

# IRL

by Nadja Lipsyc

**Note from 2023: this larp was written in 2016 and not reread or revised with new knowledge and tools, feel free to adapt accordingly!**

IRL is an experimental LARP about a group of adults gamers from the same guild of a MMORPG, their meeting «In Real Life» (IRL) and their daily online interaction during the preceding week.

This game ISN'T a parody: it revolves around what tied people for so long to online gaming and their relation, both online and in real life.

Although the game itself aims to be mostly light-hearted, most characters' background involve difficult themes.

A lot of gaming jargon is used in the following documents, the terms followed by a star (\*) are briefly developed in the Lexicon.

**Characters:** 7 + 1 *organiser*, gender doesn't matter (all pronouns are a neutral "she")



**Context:** 7 core members from the strongest guild of a closing private MMORPG\* server meet all together for the first time.

Some have been playing together for a long time, some know each other from real life, some have already met IRL, some have never met anybody from the internet.

All are millenials.

Most of them have maintained a daily contact for at least a year, generally for more, should it be on their *mIRC* chan\*, on *Teamspeak*\*, on the guild's forum, in game or in real life.

For the first time, they're all going to be at the same place at the same time, enjoy some food and drinks together.

A moment in time that might be decisive regarding the future of their friendship after the server closes.

**Themes:** friendship, support, maturity, cooperation

**Genre:** psychological, narrativist, progressive, persistent, collaborative, contemporary

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## Structure and Duration

### HARD MODE (best mode)

The game requires some online involvement for 4 consecutive days + 1 final evening (the IRL).

It's preferred that the players accept not to communicate about their character before the IRL. (Extra cautious casting as a counterpart).

- *Monday*: Workshops 2/3hrs (online) at given time. If possible the characters A and D should be in the same room.
- *Tuesday*: IRC time + PM\* time, up to you/your character, no given time, no metatechnique
- *Wednesday*: Teamspeak time: at least 20 mn + up to you/your character
- *Thursday*: IRC time + PM time, up to you/your character (online) no given time + brackets transparent monologues
- *Friday*: 2/3hrs: the IRL, at given time and place

### EASY MODE

The daily gaming can be part of workshops and squeezed in one or two days.

### Material

All participants will need a computer with:

- > Internet
- > mIRC (free chat client): <http://www.mirc.com/>
- > Teamspeak (free vocal chat client): <https://www.teamspeak.com/>
- > A working mic

### Before the game, organizer should

Set up an IRC, a Teamspeak and a forum

Get acquainted with <https://www.figma.com>

### BRIEFING

#### Explain the playing style:

- **Realistic**: don't play the game as though the characters have been close real life friends forever. Some could want to pretend it's the case (not all of them), but most characters aren't used to others physicality and meeting might be a shock.
- **Collaborative**: the game should be a collaborative creation. Be aware and careful of the group dynamic. Accept others propositions in game (and accept the memories they create too). A character's status is as much self-defined as it is by how you react and relate to it.
- The **themes** and **feelings** approached in this game are: friendship, treason, embarrassment (gathering with people that you're close to online, but who are

strangers in real life), refusing reality, leaving a shelter behind (the server is closing), self image, social norms/marginality...

- **Progressive:** embodiment is progressive. The game starts as a written interaction, then a vocal one, and finally a physical one. Likewise, the IRL part is meant to evolve progressively in dramatic intensity (if there's any!).
- **Transparent:** The organiser won't create any event, there won't be any big revelation, and the people mentioned in your background that aren't part of the guild won't show up/aren't secretly one of the guildmates.
- **Secret casting:** Please stay as neutral as possible in your written style. If possible, make it your mission not to be recognized by people you know. Likewise, please try not to investigate who's who, as one of the purpose of the game is the progression of visualisation of the other people with whom you are communicating and the surprises it creates.

If this aspect of the game makes you feel uneasy, please read the "Casting" document to learn more about the pre-game precautions and do not hesitate to get in touch with the organiser.

## **STRUCTURE**

### **TUESDAY - 7PM (The server was down earlier) :**

#### **Before you join the chat room, take a moment to think**

What did my character do today so far?

Was she playing COP earlier? Another game?

Was there a new item she saw on social networks she wanted to investigate?

Did she see something that might interest another character and want to share it?

Would she make up a story just to have something to say?

**From this point forwards, you can go to mIRC chan when you want.**

### **WEDNESDAY:**

#### **Raid night**

The game starts with H linking the DPS meter\*.

A, B, C, D and F went on an instance with secondary characters.

D was tanking\*, D and B were DPS\*, A was healing and F was doing bit of everything.

G just joined because of an after work, E starts AFK\* (she's playing PvP\*)

**From this point forwards, you can go to mIRC chan when you want.**

### **THURSDAY:**

#### **Before you join the chat room, take a moment to think**

What did my character do today so far?

Were they playing COP earlier? Another game?

Was there a news item or meme they saw on Facebook they wanted to investigate?

Did they see something that might interest another character and want to share it?

Would they make up a story just to have something to say?

**You can offer others to switch to vocal anytime.**

## **FRIDAY:**

### **Playthrough**

#### *Act 1: Meeting*

Everybody arrives at G, starts having drinks.

Keeping the appearances up.

#### *Act 2: Ordering*

People order food and maybe play something.

Starting to open up.

#### *Act 3: Eating*

Resolution should be considered.

The game ends when the last candy is eaten.

### **Debrief (20 min)**

Gather the players in a circle and ask them the following questions :

- How do you feel right now?
- What do you need?
- What worked and what didn't for you in this game?
- What'd you like to change if you were to run it next week?

### **Before reading your character's sheet:**

*Feel free to take what you like and to leave the rest.*

*This is purely background: your game will mostly rely on what you express collectively during the workshops, your interactions online and at the IRL.*

*Your character is presented with a main dilemma. Consider it a proposition, one of the characters dilemmas at a given time.*

*Again, this is a realistic game: you're not expected to solve your issues during the game.*

*The violet lines represent the little voice in your head: introspection, sometimes misconceptions, sometimes complexes. Your character doesn't actually hear voices, unless you decide she does. (not particularly recommended)*

# Casting

- This game isn't a parody. If you're expecting to play an adaptation of the webseries *The Guild*, you will be disappointed.
- This game doesn't aim to convey a message, or a moral on hardcore gaming or online behavior: it doesn't try to demonize it, nor does it try to praise it.
- If you're unfamiliar with online video games, especially with (MMO)RPGs, some jargon might be hard to catch, and some aspects of your character sheet might require a hefty projection. There are a few documents to help your understanding, the game is absolutely open to your participation, but prepare to be challenged.

## **Themes I absolutely do not want my character to have in their background:**

Examples:

*Physical abuse, psychological abuse, addiction, mental illness, incest, disease, handicap, mourning, jealousy, parenthood, bad breakup or other issues*

**As the first part of this game keeps the casting secret, it's crucial for everybody's safety that you try to be as exhaustive as possible with this question:**

Are there people you don't want to play with, or are there conditions to your interactions with certain people?

*(I don't want to play at all with X, I don't want to play romance with Y, I don't want to have a conflict with Z, I don't want any close relationship with Q, etc, no information is too much)*

*The list can be very long and precise if needed, and will, of course, remain entirely confidential.*

*For the same reason, the casting will be made precisely and cautiously, according to everybody's needs and desires.*

*If you feel the non-transparency of the casting is preventing you from trying the game but you'd still be keen to play, please, get in touch.*

## CASTING

Please rank the following archetypes according to what sounds the most appealing to you.

Characters (All are 25+ except for The Magus)	Keywords	Relations	Gamer Type	Dilemma
The War Tank C	Protective, Moral, Repressed, Romantic	Met IRL: A, D, G Close to: / To explore: D, B Explored by: B	Socialiser	To lead To retire
The Priest D	Soothing, Perceptive, Self-apologizing, Judgmental	Met IRL: A, G, C Close to: F To explore: / Explored by: E, C	Killer	To work on herself To run away
The Shaman E	Captivating, Unbalanced, Uncompromising, On the verge	Met IRL: G, F Close to: / To explore: D, B Explored by: /	Explorer	Madness Sanity
The Rogue A	Skilled, Complexed, Immature, In denial	Met IRL: D, G, C Close to: B To explore: F Explored by: /	Killer	To take action To stay passive
The Off-Tank G	Devoted, People-pleasing, Autophobic, Misled	Met IRL: A, C, D, E Close to: E To explore: B, C Explored by: /	Socialiser	To break the mask To succeed
The Magus B	Gifted, Perfectionist, Non introspective, Crackling	Met IRL: / Close to: A To explore: F, C Explored by: C, E	Achiever	Tolerance Perfection
The Druid F	Curious, Suggestible, Idealistic, pHidden strength	Met IRL: E Close to: D To explore: Explored by: B, A	Socialiser	To create To be a tool

Please, further express about your preferences/doubts, or communicate anything you'd like.

## BACKGROUND & TYPES

**Please note:** You do not need to remember the chronology or the game expansions names: this document is indicative, and its main purpose is to support the coherence of the character sheets, and to support and assist the global understanding.

Instead of learning everything by heart, play collaboratively around what everybody says/remembers.

The terms followed by a star (\*) are briefly developed in the Lexicon.

## THE MMORPG

*Clash of the Prodigies (COP), is a massively multiplayer roleplaying game set in a fantasy universe.*

*It was released in 2004 (version Vanilla), the first expansion\* was released in 2007 ("Fall from Grace" (FFG)), the second in 2010 ("Magma"), the third in 2014 ("Might of Dedalus"(Might of)), the fourth (present edition) in 2016 ("Odysseus") and a fifth one is expected for 2018 ("Streams of Sand" (SOS)).*

*The gaming community esteems Vanilla and FFG to be the best versions, and the rest of it to be but a progressive decline towards easy industry gaming, despite considerable progress in terms of graphics.*

*The only official version of the game is "Odysseus", older ones can only exist on private servers. Those servers are ran by fans, have their own active communities, are generally regional and get regularly shut down due to copyright infringement.*

*In COP, two factions are opposed and play PvP\* against each other:*

*The Chaos Army and The League.*

*Players from both faction are called Cassies and Liguies.*

*Races:*

*The Chaos Army: Undead, Orc, Naga, Minotaur*

*The League: Human, Elf, Dwarf, Gnome*

*Classes:*

*Warrior (Tank\* or DPS\*), Rogue (DPS), Priest (Healer\* or DPS), Druid (Tank, Healer or DPS), Shaman (Tank, Healer or DPS), Paladin (you don't want to know), Demonist (DPS), Hunter (DPS), Magus (DPS)*



## THE GUILD HISTORY

- 2 years ago, C, G and E co-created the guild in order to move on to HL PvE\*. It's then established that C would be the GM\* and G the raid leader\*.
- The same year, A, B, F and H join. The guild goes up to +100 members, handpicked, with raids\* 3 times/week.
- The guild is extremely efficient and raids are cleaned one after the other, especially once A took over being raid leader.
- 1 year and a half ago, D joins.
- 1 year after that, the guild kills the last boss ("Astaria") of the last raid ("The Maze"), E leaves the guild but still raids with the guild most of the time. The guild keeps playing to loot\*, to perfect the strategy and to spend fun time together.
- Soon after that, the staff reveals that the server will close within months - one month away from now.

H, is older than the rest of you by a good 10 years, you're used to hear her kids yelling in the background on Teamspeak, and her spouse getting mad at her gaming "use".

## THE TYPES OF PLAYERS

Each character has been assigned a primary "player type". This comes from an early paper by Bartle's (game developer & theoriser), which offers a (limited) test to classify players by their motivations.

<b>The Killer</b> Acts on other players. Seeks: sensation, competition	<b>The Socialiser</b> Interacting with other players. Seeks: identity, status
<b>The Achiever</b> Acts on the world. Seeks: security, mechanics knowledge	<b>The Explorer</b> Interacting with the world. Seeks: novelty, arcane knowledge

The purpose isn't to reduce characters and gamers to such types, but to highlight that the *motivations* for gaming are multiple:

Although, gamers are more complex than such taxonomy, it might be an interesting landmark in order to explore the sensations and interests of gaming.

Also, it might be interesting to see that the level of proficiency of a character doesn't necessarily reflect her motivations.

*Ex:* the player with the higher kills on the battleground might not be a Killer.

For more (and better) imaginary lines, see Roger's Caillois *Man, Play and Games*, and we can discuss how his Classification of Games can be correlated with those gamers motivations.

## THE CHARACTERS

<b>Characters (All are 25+ except for The Magus)</b>	<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Gamer Type</b>	<b>Dilemma</b>
The War Tank C	Protective, Moral, Repressed, Romantic	Socialiser	To lead To retire
The Priest D	Soothing, Perceptive, Self-apologizing, Judgmental	Killer	To work on herself To run away
The Shaman E	Captivating, Unbalanced, Uncompromising, On the verge	Explorer	Madness Sanity
The Rogue A	Skilled, Generous, Immature, In denial	Killer	To take action To stay passive
The Off-Tank G	Devoted, People-pleasing, Autophobic, Misled	Socialiser	To break the mask To succeed
The Magus B	Gifted, Perfectionist, Non introspective, Crackling	Achiever	Tolerance Perfection
The Druid F	Curious, Suggestible, Idealistic, Hidden strength	Socialiser	To create To be a tool

## WORKSHOPS

*All players should have picked themselves a pseudo starting with their assigned letter, then, a non-mandatory "real" name. Feel free to pick your character's pronouns as well.*

### **Boundaries talk + safe words (5min)**

Goal: To set boundaries, publically or via PM.

This game is offline and online, it requires extra caution.

Some people may not feel comfortable with some type of online interactions, and it's good to be upfront about it.

Online boundaries: verbal, written (be specific, ex: "I don't want to roleplay online", "I don't want to talk about sex online")

Offline boundaries: verbal, physical

Remind everybody of safe words CUT:

When a player feels uncomfortable, for whatever reason, they can decide to CUT the game.

Everybody stops playing and enquires about how that player feels and what they need. We then discuss the possibility of going back to playing.

And BRAKE (the game slows down, we change the action/the subject).

There are no rules for simulating sex as no characters will have sex during the IRL.

Apart from A and D, and perhaps E and F, no characters have a history of physicality.

This group isn't a group of real life friends, super physical, super affectionate etc.

Touching someone else, should it be their hand, is already a big gesture.

### **Icebreaker (chat game = 10 mn)**

Goal: To create an online group playful unity.

KISS - MARRY - KILL?

### **Group dynamics.**

Workshops using <https://www.figma.com> + voice streaming for the GM

Goals: Creation of affinities,

Emphasis on privileges/status,

## Giving a sense of virtual space/real time interaction

### *Image 1: YES / NO*

*Start with consensual questions then move on to social differences, privileges and personal issues.*

- Do you like video games?
- Do you like Sci Fi movies?
- Are you into sports ?
- Do you get drunk often?
- Are you a single child?
- Do you come from the capital city?
- Do you like city life?
- Are you good at video games?
- Have you ever been in love?
- Do you feel excluded?
- Do you feel undervalued?

### *Image 2: 7 people podium + The League circle / The Chaos circle*

Online status order: C>A>B>G>E>D>F (can be slightly adapted according to the above)

What faction do you want to play?

Decision made according to C, A and B's, choice.

### *Image 3: 7 people podium + Sushi circle / Pizza circle*

Offline status order: G>A>D>E>F>C>B (can be slightly adapted according to the above)

What food do you want to order on friday? Majority of G, D and A

Decision made according to G, D and A's, choice.

### Image 4: White screen

Ask all the players to line up with a little place.

Circle D, F and G and say:

*D, F and G are different from the other players.*

*You wouldn't expect to find them on an online game.*

*When you first heard them talk, they stroke you as the kind of people who'd have different interests, or wouldn't be too good at games.*

### **Cyberhot-seat (5mn/each)**

Goal: To make the characters your own

ex:

Do you want to have children?

Do you wish you could play more?

How do you feel about the server closing down?

Are you satisfied with your place in the group?

Who would you the least want to lose contact with?

### **AVATAR – Character vision of self and of their avatar (order: C>A>B>G>E>D>F)**

Pick a race of the said faction.

> 3 adjectives to describe the Avatar's appearance

> 3 adjectives to describe the character's self image

> 3 adjectives to describe the Avatar's qualities

> 3 adjectives to describe the character's qualities

### **Opening PM windows**

Goal: Planting the seeds of the online interaction + Using written metatechniques

Explain:

These last years, more or less recently, all of you have exchanged at least one PM.

There is no minimum to your interaction nor is there any maximum.

