

♻ bender

A three star hotel in the Hilton public district. Darwin region—Australia.

Otis can taste three kinds of vomit. The throbbing skull would suggest scotch, but empty gin bottles say otherwise.

“Messages.” He rolls over, head hung, eyes limp.

Keo appears on display, saying, “Hey Otis, looks like you did good. Check continental.”

“Feed,” says Otis. “Continental news.”

Nothing noteworthy. He tells it, “Volume up,” then staggers to the bathroom.

When he returns the network screens amateur footage of a fiery object burning up on re-entry before splashing down at sea.

Over it an anchor says, “The orbital rail was one of nine in service by private armed forces. While it’s not clear at this point where the attack originated, Peace Enforcement branches in several territories are co-operating with MoD in their ongoing investigation.”

♻ state of mind

“Think about it,” says Keo on call, “you made—what, a million euro give or take? The guy who moved that cannon took home at *least* five-hundred mil. Probably more. Legally, everything’s flexible with corporate backing. And morally? My man, you and the arms dealer deliver two halves of the same product. You may take the four-continent detour to slip it by MoD, but don’t think the dealers aren’t just as handy with manipulating guidelines.”

Otis shaves at the bathroom/kitchenette mirror—disinterested.

“Didn’t you try to sell me on this last year?”

“You make the call and I’ll have you set up in a *day*. Clients, suppliers, planet-wide clearance. It’s taken care of.”

“What do you get out of it?”

“Ten per cent.”

“Sounds reasonable.”

“Otis, think real hard here. Do you really want to spend the rest of your life in shitty hotels and redeye shuttles?”

Otis washes his face and looks around the room.