholians, who had been the subject of fan speculation since they first appeared on screen. "We did nail down a little bit," he says. "We mentioned that their ships were really hot on the inside. It was obvious that these guys were not humanoid. I think that made them a little more mysterious."

Even though Sussman knew they couldn't afford to show the Tholians, he took great pleasure in teasing the fans with the possibility. "We needed more padding in the show," he says, "I had this idea: 'What if the Tholians were trying to cut through the door?' All the fans are going to love it!"

Another scene that Sussman remembers involved Tucker and Reed getting caught in a time loop. At one level this was done to introduce a little extra jeopardy, making it clear that *Enterprise* was being threatened by temporal radiation, but more importantly, it offered Sussman an opportunity for some commentary.

"That scene was a lot of fun. I always attack

that kind of scene from the point of view of character. So, it really became a discussion about 'if you could know what your future was, would you want to know it?' And it became a very sharp way to delineate the characters of Reed and Tucker, who are great friends but have different outlooks on the world. I really loved writing those scenes because it allowed us to get into their heads a little bit more.

THE JOY OF THE UNKNOWN

"I thought both of them had really strong points of view about what should remain a mystery and what isn't. It was sort of a metacommentary on the show as well and *STAR TREK* as a series. We, the viewers, know how a lot of it turns out ultimately. Reed is the one who wants to know how it turned out and Tucker's attitude is where's the fun in being an explorer if somebody gives you a book about the history of the future. I don't know exactly what I was trying to say about the show but it was an interesting question to raise through those characters. And to give the audience a handle on who they were and how they would react to this really insane thing that was going on."

Looking back, Sussman feels the episode could



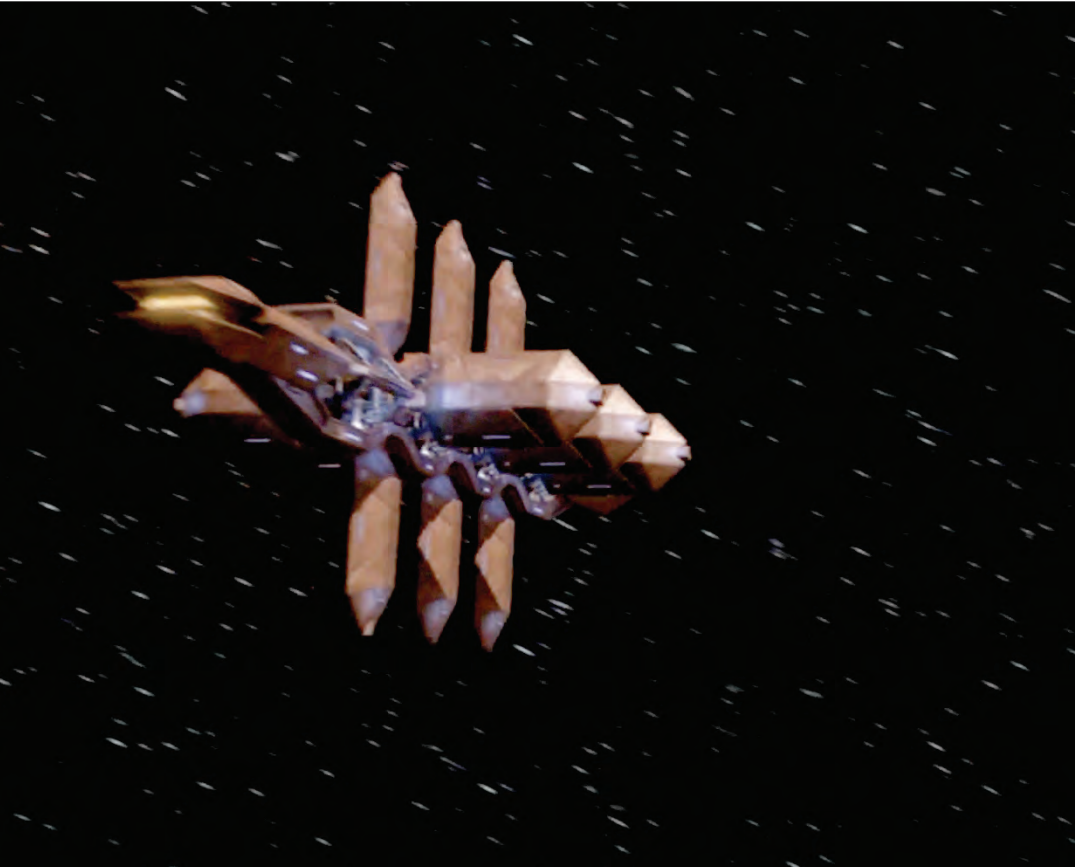
◀ The Suliban freighter pursues the *Enterprise*, accompanied by spherical cell ships.