It can be two words or a whole interaction, it can be very personal or very practical.

### **Written Metatechniques:**

They can be used in this workshop and/or during the game.

#### Writing in the Past: Round Brackets

You can use brackets if it's past, eventually starting with the time of the interaction.

To acknowledge you're playing in the same time frame, other players should also use the opening bracket.

Let the person who opened the brackets close them.

**Ex:**

Homlet: (2 months ago: u poophead why the hell would you bid on this item???)

Gothello: (chill it's for my off spe

Homlet: (I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR 5 MONTHS TO GET THAT ITEM PERFECTLY OPTIMIZED FOR ME

Gothello: (no rage it's just a few pixels bruh

Homlet : (fuck u seriously)

### Writing transparently: Square Brackets

You can use square brackets if you want to share your character's thoughts or intentions to the other player.

### **Ex:**

Gothello: so what, I've seen them IRL, they just look random

Homlet: random good or random meh?

Gothello: random yomama [they look so flawless I couldn't even maintain eye contact but you'll never know, NEVER]

You all have a PM Cheat List that can help you with this workshop or the game.

Feel free to use it or not.

A>B: Âgon VS Ilinx, the beauty of games A>C: Convince her to make you RL A>D: Love & fun & we're in the same room troll A>E: Mirroring the troll A>F: Post breakup flirtation A>G: Post first IRL: Did you get back safely?	G>A: What should I bring to the dinner? G>B: Hey, how are things going in the guild? G>C: Switching to Off-tank G>D: Ahhh so you're dating A? G>E: Remember when we used to play, bang bang? G>F: I had to switch class too
E>A: Trolling everyone E>B: Asking her what's her sacred fire E>C: You're not serious enough E>D: Tell me a dream in great details E>F: She's trying to get you to talk to her E>G: Remember when we used to play, bang bang?	F>A: she's flirting with you F>B: she's giving you advices F>C: you should switch to healer F>D: They think they own it but it's a game F>E: Answer me F>G: She says she switched for the guild
B>A: Âgon VS Ilinx, the beauty of games B>C: I can't make it to the raid B>D: F shouldn't be playing heal	D>A: Love & fun & we're in the same room troll D>B: F shouldn't be playing heal

<p>B&gt;E: What's your sacred fire?</p> <p>B&gt;F: Good job for improving your DPS, advices...</p> <p>B&gt;G: How are you feeling in the guild?</p>	<p>D&gt;C: What are you doing online so late?</p> <p>D&gt;E: How did you find the hidden room?</p> <p>D&gt;F: They think they own it but it's a game</p> <p>D&gt;G: Ahhh so you're dating A?</p>
<p>C&gt;A: Thanks for hosting the party</p> <p>C&gt;B: It's good to have you around</p> <p>C&gt;D: What about you become officer?</p> <p>C&gt;E: Be more serious during the raids</p> <p>C&gt;F: You have your place in this guild</p> <p>C&gt;G: Maybe it's time to become off-tank</p>	

### **Presentation on the guild forum**

How did you present yourself to the guild, when you joined? Which real life information did you display publicly? What was your attitude?

**Corresponding:** if you want to, you can correspond on the guild's forum and use (or not) the same metatechniques.

## STRUCTURE REMINDER

*Act 1: Meeting: So who are you, how are you, what do you do?*

Everybody arrives at G, starts having drinks.

Keeping the appearances up.

*Act 2: Ordering: Are you gonna move to another extension?*

People order food and maybe play something.

Starting to open up.

*Act 3: Eating: What about being friends IRL?*

Diner time.

Resolution should be considered.

The game ends when the last candy is eaten.

### **Introduction text (Friday)**

You all have your own history, your own complexities, your own struggles.

But all of you are gamers.

Not only that, all of you are part of the same guild.

You have raided together, you have farmed together, you have lost your time together and you have accomplished challenges together.

You have died and retried together, persevering together like some of you never experienced in any other form.

You have all stayed entire nights playing with other members of this guild, your guild.

You have all laughed, been enraged or at least upset, alone behind your screen.

You have seen players betraying your guild, you have seen players dedicating months of their life to reach the level to get in your guild.

Many of your guildmates left, the guild, the server, the game.

But all of you, somehow, stayed.

How important are your relations, now that your common land is about to vanish?

Are you too different to stay friends, or perhaps, too close?



## END MEDITATION

*In dimmed lights, everybody should be sitting on a chair, it should be read slowly, with a soothing music.*

Take a minute to relax,  
to breathe, at a comfortable pace,  
At your pace,  
Feel your feet on the ground,  
Feel the places where your body is touching.

Picture your character,  
Picture the different forms she has taken along the week,

Let the weight on her shoulders be lifted from yours,

Keep breathing at *your* pace.

Roll your shoulders slightly back to relax them.  
Let go of your character and of her ties,

You can also touch your neck and gently massage it.  
Keep breathing at your pace.  
You character's story belongs to you.  
Let it be a story.

Keep your eyes closed a little longer.  
When you're ready, you will open your eyes, look at the people around you, and see them as the players you know, or as people you've never met before.

## DAILY ROADMAP & TIPS

Please note: The game is meant to be a progressive build up towards the IRL.

Although you can complexify and develop your relationships it's advised that you do not resolve anything online and keep some tension and awkwardness for Friday's IRL.

Try to come up with a rumor.

Try to confess something to someone inappropriate.

Remember... The screen is protecting you.

You all have a PM Cheat List at the end of your character sheet that can help you with workshops or/and with the game.

Feel free to use it or not.

### Tips for an easier genderless game:

If you pick yourself a real name, pick a name that's either neutral or of the opposite gender (if you identify to one!).

Use "she" all the time.

All parents are "mothers", all siblings are "sisters".

A guy or a girl will be a "Jen" or a "people" (why not?). (Une Jen ou une personne)

Monday: 8pm - 11pm (Workshops)

What you have to do before the game:

- Read your character sheet
- Read the background document
- Find a pseudo starting with your letter, and an optional name. It's encouraged for players to pick a gender neutral name or a name of the opposite gender (if they identify to one).
- Start thinking of how your character would present herself on the guild's forum.
- Download Teamspeak
- Disable your mic

Tuesday: free time + evening time

You're free to bum around the teamspeak channel and the guild forum as you please throughout the day.

Try to come and chat during the evening, remain fairly mundane. There is no metatechnique to be used and this isn't the moment to resolve anything.  
Try to bum around 7:30/8pm to have some group game!

**Before you join the chat room, take a moment to think...**

What did my character do today so far?

Was she playing COP earlier? Another game?

Was there a new item she saw on social networks she wanted to investigate?

Did she see something that might interest another character and want to share it?

Would she make up a story just to have something to say?

How talkative is she online?

**If you want to play but are out of ideas...**

You can try a silly chat game.

Ex: The abbreviation game. A player says a sentence that has an abbreviation and the others have to guess what it is (or to troll her).

Homlet: I'm currently sitting on a PFC (Purple Fluffy Chair/Punk For Coins, etc...)

Never have I ever works too.

Wednesday: free time + 8pm - 9pm

You're free to bum around the teamspeak channel and the guild forum as you please throughout the day.

At 8pm: go to the Teamspeak and enable your mic: the game is going to be vocal (you can still use the chat as you please).

The game starts with H linking the DPS meter\*.

A, B, C, D and F went on an instance with secondary characters.

D was tanking\*, D and B were DPS\*, A was healing and F was doing a bit of everything.

G just joined because of an after work, E starts AFK\* (she's playing PvP\*)

**Before you join the chat room, take a moment to think...**

What did my character do today before the instance?

Did she enjoy the raid?

How comfortable is she with using a mic?

Was she playing COP earlier? Another game?

Was there a new item she saw on social networks she wanted to investigate?

Did she see something that might interest another character and want to share it?

Would she make up a story just to have something to say?

**If you want to play but are out of ideas...**

You can invite other players to a browser game online that allows you to keep talking on teamspeak.

Ex: isketch, a music blind test, chess online etc...

Thursday: free time+evening time

You can now use the metatechniques.

**Reminder:**

Writing in the Past: Round Brackets

You can use brackets if it's past, eventually starting with the time of the interaction.

To acknowledge you're playing in the same time frame, other players should also use the opening bracket.

Let the person who opened the brackets close them.

**Ex:**

Homlet: (2 months ago: u poophead why the hell would you bid\* on this item???)

Gothello: (chill it's for my off spe\*)

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Gothello: (no rage it's just a few pixels bruh

Homlet : (fuck u seriously)

Writing transparently: Square Brackets

You can use square brackets if you want to share your character's thoughts or intentions to the other player.

**Ex:**

Gothello: so what, I've seen them IRL, they just look random

Homlet: random good or random meh?

Gothello: random yomama [they look so flawless I couldn't even maintain eye contact but you'll never know, NEVER]

Feel free to bum around the teamspeak channel (and to speak!) and the guild forum as you please throughout the day, try to stop by around 7:30/8 pm to have some group game!

## Friday night

When and where: TBA

All acts should last around 1hr, with some flexibility left to the appreciation of players.

*Act 1: Meeting: Who are you, how are you, what do you do?*

Everybody arrives at **G**, starts having drinks.

Direction: Keeping the appearances up.

*Act 2: Ordering: Are you gonna move to another server?*

People order food and maybe play some card/board game.

Direction: Starting to open up.

*Act 3: Eating: Should we see each other again?*

Diner time.

All players have a bag of marbles. On the table, there are three transparent pots, named "play", "meet again" and "leave". During the diner, the players can represent their state of mind and its evolution by placing marbles in the different pots. The game ends when all the marbles have been placed.

## CHARACTERS SHEETS

# A

## The Rogue

Skilled / Generous / Complexed / Immature / In denial



Primary Gamer Type: KILLER

### Online

You have always been good at games. Minitel, consoles, cards, PC, name it, you've beaten it.

Not only were you good, games might have always been your favourite activity.

Since childhood, your sibling and you started spending a great deal of time playing videogames together.

### Offline

Actually, you've always been good at everything.

Sports achievements and good grades would pile up without too much sweat.

*Your one true talent, however, is to have your way with people.*

You come from a family of overachievers that don't communicate much.

One of your parents is a professor emeritus of genetics, a great figure, and an extremely demanding individual.

She puts a lot of hopes in your older sibling, who's showing really promising progress at school.

You and your sibling **V** are close, although she's incredibly full of herself.

*She's some sort of genius. Insufferable, but a genius.*

You have similar taste in terms of comics, books, games, movies, to the point you could swap about anything in your rooms and the both of you would still be perfectly happy.

Your parent is proud of you too. That is, when it comes to your sports performances. She'd always find a way, despite her incredibly busy schedule, to take you to training and to attend all your important meetings.



However, you're much better than she is, for some reason, at video games. It is somewhat satisfying to witness all the efforts she puts in trying to get at your level.

The only games where the both of you were somewhat even, were those not relying so much on reflexes and reactivity.

Apart from that little rivalry, V and you could also play collaboratively.

You finished school earlier, as you're younger *and as your parents won't put you in genius school anyway*, so you took the habit of rushing home, plugging the console, going as far in the game as you could.

Then she'd come back, you'd alternate, and as you'd go to bed earlier, she'd keep playing longer.

That's how you managed to finish super long levels and hardcore mode games.

The both of you, along with N, joined COP Vanilla pretty much as soon as it was released. You had all tried to play other MMORPGs, but none was compelling or satisfying enough thus far.

COP was a truly interesting game. It combined the reflexion of strategy games, a dense fantasy universe and the pleasure of convivial games. *competition.*

V, N and you had a nice trio, although you were faster at getting the game

*You don't have that incredible gift your parent and V have,* but you're clearly above average. *Average, though, seems to be an incredibly low value.*

You have a loving nature and you can find interest in most people, *but let's face it, the average human is fairly stupid.*

Even your best friend, N, isn't that smart. You can more or less twist her mind and get her to agree with you on everything.

She's fun, loyal and she has good values. Those are more important qualities.

*For other people...*

Your sports career started to take off, as you won a few junior championships.

It was incredibly demanding.

But it was a mental game.

*And you were good, at mental games.*

You'd know how to unsettle your opponent, to read their tells, to identify and exploit their weakness, how to disturb their routine and to get them to a point where they can be destroyed.

You'd use cunning to gain time: high level, every single detail matters.

The time you spend tying your shoes, having a few sips out of your ultra condensed sirop bottle, vomiting on the side of the court.

The pride your parent felt when you brought back those prizes was tangible in the air. It even seemed to exceed

mechanics, at levelling, and then at slicing the enemy.

Truth be told, you did pick rogue, clearly the best class around to get kills.

PvP was way more fun than PvE. The parallel with sports was interesting; how it required to juggle between control and gambling.

V and N dragged you into joining a PvE guild, you had managed to win some stuff through PvP achievements and could perform quite decently.

Definitely not as challenging or exhilarating as PvP, but you were spending fun times trolling each other and talking nonsenses on voice chat.

You remained all faithful to the same guild, progressed quite far in the game and developed a good knowledge of the strategies and game dynamics.

When the second extension went out, you all logically followed.

But this time, there was no place for petty PvE. You became a hardcore Arena player.

You were part of two teams, one with a Druid and one with a Mage and a Priest. You made it your mission to get as much victories as possible.

*The more your opponent would rage, the more fun.*

You also became an expert at Wild PvP\*.

Although you used to have your occasional friendly camping session\*,

what she ever shown regarding V's brilliance.

Your parent put physical excellence very high on the hierarchy of achievements. Partly because they never could reach it, partly because of some bourgeois ideal of Corinthian excellence and prestige.

*For a while, you were forgiven not to be a genius.*

Alas, this was a double-edge sword. When you'd lose, sometimes, she couldn't talk to you on your way back and the both of you would remain silent in the car. It was too painful for her and her pain was what was painful to you.

Progressively the pressure was building up.

And suddenly, as V was on her way to start the very best science school in the country, as you were making it to solid national rankings...

The world collapsed.

Your parent was just diagnosed with cancer. A bad one.

As soon as the news had dropped, the subject was closed.

None of your parents dabbled into victimization or over sentimentalism.

After that, your relations with V started becoming poisonous.

She, simply, would, never, stop, talking.

you now took it to another level and would chase down the enemy for entire days.

Many players stopped playing because of you....

...But on the other side, it did create brilliant gaming moments!

They'd cry for help, their friends would get there, than you'd kill them 1v2,3,4. They'd bring their whole guild sometimes to track you and kill you. Your PvP friends would then come to your rescue and those improvised battlefields are amongst your favourite gaming memories.

When COP's third expansion got out, the PvP system was entirely broken, and you left, feeling a bit nauseous and pissed at that money-vortex studio.

You immediately switched to a 5v5 Tower Defense\* that had a very dedicated community, lots of streams, lots of theory online: lots of matter for you to fiddle with and meta-game.

Not only were you playing the game everyday for several hours, you'd eat watching streams and spent a lot of time reading forums.

Over the months, with that intensive regimen, you became very good.

*Not a genius, although you got a little taste of true talent when you met B.*

Cynically and often provocatively, using her intelligence as a pretext to go through nonsensical ever-lasting crappy personal developments.

They got on your nerves, exponentially. The constant rambling, the bullshit, was just as much annoying as how she'd use her genius status to hide her ignorance on topics.

*Or was not being capable of proving her wrong your real issue?*

Sports was harder and harder, probably partly because you started smoking constantly - definitely not just the tobacco, *probably partly because you didn't have your parent to watch you play all the time anymore.*

You entered a time where you had to chose between a career in sports and going to engineering school.

*You were good, yes, but you were nothing exceptional.*

So you picked engineering.

At school, you managed to quickly create yourself a "clique".

People were naturally smitten by you. You were very friendly, *but especially, you were a master at mirroring them. People are so narcissistic and limited that they love what's exactly like them.*

The fun thing was that you could even be open about it. Say "Yeah I'm totally manipulating you", and that would be

B was one of the players you were following, one of the rare ones to be from your country.

Completely randomly (well, also because you both were in a high skill pool\*) you ended up in her team for a game.

You immediately recognized her pseudo, and knew it was truly her from her graceful, precise, deadly gameplay.

You tried your best to impress her during that game, executing complex moves and asking very acute questions. The bravado worked. You made your way to her friends list and started playing with her regularly.

Chatting with her confirmed your impression: she was fucking brilliant.

A shining star, fuck it, a goddamned supernova.

You offered her to play with some of your other friends, and although she was infinitely better than them, she seemed happy to do so.

You probably had found the perfect balance between flattery and keeping some of your shiny charisma intact.

You kept playing the whole time. Channeling your thoughts. Being with your friends.

