

NOOR AMIN

ZERO

# FOREWORD

I IMAGINE THAT I HAVE NEVER ENGAGED WITH A GAME AS IT WAS INTENDED BY ITS DESIGNERS. I REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST BEGAN PLAYING LEAGUE OF LEGENDS WHEN I WAS THIRTEEN YEARS OLD, AND I WOULD OFTEN FORFEIT MATCHES TO POUR OVER THE LORE, WHICH INCLUDED ORIGIN STORIES AND CINEMATIC TRAILERS FOR THE CHAMPIONS, MAPS OF THE VARIOUS REGIONS WHERE MATCHES TOOK PLACE, AND NOTES FROM THE DEVELOPERS ON HOW THEY CONSTRUCTED EACH CHAMPION.

I WANTED TO MAKE ZERO TO RECREATE THE FASCINATION I FELT TOWARDS THE IMMERSIVE WORLDS THAT LED ME TO STUDY GAME DESIGN IN COLLEGE, PERHAPS ACTING AS A SISTER UNIVERSE TO RUNETERRA. ONE DAY, I HOPE THAT ZERO SERVES AS THE FOUNDATION FOR A NEW TYPE OF GAME—ONE IN WHICH NARRATIVE AND GAMEPLAY UPLIFT AND ENHANCE THE OTHER—AND MATERIALIZES THE FIRST STEP IN MY EXPLORATION OF VISUAL DEVELOPMENT, 3D MODELLING, PROGRAMMING, AND STORYTELLING.

THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED INTO TWO MAIN SECTIONS. IN PLAIN TEXT, YOU WILL FIND DESCRIPTIONS OF ZERO'S UNIVERSE AND ITS INHABITANTS. IN ITALICIZED TEXT, YOU CAN FIND THE THEORY AND ARTISTIC DECISIONS BEHIND EACH OF THE WORLDS. I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE FIRST EDITION OF ZERO.

08.11.20

DEDICATION  
09.02.20

*THOUGH CREATED ALONE,  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED  
TO AN ASSEMBLAGE OF  
ARTISTS, PROFESSORS,  
DEVELOPERS, STRANGERS,  
AND FRIENDS WITH WHOM  
MY JOURNEY HAS BEEN  
MADE TANGIBLE.*



## LORE



07.26.20

SUPPOSE TIME TAKES THE FORM OF SEVEN IDENTICAL SPIRALS, ARRANGED NEATLY IN A CIRCLE. TIME BENDS OVER PRECISELY AND REPEATEDLY, NEVER INTERLOCKING WITH ITSELF. NOW AND THEN, SOME COSMIC DISTURBANCE WILL ARISE FROM THE SPLITTING OF NEIGHBORING SPIRALS. THESE EVENTS ARE CALLED CENTRALITIES, AND THEY ALLOW FOR THE PASSAGE OF SOULS BETWEEN THE SEVEN WORLDS OF CONSTELLIS.

IN THIS UNIVERSE, THERE EXISTS ONE PLANET, IN WHICH SEVEN REALITIES COEXIST AT ONCE. EACH SOUL MAY CHOOSE ONE OF SEVEN IDENTICAL BODIES TO INHABIT, FOREVER SEPARATED IN SPACE. UNINHABITED BODIES ARE EASY TO IDENTIFY: THEY MURMUR INDISTINCT WORDS AND BEAR A BLANK VISAGE, LIVING ONLY AT THE BARE MINIMUM OF SURVIVAL.

THOUGH MOST CHOOSE TO REMAIN IN THEIR BIRTH WORLD, GIFTED SCHOLARS OF TIME HAVE DISCOVERED A METHOD OF DISPLACING THEIR SOULS TO OTHER WORLDS. DURING CENTRALITIES, SEERS PULL THEIR SOULS FROM THEIR BODIES AND RELEASE THEM THROUGH THE HALFLIGHT, THE INTERSTELLAR REGION WITHIN THE CONSTELLIS. CIPHERS LEARN TO SPLIT THEIR SOULS AND SCATTER THE PIECES ACROSS DIVERGENT STREAMS OF TIME. THE REMAINDER OF THEIR FRAGMENTED SOUL IS FILLED BY GOSSAMER, RESIDUAL EXISTENCES OF VENGEFUL SPIRITS RESIDING IN THE HALFLIGHT.

LONG AGO, SEERS AND CIPHERS LIVED HARMONIOUSLY, OCCUPYING VARIOUS ROLES IN DIPLOMACY AND TRADE ACROSS THE WORLDS. A POWERFUL CIPHER KNOWN AS ZERO SPLIT HER SOUL INTO SEVEN PIECES AND RULED THE WORLDS FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS. RESOURCES WERE PLENTIFUL, SCHOLARLY RESEARCH SOARED, AND WARS WERE VANQUISHED. HOWEVER, HER SOUL

GREW WEARY AND CONSUMED BY GOSSAMER. SHE HARBORED HATRED AND CONTEMPT FOR THOSE WHOSE SOULS REMAINED INTACT. DAYS BEFORE HER DEATH, SHE OPENED A HOLE IN THE RIVETS OF TIME, ALLOWING GOSSAMER TO BLEED THROUGH THE HALFLIGHT AND TERRORIZE CIVILIANS. WARS OVER FOOD SHORTAGES AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES PLAGUED THE WORLDS. THIS YEAR OF TERROR WAS NAMED ZERO AS A REMINDER OF THE RULER'S TYRANNY AND THE SLOW PATH TO RECOVERY.

BY YEAR 113 AFTER ZERO, THE SEVEN WORLDS OF CONSTELLIS HAVE FOUND PEACE AMONG THEMSELVES THROUGH THE SACRIFICE OF CIPHER CHILDREN. THEIR PEACE IS INTERRUPTED BY THE NEWS OF A PROPHECY RECEIVED BY A RENOWNED PROFESSOR OF TIME, WHO WARNS OF THE REINCARNATION OF A CIPHER THAT THREATENS TO SEND NATIONS INTO THE DARK AGES IF NOT STOPPED BY ANOTHER OF THEIR KIND.

THEN, KAI IS BORN.

*LINEARITY HAS BEEN THE DOMINANT FORMAT FOR NEW MEDIA NARRATIVES SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE MOTION PICTURE IN THE LATE 1890S. THE KINETOSCOPE, ONE OF THE EARLIEST MOTION PICTURE EXHIBITION DEVICES, FEATURED A CONVEYING STRIP OF FILM THAT DISPLAYED SEQUENTIAL IMAGES UNTIL IT REACHED THE END OF THE STRIP. THOUGH ADVANCES IN DIGITAL CAMERAS AND COMPUTER ANIMATIONS HAVE ENABLED MORE INVOLVED NARRATIVES THAN THE SHORT, SILENT FILMS OF THE 1890S, LINEARITY IN NEW MEDIA REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT RELICS OF THE MOTION PICTURE ALIVE TODAY.*