have gone a little further in revealing what was going on. "Personally, I think we could have been a little firmer in terms of what some of it meant, or at least answering some questions and asking new ones. We really didn't answer any questions at the end of the episode. I pitched the idea that the pilot of this time ship would show up at the end of the episode and claim his own dead body. How he could possibly do that was a very fun thing that I wanted to leave a mystery. 'That's my dead body in the spaceship. I can't really tell you what this is all about but I'm going to take it and go back now. Thank you very much for fixing our transmitter and holding off the Tholians as long as you did. Good job, Archer!'"



◀ The story involved the *Enterprise* being caught between two different forces: the Suliban, who were an essential part of the Temporal Cold War, and the Tholians who survived from Sussman's original idea for the story.

ON SCREEN



- FIRST APPEARANCE: 'FUTURE TENSE' (ENT)
- TV APPEARANCE: STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE
- DESIGNED BY: JOHN EAVES

KEY APPEARANCES

STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE 'Future Tense'

The *Enterprise* encounters a small vessel adrift in space. Bringing the ship on board, a corpse is discovered inside which T'Pol confirms to be human.

The *Enterprise* is attacked by a Suliban freighter when Archer refuses to hand over the mysterious ship. However, the *Enterprise* is able to repel the invaders.

Archer suspects the ship is not of their time. This is confirmed when a database in Crewman Daniel's sealed quarters indicates that the ship comes from 900 years in the future.

The *Enterprise* is approached by the Tholians. When Archer refuses to hand

over the time ship, the Tholians lock a tractor beam on to the *Enterprise*, but release it and retreat when Archer threatens to destroy the time ship.

The Suliban return in force and pursue the *Enterprise* to a rendezvous with the Vulcan ship *Tal'Kir* which is engaged with the Tholians. There the Tholians and the Suliban attack each other. Archer orders that a signal device found inside the time ship be activated. He then prepares to release the time ship into space and destroy it by detonating a warhead which they have planted on board. The Tholians neutralise the warhead, but the time ship, and the corpse of the pilot, all vanish, apparently returning to the future.

TRIVIA

The corpse at the controls of the time ship was played by Mark Major, a background actor who played more than two dozen different characters on *DEEP SPACE NINE*, *VOYAGER* and *ENTERPRISE*. He specialised in aliens and appeared as multiple Borg drones, Kazon warriors and Cardassians. He rarely had much dialogue and played more than one corpse.



When the crew are speculating about the identity of the corpse, Archer wonders if he could be Zefram Cochrane, the inventor of the warp drive. This is another reference to the original *STAR TREK*. The episode 'Metamorphosis' established that as an old man, Cochrane had taken a starship and headed out into deep space where he vanished. Archer describes his disappearance as the "greatest missing person case of the century."



The time ship is powered by a temporal displacement drive, a technology that has never been referred to before or since.

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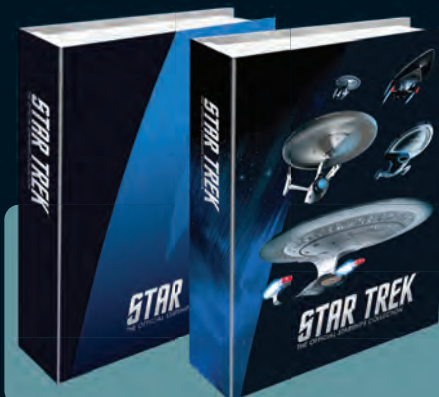
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- Writer **Bryan Fuller** recalls how he brought back a vengeful Kes to *VOYAGER* in 'Fury'.
- We reveal how *Kes' shuttle* was adapted and changed to appear as several different ships in *VOYAGER*.
- Designer **David Lombardi** looks back on his many digital contributions to *DEEP SPACE NINE*, *VOYAGER* and *ENTERPRISE*.

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