You weren't performing as well though, weed had clearly softened your reflexes.

You needed a game that wasn't as stressful, just for a little while.

welcomed with a few laughs, or even admiration. *People are mental.*

Soon enough, you were dating P the most attractive student in the whole school. Of course, it was an achievement to get her hooked, but she also had a liveliness, a thirst for existence, that was striking to you. Something fresh and spicy you couldn't quite put the finger on.

That's probably the first person you loved.

*Despite her lack of wit.* Not that she was an idiot, she just wasn't as sharp as you were.

*And you're not that smart yourself.*

Which is probably why you could never be true to her.

P and you had some form of unspoken agreement. The both of you were free to do whatever they wanted, as long as it wouldn't come to be known.

And you certainly made the best out of it, chasing everything that seemed like a fun challenge.

When you parent died, *both her children had become disappointments to her.*

Your other parent was devastated to unspeakable levels, cried a lot, but hardly expressed anything. The three of you sat in silence, in mourning by the hospital bed for a while, and that's the last time you tolerated V's presence

You looked for a COP Vanilla server, downloaded the biggest one around, and created a little rogue, all over again.

You didn't invite N to join, she would still sometimes play other games with V (V would always try and appropriate your relationships, she was dating someone you briefly hooked up with, and many of her friends started by being yours) the last thing you needed was to have your sibling ruining your retro pilgrimage.

You started alone, lvl 1, on your own, from scratch.

It was so, pleasurable, to rediscover the combos, kept in the physical memories of your fingertips. To remember how to build a spec, how to optimise an interface.

You rushed level max, and in a matter of months, the whole server had heard of your exploits on the battleground.

You got invited to many events and raids which ended up being more fun than you'd expect.

The PvP community wasn't very big on the server, also it became very easy to spot the interesting players.

**C** was a pretty solid war. Her class wasn't the easiest, it required a lot of rigour, a good map awareness and an excellent knowledge of all the other classes. C had all that, and she might have been even better than you could

without having to face the urge of breaking her nose.

*How does a car run without a motor?*

You were now spending all of your time smoking, while playing. You didn't care so much about your agreement with P and fucked whoever you wanted, whenever you had the opportunity to.

N and a few friends would come at yours to play LAN and smoke with you. But their presence started getting too heavy and you eventually stopped answering their messages.

P didn't even try to indulge. She got berserk, said you were out of control, and broke up with you, *right when you needed her the most.*

*Who's betraying who, now?*

You spent more and more time researching COP and less and less time in class.

You didn't want to see their sorry faces. You were completely locked in your small studio apartment, right above your parent's flat.

You'd often go downstairs to eat, cautiously trying not to run into V.

V was still *in* the flat.

*V was always in the flat.*

Your parent sometimes confided how V was getting on her nerves too.

see, if she had been playing another class, or if she had been more dedicated to get all the appropriate PvP stuff.

There was also **G** and **E**, a peculiar duo, rogue/chaman. The chaman had a nice reactivity but seemed to be a massive troll, whereas the rogue, decent, could learn one thing or two from you.

As the three of them were all in the same guild and as you were craving some more challenging and followed-up interaction, you took a look at their forum, applied and, *naturally*, got in.

You started raiding with them, and immediately liked the guild ambiance: mostly friendly, mature and fun players. Some strats weren't quite on point, so you started sharing your knowledge.

If C was a great GM - serious, devoted, never a bad word, and a big voice to cover the others when needed -, you couldn't say as much about G as a raid leader.

G was very talkative, a bit precious and lacked the charisma and precision necessary to lead 40 people, *overall, she just weren't sharp-minded enough.*

G kept talking about her life, the dates, the high society parties. *None of that impresses you, it's an easy game to play, and you find it rather pathetic to make great noise around it.*

However, something was somehow redeeming which raised a little smile when you think about it: firstly, G would

*She always liked you best, probably because V was a genius like your other parent, and you...more of a soft one, like her.*

*If only she knew what you were capable of inflicting on others.*

You didn't attend your exams for your final year at school, and were held back.

Apart from eating occasionally with your parent, you'd mostly go out to get some weed, sometimes, sell some.

Sometimes, rarely, N would still come around and you would play something 2 players. You kept COP a secret and invented something about having a few personal programming projects going on.

spend way too much time farming to get ready for the raids to be that party-animal she was describing. Secondly, she'd take the trolls and the jokes light-heartedly.

You'd tease her and she never took umbrage, a rare quality.

As for E... E was a mystery. You can't truly pinpoint whether she's, indeed, nothing but a massive, and very creative troll, or if she's a proper weirdo. Gameplay wise, she knows how to play COP, no doubt. In PvP, she displayed a mixture of great reactivity and crazy moves that aren't always successful. As a result, you did enjoy duelling her, much less playing in her team.

Around the time you joined, F, apparently E's partner, also joined.

At first, she was extremely naive and quiet - to the point you doubted whether she had a keyboard (*frankly her gameplay was so terrible she could have been mouse clicking everything*), she then started to open up a little, and revealed a bleak, absurd sense of humour. A sign of intelligence!

She was intriguing, yet out of reach, as always glued to E, and doing random things with her.

When they broke up, it clearly felt like an opportunity.

F was a complete beginner and you liked to offer a chance to others to unravel their full potential, to act as a mentor.

*Needless to say, you were desperate to have someone.*

N eventually signed you up for the new year at school... But you don't really intend to attend. You don't have the energy to go back into that masquerade.

The both of you started playing more together, she'd follow you on the battleground... Rogue+Druid had a nice potential! You tried to bring the discussion to a more personal level, but she got incredibly evasive and would take absurd detours. Something that eventually got you bored with that particular game.

At that time you flirted with a few people online, knocking on several doors to see if there was anything interesting to be discovered. It brought you short-term comfort, but nothing led anywhere serious.

One day, the server was down, and you decided to connect onto that good old Tower Defense. B was online, it had been a while since you had played together and the reunion was quite nice. She didn't ask any question and seemed genuinely happy to catch up.

That felt good. Relaxed and good.

At the end of the day, she was downloading COP and creating a Magus, one of the most demanding, and powerful, class of the game.

You've never seen anybody reaching level max\* so fast, or rapping so much people with absolutely no stuff.

*That fucking genius of hers.*

She naturally joined the guild soon after that, and although she was very busy with school, she'd manage to get there for raids and PvP nights.

Days would get more lonely for you. Most people in the guild had a job,



studies to attend, and the ones that didn't were either really hard to understand, like E, or straight up scary. Hopefully PvP was stimulating enough to not feel the need to chit chat all the time.

Again, it's on the battleground that you met **D**. D too was a new player, although not entirely new to video games like F. She was a little Priest, beginning the hard way with PvP, trying to learn the mechanics and to survive through healing big DPS. She caught up very quickly on complex strategies, which put her instantly under a favourable light.

Moreso, she was enthusiastic to enter into discussions about herself.

She would even challenge you into giving more details, into sharing more intimate things from a very early standpoint.

C also seemed to appreciate her, and although she wasn't at the level yet and since an exception had been made for F, the both of you agreed to invite her to join the guild.

D was hardcore on trying to level-up.

She would spend her days on the game... And so would you.

After raiding together and hearing her voice on Teamspeak, you were all the more besotted. She was eloquent and would pull up elegantly with the criticism, giving as good as she got.

You offered to exchange Skype details, she accepted.

After gaming all day long together, you'd also talk all night long together.

It was energising. You started bringing up the possibility of meeting.

For a while, she entirely refused.

She said she didn't want to meet anyone, and also, what you had online was too precious to be confronted to reality, which might very well simply put an end to it.

You didn't care what she looked like. Any knew quality would just be a bonus.

Gaming side by side was the dream.

The guild kept progressing and D too. She soon became good *enough*.

Sometimes your PvP mates would tease her, but you had faith in her potential.

So had C, since he offered her to become officer Heal; an evidence that you were not blinded with love.

D found her place ridiculously easy in the guild.

When you had reassured her enough, she finally agreed to meet, and, the same week, you stopped smoking, cleaned your studio for the first time in ages, and she was moving in.

She was smart. Smarter than she let people see. *Smarter than she let herself explore*. That all became very clear when she beat your ass 5 times in a row at chess.

Only V had ever beaten you at chess.

Things were easy with her. No drama like you had with P, and, for the first time in your life, you didn't feel the need to manipulate someone.

And so you were in love, deeply, for the second time. *Scratch that. The first*. Yes, it was gonna be the first time you had ever been in love.

D was very supportive, listened deeply to you, always in a very patient and

It was wonderful, to be able to share this experience with your significant other.

The social side of it as much as the skilled side of it... No wonder why your story created some envy.

One night, after a raid, G suggested that C, D and you have a few drinks together.

After progressing at a swift pace, the guild entered the very last raid of the extension: The Maze. You knew things had to be perfectly optimised for the guild to succeed. There was an overload of useless DPS, including F. Not only was she among the weakest links of the guild, but she was playing druid, a class that can hardly show up anything on the DPS meter. You discussed with C about it, and you both pushed her to switch to an alt. Although she didn't seem to react much to it, D called you a fascist and refused to heal you for the raids that night.

respectful manner, which brought you the support you needed to be able to go back to school.

So you did go back, for her.

About a year after you first met, you moved to a slightly bigger apartment.

It was around New Years eve, so you offered to kill two birds with one stone and to celebrate at your place.

It felt incredibly natural, to meet them. C was exactly what you were expecting, so precisely the representation of her online persona that it was surprising. Tough, with a calm composure and a greasy humour.

G was definitely not the gamer type. Very fancy, very assured. You know that type of social butterflies and their way of flapping their shiny wings amuses you.

After a few drinks C told you you had found a gem in D, which did sound bittersweet.

D and you love each other, you've bonded within isolation and despair, that's clear. The both of you rejected the world and its pressure at the same time and you became joined almost as one very fast.

But despite, or maybe, because of this fusion, D seemed to find the situation frustrating.

Kinda cute.

The guild ransacked that raid until the very last boss. For months you all tried different strats, farmed more potions, optimised your stuff, kicked a few players and had a few others joining. It was resisting you and almost mocking you.

The night you killed Astaria, the very last boss of the Maze, everybody was absolutely hysterical on Teamspeak. You may always remember D's deep voice cheering up the troops, everybody yelling when the life bar was dramatically reducing and the collective joyful cry: GG!

Everybody got flooded by messages from other guilds players, and even players from the other faction connected their spy characters to congratulate you.

Yes, that was a collective effort and a striking, even glorious, moment.

E immediately left the guild to join a PvP one, while the rest of you kept playing; to farm stuff, to be together, raiding in a more flexible and relaxed way.

A couple of months later, the server's website was colored in a dark theme and announced they were due to close within 8 months.

It seemed as though justice had waited for the guild to clear the content, to take down the last boss, yet that was hardly any satisfaction.

She wanted to do more, to see more, to go out more.

None of that was truly appealing to you, mundanities, cultural masturbation, plus your flat was kind of in the sticks and you hated public transportation.

For some reason, she wouldn't try much on her own. Although you dismissing her suggestion would visibly irritate her, she'd stay in instead of attending all those events alone.

In this dynamic, however, it seemed that she's growing apart from you, which is insanely scary.

You always felt like D would leave you eventually. She is one of the smartest people you know, she is beautiful, she has something unique, in her way of thinking, in her way of caring. Even C saw it immediately.

So you've been making more efforts, to play a little less, to be a little more active.

You don't really want to go do all these activities, but you're trying more.

You've been trying to make efforts on your look too.

It feels like everyday they're putting a little bit more distance between you while telling you they love you.

*How can a car run without a motor?*

<p>G: let's meet before it closes. A: ^ H: I probably couldn't make it but take pics A: oooo let's discover G's trendy lair D: Will you cook for us this time? C: F, B, H, E, you better drag your ass to our final IRL &lt;E left the channel&gt; A: lol G: that mofo B: why not H: well can I come with my kids? C: yeah, watching A and D is like watching a fucking disney movie G: If they can hold their liquor A: &lt;3 D: F will be there. C: F? F: .</p>	
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**PM's cheat list:**

A>B: Ågon VS Ilinx: what's a better activity than video games?

A>C: Convince her to make you RL

A>D: Love & fun & we're in the same room troll

A>E: Mirroring the troll

A>F: Post breakup flirtation

A>G: Post first IRL: Did you get back safely?

# B

## The Magus

Gifted / Perfectionist / Non-Introspective / Crackling



Primary Gamer Type: ACHIEVER

## Online

You can't remember a time when you weren't playing video games every day.

It worked just fine with video games too. Except those allowed you more freedom to experiment: in virtual worlds, one can die and be reborn instantly, perfecting one's strategy without consequences.

Somehow, it seemed that both worlds could feed each other. You could optimise your gameplay using statistics, probabilities, or even physics, for any games - FPSes, RTSes or RPGs. Every system could be studied and understood.

## Offline

You're the single child of a single parent.

Your other parent was unsuited to having children, too much of "a loser" to step into your life.

"An alcoholic, a gambler, a depressive coward."

During your childhood, your parent and you moved a lot: sometimes to stay with family because your parent didn't have enough money to pay rent, sometimes because they found a job in a different city.

As a consequence, you very much shaped yourself alone.

The one rule in your life was "doing things right".

It was easy to follow: if you focused and if you studied, nothing could go wrong. At least at school.

*In real life, stumble once and you become a loser.*

That's exactly what you did, through your childhood and teenage years. You followed this rule to the letter, and it kept you safe.

Maths was the simplest example: formulae, structure and rigor led to perfect grades.

You didn't really understand why people struggle with applying simple and straightforward principles.

Before high school, you mostly favoured solitary games, which was partly because kids at school set a terrible example of human interaction.

Although the internet teems with all sorts of trolls and immature douchebags, you came to the realisation

You started playing with a few people online, regularly.

That wasn't really your forte; your system worked better when you only had your own actions to compute. Human unpredictability was ever so confusing.

That said, you did value those occasional moments of grace, when a whole team would connect and seem to work as a single being.

Chance, probably. It was all too rare to be a sustainable goal for you.

Likewise, video games were a fascinating testing ground for all types of science; games granted you with a great ability to visualize abstract concepts, to give them a feeling of physical space and to comprehend whole systems.

You openly identified as being a "nerd", and a "gamer".

It's a fact: you prefer the company of complex problems and beautifully scripted AI to most of the people you meet on an everyday basis.

there was something more fake about your classmates than your gaming buddies. Something that made them harder to understand.

Most people your age might have enjoyed "hanging out", gossiping or chit chatting, which was simply beyond your comprehension.

*And most of them would have wanted nothing to do with you anyway... as a matter of fact, no one ever cared to approach you.* You didn't look like them, you didn't talk, dress or behave like them.

Several times, your parent expressed their concerns regarding your way of life; but you didn't really feel bad about it



You started focussing on Startech, a very demanding, beautifully designed 1v1 RTS.\*

The balance of the four warring civilisations was ingenious, and provided you with a thrilling satisfaction. You broke down its principles, and trained your reactions. Every second – every pixel – counted.

This game's community was incredibly serious and dedicated, but for some reason, those doing the proper job of trying to understand what was behind the units, the map, the production, weren't that numerous.

You became really good.

As you were making your way to the national top five, you started receiving a lot of attention, including from professional teams.

You weren't one of those competition adrenaline junkies; you simply couldn't understand why people wouldn't try to comprehend the game as they should.

Similarly, you didn't care about making a living out of video games... that was a lot of exposure for very little freedom.

What really motivated you was teaching others about your methods.

So you recorded a few gameplay videos, compiling your best moves and your latest breakthroughs. These videos made you famous in your community.

As a consequence of this niche cyber-fame, you sometimes received requests from players who'd seen your

and it's hard to reproach you for anything.

*They certainly can't blame you for not having long lasting friendships with the nomadism and the instability they imposed on you.*

You don't feel resentful about it, you understand they weren't capable of settling, in any realm of things.

During high school, you signed up for a volunteering tutoring program, to help other students in Maths.

You reasoned it would be healthy to do something positive, and that it could challenge your understanding of those fields. They say that the best way to master a subject is to teach it, and the idea of mastery enthralled you. Research and teaching go together like horse and carriage.

You got assigned **M**, a student your age from a different class.

M was very grateful for your help. You never thought someone so popular could get on so well with you.

You began M's education from the very beginning. Maths teachers were a lazy, sad and incompetent bunch.

It was easy to give out a list of formulas to learn by heart. Much less to take things step by step and to teach how to think.

How to dive, fearless, into depths of a problem -- the true way to solve it, not just rote memorisation?

videos, to play together, on all types of games.