*BUT, WHY SHOULD WE RECYCLE THIS PIECE OF MEDIA ARCHEOLOGY? AUTHORS AND GAME DEVELOPERS HAVE PIONEERED NONLINEAR STORYTELLING THROUGH CHOOSE-YOUR-OUR ADVENTURE BOOKS AND RESTART BUTTONS. THE PHYSICALITY OF TIME IN THE CONTELLIS WAS INSPIRED BY EINSTEIN'S DREAMS, A COLLECTION OF VIGNETTES WRITTEN BY ALAN LIGHTMAN. IN EACH CHAPTER, TIME OPERATES UNEXPECTEDLY – IN REVERSE, IN CYCLES, SCALING WITH RESPECT TO ALTITUDE, MULTI-LINEARLY. FOR ME, ZERO IS AN EXERCISE IN THINKING THROUGH EVERY ELEMENT OF MY CHARACTERS' EXISTENCE, EVEN THEIR EXPERIENCE OF TIME AND SPACE.*





# DRACONIA

DRACONIA IS A WORLD OF CONTRADICTIONS. WHAT ONCE CONSTITUTED A PROMISE OF ASYLUM FOR THOSE CAST ASIDE BY THE CONTELLIS HAS BECOME EMACIATED BY CYCLES OF LONG, UNFEELING DICTATORSHIPS AND CRAVEN GENOCIDES. IT HAS REDUCED ITSELF INTO A PRIZED DESTINATION FOR ENVIOUS RULERS WHO SEEK TO BLEED THE REMAINING LIFE OUT OF ITS BARREN, EXHAUSTED EARTH. IMPOVERISHED CITIZENS STEAL CABBAGES AND LIVE IN THE SHADOWS OF ABANDONED MILITARY OUTPOSTS—AN IRONIC NOD TO DRACONIAN'S PAST MIGHT. CHILDREN ARE UNRELENTINGLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY TRAINED AS SOLDIERS, ONLY TO LIVE OUT THEIR DAYS FIGHTING SENSELESS WARS FOR FREEDOMS THAT THEY WILL NEVER POSSESS.

UNSURPRISINGLY, DRACONIA WAS ZERO'S FIRST STRONGHOLD—AN EASY TARGET. HISTORIANS PREACH THAT THIS WORLD IS A FAILED STATE: A PATH THAT WE MUST LEARN FROM BUT WILL NEVER RETURN TO. YET, IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY, YOU MAY CATCH A FLEETING EXPRESSION OF APPREHENSION ON THE FACES OF THE HISTORIANS' YOUNG STUDENTS, AS IF THEY BELIEVE ZERO'S SUCCESSOR IS LURKING SOMEWHERE IN THE DRACONIAN SHADOWS.

08.10.20





RECALLING THE TALES I READ AS A CHILD, THE FANTASY WORLDS THAT I ENJOYED MOST WERE CONSISTENTLY GROUNDED IN THE REAL WORLD. THE HARRY POTTER SERIES INVOLVED STUDENTS WHO FIND THAT THE WORLD IS NOT AS KIND AS THEY ARE TAUGHT. THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY IS LARGELY ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY. TO ME, FANTASY WAS INTERESTING NOT DESPITE ITS "REAL" ELEMENTS, BUT BECAUSE IT EXTRACTED RECOGNIZABLE ELEMENTS FROM MY WORLD AND SHIFTED THEM JUST ENOUGH TO CAPTURE MY IMAGINATION.

WHY DO HUMAN ELEMENTS EMERGE IN FANTASY LITERATURE? TO POINT OUT THE OBVIOUS, THEY EMERGE BECAUSE PEOPLE WROTE THEM. AS BOTH AN AMERICAN AND A CHILD OF IMMIGRANTS, THE PROMISE OF A BETTER LIFE COMES WITH CONTINGENCIES THAT MY PARENTS KNOW ALL TOO WELL. THOUGH I WILL NOT HAVE TO EXPERIENCE WHAT THEY DID, I OFTEN WONDER WHETHER ALL OF THE SACRIFICES THAT MY FAMILY HAS MADE WILL EVER COME TO FRUITION. IN HOPES THAT A PROMISE WILL GROW INTO SOMETHING MORE THAN A PROMISE. I WANTED TO CAPTURE THAT ANXIETY IN DRACONIA; A MANIFESTATION OF UNFULFILLED PROMISES, BUT ALSO A WORLD THAT PEOPLE LOOK ONTO FEARFULLY, FOR DESPITE ITS NEGLECT, IT HAS MAINTAINED ITS RESILIENCE.

08.10.20

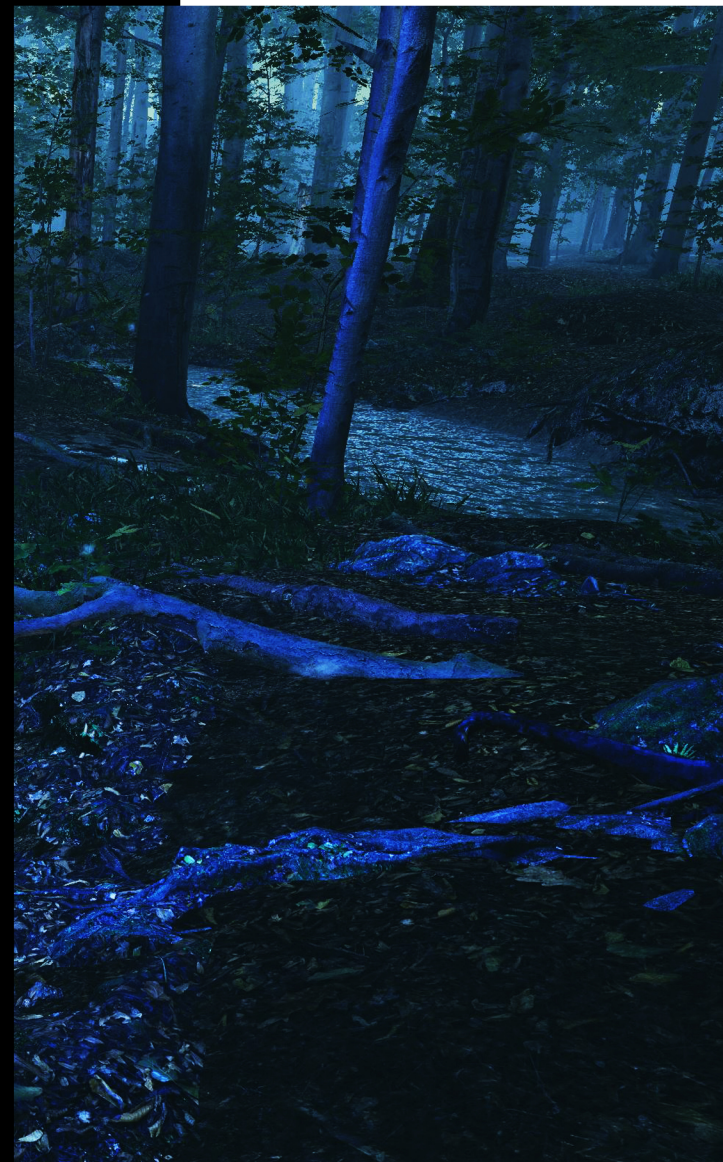
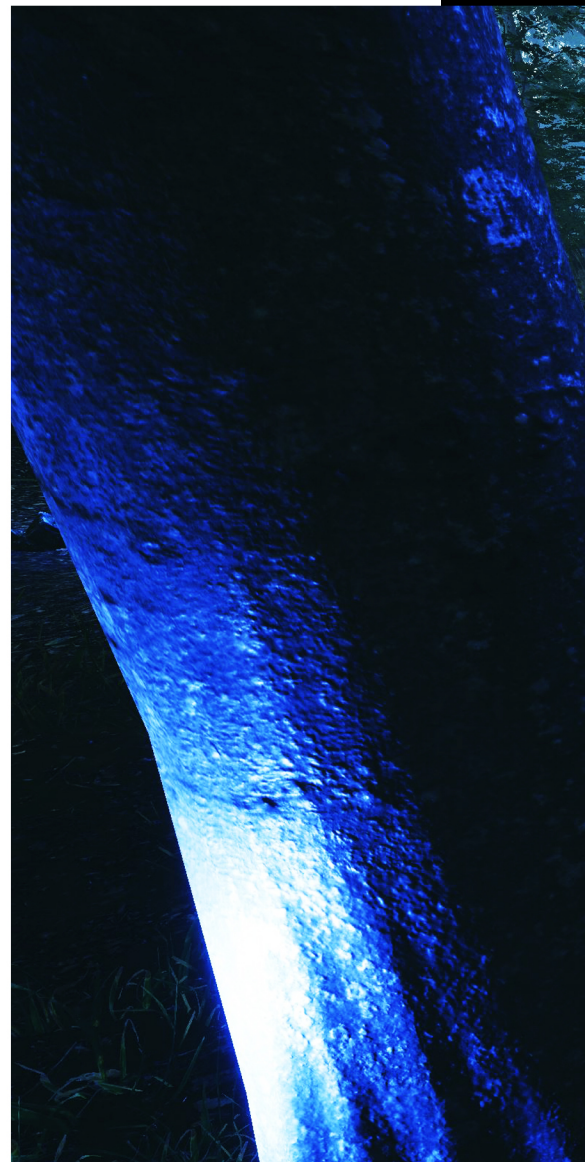
# HYACINTHIA

LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT HYACINTHIA, HOME TO RECLUSIVE PEOPLE WHO OFTEN GO UNSEEN BY MEMBERS OF THE CONTELLIS FOR DECADES. IT IS RUMORED THAT HYACINTHIANS CONGREGATE AT THE HEART OF ENCHANTED SWAMPS, GUARDED BY FAIRIES WHO LURE AND INTOXICATE STRANGERS WANDERING TOO CLOSE TO A CITY'S BORDERS. BRAVE AND FOOLISH SEERS WHO SEEK TO UNCOVER THE MYSTERIES OF HYACINTHIA EMERGE SENSELESS, THEIR YOUNG SOUL SAPPED FROM THEIR BODIES, FOREVER ROAMING THE BRACKISH, ENDLESS SWAMPS.

ONCE ENERGIZED BY CENTRALITIES, THE FEW HYACINTHIANS WHO CHOOSE TO DEPART FROM THEIR WORLD GO ON TO DEVELOP THE MOST ADVANCED BIOTECHNOLOGIES IN THE CONTELLIS OR PRACTICE THE ANCIENT ART OF SOUL-HEALING. THEY LIVE LONG, QUIET LIVES, ONLY TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME BY DEATH'S CALL, THEIR SECRETS NEVER TO BE REVEALED.







CHARACTERIZING A WORLD IS MUCH MORE AKIN TO CHARACTERIZING A PERSON THAN A NATION. A NATION IS INSEPARABLE FROM A WHOLE – IT IS LOST WITHOUT THE CONTEXT OF ITS SURROUNDINGS, YET IT IS PRECISELY THE COMPLEX DEPENDENCIES ON ITS SURROUNDINGS THAT OFTEN OVERSHADOW ITS CULTURAL IDENTITY AND UNIQUE AFFORDANCES. A PERSON, HOWEVER, CAN BE CONSIDERED AS A FULLY-FORMED BEING THAT EASILY ADAPTS TO NEW SURROUNDINGS AND FINDS A NICHE FOR SELF-EXPRESSION. THIS CONCEPT IS HOW I ENVISION HYACINTHIA: SELF-SUSTAINING, BUT MALLEABLE.

IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE, BIDIRECTIONALITY REFERS TO HOW HUMANS SIMULTANEOUSLY AFFECT AND ARE AFFECTED BY THE ENVIRONMENT. THERE LIES A CERTAIN FRAGILITY IN BEING PREY TO ONE'S SURROUNDINGS, WHICH I MIMICKED IN HYACINTHIA'S INTRIGUE. IF HYACINTHIANS ARE WELL-KNOWN, INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE CONTELLIS, WHY MUST THEY BE PROTECTED? TO ME, THIS TENSION MAKES THE WORLDS BELIEVABLE.





# JAFFAR

FOR MANY CENTURIES, JAFFAR ENJOYED AN ERA OF PROSPERITY, EXPORTING OIL AND PRECIOUS METALS ACROSS THE CONTELLIS IN EXCHANGE FOR HISTORICAL TEXTS. TO PRESERVE THEIR WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE, THE FARESE PEOPLE BUILT THE LIBRARY OF THE ANCIENTS, A JEWEL-ADORNED STRUCTURE CONTAINING THE OLDEST AND VASTEST COLLECTION OF BOOKS IN THE UNIVERSE. JAFFAR BECAME A MECCA FOR SEERS AND CIPHERS, WHO FLOCKED FROM ACROSS THE WORLDS TO STUDY AT THE GLISTENING LIBRARY.



HOWEVER, YEARS OF EXTRACTION CRACKED THE PARCHED SOIL, AND SANDSTORMS PLAGUED THE FARESE DURING THE LONGEST AND MOST DEVASTATING NATURAL DISASTER IN HISTORY. AS INHABITANTS FLED FROM JAFFAR, THE ELDEST SCHOLARS REMAINED, ALLOWING THEMSELVES AND THE LIBRARY TO BE BURIED BY SAND. NOW, THE DESCENDANTS OF THE SCHOLARS LIVE UNDERGROUND IN A COMPLEX NETWORK OF TUNNELS BENEATH THE SAND. MEMBERS OF THIS COMMUNITY, KNOWN AS THE GATEKEEPERS, ARE ENDOWED WITH THE DUTY OF DELIVERING PROPHECIES REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE CONTELLIS—including the arrival of ZERO'S SUCCESSOR.

DESPITE THE GATEKEEPERS' RENOWN, EVEN THE MOST EDUCATED FARESE REFUGEES STRUGGLE TO FIND THEIR PLACE IN THEIR NEW WORLDS. THOSE WHO ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE PITIED BECOME PROFESSORS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS; THOSE WHO ARE NOT OCCUPY DANGEROUS JOBS IN MINING AND CONSTRUCTION. THE DISDAIN FOR THE FARESE ONLY GREW STRONGER SINCE THE GATEKEEPERS' PROPHECY, AND SOME HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RETURN HOME TO FIND LIFE WITHIN THE SAND.