That's how you met **A**, on another of your favourite games, a 5v5 Tower Defense\*.

You could see from her gameplay that she was trying to make sense of the action. She would sometimes act on impulse rather than making the smart play, but she was a good player.

Not only that, she was fun; A has a natural charisma that makes most people like her. Even on this game, full of prepubescent raging kids.

It's impressive to see how easily she can settle conflicts with humor or a couple of diplomatic sentences. This talent mirrors her gameplay: laid back and skilled.

You feel like her influence is good for you, and it helps you open up a bit. Maybe she can help you finding a middle ground between skill and acceptance.

A was immediately keen to introduce you to all her online friends.

She hooked you up with other cool players, she sent you cool music, and you enjoyed her attention.

Unlike with M, this was a sustainable match.

It's funny to think she chased you, but that's a nice form of mutual admiration.

Out of the blue, A vanished.

Your status at school started changing a little. People would smile at you, or even greet you. In M's light, you did exist.

Alas, this was doomed to be temporary.

As the year progressed, and as M was keeping up, you became more critical of her mistakes.

When she wouldn't understand, it would be fine, *but what you couldn't tolerate, was the mental laziness.*

M started closing up.

Eventually, she stopped showing up altogether.

Why wouldn't she listen like A would?

And there you were, in the darkness of high school's corridors again.

The hours, then days, weeks, months where she hadn't been connected piled up. It felt bitter.

Over the last few months, you had taught her a lot, and for the first time, someone seemed to get it. Sometimes, you were in such a beautiful synchronicity IG that it felt incredibly exhilarating, moving.

So you went back to playing on your own, more intensely too.

You tried to recreate the same type of collaboration... even friendship... but it always felt artificial.

Gamers are more like you than they are like A. They don't facilitate communication.

You stopped playing 5v5 to go back to good old solo Startech.

After getting your level back, which took a few intensive months, you reached an amazing level of immersion.

Even when you weren't playing, in your mind you would visualise games, from beginning to end.

Those moments were magical, when you could lay in bed, close your eyes and let your subconscious whisper new strategies and possibilities, by compiling faster the information than your methodical reflection would have.

You were now starting your super-competitive science program, and most people weren't too interested in having beers anyway.

This cold temperature might have been better for your progress at school.

Not that you had any reason to worry, but human relationships create a breach in your focus.

There are so many parameters to consider, when getting close to a human and trying to understand them.

It upsets you, not being able to afford to leave your parent's house now that it's legal for you to do so.

Sometimes you think you'd be better off signing up for a Startech team and postponing your academic career until after you've saved enough money to be independent.

However, dedicating yourself entirely to one single logic system risks declining in all the others, which is insufferable.

*And you can't be a gamer, that's too close to a gambler... to a loser.*

In the middle of the holidays, as you decided to play some recreational 5v5, A connected.

Your heart jumped, it had been such a long time since you had seen her username pop up on your screen.

You played together the whole day, as though she had never left, and it was so natural and light-hearted that you didn't even ask her what had happened.

A had seen your last video, and she showered you with praise.

It was good to think that, all this time, she thought about you and followed your progress.

On your birthday, you received an email from your other parent.

*"Happy birthday, I've heard you're doing fantastic and I'm really proud although I haven't done much to contribute to your success".*

*That's it? Why? What does she want?*

For the first time in a really long time, your parent seemed to be in a long-term relationship.

Of course, her partner was a mess. Your parent only dated people with psychological baggage.

This one was at your place all the time, half naked, and it led you to retreat even further to the depths of your room.

*Anything not to cross paths with her, not to have to listen to her rambling about how miserable her life was despite her countless qualities.*

You finished school early, with honors, and were offered a place at the best university in the country.

You accepted, and although it was fully funded, you didn't manage to move out. The grant wasn't that much money... saving a little wouldn't be too bad.

*What if you left and then had nowhere... and nobody... to go to?*

From gaming, you understood the necessity of constant training. Oiling systems is athleticism, being able to breakthrough comes with immersion. A state you had yet to experience with maths, but you knew was reachable.

Maybe you'd find a path to create a similar passive processing as with Startech. Maybe complex problems would solve themselves in front of your closed eyes.

*"Did she send you an email? She said she would."*

You reread the email several times, trying to understand your own feelings. Confusion. That's what it was. Too confusing to deal with. You archived the email.

A mentioned she was having a blast on that old-school server of COP and suggested you come and play. She stressed that her guild was lacking some solid players and that she'd love to pick your brain on COP's game mechanics.

You had only played the newer expansions of it a few years ago and never found it interesting, but A was presenting you the Vanilla version as an entirely different game. You agreed to try it out.

You were used to vintage aesthetics and the old-school graphics didn't shock you all that much. It was definitely another pair of hands than the official game. More hardcore, more fun.

A started over with a new character so the both of you could level up together. Although pexing\* was fun, with your current level of reactivity and A's experience, you got to the level max\*, very quickly.

You discovered the beauty of COP through its PvP. The class you had fortunately picked, Magus, was incredibly rich and allowed for elaborate combinations.

Your parent started therapy and became obsessed with applying all these new rules of well-being and of "how to have healthy relationships with people" to everybody around her.

Her partner threatened to leave if she didn't stop showering her with never-ending suggestions, and you wished you could do the same.

"No." That was the easy answer, the easy way out, they'd figure it out together, *since they had been communicating secretly anyway.*

The gap between you and your parent was ever expanding. You overheard her partner complaining about you being home all the time, saying you should get autonomous, giving her all types of parenting advice, coming right from her void experience.

Yet your parent would agree with her. All the time. *She always did go in her partner's sense, no matter how crazy, how stupid they could be.*

You shut down more and found a routine where you'd always been studying or gaming.

You'd do the minimum socialisation at school, but everybody was determined to thrive and that hardly left much time to chit chat.

Your RTS experience granted you with an exceptional spatial awareness that was a clear advantage, even over experienced COP players.

Along with cracking the secrets of the battleground, A invited you to join her guild.

You accepted, mostly because you were curious to try PvE HL. Raiding with 39 other players seemed both repulsing - more uncontrollable variables - and interesting - how much of a difference can one player make?

It's not easy for you to talk on Teamspeak or to lead a conversation with groups, but you feel comfortable enough around them.

**C**, the GM was doing a solid, consistent job, of course, there's A's partner **D**. You never really got to interact much with her and were surprised to hear about her mere existence. In the core group, there were also a few other players that liked PvP.

Such as **F** and **E**.

You learned that F started gaming as an adult.

COP - Vanilla is a very demanding game and she's starting from scratch, surrounded by players who've been playing in general for more than 10 years.

You can't remember starting anything from scratch and can respect that journey.

It was inevitable. Your parent's partner *finally* left.

Your parent spent weeks crying.

That was a cycle you knew all too well. You comforted her, freed some time both from raids and from school to watch movies with her, and felt like you could breathe a little again in your own house.

*Or was it your house?*

And then she had to spoil your relationship again by yelling at you for not being more proactive, sociable, yada yada.

*Same speech her almighty exes would give.*

That guild was the first time you got to see a great variety of gamers. You used to put gamers in two categories only: casual players and hardcore players.

No one on Startech or Tower Defense would slack around to “explore the game peacefully” or to “interact with friends.”

The mere thought of it makes you giggle.

As F was always struggling in the guild, and got pushed to switch to Healer, you discovered a bitter feeling of injustice, right in your upper stomach.

She only got to loot heal items, which sucks for someone that wants to learn hybrid gameplay for PvP.

Anyway, she hasn't been playing PvP much lately. It might be because she used to date E, who's often on the battleground.

Sometimes you find it ironic that you managed to avoid so carefully the drama linked to groups of people IRL and find yourself witnessing crumbs of it online and even getting affected by it.

It's hard to pinpoint what type of player F is, though. Or what type of person she is. She's quite mysterious and doesn't show off much.

*However, her voice does have a nice tessiture and it makes you really wonder what she looks like.*

Anyway, you like to go PvP with A, sometimes with G too. The both of them are probably the most charismatic

You reason it would probably be good for you to escape that droning family cocoon where you've been macerating all this time.

However, that's a lot to organise, you hardly have mental space for it, while dismissing the feeling altogether takes a few minutes only.

Maybe you could try and see what it's like to be elsewhere.

Somewhere still convenient for your school.

Somewhere where you could put your computer.

That's too complicated and too much of an investment to be arranged for a few days only.

Could it be for longer?

And ...

<p>people around, and their confidence feels like there's something they've understood about life that you haven't.</p> <p>It's nice to be around them, to hear their flow, to laugh with them.</p> <p>After a few more months the guild entered the very last raid of the extension: The Maze. The guild ransacked that raid until the very last boss. For months you all tried different strats, farmed more potions, optimised your stuff, kicked a few players and had a few others joining. It was resisting you.</p> <p>The night you killed Astaria, the very last boss of the Maze, everybody was hysterical on Teamspeak. You may always remember D's deep voice cheering up the troupes, everybody yelling when the life bar was dramatically reducing and the collective joyful cry: GG!</p> <p>Everybody got flooded by messages from other guilds' players, and even players from the other factions connected their spy characters to congratulate you.</p> <p>Yes, that was a collective effort and a striking moment.</p> <p>E immediately left the guild to join a PvP one, while the rest of you kept playing, to farm stuff, to be together, raiding in a more flexible and relaxed way.</p>	<p>Where?</p> <p>What does it matter. You've handled the everyday suffocation since childhood. There's no reason it should change now.</p>
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A couple of months later, the server's website was colored in a dark theme and announced they were due to close within 8 months.

It seemed as though justice had waited for the guild to clean the content, yet that was hardly any satisfaction.

Learning about the server closing was sad. You put some money into the common pot to finance the lawsuit, but that wasn't sufficient.

You'd like to keep playing with the guild, that's certain, you feel you could be useful, have a place and learn from very different types of people.

When some of your guildmates joke about it, it does pinch your heart. You don't like thinking that your common adventure is a burden for some of you, and that they might get freed.

Freedom is online.

G: let's meet before it closes.

A: ^

H: I probably couldn't make it but take pics

A: oooo let's discover G's trendy lair

D: Will you cook for us this time?

C: F, B, H, E, you better drag your ass to our final IRL

<E left the channel>

A: lol

G: that mofo

B: why not

H: well can I come with my kids?

C: yeah, watching A and D is like watching a fucking disney movie

G: If they can hold their liquor A: <3 D: F will be there.  C: F? F: .	
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**Open questions:**

What does B need to become independent?

Has B ever been in love?

How could B make room in her life to accommodate a relationship?

Could B reconsider a career in gaming?

Is science too vast to comprehend for B's sanity?

How does B feel about A vanishing and showing up?

How does B feel about A having a partner?

Could B compromise her progress to teach F?

Would B join the guild for another online game?

**PM Cheat List:**

B>A: Âgon VS Ilinx, the beauty of games

B>C: I can't make it to the raid

B>D: F shouldn't be playing healer

B>E: E asking you what's your sacred fire

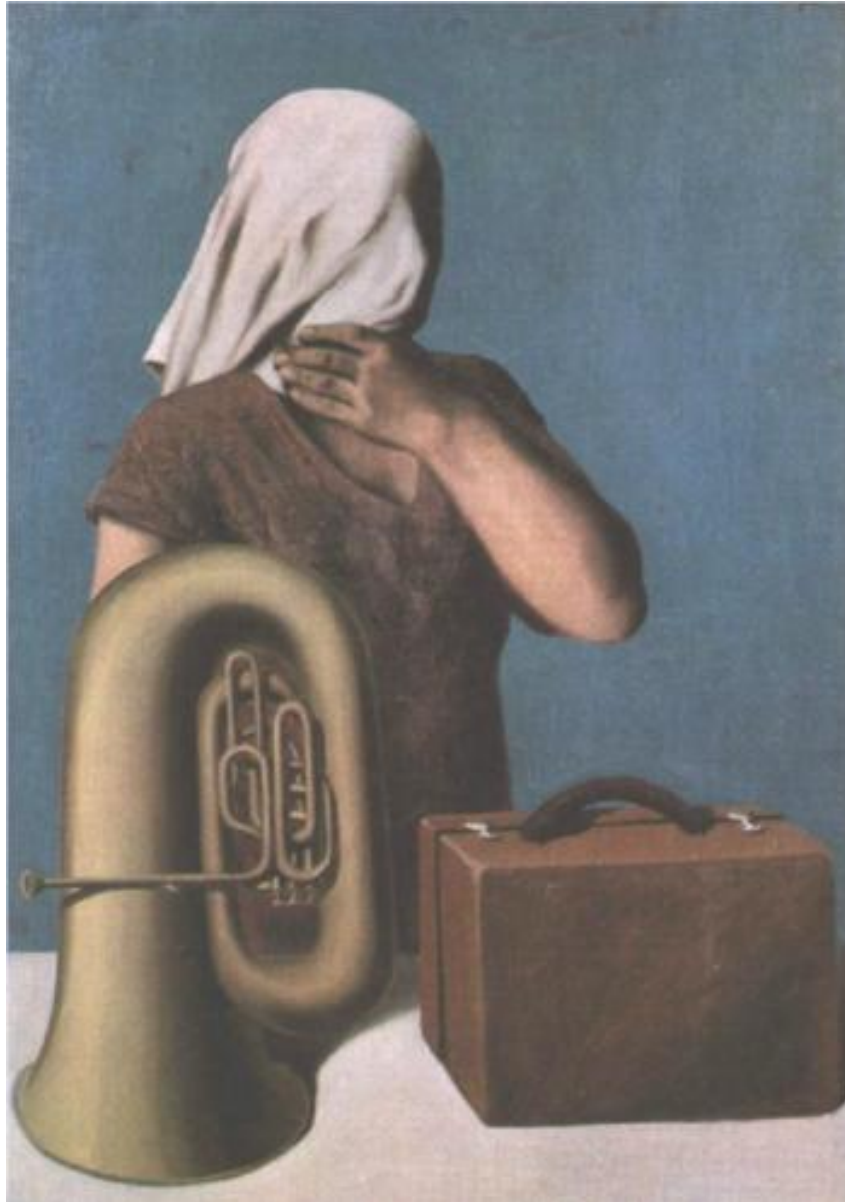
B>F: Good job for improving your DPS, advices...

B>G: G asking you how things are

# C

## The Tank

Protective / Moral / Repressed / Romantic / Pessimistic



Primary Gamer Type: SOCIALISER

## Online

Boredom is pretty much what drew you to gaming, and to “discover the wider world” online.

It started off with typical kids stuff, Gameboy, Gameboy Color, Playstation, adventure games, sports games, motorbikes forums, myspace...

L was playing too, though always in her room and it never occurred to any of you that playing together would be a good idea.

As you grew up, you got more interested in FPS\*, gaming forums, sports forums, researching and applying good tips to perform better and establish a good routine in your practices.

## Offline

To say there wasn't much to do in your tiny country town is an understatement. Everyday was, pretty much, a declination of the nothing new.

Everybody knew everybody, and all the people your age were in the same class of the same school.

You all complained about being stuck in the middle of nowhere, far away from all the hussle and the events. Feeling trapped in non-existence kinda brought you together.

Your parents had you pretty late - your other siblings are 10, 14, 18 and 20 years older than you. For some obscure reason, your old folks had a renewal of passion during a cold december night, and here you were, younger than your flippin nephew.

Among your siblings, you only got to know well L, who stayed on and off at your parents until she was 27. Most of the others left that hellhole of a town as soon as they could.

The four of you formed an uncanny household.

Thing is, *ever since you were born, L was pissed at you for existing.* She teased you a lot, often with deviousness and sometimes with cruelty.

In a way, she's the one who taught you how to take in people dirty tricks and, overall, *life perpetual whiplashes.*

You're not a typical nerd though. You like gaming as it allows you to unwind, and you like researching practical information.

But clearly, you're not into role playing on forums, painting little action figures or that "online dating" new lame trend.

There, you'd play FPS collaboratively with the other bored local kids...And eventually followed the flow of the new games coming out.

That's how you joined COP. Everybody at the coffee would play together and yell in the same room, it was fun and emulating.

Those were good times. You took the lead of the guild, and felt gratified seeing that everybody would show up to the coffee to raid 2 times a

Your parents were too old, too tired and too preoccupied with their shitty retirement scheme to notice L's ever declining behaviour.

They pretended not to see she was smoking more and more weed, drinking more and more, and probably taking stronger stuff.

They had already paid their due, educating 4 kids and working at a factory all their life.

Now they were letting their mind go slower.

On your own, you found ways to get a structure in your life: L was somewhat everything you didn't want to become.

So you made it a principle to always be sober and clean. You joined a boxing class and started following a strict training routine.

You also started spending more time at the internet coffee, to take a breather from home.

As you were growing older, and stronger, you started to oppose L more.

*To tolerate less of her shit.*

One day, she came up completely wasted and started taking it out on you for finishing the pasta or something.

It was clearly the toxic mixture in her body expressing through her. But intoxication is never an excuse for being a pathetic cunt.

As she was about to throw a plate on the floor, you caught her wrist and

week...*looking up to you, following your directions for 3 to 4 hours.*

Your gaming gang stood together for about 2 years, then, with high school graduation approaching, and with the new COP extensions being disappointing, you all got less and less committed.

From that group, nobody kept in touch from that time. The internet café was more of a teenagers asylum, and none of you really wanted to talk about video games outside of that room.

To stop playing was out of the table, though. You switched back to FPS, which would fit a more solitary routine.

squeezed it. Strong. Strong enough so the both of you would know how strong you actually got, *and how far you were willing to go* to be at peace in your fucking house.

She mostly stopped addressing you directly after that, instead, she'd use your parents as an intermediary. She'd look at one of them, and ask "How about you tell your illegitimate, bastard child she let her stinky tennis shoes in the living-room, again."

Your parents would ignore her, pretending they didn't understand, maybe they didn't, and you'd boil without saying a word.

Many walls got hit, paying the price of your silence.

L moved shortly before you graduated from high school.

*Probably because she couldn't stand the thought of you being independant before her.*

And you did become independant very soon after graduating. You took a job in security, and a small flat downtown.

At that time, you upkept a very strict lifestyle; you would go to the gym, then go to work, then to go the box club, then you'd go back home and would play a little before going to bed.

Sports and games are probably both necessary to keep you calm and to put you to sleep.

Although you've but caught sight of it, there's a deaf rage in your

As things got serious with K, you had to lower your gaming hours. It was somewhat frustrating, and you tried your best compensating with more intense sports sessions... However your mind felt more cluttered and repressed.

You needed a “feel good” game. You didn’t really feel like going back to FPS.

stomach....Something you need to asphyxiate with activity, or it would go up to your head and drive you nuts.

Once you were settled, you finally asked **K** out. You had been thinking about it during all of high school, but you were too ashamed of your environment to take any type of action. Now, everything was clean.

*No weirdo sibling, no sad old folks around.*

K was working as a school teacher, that’s something you liked. Something nice, something somewhat structured.

After dating for a little while, though, she started complaining about not having enough “special moments” with you.

*What the fuck was that supposed to mean?*

You were there for her anytime she needed you, you bought her gifts, you treated her respectfully. Unlike most people around would.

You did the effort, dressed up and took her out, you even went dancing together.

Yet she was still not satisfied.

One day, she finally dropped it:

“Those games are too violent, and too childish... I can see it at school, it has a bad influence on children and I think it’s time you stop.”

“Violent? But I’m not violent. Do I look like a child to you?”

So you browsed online and found a private server of COP.

You took your time to level\* your character and to savour rediscovering the skills\*.

You went for the same class\*, a warrior, with the goal to get back at doing what you used to: lead a guild.

Following the necessary steps, you joined small guild and got back into raiding. Most players didn't have your level of expertise and although there was a nostalgic quality to your experience, that gap was frustrating.

In hope of finding more skilled\* players, you started PvP. PvP was fun and you could see that time spent farming FPS had improved your reactivity.

That's how you met **E** and **G**, a peculiar duo.

The first was a chaman, who clearly knew her class well, but would talk in the weirdest way. Precious and over-dramatic characters aren't really your cup of tea, but the skills were there. *She clearly was a city person, who enjoyed flaunting all her privileges and make people sound stupid.*

G was much more accessible although a real chatterbox. A rogue, like 50% of the server. She'd be some sort of translator to understand E, and eventually, sticking together, the three of you got fairly efficient on the battleground.

After a bit, you told them about your past as a GL\*, and how far you went

"Well, when I see you sitting there for hours with your tongue pending and how important it seems to you to shoot people I..."

"What the fuck are you talking about? It's a game, a hobby. If anything it helps me channel my energy."

"Whatever you say."

It was the first fight of a long series of gaming-related fights.

Finally, she won the war and you put your console in the basement.

*No one will ever have reasons to blame you, especially not her.*

You had more couple nights, and, when she'd correct her students tests, you'd just go out for a jog.

And then she dropped it again:

"I'm sorry, I just think we're too different".

*The nerves of her, the bloody fucking nerves.*

*Yeah you're different, so what? After all the efforts you've made, after complying and sacrificing your routine. Fuck her, and her snobbish little nose. She was lucky to have you.*

*No one would ever have a say in how you were to spend your time anymore.*



with your guild. None of them had really tried HL pvE\*, and you agreed it would be worth trying to build a serious guild. You became Guild Leader, and the both of them became officers\*, with G as the raid leader\*.

You started recruiting good players, and you opened a forum. Things got serious when you took the initiative to develop a long and precise post to explain what was the minimum required stuff to get in. That way, a few players farmed the optimised gear and you could recruit dedicated people.

Your *mlrc* and *Teamspeak* started to become really active, and you did feel kind of forced to stick there longer in order to fill up your responsibilities.

The battleground was still the best place for you to handpick good players. That's also how you got to know **A**, who fast became the server's "rogue superstar" after joining the PvP scene. She had the skills, the knowledge and the attitude to go with it. Super friendly, *maybe a little too much to be real*. Having her to join the guild did motivate more players to apply and did give a new impulse to your progression.

It waves a chance, but her gameplay was ss good and allowed you to accept more peacefully to have **F**, who was E's partner and a complete noob\*, to join. Yeah sure she was nice and dedicated, everyone desero slow and random that it was painful to watch. And why did she

You did try to date someone else, a while after. - It was important to you to be entirely over K before initiating anything else.

You'd never use someone as a rebound.

Soon enough, that good ol' criticizing came back. You were either playing COP too much, or knowing you were talking to people online was creepy.

Once, not twice.

You dismissed her from your life.

You're not the type to repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

Dating was probably not in the plan for you.

Every saturday night you'd go to the pub with a few colleagues, watch sports on the big screen, and leave when they'd start being too drunk.

have to pick a class as complicated as hybrid druid to start with?

When A asked to become RL, you were torn. G was there from the beginning, she was dedicated and always on time despite her crazy, *annoying, potentially fictional* social life.

... However you could see that A had clearly more knowledge and a deeper understanding of the mechanics. G was fun and nice, you always somewhat looked after her IG, but her guidance got often rejected by guildmates and that's something dangerous for the guild unity.

You took it on yourself to chat with G.

She understood and A became RL and an officer. E wasn't really involved in her officer role, especially since her and F broke up, so it was good to get some backup.

Some people sent you PM to say that F should be kicked since she wasn't dating E anymore.

Without mentioning it to anyone, you discarded them entirely and made a blacklist of those nasty assholes to have them looting less often.

You often stayed online late, to check everything was fine, well scheduled, and to review applications and forum posts. You'd indulge a few PvP games, and it's in those dark hours that you got acquainted with **D**. D, very much like F was a new player, but with a much different attitude. Clearly she had been training her reflexes on other games and was reflecting more on the

So yeah, the balance switched a bit, less sports, more gaming.

mechanics. Other major difference, she was playing healer, a Priest. She healed you quite a bit and you did your best to get rid of the enemies trying to rush at her.

Her attitude was kinda nice. Never a bad word, she expressed gratefulness and would ask relevant questions.

You could see she was getting quite a bit of attention from other players, A being one of them.

At first, you thought that was great: you both agreed to let her into the guild and with A on your side it was easy to justify.

One day, during a raid, as A was talking, you heard D in the background.

*That did feel somewhat bitter.*

So that's what happened, they were both living in the capital city, they met and now were dating.

It was kind of annoying to have so many couples stories within the guild.

A made it up a little bit to you by having a friend of theirs, B, joining the guild.

Now B was hell of a player.

A linked some videos of her playing other games and she was actually a bit famous in the community, *not that it impressed you.*

Although she was more drawn to PvP, B's Magus made a tremendous difference, even in a raid of 40.

She hardly ever speaks, which is appreciable, and despite her cyber fame, takes the time to farm and to come prepared to raid. Irreproachable.

Every sunday, you'd go eat with your parents. You're the only one still visiting them regularly.

It's sad and revolting, but part of you understands. They're deaf, they're not very interesting.

You found yourself having not much else to do from your days than playing. At that time D was online quite a lot too, and the both of you played a lot together.

She had tremendously progressed, and it's hard to think that one year ago she had never played COP at all.

"It's all thanks to A's enlightened guidance."

You can't really compete with that.

Around that time, you offered her to become the healer officer, as you had none.

You randomly mentioned your trip to G, who literally jumped on the occasion.

"Let's have drinks together, with A and D!"

That was a surprise... But you had been playing together for a while, you were chatting with G most nights and you were intrigued about D. And A.

The next week you did feel like it was important for you to focus a bit more on RL. You got back to a more intense gym/box routine, had a few ego-boosting chats with people.

... Until you forgot things have to be progressive and one can't just jump back into high intensity training.

*Dumbass, of course you got a bad tear.*

And here you were, put on sick leave from your physical work for a whole month.

After a few more months the guild entered the very last raid of the extension: The Maze. The guild ransacked that raid until the very last boss. For months you all tried different strats, farmed more potions, optimised your stuff, kicked a few players and had a few others joining. It was resisting you.

The night you killed Astaria, the very last boss of the Maze, everybody was absolutely hysterical on Teamspeak. You may always remember how thrilling it was, everybody yelling when the life bar was dramatically reducing and the collective joyful cry: GG!

Everybody got flooded by messages from other guilds players, and even players from the other faction connecter their spy characters to congratulate you.

Yes, that was a collective effort and a striking moment. You led your guild through quite a few accomplishments and many people look up to your advice, guidance and it's gratifying.

After a month, as you were still in pain, it was recommended that you go see a specialist in the capital city.

You agreed to indulge a few drinks as it happened to match New Year's eve. (The only yearly exception to your sobriety.)

You went to A and D's place -how can people live in these cities where there's hardly enough room to breathe- with a good bottle from your region.

It was kind of surprising, none of them were the "gamer type". G was, as predicted, super trendy and mannered, A had this annoying nonchalant demeanor and D... D was really sweet, always trying to make everyone comfortable.

Gaming is certainly not the place where you'd expect people to care so much about each other.

You observed her quite a bit and even said to A, after a few drinks, how lucky she was to have found such a gem. They seemed uneasy about that interaction.

*It's your steadiness, your self confidence and your loyalty that got you to be a good GM,*

E immediately left the guild to join a PvP one, while the rest of you kept playing, to farm stuff, to be together, raiding in a more flexible and relaxed way.

A couple of months later, the server's website was colored in a dark theme and announced they were due to close within 8 months.

It seemed as though justice had waited for the guild to clean the content, yet that was hardly any satisfaction.

Learning about the server closing was sad, you did put some money into the common pot to finance the lawsuit, but that wasn't sufficient.

You'd like to keep playing with the guild, that's certain, you feel you could lead the group further. Maybe on the next extension server.

G: let's meet before it closes.

A: ^

H: I probably couldn't make it but take pics

A: oooo let's discover G's trendy lair

D: Will you cook for us this time?

C: F, B, H, E, you better drag your ass to our final IRL

<E left the channel>

A: lol

G: that mofo

B: why not

*Something you wouldn't really expect to happen IRL.*

qualities that are hardly ever valued in our world. *Leaders are those lucky enough to be born in a good families, or those willing to step on everybody to make up for their poor upbringing.*

H: well can I come with my kids? C: yeah, watching A and D is like watching a fucking disney movie G: If they can hold their liquor A: <3 D: F will be there. C: F? F: .	
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C>A: Thanks for hosting the party  
C>B: It's good to have you around  
C>D: What about you become officer?  
C>E: Be more serious during the raids  
C>F: You have your place in this guild  
C>G: Maybe it's time to become off-tank

# D

## The Priest

Soothing / Self-Apologizing / Judgemental / Perceptive



Primary Gamer Type: KILLER



## Online

Video games always were exciting to you, and you feel you grew up on the internet.

As far as you can remember, you've been playing around with a computer. Educational games, simple games, digital card games, anything would be interesting for you to try out.

Consequently, as a child, you had to repress your gaming instinct and mostly kept out from it.

## Offline

however, it was always badly seen for you to play them. It wasn't a clear restriction, but your entourage considered it was idiotic, too violent, not creative enough, below you, below your family's expectations, unproductive, and the list goes on.

Drawing, practicing music, yes. Even playing with a ridiculous how-to-make-a-candle kit seemed more suitable.

Your two step-siblings were free to play on *their* console, if they wanted to. They were older, they were stronger, *they were more normal*.

*You... You were too weird to make your case any worse by "trying to escape from reality".*

Your parent and theirs got married when you were around 5. You never liked any of them: the parent was arrogant, ambitious, narcissistic and her kids were, naturally, spoiled and whimsical.

Your parent was much younger, much softer and simply vanished in this relationship. She was always very concerned with you; over protecting her only child was probably the best detour not to face her own issues.

None of her concerns made you more "normal". School was a daily reminder of that fact.

By the age of 5 you had taught yourself to read and to write. You skipped two classes and were still more advanced than the other kids, who'd be very keen to highlight it.

Around junior high, you started roleplaying on forums and chat. It was mesmerizing, but also very stressful.

You'd take crazy amounts of time to write your answers, even when the game was supposed to be live. You had to take a book and read it while writing, in order to get infused with the style *of someone who actually knew what they were doing*.

Although the other players were way faster than you, some expressed they liked interacting with you.

You pretended to be -much- older, and developed a few stimulating corresponding. Ultimately, you'd always give up on answering, lacking inspiration, lacking the magical spark that'd make the story take-off.

You lost contact with all of them, mostly because you felt too ashamed to rekindle after being silent for a while and because the weight of lies could become suffocating.

You were around 14 when you really found your way towards video games.

Logically, you started off with "old school" RPGs. Games needed an extra touch of soul to interest you. A unique universe, something gloomy, something dreadful, and as you came to realise, there could be an unspoken beauty hidden in gameplays.

After RPG's, you moved to RTS. You never got incredibly good at those, because you refused to unravel the game mechanics.

You created countless kingdoms and countless worlds, that'd be defeated, or that'd win, without you knowing exactly why. Part of you didn't want to learn, *because you didn't want to fail*, part of you liked to think of those games as organic stories which truth shouldn't be exposed.

You only had about one friend per year, always *weird, or troubled* people. The only people you could ever talk, or relate to.

Your other parent would sometime show up, always when it was convenient for her, *or when she needed to sprinkle some "meaning" in her selfish life*.

She'd request for you to visit, and you'd always feel forced to oblige, although it was nothing but a chore.

She always lived in shitholes, her partner would perpetually be passive-aggressive with you, and ultimately, between trying to please them and facing showers of reproaches, you never felt like you could be a kid, or yourself.

You've never been a kid, *or yourself*.

Although the materials never seemed out of reach, being at school became harder and harder.

You hated having to sit there for whole days. It was rare that a lesson was interesting: why should you believe what a History teacher says? What makes it real? Sciences were slow. How are you supposed to study the universe laws stuck on an uncomfortable chair?

And all those literature classics were a bunch of self-centered narcissistic bourgeois rambling. You liked poetry, though. Somehow, it felt more meaningful to study the unspeakable than to analyse what rich people said about poor ones.

Arts. Haha. Ridiculous collages where the most consensual pretty kids would receive plebeian affection.

You liked poetry.

You liked music.

At that time, you went back to that old roleplaying chat and to your old ways with it. A disposable online fairyland where you'd get shots of magic. Soon you took the habit of creating fantasies for others, rather than to play for yourself. Part of your pleasure was to read through them, their set of references and to build up a character, a universe, that'd get them hooked. And you'd drop out of it. That wasn't cynical, you did feel terribly guilty each time, but just like with school, like with friendships, *there was just a moment when you couldn't take it anymore.*

except with T.

Who was T?

T broke your heart, made it beat way too fast, disappointed you and surprised you again and again for years.

You started off as parodying the game, then you'd create short stories, exploring human horror, alien beauty and abstract passion.

She, literally, played you more than once. Pretending to be other players and starting off other games with you.

You've no idea who, what she really is, but undeniably, this abstract, semi-monstrous individual, was the first to ever impress you.