08.20.20





REFERENTIALITY PLAYS DIVERSE ROLES IN NEW MEDIA. GAME DEVELOPERS OFTEN RESPOND TO CURRENT OR PERSONAL EVENTS, SUCH AS NIKKI CASE'S WE BECOME WHAT WE BEHOLD, WHICH UNPACKS MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL OF VIOLENCE, OR LIZ RYERSON ABSTRACTLY NAVIGATING HER EXPERIENCE WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT IN PROBLEM ATTIC. REFERENTIALITY OFTEN OCCURS FOR THE SAKE OF REFERENTIALITY, INCLUDING POPULAR "EASTER EGGS." FANS OF PIXAR WILL RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE YEAR 113 AFTER ZERO. HISTORY BUFFS MAY SPOT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DRACONIAN CITIZENS STEALING CABBAGE AND THE GREEK LEGISLATOR DRACO'S LAWS. A FEW PARTICULARLY ASTUTE READERS WILL NOTICE THAT THE NAME KAI IS DERIVED FROM THE JAPANESE WORD FOR RECOVERY.

JAFFAR SEPARATES ITSELF FROM THESE EXAMPLES. THE WORLD IS NAMED AFTER THE SULTAN IN PRINCE OF PERSIA, WHICH I FIRST PLAYED WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD. AT THE TIME, I WAS LIVING IN CAIRO, EGYPT DURING THE ARAB SPRING. I VIEWED MIDDLE EASTERNERS AS FIERCELY RESILIENT PEOPLE WHO HAPPEN TO BE VICTIMS OF A DICTATOR, HOSNI MUBARAK. MY PEERS IN THE UNITED STATES SAW THEM AS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY. I SAW THE PRINCESS; THEY SAW THE SULTAN. JUST LIKE THE MIRROR IN THE PRINCE OF PERSIA, THE REFLECTION OF JAFFAR DOES NOT REPRESENT HOW THE FARESE SEE THEMSELVES; IT IS OBSCURED BY THE PARANOIA OF ANOTHER OPPRESSOR AND ENVY OF THEIR SUCCESSES.

THOUGH PRINCE OF PERSIA WAS MADE IN THE 1980S, IT REPRESENTED A PROPHECY FOR THE AFTERMATH OF THE ARAB SPRING. THE MERCIFUL WHITE MAN GRACIOUSLY TAKES THE PRINCESS INTO HIS ARMS. BUT WE NEVER HEAR FROM THE PRINCESS, NOR DO WE HEAR OF THE FUTURE OF THE FARESE.





IMAGINE A WORLD OF ETERNAL WINTER. IMAGINE A THICK SHEET OF SNOW ADORNING ROOFTOPS AND WALKWAYS. IMAGINE ICICLES CLINGING FIRMLY TO THE BRANCHES OF BARE TREES.

NOW, REMOVE THE SNOW. REMOVE THE WARM REFLECTIONS OF STREETLIGHTS ON WET GROUND. REMOVE THE CHILDREN TURNING THEIR FACES TOWARDS THE SKY TO CAPTURE SNOWFLAKES ON THEIR TONGUE. REMOVE THE SWIRLING SCENTS OF CINNAMON AND PEPPERMINT WAFTING FROM A NEARBY COFFEE SHOP. REMOVE THE COLD WINDS' BITE ON YOUR RED NOSE. LEAVE ONLY THE WHITE.

THIS COLOR DEFINES XAYU. THE MONKS WHO INHABIT THIS WORLD ARE BESTOWED WITH THE DUTY OF PRAYING FOR THE COLLECTIVE SOUL OF THE CONTELLIS. THEY NEED NOT IDENTIFY EACH OTHER, FOR THEY LOOK ONLY TO THE HALFLIGHT FOR JUDGMENT AND BEAR PRISTINE HOODED ROBES TO CONCEAL THEIR FACES. THEY FORFEIT THE DELIGHTS OF THE SENSES; THEY CONSUME ONLY THE MOST GOSSAMER FOODS, THEY NIP THE BUDS OF ORCHIDS BEFORE THEY RELEASE THEIR SWEET AROMA, AND THEY STEP LIGHTLY—NEARLY GLIDING OVER THE MARBLE TEMPLES—TO PRESERVE THE DEAFENING SILENCE OF WHITE NOISE.

AT THE CUSP OF SUNSET, A MONK LIFTS HIS EYES TO ADMIRE THE FAINTEST LAVENDER HUE THAT HAS EMBRACED THE VISAGE OF HIS TEMPLE. HE SMILES GENTLY, THEN LOWERS HIS HEAD. HE HAS DUTIES TO ATTEND.

# XAYU

08.20.20





XAYU IS LARGELY INSPIRED BY THE WAT RONG KHUN, OR WHITE TEMPLE, IN THE CHIANG RAI PROVINCE OF NORTHERN THAILAND. I SPENT THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF MY LIFE IN THAILAND AND WAS FORTUNATE TO VISIT IN THE WINTER OF 2019. I AM FASCINATED BY THE REPRESENTATION OF RELIGION IN DAILY LIFE. AS AN AMERICAN, I HAVE BEEN CONDITIONED TO SEE RELIGION AS A PRIVATE MATTER, AS IT ONLY SEEMS TO BE PUBLICIZED WHEN IT BECOMES A POINT OF CONFLICT. IN THAILAND, SPIRITUALITY – INCLUDING RELIGION – MANIFESTS AT VIBRANT TEMPLES AND SHRINES SCATTERED AT EVERY STREET CORNER, WIDELY-PRACTICED FORMS OF MEDITATION, AND ENGAGEMENT IN CERTAIN ARTISTIC PRACTICES.

PERHAPS MORE FASCINATING THAN THE REPRESENTATION OF RELIGION ITSELF IS HOW PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH IT. BUDDHISTS WILL OFTEN DONATE FOOD FOR ELDER MONKS, WHO PRAY FOR THE COUNTRY. IN FACT, THE WORD “XAYU” IS DERIVED FROM THE THAI WORD FOR ELDER. RELIGION IS A PUBLIC DUTY, AND DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SEPARATE PARTS OF THE COLLECTIVE WHOLE.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CONTELLIS DRAWS ON THE ISLAMIC BELIEF IN THE SEVEN LEVELS OF HEAVEN, OR JANNAH – THE ORIGINAL NAME FOR JAFFAR. DESPITE ITS ORIGIN IN RELIGIOUS TEXT, I QUESTIONED WHETHER IT WAS IMPERATIVE TO CREATE A SYSTEM OF RELIGION. IN SUCH AN OVERTLY DIVIDED UNIVERSE, THE CONTELLIS NECESSITATED NOT JUST ANY RELIGIOUS SYSTEM, BUT THE SYSTEM SPECIFICALLY PRACTICED IN THAILAND WHICH ACTUALIZED NETWORKS OF INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE.



# THE CRESCENT

FOR PRECISELY TWELVE HOURS EVERY MONTH, A SLIVER OF MOON FLOATS DIMLY OVER THE CRESCENT. PEOPLE EMERGE FROM CLIFF SIDES OF YAWING CANYONS AND SAVANNAS TO KNEEL SILENTLY, TURNING THEIR GAPING MOUTHS TO THE SKY, AS IF WAITING TO CAPTURE A DRIP OF LIGHT ON THEIR TONGUES.

WHEN THE MOMENT PASSES, THE CRESCENTS RETURN TO CRAWLING OVER THE PETRIFIED EARTH, BLADES OF GRASS BLENDING INDISTINGUISHABLY TO HUMAN HAIR, SKIN MELTING INTO THE DEATH-BLACK REALMS. SOME HOLD THEIR HAND OVER THEIR FACES AND SUFFOCATE, FEARING THAT THE TOXIC ABSENCE WILL PENETRATE THEIR LUNGS. OTHERS LAY MOTIONLESS, *MORS CERTA, HORA INCERTA*. FOR NOW, THEY MUST PRAY FOR A NEWLY-RISEN CRESCENT.