When you got back to gaming, you eventually cut off with her too. Thinking

Socially, you had nothing in common with the rest of your classmates and their gossip would add up, like an insufferable anvil attached to your lower back.

You still had good grades and would naturally befriend the other "good students". Yet, the bridge with "the others" seemed insurmountable.

Your parent would see your fragility - *did you fake it?* You don't really know. - and became your accomplice when *you'd need* to miss school.

The older you got, the less you could stand school.

By high school your absenteeism had become ridiculous.

Absenteeism was more than just a school thing, it was a your thing.

You dropped out your relationship with your other parent, you dropped out most of your friendships -when they'd become too intense, or *when you'd have too much to deal with.*

You never knew how to preserve yourself, you'd give everything to your friends, should they be online or offline, *until you'd feel resentful about it, and about them getting overly attached.*

You don't really know how you managed to go through high school. You hardly even showed up during your senior year.

Still, you graduated, with just enough points to pass, and, you feel, without learning anything.

Fed up with all that load of high school gibberish science, you joined an art school.

Moving on to university was alright.

maybe your paths will cross again, in another weird phase of your life.

You found yourself new RPGs and some adventure games, engaging, immersive games with strong artistic qualities.

You decided to try and meet someone online. It seemed to you as though you'd be single forever. No one ever stroke your fancy IRL, but people were often more vulnerable, more deep online, far away from the social codes.

Most of your interactions ended up to be never-ending online correspondences never felt compelled enough to see their real selves, *or safe enough to show yourself.*

New life, new people, new classes. Light schedule, little work, but the lack of routine and discipline did add to your chaotic nature and *once the infatuation of the novelty passed*, you progressively lost interest and got back to secluded gaming.

This was a somewhat dark phase in your life, you felt as though you had lost means to communicate, and no future prospects seemed really thrilling.

Working in an office? You'd get insane.

Working in nature? You'd feel unaccomplished.

Working with people? Too human, not elevated enough.

Art? Narcissistic.

Sciences? Maybe.

After graduating, again, with the minimum grade, you decided to switch entirely and joined a masters of science in another city.

New life, new faces, new classes. A whole realm of fascinating subjects was about to shower you!

Except, not really.

Same soulless teachers, same shallow people, same lack of organisation, of management.

You lost interest, again.

You eventually decided to cut off from the epistolary nonsenses (lots of fake drama that made you nauseous) and met a few of them.

That's how you met your first lover.

It didn't last long. She broke up with you very fast,

by sending you a mail to say in an overly dramatic fashion, that her ex was back in town.

During the six months before the classes started, you crammed games. You decided maybe that was something artistic, maybe that was something you could work with one day. It was time for you to try an MMORPG.

Those are so popular, so “real gamer”, that it appeared as a necessary step in every gamer’s “career”.

You did your research and found out the Vanilla version of COP was probably the “finest experience out there”. Hopefully it still ran on pirate servers, so you signed up.

It caught you right away. Of course it did. Semi-roleplaying, progressive gameplay. You’re not a very good gamer, so you decided to go with what seemed to have the less responsibilities: the basic healer class, the Priest.

You joined a newbies guild, pexed with them, had fun chatting with all those social catastrophes and imagining what type of hopeless kids would hide between them.

For the first time in your life, you were clearly not in the best performers at something... and not the youngest.

It felt a bit bitter, but you stuck to it, maybe to get better, maybe because you had no

You puked.

Not that you were particularly comfortable in the relationship or particularly attached, but the disgust was real.

Disgusted you had forced yourself, disgusted with people, with your studies, with life overall.

And here you were, ever in your submarine.

You dropped-off the masters and signed up for another one. Back to arts, back to the capital city.

It’s funny how no one ever suspects that you’re a gamer. A real nasty gamer. You look so proper IRL.

Your parent made sure at least you’d be proper looking, you’d have some poise and some public composure.

It’s so ingrained in your upbringing that you’re capable of torturing yourself in all the possible ways, to at least, seem proper.

pressure regarding trying your best, *maybe because you wanted to punish your ego.*

Once level max, you decided to move on to learning the hard way: through PvP.

You got decimated. Not only were you new, you had no stuff and a particularly squishy class. However, you didn't get discouraged, and started following heavy geared good players, hoping they'd save your sorry buttocks if you tried to keep them alive.

That's how you met **A** and **C**.

A, a rogue, was somewhat "famous", known to be one of the best player of the server, which was evidenced again and again after each battleground you fought with her, where she'd always top the kill/death ratio.

C, a warrior, was also quite good, but more of a grounded player. She'd be here at odd hours just like you, and less of a show-off than A.

You did stick to healing her, and she often died trying to save you in desperate situations.

Both were in the server's best guild, -C was the GM- which had started to progress in HL PvE at a crazy pace.

The both of them somewhat simultaneously offered you to join the guild, which was quite surprising. Clearly, you weren't of the same caliber as their other guildmates, but it was flattering and you felt you'd learn from the best!

Most players actually welcomed you fairly warmly.

**G**, a very bubbly, seemingly educated officer, made sure you'd feel comfortable, and suggested you try and talk to **F**, who also shared the burden of being a new player around.

New life, new faces, new classes.

You knew right away making friends was off table. A bunch of spoiled consensual hipsters.

But it was comforting to study.

Eventually, things will fall into place, if you study your way through life. Right?

Surprise, surprise. That new school wasn't your thing either.

You didn't like the people in this field.

You didn't like the commercial side of it.

You got your ideas rejected, and you didn't like to have to smooth the rough edges.

You hated not being able to fit, *even when trying, even when surrendering entirely*, and at the same time, you were desperate to be seen for who you were.

The suggestion was great, F and you got along just fine. She seemed so introverted from an external standpoint that you got amazed at how fast she opened up to you, and how dense your conversations would get.

She had broken up a few months ago with E, who was the reason why she had started gaming altogether, and she felt a bit awkward in the guild; having to still “see” her avatar around, and not having her relationship to justify her presence in the guild.

You joining was somehow a good support for her.

A was always very keen to chat via PM with you. C was busier with things to handle, maybe shyier too.

Of course you're no stranger to internet flirtation as you've ventured to its darkest places very early on. Your first romantic feelings were online, and you were all too aware that you felt safe behind your screen, controlling your image, controlling your expression, and sometimes interacting with potentially dangerous people.

A never scared you. You didn't want to meet her at first, you appreciated that physically distant form of affection.

A was depressed, you were depressed. She had lost their parent one year ago, a parent that she deeply admired and who were their motor. Now, she was dropping out of some prestigious engineering school. You both spent nights together playing chess – you beating her repetitively is probably what ended her getting so hooked to you-

Flattering and upsetting. You're more than that logic. That logic doesn't mean anything. She'd never understand that.

She had an irrational attraction to that cold form of intelligence.

She started to insist on the both of you meeting. You had something precious going on, she said, and you agreed (*but did you? You can't really remember, can you?*).

After a month of not feeling like showing up...

playing side by side,

You'd go back, from time to time, to play at night, where you'd only cross path with C and E.

E was quite an odd character. She'd send you gorgeous music sometime, in the dark hours, something that you'd perceive as beautiful gifts.

One time, E showed you a cool glitch, though, some hidden dark room behind a random house in a minor city.

COP map was gigantic and this city had hardly any pexing quests. How did she find it? She never answered that.

She hardly answered anything factual.

There were too many red flags for you to try to bond more deeply with E.

F, of course, but also some gloomy intuition.

C had been more cyber distant with you, she had ignored a few fun PM you had sent her, and finding yourself on the battle ground with only a few new players at 3am

...you met. It was immediately obvious you had something sustainable and serious going on. From your first night together, you knew you'd be a couple.

You moved in with her shortly after that.

You had great times

but also discussing, introspecting, sharing things the both of you never had before.

You used all your energy to push A to keep up with school, you helped her with every phone call, with living properly, hygienically and healthily.

She stopped smoking for you and she managed to go back into her studies...While yours weren't getting better.

Soon, and quite unexpectedly, you got a little bugged by all this couple gaming.

Playing used to be an intimate activity, a solitary bubble, and now not only was it invaded, it was taking so much space in your life.

Not that you were doing that more than occasionally before, but you started craving getting out more.

Seeing things, doing things, listening to things.



or 10 am - she had to stop working for a while because of some injury and you weren't all too committed to that new degree, were you- did rekindle some of your early days companionship.

A, on her side, would play quite a bit with her friend from another game, **B**, apparently an amazing player, a "genius" as A would say.

Although B joined the guild, you hardly had a chance to really interact meaningfully. She's quite silent. A says it's because she lives in her head, but you do wonder sometimes if she's not maybe somewhat jealous.

One day, G suggested that C, A and you have a few drinks together, as C was visiting the capital city for a few days.

After a few more months the guild entered the very last raid of the extension: The

But all your suggestions were welcomed with "It's too far." "I'm too tired tonight." "Let's watch a film here" and worse of all "But you can go."

You hardly ever went anywhere alone. A's cosy laziness was contagious.

It was around New Year's eve, and A offered to host it.

You weren't really thrilled to meet them, or to have them at your place -*you weren't thrilled either to have them knowing A and you were together* - but played along.

G was an unconventional gamer. Quite stylish and with some poise, she however was just as extroverted as she was online. *Maybe was there something delicate and fragile that was more perceptible about her IRL..*

C was impressive. It's odd that you got impressed as she was exactly what one would expect from knowing her online. She was tough, calmly owning the place. She helped out with bringing things from the kitchen, cleaning out, serving etc, while the two others were too busy drinking and speaking louder than the other.

When they left you realised it was the first time you hanged out with people that weren't **N**... A's best friend.

Maze. The guild ransacked that raid until the very last boss. For months you all tried different strats, farmed more potions, optimised your stuff, kicked a few players and had a few others joining. It was resisting you.

The night you killed Astaria, the very last boss of the Maze, everybody was absolutely hysterical on Teamspeak. You may always remember C's deep voice cheering up the troupes, everybody yelling when the life bar was dramatically reducing and the collective joyful cry: GG!

Everybody got flooded by messages from other guilds players, and even players from the other faction connecter their spy characters to congratulate you.

Yes, that was a collective effort and a striking moment.

E immediately left the guild to join a PvP one, while the rest of you kept playing, to farm stuff, to be together, raiding in a more flexible and relaxed way.

A couple of months later, the server's website was colored in a dark theme and announced they were due to close within 8 months.

It seemed as though justice had waited for the guild to clean the content, yet that was hardly any satisfaction.

G: let's meet before it closes.

A: ^

H: I probably couldn't make it but take pics

A: oooo let's discover G's trendy lair

D: Will you cook for us this time?

C: F, B, H, E, you better drag your ass to our final IRL

<E left the channel>

A: lol

The feeling that you forgot yourself, or who you even were in the midst of bonding with A was planted. You were only thinking in terms of two. You were an entity.

A would say it herself, there's nothing she likes more to do than gaming. Each time, it would make you feel a bit asphyxiated.

Maybe none of you ever stopped being depressed, but the love distracted you from seeing it? You loved her, there's no doubt, but how?

Maybe being together was bringing you down. Not her, you.  
You could never hurt her.

Your common dream, that used to be so comforting, of one day evading to Korea together, to have a garden, perhaps, a café or a restaurant, started feeling like a distant memory.

You'll never hurt her, of course, but...  
What if the server closing was for the best; the call for a new beginning?

G: that mofo B: why not H: well can I come with my kids? C: yeah, watching A and D is like watching a fucking disney movie G: If they can hold their liquor A: <3	
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D>A: Love & fun & we're in the same room troll

D>B: F shouldn't be playing heal

D>C: What are you doing there so late?

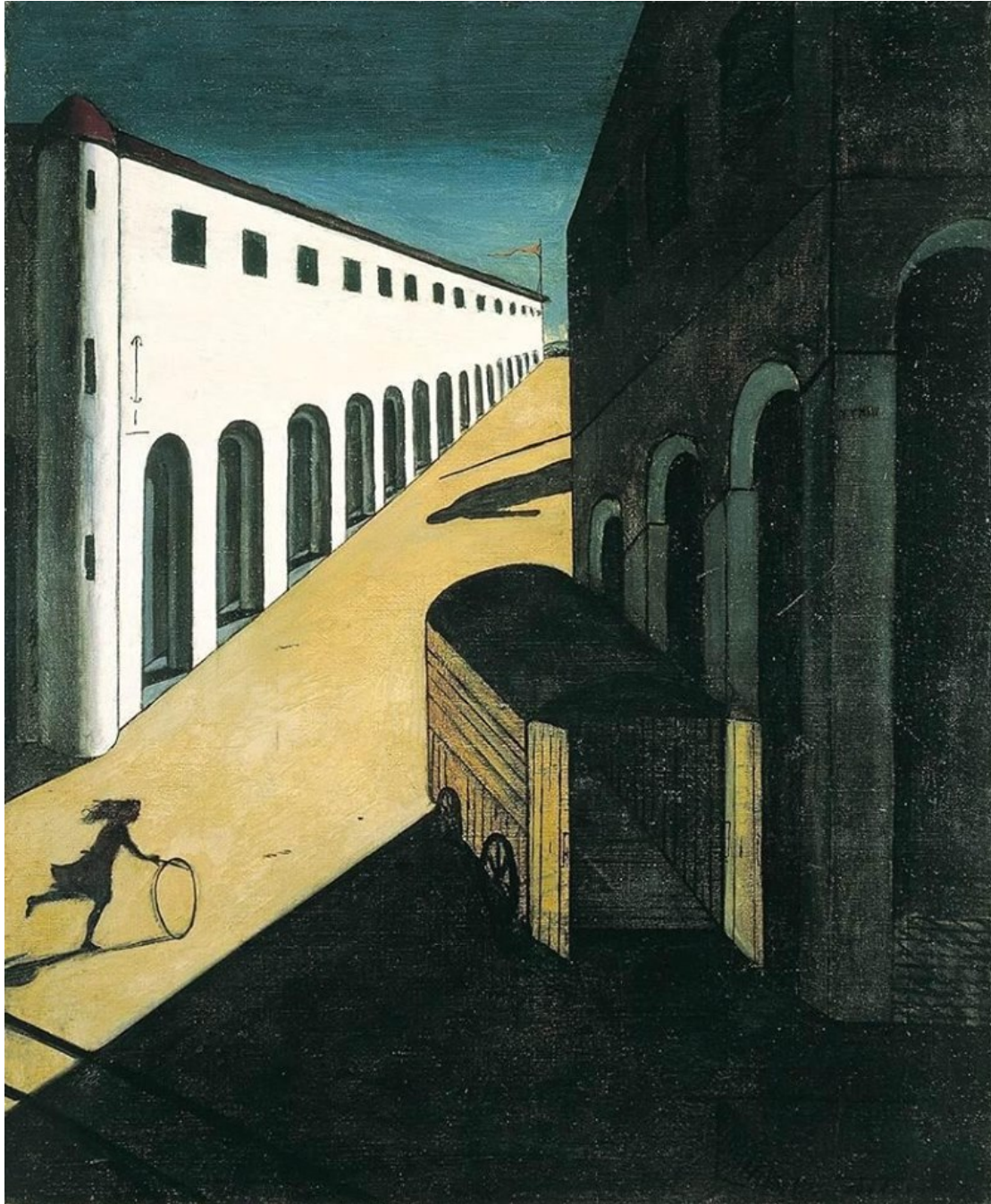
D>E: The hidden room

D>F: They think they own it but it's a game

D>G: Ahhh so you're dating A?

# E The Chaman

Captivating / Unbalanced / Uncompromising / On the verge



Primary Gamer Type: EXPLORER

## Online

You always considered games to be something important; interesting, flexible, strange, ever-evolving...

The both of you would venture to those virtual wonderlands, the only places where you had enough power to make things beautiful for her, to give some -as pixelized as it was- body to your imagination.

You'd play a lot to this RTS\* with a great editor mode\*, and you'd create maps\* from scratch for her to explore.

With time, you enjoyed making the game harder and harder.

## Offline

...some place where you could vanish with your younger sibling, **S**.

*S was a fascinating little creature, a little bird, pretty, sweet, with large inquisitive eyes. You were always besotted watching her grow, learn and develop day after day. Something magical, utterly different from what your ever so static parents inspired you.*

*Your parents were the quintessence of mediocrity... A proper dysfunctional family, with an aristocratic name to reminisce some long lost prestige.*

You don't remember much of childhood, *it very much feels like a long hangover, interspersed with purple shades and overall, a feeling of nausea.*

You rejected everything from them, starting with the name they gave you. *E, is your only name, now.*

As S grew, your relation grew. In depth and in layers, remaining naive, tender and, so soothing.

*You were akin to a full-time game master and she was the most perfect player.*

*How involved she would get! How strongly she would feel the destinies of her characters of fiction.*

*Both your hearts were beating so fast and with such synchronicity it didn't matter what was real and what wasn't.*

This is how you wanted to exist: through the stories you'd tell, maybe through the stories someone precious would articulate, *but never through the ugly banality of the default world.*

*There was something irresistible in squeezing your little bird just a little, to then witness it taking its original form back, and be absolutely unchanged.*

You shared all your gems with S, from the old bizarre adventure games\* to the RPGs\* with a peculiar melancholic touch. You could sit by her for hours and observe her going through the very same motions you did, but getting even more fully immersed, getting even more convinced.

You started playing online together, *and you'd be the guide and chaperone to her sensational journeys.*

Soon, you were to discover the gaming community.

It was a sea of absurdity and of filth, that trolling could be raised to the rank of art.

*How not to get entirely deconstructed when facing all those lost souls, fighting for a little success, a little attention? Each insult online is a cry of despair. Don't reject me! Look, I'm strong! See me!*

When COP went out, you immediately knew it had a great potential for countless exploration and creation; a persistent universe was something you had always thought of with anticipation.

S too was fascinated by the game, and together, you discovered its mechanics, you as a druid, she as a priest.

School was the finest example of the above.

*Being forced to repetitively return to this temple of ordinariness was an everyday violence.*

You soon lost the habit to even speak to your classmates.

*Listening to them was, as it mostly remained with others, akin to a splash of words that withered as soon as they turned to sound; every single word would be wiped off entirely, before it had time to ring and make sense, by the rest of the sentence; in the end you had no idea what had been spoken. It was like undecipherable, disharmonic -but in a non-interesting way- music heard.*

*S was the light one. She never felt so harshly, she was receptive to more... Or was it to less?*

*It feels like you have a tolerance threshold... Like can only suffer, or appreciate things once they hit a certain intensity.*

*She'd still favour playing with you to anything else...And it's with her that you'd discover the best game of all: exploring another being. Fully.*

*Finding someone with an interesting mind, a peculiar melody of her own, venturing to see the world through her prism, dancing, merging.*

When you entered high school, S stepped in her teenage years.

*Your roles became harder to switch, to adapt, it seemed you had to explore your dynamic entirely: you the dark one, she the light one.*

*There was also something esthetical; the sublime beauty of these staggering graphics, this unperfect immersion that would ape the absurdity of reality in such an amusing, enlightening way.*

You built together a cartography of glitches, bugs and even found a secret room, when trying to climb on all the windows of a tiny early levels city... Something that was probably left here, forgotten by a developer.

You had to play by yourself, more and more,

dealing with S desertion by roleplaying with a few other online absurdists.

One of them was **G**, as amusing, as incompetent at fighting.

You both developed a form of cynical gameplay; the B-movies of videogames, failing in as many ways as possible and parodying COP's universe.

As S grew further, you grew closer to G. Sending her music, talking about

*There was no other way, to break state from that part of the game than to play it, to fulfil it.*

*Inevitably, you did touch its core meaning, in all its necessary horror.*

But S wouldn't break state *as you wanted her to.*

Rather, she started shutting down.

She started by saying the computers would give her headaches.

Soon, she wouldn't even come to your room.

Or speak to you at all.

Or look at you.

She'd tremble.

*The bird had become an inanimate leaf.*

You were upset.

She would lock the door of her room at night, she would eat with your parents.

As months passed,

*The air became unbreathable,*  
you left *forever.*

movies, speaking nonsense.  
A new form of interaction that'd have  
room for the ugly and the silly.

you created a new character to reach  
out to S,  
she didn't catch fire.

*Dear G, I have bags full of old kung fu  
movies, where do you live?*

You wandered. For months.

*Appreciating for some time the dread  
feeling of absolute loneliness and  
aimlessness.*

You went to an internet coffee,

And you hit the road again, living out of  
nothing, sometimes joining people  
squatting on boats, making your way  
through those spheres by telling stories.

Acting stories.

Something, that, finally, your whole life  
had trained you for.

However, living in communities, with so  
little comfort, wasn't anything for you.

Again, you went to an internet coffee.

You had no one else, *and her online  
persona had been a sufficient statement  
to earn your appreciation.*

She took you in, and you can't even  
really remember what she even looked  
liked, although you did spend about 3  
months there: the both of you vanished  
almost entirely in the cyberspace, and G  
was your digital companion, although  
she was right next to you.



This led to a period of hardcore gaming, that did last a couple of years.

You learned programming by coding mods\* for games, or observing your friends.

Freelance missions soon became your way towards independence.

Online, it never occurred to recruiters to check those fictional lines of references, *storytelling could lead you absolutely anywhere.*

You searched for a COP Vanilla private server\*, and found one with a few

*That nice bourgeois kid who liked to make cakes was now pursuing some ugly business thing. That's clearly not for her... She's more of the pathetic bookish poet, but how even more pathetic is it to turn your back from your troubadour spirit.*

*And for glitters.*

A time during which you would only sleep at online friends homes.

You moved a lot, from cities to cities, around that time.

*Exploring places but also exploring human beings, learning from them, then leaving them, generally in pieces.*

From your peregrinations, you found that the theatre realm was a great place of catharsis, *and the best mean to find hearts that'd beat the fullest; sensible people, ready to be peeled alive.*

Somewhere, S was turning 18.

*Her fragile softness was all over you, that night.*

*You would have laid two kisses on her eyelids.*

*It was time for a pilgrimage.*

hundreds of people, dedicated to rediscovering the old ways.

You picked chaman, DPS, and were marveled by every second of your expedition in your memories.

*When one only lives of reveries, past isn't much less alive than present.*

All your best gaming emotions were back, alive,

You messaged G.

She joined immediately.

This server was a vivarium of greatly skilled\* players who regretted the days of challenging gaming. And slowly but surely, your pilgrimage turned into rediscovering how brilliant the PvP system was.

On the battleground\*, you met curious types of animals. Among them, **C**, a *war tank\**, that seemed to be the caricature of a good ol country pal.

C wasn't talkative: C was efficient.

Soon, C and G thought about creating their own guild, with only the best players around, in order to start "cleaning the HL PvE\* content".

That was an interesting challenge, however. Back when you first played COP, you had never went that far in the game and were curious to see what types of strategies you'd have to come up with.

After numerous country exiles, small town explorations and overall solitary living, you moved to the capital city.

*You had been craving the density of a big city, the vertigo.*

*so was, the smell of your old room, the small fingers of S, pointing at the screen.*

You found yourself a small studio flat nearby the riverbanks, and joined the nearest Drama class.

*You knew how to make yourself interesting to anyone, how to shine in the crowd.*

*Not only did you have this mysterious looks, you could mirror others in subtle ways.*

*A living-bait.*

You joined and even got the title of “officer” which you’d use with irony.

*But it wasn’t sufficient to be your only game.*

It was fascinating, somehow, to see the impact of one single good player on a whole guild progress. *When A joined, it seemed everyone got injected with a bit of her speed and agility.*

*There was an organic collectivity in raids that seemed to take a slightly different tint with each player that’d join.*

You went to that tiny gritty rehearsal room. It was a very free form of theatre based on physical exercises.

*You felt, as you often felt, dissociated. One part of you never left this inner chamber.*

After gauging the assembly, you immediately knew who you wanted to bond with.

**F.**

*She was there, in this freaky crowd, seemingly happy in tears, like touched by grace.*

During that first class, you sat there, in a corner, and observed, without interacting with anyone.

*You wanted to visualise where your place was and how to fit the one you had spot.*

The second class, you stood next to F and you got paired to do the exercises.

*The rest of the classmates became extras to your game.*

Weeks after weeks, the both of you would always use cunning to make sure you’d only have to play with each other.

*Your bond got ripe enough.*

At the end of a class, you took her hand and you dragged her away, to run, to climb, to walk in the city. *To use that physical vocabulary you had been developing, in situ.*

“Where from did you get this vulnerability?”, you asked, as to create a shock in your mute exchange.

...So you took her hand through it.  
Step by step, you taught her how to play your primary class; druid. Not the easiest to master, but one particularly rich and interesting.

She got hooked, and the both of you started playing together a lot.

F joined the guild and played as a DPS\*. The difference of skill was of

*She wasn't ready, and she kissed you, probably out of panic. Pretty basic response, but you accepted it.*

Following that direction, you started spending days touching, and entire nights where you'd do nothing but question her, *unraveling her fibers to weave an inner portrait.*

*She was your new muse. A feeling you hadn't felt in a long time.*

You moved at her place, partly for practical reasons, partly out of curiosity, *partly because it was absolutely inappropriate.*

You liked, how she'd answer the inappropriate.

*She was so, utterly conciliatory.*

F hardly knew how to use a computer, but she insisted you'd show her your game.

*Somehow, it was more convenient to have some online interaction with F. Real life tends to lead to routine, mundanities and switching to COP miraculously distracted her from sending you that bad poetry.*

*There's only room for one muse and you certainly do not fit those slippers.*

course terrible, one cannot make up for 20 years of reflexes in a few months.

The guild showed an unhelped for patience, and your make-believe officer badge did, for some absurd reason, have some authority on people's mind.

*When F joined the guild, the guild took a different tint too. Something more amber.*

*Amber was definitely F's colour.*

Unlike what you had been doing with S, initiating F was a lot more about teaching her the mechanics, and training her reflexes.

For some obscure reason, you wanted her to be functional.

*You wanted her to catch up, to have the tools to, as absurd as it was, survive, to make it in that collective.*

This time was very enjoyable: you could just come up with an amusing plan whenever you wanted to, and F would be up for it, *and then, you would go back to your disembodied lair of art and weirdness.*

To F daily contact, and probably partly because it rekindled some physicality in your life, *a breach had opened.*

*You couldn't quite treat her like you treated your loneliness.* You had to take into consideration the human needs and hygiene that were so easy for you to discard.

That breach of reason was gaining more and more ground.

As F became increasingly compelled by the game, you would rationalize it would be healthier for the both of you to spend more time in real life.

You would rationalize it would be healthier to eat better, to exercise more, to be in touch with nature and to create human bonds.

*But how much more enjoyable was it, to be a projectile with no target, and no provenance, akin to a non-Newtonian fluid in levitation.*

You tried to communicate more. To ask about her peers and close ones. She had two sisters. Perhaps would it be good for you to know them, to see how F falls in her family, to understand her from a rational point of view and to put clear basis for a sustainable, earthly life too.

<p>She'd follow your avatar online. She'd stay in front of your screen.</p> <p><i>There was no limit to her pitiful teenage behaviour.</i> The more she'd chase, the more detached you'd feel.</p> <p><i>After a few days, her avatar became but a stack of pixels, an inanimate part of the game decorum.</i></p>	<p>You made up your mind to ask. It was the first time you were willing to start clean. To go through the motions, <i>to perhaps, stop living like a mad one.</i></p> <p><i>"You will never meet them!"</i></p> <p>When you asked F, her eyes opened wide. You could clearly see the fear, the fear and the dread, <i>some bloodcurdling gaze that you had often admired when playing with S.</i></p> <p><i>She was scared of you? You were a monster to her? At the same moment F was unfair, defeated and ridiculous.</i></p> <p><i>Let us kiss the mediocre ones goodbye,</i> the breach had almost instantly closed and you left.</p> <p>F tried to call you, again and again.</p> <p><i>But your good esteem could only be lost once.</i></p> <p><i>The real life equivalent would be those NPCs in an administrative office, or public transportation. Not really living creatures, functions, or props.</i></p>
--	--

*F now had the online function to remind you that you always have to be in movement.*

*Remaining static, would only lead you to mediocrity and death,*

After a few months, the guild had tremendously grown. F never left, and you did still raid together, although never addressing each other.

Quite a lot of new players had joined, among them, **B** and **D**.

B, a Magus, seemed to have magical abilities indeed. An exceptional fluidity, reactivity, particularly on the battleground.

You like to picture her as a wizard in a high castle, gracing COP with her enchanting skills.

D was an attention magnet. She had a way to lull the other players... A and C, especially.

Perhaps was it her soft voice, perhaps was it her soft class, Priest.

*You too, wanted to get closer to that seemingly beautiful source.*

*There seemed to be an unspoken understanding between the two of you.*

*She'd sometime follow you without really questioning, to those odd places you were keen to show her.*

*You took her to that hidden room: she had the looks for the part...you could only go back there with another priest.*

*whatever the world.*

After a few more months the guild entered the very last raid of the extension: The Maze. The guild ransacked that raid until the very last boss. For months you all tried different strategies, farmed\* more potions, optimised your stuff\*, kicked a few players and had a few others joining.

It was resisting you.

The night you killed Astaria, the very last boss of the Maze, general hysteria took over Teamspeak\*.

You may always remember C's deep voice cheering up the troupes, everybody yelling when the life bar was dramatically reducing and the collective joyful cry: GG!

Everybody got flooded with messages from other guilds players, and even players from the other faction signed on with their spy rerolls\* to congratulate you.

Yes, that was a collective effort and a striking moment, but also it marked the end of HL PvE.

There was nothing else for you to see there, and you immediately quit the guild to go back to PvP, as a symbol rather than anything else.

You'd still stick around the channels, eventually do an occasional instance or PvP session with the guildies.

A couple of months later, the server's website was colored in a dark theme and announced they were due to close within 8 months.

*It was time to find something else, something new, something...alive.*



G: let's meet before it closes.

A: ^

H: I probably couldn't make it but take pics

A: oooo let's discover G's trendy lair

D: Will you cook for us this time?

C: F, B, H, E, you better drag your ass to our final IRL

<E left the channel>

*Perhaps will you go, as a last farce, a grotesque, macabre homage.*

E>A: Trolling everyone

E>B: Asking her what's her sacred fire

E>C: You're not serious enough

E>D: Tell me a dream in great details

E>F: She's trying to get you to talk to her

E>G: Remember when we used to play, bang bang?

# F

## The Druid

Curious / Suggestible / Idealistic / Hidden strength



Gamer Type: SOCIALISER

## Online

## Offline

You were a very playful kid.

However, the toys your old school parents provided you with weren't exactly the electronic type.

Maybe you would have loved video-games right away, the only thing you know is: your toys weren't sufficient, *nor was reality.*

At home, all the attention was directed towards your siblings, *who were absolute nightmares, each in their very own way.*

**Y** was superficial and whimsical, always crying for more gifts and glitter, and the other one, **S**, had a whole bunch of allergies that required perpetual attention.

*S wasn't fun to hang out with, and playing with Y never ended well.*

Soon, you started inventing your own solitary games.

At school, you would also play by yourself, for hours, a game called "the worlds": a system of parallel imaginatory plans that could only be accessed through certain codes.

Eventually, along the years, you took a few other kids in, gave them - those you'd trust the most - the codes, and told them how to join you in venturing the worlds.

That was your first encounter with physical storytelling and acting,

something you'd understand in depth much later on.

At the time, it seemed complicated to explain what was so compelling and involving about "the worlds", and growing up, you lost sight of it a bit.

Your parents were rather compliant, and so busy with S and Y that they never opposed or encouraged anything.

During junior high and high school, you were the peculiar creative introvert sitting at the back of the class.

You'd do the bare minimum to maintain decent grades and spent most your time doodling, writing stories, or knocking something together with whatever you'd find within your reach.

*Rubber-pen-elastic catapults yaaaay!*

There was one kid, **P**, that you liked from afar.

She was in a band of misfits from another class. Video games, tabletop role playing, all types of socially awkward activities. But instead of being embarrassed about it, she seemed very confident and embraced all the cliches with a certain nonchalant irony.

Sometimes, you'd repeatedly circle the school just to cross path with her again.

When **P** asked you out, you felt a sharp pain right in your plexus and said yes while feeling your whole body was ready to run away. *You certainly didn't see that coming: you had been playing*

*with the thought you'd be asking her out, someday.*

*You imagined you could make a whole treasure hunt, with ordeals and riddles, for her to find a letter where you'd uncover the truth of your heart.*

But she jumped right into it, with a disconcerting ease.

You remember reading somewhere "if you wonder how people feel about you, try and see how you feel about them", *maybe that was it, probably.*

You were soon to see what it was to date a gamer: going out meant staying in, and doing your things while she'd play her games.

She never truly asked you to join, - she offered to let you try a few times, but completely out of the blue and without insisting much, *probably just out of politeness* - and you were already quite committed to your other activities, so you passed...