09.01.20

*I CAME ACROSS THE LATIN PHRASE MORS CERTA, HORA INCERTA – TRANSLATING TO “DEATH IS CERTAIN, ITS HOUR IS UNCERTAIN” – IN AN ERASURE POEM, WHICH INSPIRED THE CREATION OF THE CRESCENT. WE OFTEN DISCUSS STORIES “COMING TO LIFE,” BUT I WAS INTRIGUED BY THE IDEA OF A REDUCTION OF LIFE: A STORY BIRTHED FROM LIFE BUT TOWARDS AN ABSENCE.*

*THERE ARE OBVIOUS CONNECTIONS BETWEEN XAYU AND THE CRESCENT, AS I BELIEVED THAT A WORLD OF PURE WHITE NECESSITATED A PITCH-BLACK COMPANION. THOUGH NARRATIVES IN GAMES HEAVILY RELY ON VISUALS, THIS WORLD WAS FORMED OUT OF TOUCH. UNINTENTIONALLY, THE TWO WORLDS EMERGED WITH SIMILARITIES IN THE PRACTICE OF PATIENCE, THE SUFFOCATING ORDER IN XAYU MATCHED WITH THE SUFFOCATING DISORDER OF THE CRESCENT, AND A DETACHMENT FROM HOW WE COMMONLY IDENTIFY AND INTERACT WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT.*



# EISERMIGHT

08.30.20

PRESIDENT EISER STOOD SILENTLY AT A WINDOW, TRACING THE PATHS OF RAINDROPS WITH HIS EYES. HE HAD, IN FACT, CALLED FOR THIS MEETING, BUT SHOWED NO INTEREST IN THE MATTER AT HAND. HIS BACK WAS TURNED ON A TABLE OF SIX COUNCILMEN REPRESENTING EACH OF THE WORLDS, SUMMONED TO DISCUSS THE STATE OF RECOVERY IN EISERMIGHT. ZERO'S REIGN HAD SLOWED TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS THROUGHOUT THE CONTELLIS, BUT THIS WORLD SEEMED TO HAVE STOPPED ALTOGETHER.

EISER KNEW THAT THE MEETING WOULD END WITH A REQUEST OF HIS ABDICATION. HE KNEW THAT HE HAD NOTHING TO OFFER THAT WOULD APPEASE THE COUNCIL; HIS FARMLANDS GREW ARID, HIS SOLDIERS RETIRED, HIS OIL RESERVES RAN DRY. AT LAST, HE SPOKE.

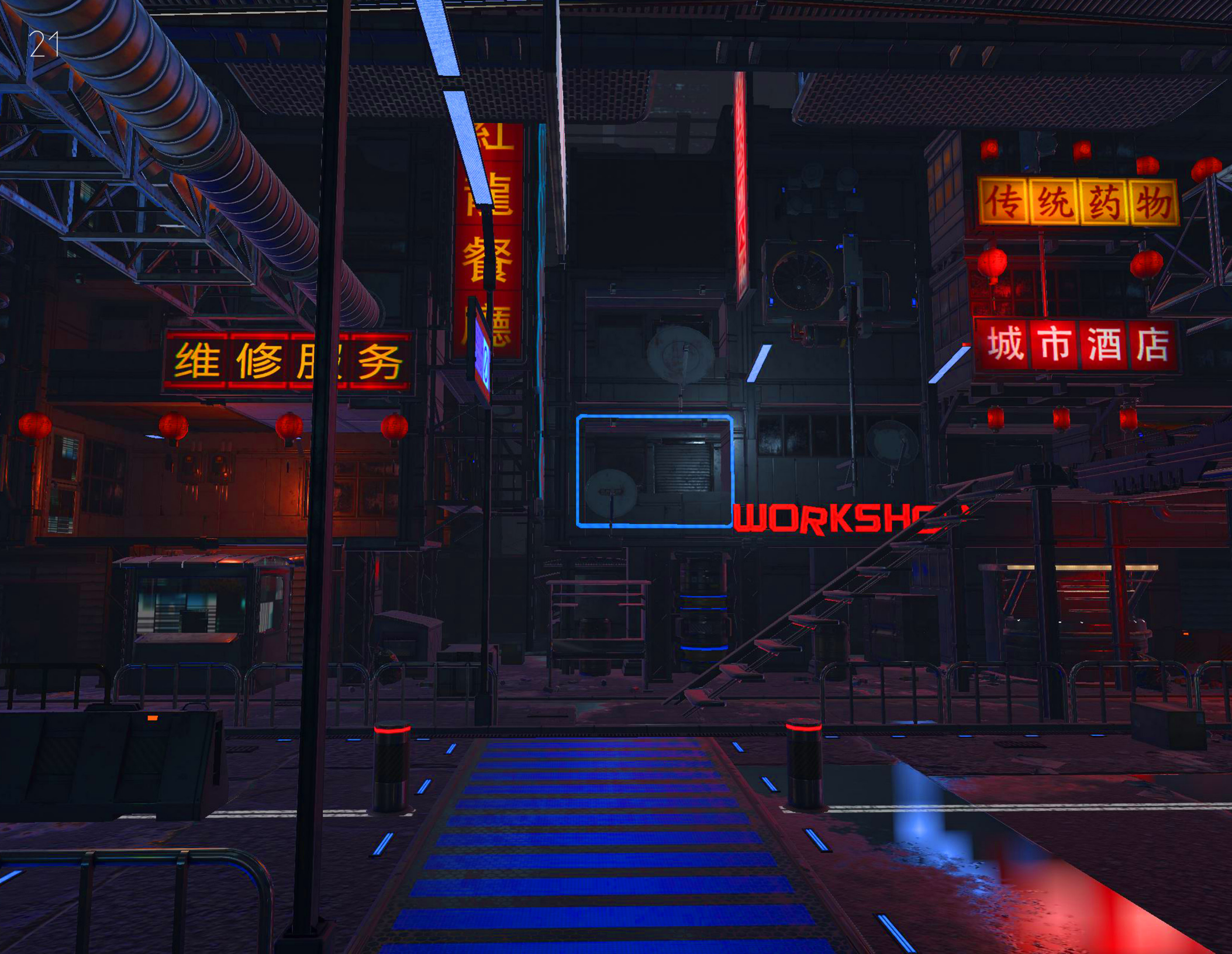
MORE THAN A CENTURY LATER, THE NEON LIGHTS LINING THE STREETS CAN BE SEEN THROUGH THE SOOTY CLOUDS RISING FROM CITY WORKSHOPS AND FACTORIES. LOOSELY



GOVERNED BY A HANDFUL OF SERIAL ENTREPRENEURS, EISERMIGHT REPRESENTS A HAVEN FOR INVENTION, SHIELDED FROM MAN'S HUBRIS AND DESIRE TO CONTROL, FLIRTING WITH THE BRINK OF ANARCHY.

FOR A WORLD WITHOUT LAWS, CRIME IS LOW—DISAPPOINTINGLY LOW FOR THE ENDLESS VARIETY OF WAYS TO KILL AND THIEVE. CURRENCY HAS ALL BUT LOST VALUE, AND YOUNG TINKERS TRADE THEIR LAPIDARY CREATIONS FOR FOOD. PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY LIVE NOMADICALLY AND INDISTINGUISHABLY. A YOUNG WOMAN AND HER CLONE WALK SIDE-BY-SIDE, WITH BRONZE PLATES LINING THEIR TEMPLES LEADING TO A PAIR OF BIOLUMINESCENT IRISES. THREE CHILDREN—TRIPLETS, AND LIKELY SURVIVORS OF HUMAN MEDICAL TRIALS—ZIPLINE ACROSS THE LATTICE OF ELECTRICAL WIRES THAT HEM THE DARK SKY, BARING THE SPECKLED FEATHERS THAT ADORN THEIR FOREARMS AND CHEEKS. AN ARISTOCRATIC COUPLE TURNS A CORNER, HEADED TOWARDS A CLINIC FOR COCHLEAR IMPLANTS. ONE GENTLEMAN HOLDS AN UMBRELLA FOR HIS PARTNER; THE OTHER LIMPS GENTLY, THE CLICK OF HIS BIONIC LEG MASKED BY THE RHYTHMIC TAPPING OF RAINDROPS ON COPPER ROOFTOPS. THEY WILL BE SAFE AFTER THE RAIN.

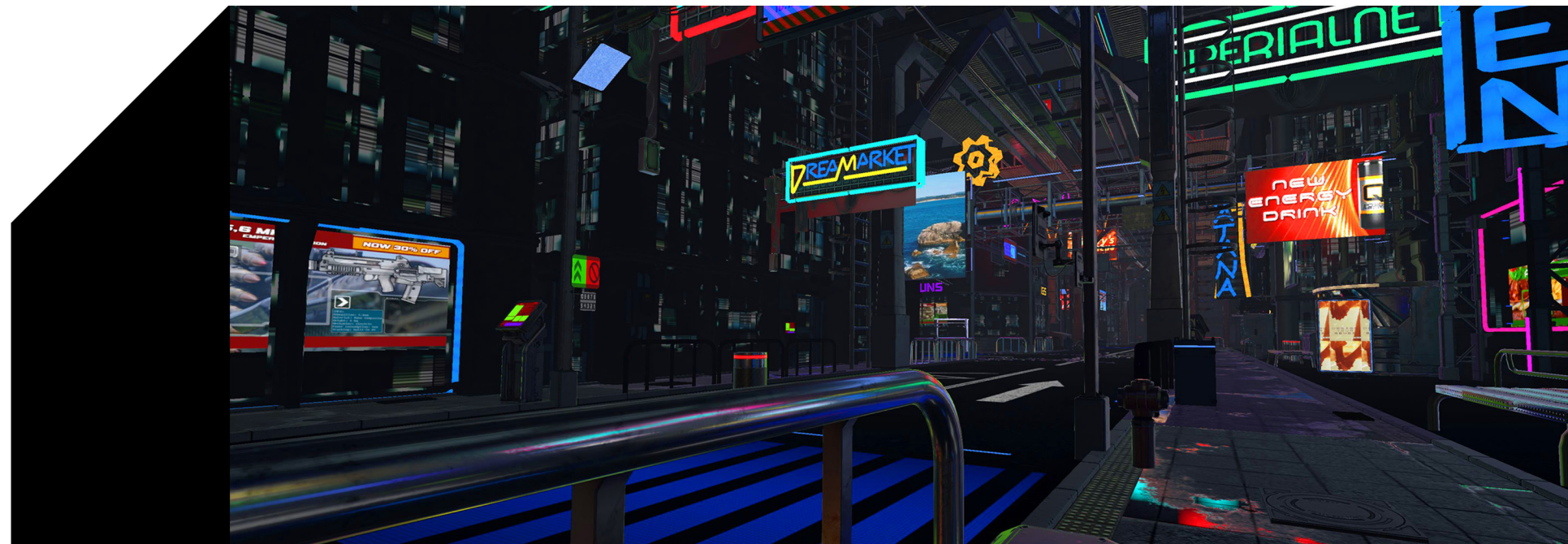




EISERMIGHT AND LUNARIS STAND OUT AS THE WORLDS WITH THE MOST EXPLICIT BACKSTORY; HOWEVER, THEY DIFFER IN EXECUTION. THE STORY OF LUNARIS BEGINS WITH THE ORIGIN STORY OF THE CONTELLIS, WHILE EISERMIGHT'S STORY IS SPLIT BETWEEN THE BEGINNING AND END OF A RENAISSANCE.

WHY DOESN'T EVERY STORY BEGIN AT THE SAME TIME? COMPARING WORLDS ACROSS PARALLEL UNIVERSES WITH NON-LINEAR TIME CONTINUUM IS RATHER ILLOGICAL. INSTEAD, STORIES SHOULD ENCAPSULATE A FRAMEWORK THAT INCLUDES A TIPPING POINT. SIMILAR TO THE WAY PEOPLE TELL PERSUASIVE STORIES BY INCLUDING THEIR PAST, TIPPING POINT, AND FUTURE – "I WANTED TO BE A DOCTOR UNTIL I DISCOVERED VIDEO GAMES, AND NOW I STUDY GAME DESIGN!" – BELIEVABLE WORLDS ARE DEFINED BY THE SAME KEY THREE ELEMENTS.

CHOOSING A TIPPING POINT OFTEN INVOLVES SELECTING A MOMENT THAT IS EITHER INFORMATIVE OR SURPRISING. IN THE CASE OF LUNARIS, THE TALE OF THE SIBLING GODS ALLOTS INFERENCE ON THE STRIFE AND ATTITUDES OF THE LUNARI. THE TIPPING POINT OF EISERMIGHT ACTS AS A MOMENT OF CONTRAST; WHAT WAS ONCE DESOLATE HAS BECOME A BEACON OF INNOVATION AND PROGRESSIVISM.







# LUNARIS

LONG BEFORE ZERO, THE CONTELLIS CONSISTED OF A SINGLE PLANET. THE SIBLING GODS LUNARIS AND SOLARIS BALANCED THE FLOW OF TIME AND SPACE, ALLOWING EARLY LIFE TO EMERGE. HOWEVER, SOLARIS BECAME GREEDY AND CONFIDED IN HIS SIBLING THAT HE SOUGHT TO CONQUER ATOSSA, A NEIGHBORING UNIVERSE. KNOWING BETTER THAN TO MEDDLE WITH CELESTIAL BODIES, LUNARIS RESISTED. BUT SOLARIS WAS OBSTINATE AND WILLFUL; HE CAPTURED SIX PLANETS FROM ATOSSA. ITS RULER, XERXES, WAGED WAR ON THE PAIR FOR SIX DAYS AND SIX NIGHTS, KILLING LUNARIS. UPON HER DEATH, THE STREAMS OF TIME SPLIT AND SPIRALED INTO ITSELF. UNABLE TO MAINTAIN ORDER BETWEEN THE PLANETS, SOLARIS SPLIT HIMSELF INTO SEVEN PIECES TO RULE OVER THE STREAMS OF TIME.

THE PEOPLE OF LUNARIS ARE KNOWN TO BE THE FIRST CIPHERS IN THE CONTELLIS, DERIVING THEIR POWER FROM SOLARIS. HOWEVER, THE LUNARI BELIEVE THEMSELVES TO BE CURSED BY THE FOOLISH GOD, WHOSE TEARS FALL AS AN ETERNAL BLIZZARD ACROSS THE FROST-BITTEN MOUNTAINTOPS.

08.22.20





AS MUCH AS WE ARE DEFINED BY OUR RECENT PAST, WE ARE EQUALLY DEFINED BY EVENTS THAT OCCURRED LONG BEFORE OUR BIRTH. PEOPLE MAY ATTRIBUTE CERTAIN BEHAVIORS TO CULTURAL TRADITIONS OR FAMILY VALUES. THE PRESENT, IN MANY REGARDS, IS A MANIFESTATION OF OUR PAST ADAPTING TO AN INCONGRUOUS ENVIRONMENT.

IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF RESPECTING WORLDS AS CHARACTERS, THEIR PAST IS SOMETIMES MORE INFORMATIVE THAN THEIR PRESENT. VISUALLY, LUNARIS IS A TUNDRA. LEVERAGING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ITS HISTORY, IT BECOMES THE CRUX OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CONTELLIS, HOME TO RESILIENT, YET MISFORTUNATE PEOPLE. ITS HISTORY STRATEGICALLY MESHES WITH THE CENTRAL LORE BY EXPLAINING THE FOUNDATION OF THE SEVEN SPIRALS OF TIME, SIMILAR TO THE MANNER IN WHICH UNDERSTANDING AN INDIVIDUAL'S ANCESTORS MAY HELP US MAKE SENSE OF THE PERSON.



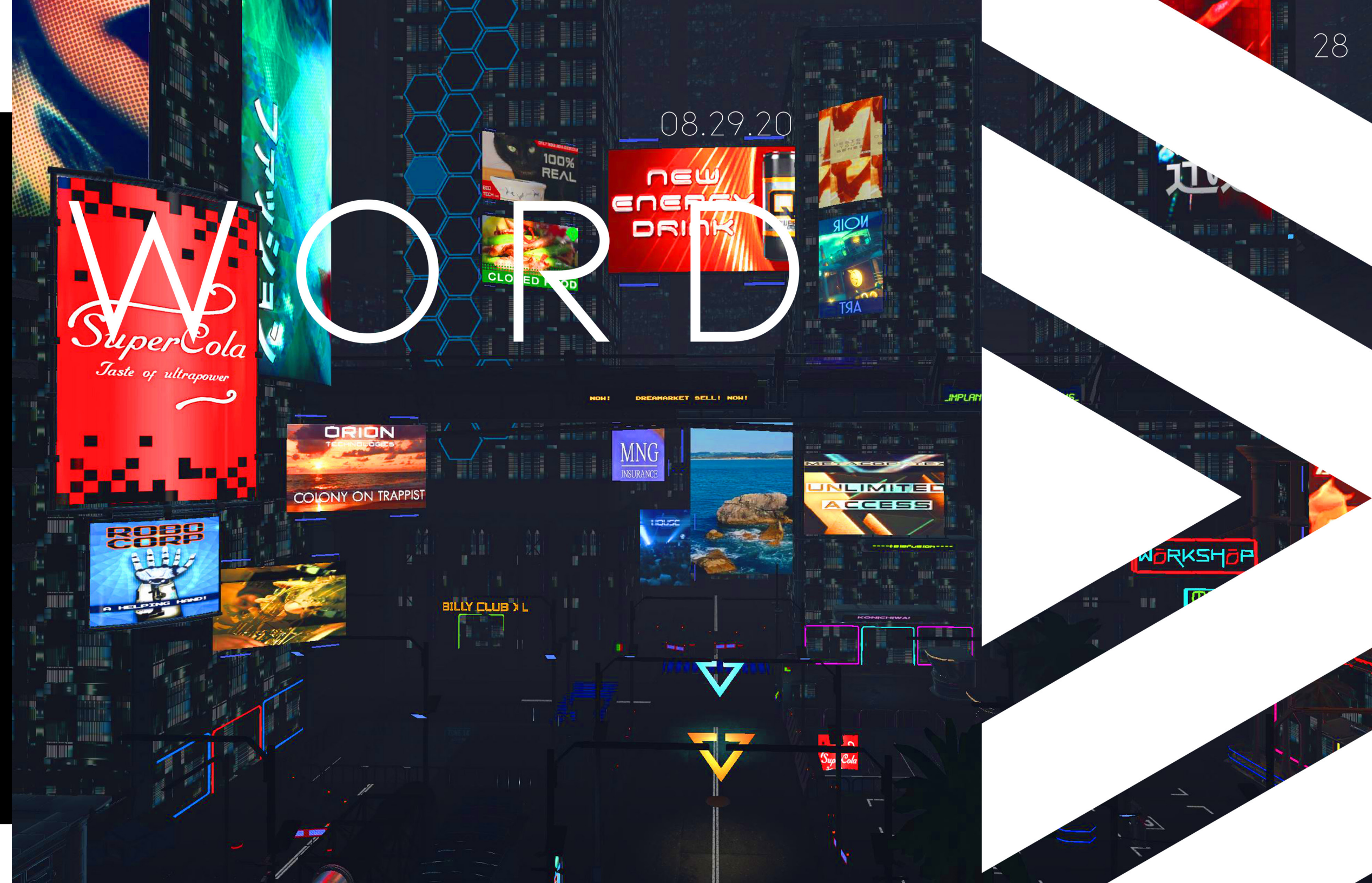


# AFTER

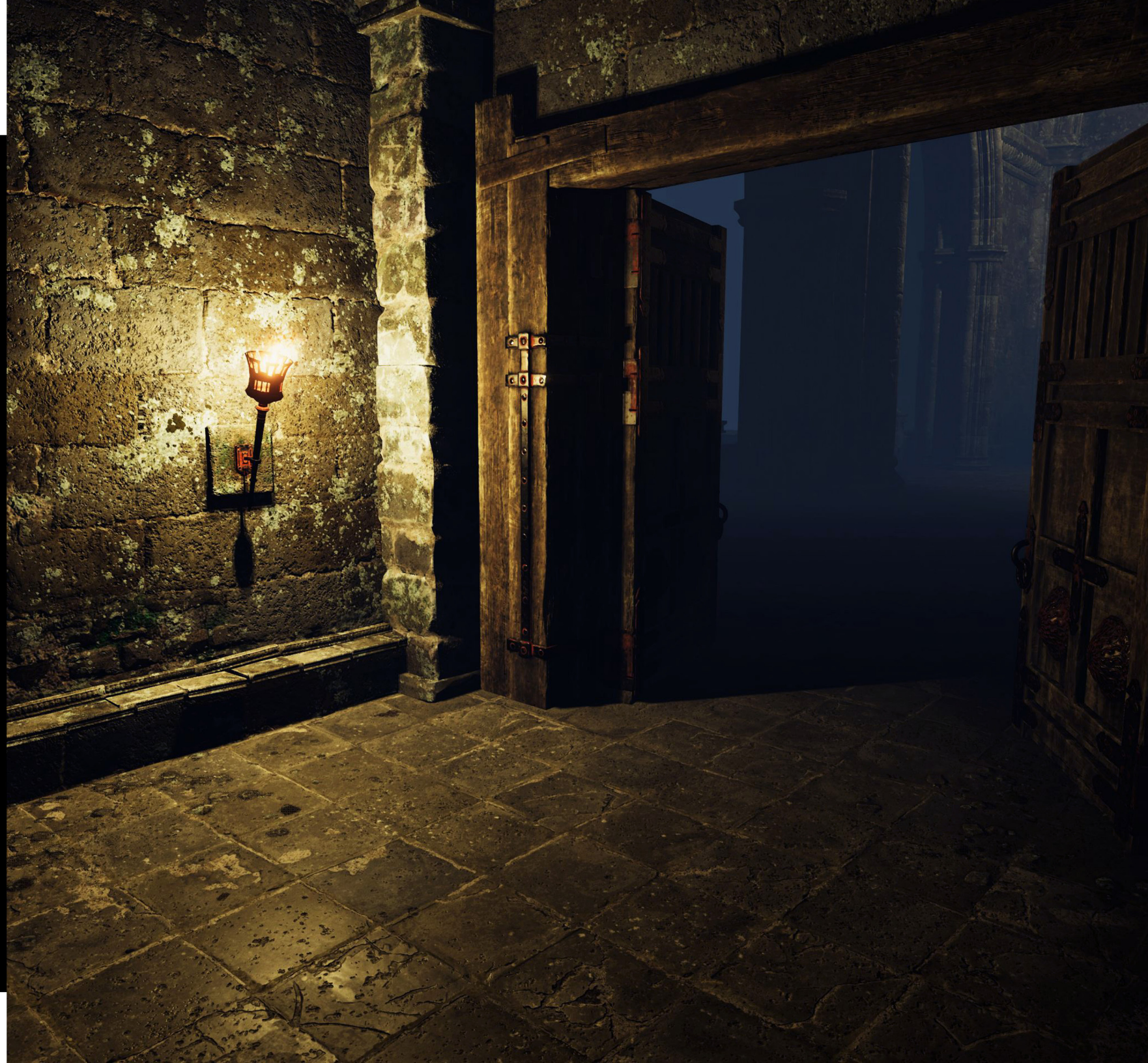
## WHY GAMES?

NOW THAT I HAVE COMPLETED MY FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE, I HAVE MOVED PAST THE PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT AND TOWARDS THE AMBIGUITY OF MY FUTURE.

I WAS SCARED OF HOW MUCH I ENJOYED LEAGUE OF LEGENDS WHEN I FIRST BEGAN PLAYING, AND EVEN MORE FRIGHTENED BY MY GROWING INTEREST IN WORKING AT RIOT GAMES. I TRIED TO RUN FROM GAMES—TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT I WANTED A MORE “RESPECTABLE” CAREER. ONE OF THE MAJOR REALITIES OF BEING A MINORITY WOMAN IS THAT EXISTENCE IS INTENSELY DEMEANING. MY IDEAS ARE MET WITH DISMISSAL, MY WORDS ARE SWATTED AWAY IF NOT SPOKEN THROUGH ANOTHER PERSON; MY HIGH ASPIRATIONS OUTMATCHED BY MY PEERS’ EVEN HIGHER DOUBT. I WANTED TO BECOME A DOCTOR SOLELY BECAUSE I SOUGHT THE KIND OF RESPECT AND AUTHORITY







THAT A MINORITY WOMAN COULD ONLY ACHIEVE WHILE SAVING LIVES.

WHEN THE KOTAKU ARTICLE EXPOSING SEXIST PRACTICES AT RIOT GAMES SURFACED, I THOUGHT MY INTENTIONS WERE AFFIRMED. BUT EVEN AS A PRE-MEDICAL STUDENT AT A WELL-REGARDED UNIVERSITY, I BECAME UNINSPIRED—BY THE COURSE OFFERINGS, BY THE EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES, BY MYSELF. I REMEMBER TELLING MY PROFESSOR, NOW A GOOD FRIEND, THAT I HAD LOST MEANING IN MY EDUCATION. I SPENT THE MAJORITY OF MY SECOND QUARTER IN COLLEGE OBSESSIVELY CHANGING MY MAJORS IN A FRUITLESS ATTEMPT TO RECENTER MYSELF.

MY SECOND REALITY OF BEING A MINORITY WOMAN IS THAT BIZARRE PEOPLE INSPIRE ME. I REDISCOVERED MY CREATIVE ENERGY IN THE COMMUNITY THAT GENERATED A RIGHT-WING BACKLASH AGAINST PROGRESSIVISM IN NEW MEDIA. THE COMPANIES THAT I LOOK UP TO HAVE EMERGED FROM MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR LAWSUITS OVER GENDER DISCRIMINATION. DESIGNERS THAT ADVOCATED FOR GREATER ACCESSIBILITY IN GAMES HAVE BECOME ENTANGLED IN MEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISM.

SO WHY? WHY ARE GAMES WORTHWHILE FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME? WHY, AFTER EVERYTHING THE INDUSTRY HAS DONE TO HURT MINORITIES, DO I STILL FEEL COMPELLED TO NOT ONLY SUPPORT THEM, BUT JOIN THEM?

BECAUSE MY REALITIES DON'T DEFINE ME. BECAUSE BECOMING A DOCTOR WON'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I WILL NEVER SEE A JUST FUTURE IN MY LIFETIME. BECAUSE DESPITE MY REALITIES, I DESERVE TO FEEL EMPOWERED—REGARDLESS OF WHICH WORLD I HAPPEN TO BE BORN INTO.





FOR ME, GAMES ARE THE OPPOSITE OF ESCAPISM. THEY REPRESENT A MEDIUM FOR QUESTIONING AND REINVENTING THE SYSTEMS AND REALITIES OF OUR WORLD. WHAT IF WE LIVED IN A SOCIETY THAT ACHIEVED POLICE ABOLITION? WHAT IF OUR MONEY LOST VALUE OVER TIME, SUCH THAT GENERATION WEALTH WAS ERADICATED? WHAT IF YOUNG WOMEN ARE AFFORDED JOY FROM THE MOMENT OF THEIR BIRTH? IN CHOOSING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN GAME DESIGN, I DID NOT FORFEIT A LIFE OF MEANING FOR TRIVIALITY. I OPENED A POSSIBILITY SPACE FOR DEFINING A REALITY ON MY TERMS.

WHEN I JOIN THE GAMING INDUSTRY, I HOPE TO ADVANCE INCLUSION BEYOND THE BASELINE OF ACCESSIBILITY AND TOWARDS A FUTURE THAT LEVERAGES GAMES AS A REMEDY FOR THE INJUSTICES OF OUR WORLD. AND WHEN I LOOK BACK ON HOW FAR I'VE COME IN A DECADE, I HOPE TO REFLECT ON ZERO AS THE FIRST STEP IN MY JOURNEY.



The image features a vertical strip of aged, textured paper, possibly a book cover or endpaper, with a diagonal fold. The paper has a mottled appearance with various shades of brown, tan, and cream, suggesting wear and age. It is set against a solid black background. The text "NOOR AMIN" is printed in a simple, white, sans-serif font at the bottom of the paper strip.

NOOR AMIN