*Plus... What you'd hear about the games wasn't that seducing: offensive language, time consuming, frustrating, and what you'd see from P's screen: ugly little characters represented in grotesque shapes and using a horrible colour palette.*

What you'd somehow envy, though, was her complete involvement in an activity, and a group.

You didn't want to be so focussed on unimportant things forever: you too, wanted to have a devouring hobby!

*You knew, in the back of your head what it would be. Perhaps had you always known: theatre.*

You joined a nearby youth class and in a matter of weeks, you knew it was your home.

Not only was it interesting, it was liberating, *and people became more beautiful taking those unnatural yet somehow more sincere acting postures. A way to juggle between the mind and the body, a way to bond through the unspoken.*

After a few months you felt transformed, more in touch with your physicality, less obsessive.

*Of course*, your enthusiasm got your sibling Y interested and soon after that, she joined.

*And here she was, at the center of the attention again,* playing with flamboyance and getting praised for it.

Although, at the moment, you were mostly exasperated, *you ended up feeling somewhat grateful she did: not only because it did, in a twisted way, bring the two of you closer, but mostly because you built your acting style in opposition to hers.*

You, wouldn't play for the show, or to flirt with others, *you'd play to become living clay. Ready to be moulded as precisely*

*and finely as possible.*

P was increasingly possessed by her games, and it was more and more annoying to you that every night had to be spent in front of a screen. You started arguing.

And, the unthinkable happened: you broke up with P.

*...maybe also a little bit because of that person you'd see at the theatre class too? The one that's quite attractive, quite ...free...?*

After high school, you moved to the capital city to go to the university and studied to be a librarian.

Although you love theatre, *it's obvious you can never be an actor.*

*Not only do you not have the charisma or stereotypical beauty needed, you don't want to spoil that play style of yours. It's too precious to get eroded by production.*

Putting some distance with your family ended up being a double-edged sword.

During your first years at uni, Y would constantly reach out to complain about her crazy stories, to tell you about all her performing glory and how everybody was jealous of her.

Your parent would also call you a lot to share S's difficulties.

*You often felt like you'd escaped a sinking ship, but also that your presence there was some sort of appeasing,*

*balancing element: a mixture of relief and guilt.*

At Uni, you joined the Drama club, which ended up being a complete disappointment. Learning by heart a bunch of lines and repeating them with grandiloquence was not for you.

*Everything at Uni eventually let you down. The classes, moronic, normative, taught by passionless scholars that probably only signed up to get a fixed salary.*

*What use was there in learning the name of 400 greek poets?*

Why spend hours reading in classrooms when there was so many more ways to explore those subjects, those arts, by walking through them, living them?

All over again, you felt like the outcast.

You went less and less to class, and started spending more and more time in empty cinema rooms.

That's how, in one obscure, small independent cinema, you found out about another Drama class, organised in a neighboring DIY space. Something more experimental.

When you got there, it looked like a proper Court of Miracles. Old people, young people, squatters, weirdos of all types. *Sometimes it was hard to know which eccentricities were played and which were real.*



*Yes, you got hooked on video games.*

It was good, at least you could perform and feel however you wanted to... *although it was slightly unsatisfying not to be attracted to anyone there.*

That was, until **E** joined the class too.

During the first class, E sat there, in a corner, observed what was happening, then left without saying a word.

*Her mere presence had something fascinating -crackling in the air-* and everyone commented on it at the end of the class.

During the second class, E stood next to you and you were paired up to do the exercises.

The following weeks, you played exclusively with each other, almost ignoring the others, and without even talking.

At the end of a class, E took your hand and you walked together in the city.

“Where from did you get this vulnerability?”, she asked, first direct address, out of character.

*As to prove her wrong, or right,* you kissed her.

E was the one to get you hooked on video games.

And, following E's advice, you picked a druid.

E talked differently online. Still...peculiarly, but she'd communicate, *she wasn't only trying to absorb, feed upon the others.*

E patiently and kindly taught you the basics. She had an unforeseen softness when it came to teaching you gaming.

And you got it. You did struggle, but you got very attached to your shapeshifting druid.

As you got to know her - *if you ever did-, video games seemed to be the only human part of E.*

At that time, you spent your days touching and answering her **copious** questions, as sincerely as you could.

*It was painful to think she could simply lose interest in you; here you were... a helpless muse. Quite the bittersweet role.*

E moved to your tiny student studio pretty fast. *A necessity of that romantic leap; getting entirely immersed in each other.*

When she set up her gaming computer, you felt very differently than with P. She was praising the beauty of gameplay execution and how venturing through old ugly games was some sort of adventure, or pilgrimage.

You wanted to spend more time with her, to understand her better. So you joined her game.

*Somehow this unspoken yet intimate communication with E had an abstract appeal... made your relation something magic, beyond understanding.*

Somehow it also was a distance.

*You did start enjoying discovering those impossible lands. You did reconnect with the excitement of small accomplishments.*

you'd play Online,

Once you had reached the max level\*, you started playing PvP\* together. That was the most challenging part.

You were so obviously the worst player of the whole battleground. Needless to say no one starts their whole gaming career on a private COP Vanilla server.

She got you to join the guild and you ended up raiding\* 3 times/week.

*You liked how things progressed so fast. Everything was a new discovery... and it became sort of a challenge to try and get better.*

It was also fascinating to discover the guild dynamics. **C** was the GM\*, with a big authoritarian voice to call everybody back to order on Teamspeak\* during the raids.

**A** was somewhat intimidating, there was always a bunch of players talking to her, or asking to duel her. She's a good player and a people person, always inclusive and patient. **B** on the contrary was quite the opposite, rather non-talkative when the topic wasn't very precise and technical. Both of them PM'd you regularly to help you with PvP, but B would send you crazy details of optimisation and strategy, impossible to

A sort of routine installed. You'd play IRL,

she'd ignore you for a few hours, you'd go out together and walk, then go back, touch, and sleep.

And things kept going on this way for a while.

*You always figured out E would simply leave when she'd learned all she wanted. When all the books had been read.*

It was painful.

E started to ask you more and more detailed family questions.

After getting in such a precious, secretive intimacy, it got harder for you to keep babysitting your sibling Y, even just by phone. *It simply felt too*

understand and to remember at your level.

**G**, another officer\*, was always telling her life story in great details on the chan, who she was dating, what was her next culinary achievement (a grand chef, you see). *See me, love me. Something all too familiar to you.*

Raiding, you could see on the DPS meter your score improving week after week. And after a few months, you finally weren't the last DPS of the roster of 40! A and B both sent you a PM that night, and it might be ridiculous, *but you felt like you were earning your place among good players.*

A might have been interested in more, though... She did send you a few PMs that were a little bit too sweet, stating that you "intrigued them".  
Something you didn't care to react to.

But you'd still see E in game... Always there, as though nothing had happened. *Nothing had happened, for her, probably.*

You tried following her, putting your avatar right in front of her to cover all her screen space, but nothing would do. She had brought ignoring to new levels.

The situation fast became quite apparent to the guild, as you used to

*schizophrenic and too overwhelming.*  
You insisted to switch to text, *which was still a good enough medium for her to flood you with any minor anxiety she had.*

All of a sudden, E expressed she would be "interested" in meeting Y and S. *Something that, for a reason you can't really pinpoint, or at least express, felt like a cold breeze in your back. You tried to evade it..*

She insisted, and... without seeing it coming, you yelled:  
"You will never meet them!"

You'll always remember the look on E's face at this very moment. *Disappointment, mockery, surprise, a torn face that struck your heart.*

She left that night.  
You called her. You apologized. She wouldn't hear a thing.

You felt aimless for a while, gave in entirely to the game...

*... feeling sick at the idea of going back to theatre.*  
*Something felt defiled.*

*How you missed her.*

<p>share one mic during raids...And as E stopped coming to every single raid and went back to PvP more.</p>	<p><i>How disenchanting you felt.</i></p> <p>Never</p>
<p>C sent you a few PMs to say the guild was just as much yours as it was E's. That did comfort you.</p>	<p>A</p> <p>Single</p> <p>More</p> <p>Word.</p>
<p>After raiding with the guild occasionally, <b>D</b> joined the guild. She reached out to you, out of the blue; she's a beginner too, although not as new to video games as you were, and this created a form of connection between the two of you. You could discuss more analytically perhaps about games, and gamers. About A, whom she had started dating, and about E. You never got into the details of your relationship with E. <i>That was too private, too secret, too...unexplainable, perhaps. Or a betrayal, perhaps.</i></p>	<p>Days</p> <p>Weeks - still no interest in theatre</p>
<p>Despite C's message and A's early support, the guild started pushing you to change your character's speciality from DPS to Healer, as you had too much players of the first and not enough of the second.</p>	
<p>That felt upsetting, considering you wouldn't loot any gear that'd allow you to go, progress and eventually shine on the PvP battleground. G tried to comfort you, telling you she had had to change class too. <i>Funny, most people didn't know about that.</i> <i>Funny, G isn't a typical player either.</i> <i>Funny...</i></p>	<p>Months - still reading the journals she left</p> <p>still not talking to your sister</p> <p>Barely talking... at all?</p>

You tried and swallowed the childish pride and joined D's roster.

B sent you the access to a full stuffed\* PvP rogue that they use from time to time to allow you to practice, but you didn't really dare to log in...

*It would throw a bad light on B to be associated with such a low skilled player. Everybody would notice she gave her account and would taunt her for that.*

After a few more months the guild entered the very last raid of the extension: The Maze.

The guild ransacked that raid until the very last boss. For months you all tried different strats, farmed more potions, optimised your stuff, kicked a few players and had a few others joining. It was resisting you.

The night you killed Astaria, the very last boss of the Maze, everybody was absolutely hysterical on Teamspeak\*. You may always remember D's deep voice cheering up the troupes, everybody yelling when the life bar was dramatically reducing and the collective joyful cry: GG!

Everybody got flooded by messages from other guilds players, and even players from the other faction connecter their spy characters to congratulate you.

Yes, that was a collective effort and a striking moment.

It was very unlike you, not because you were a chatterbox, far away from that, but *because you always had to have a source of affection.*

Whether it had been a friend or a lover, *your life had always been orbiting around someone's warmth.*

E immediately left the guild to join a PvP one, while the rest of you kept playing, to farm stuff, to be together, raiding in a more flexible and relaxed way.

*That did inject a new dose of obsession, to see her going, again, further away.*

A couple of months later, the server's website was colored in a dark theme and announced they were due to close within 8 months.

It seemed as though justice had waited for the guild to clean the content, yet that was hardly any satisfaction.

Learning the server was about to close did pinch your heart.

*After all, you never were part of a real community before.* Who knows what's next for the guild. Some people mentioned moving to another server, maybe the next extension...

G: let's meet before it closes.

A: ^

H: I probably couldn't make it but take pics

A: oooo let's discover G's trendy lair

D: Will you cook for us this time?

C: F, B, H, E, you better drag your asses to our final IRL

<E left the channel>

A: lol

G: that mofo

B: why not

H: well can I come with my kids?

C: yeah, watching A and D is like watching a fucking disney movie

G: If they can hold their liquor

A: <3

But is it for the best?

Maybe you need a clean break to get things under control again and move on.

*...maybe you won't feel anything seeing E there, if she comes.*

How could she miss that?

D: F will be there.	
C: F?	
F: .	...or maybe you could come up with a game that'd sway her back....?

### PM Cheat list

F>A: she's flirting with you

F>B: she's giving you advice

F>C: you should switch to healer

F>D: They think they own it but it's a game

F>E: Answer me

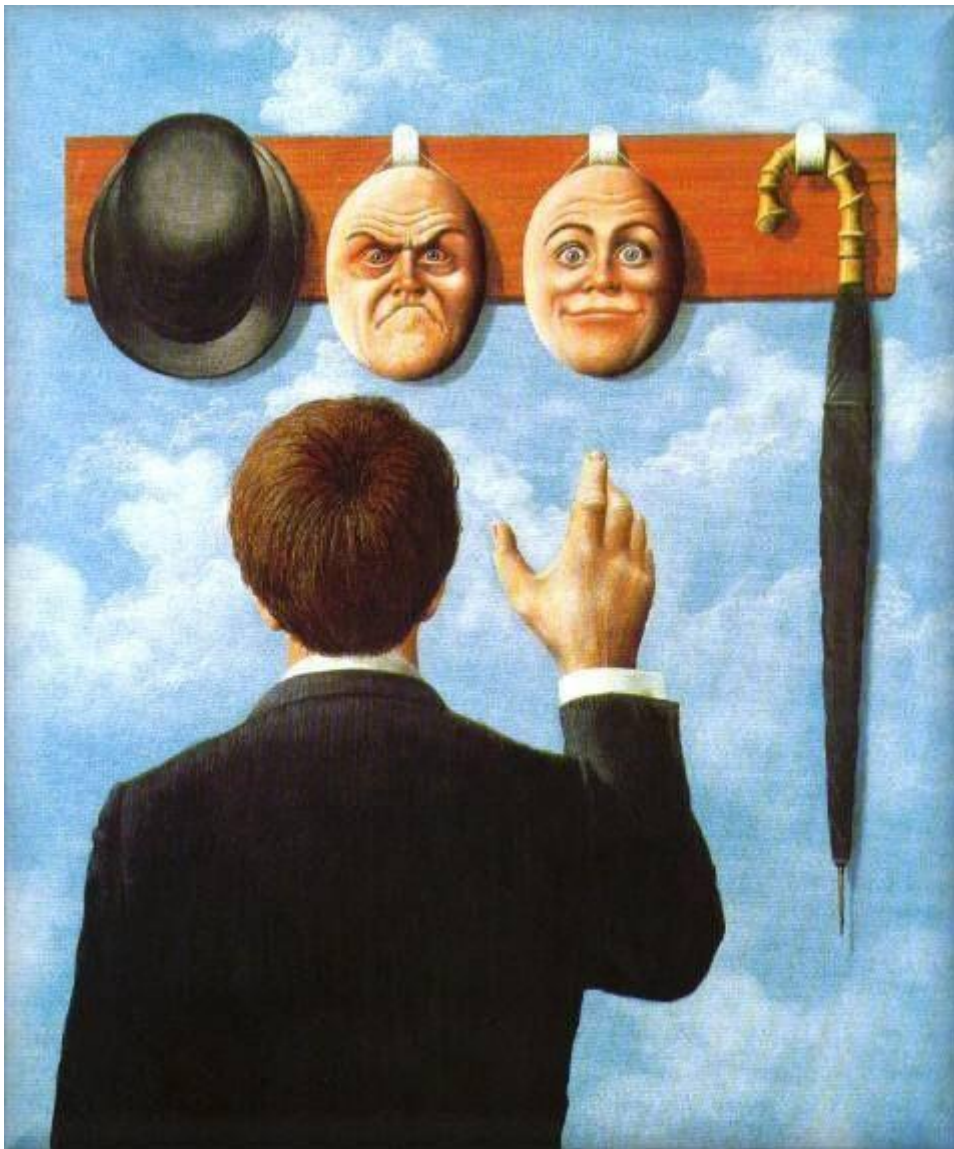
F>G: She says she switched for the guild



# G

## The Off-Tank

Devoted / People-pleasing / Autophobic / Misled



Primary Gamer Type: SOCIALISER

## Online

Games are a long-lived love story. Your parents offered you your first console pretty early on and left you under its wise custody.

As soon as K was old enough, you started playing together. You compromised a lot and always obliged to play the game she liked the most. She never developed the same interests as you, *in any realm of things*, and since you've always preferred not playing alone, you'd let her pick.

She eventually stopped to play games altogether...

But you didn't. On the contrary, you switched to PC gaming, and also started spending more and more time reading forums, and bumming around chats.

You often were one of the youngest there, *and the most vulnerable*, but internet, in general, had a density of

## Offline

Your parents have a *great* love story.

You've always been a nice and loving kid, *rather banal*, and when your sibling **K** was born, you welcomed them into the family *better than your parents did*.

Your parents weren't neglecting, they did take responsibilities, but the love was beamed onto one another, *to the point you felt your sibling and you could only get but rays of refracted light*.

You kept trying to be as irreproachable as possible, hoping for some positive reinforcement, *something feeling similar to more affection*.

You'd set the table, you'd empty the washer, bring back good grades and made no waves. *But perfection was out of reach, for you*.

K took the opposite road, after being a very agitated child, she shut down, shelled entirely, and it was hard even for you to reach her.

...and started hanging out with older kids, even to date.

That was before you, the firstborn, had but a clue of what a romantic feeling was.

As you didn't want to upset K, and as you didn't want to worry your parents who, naturally, didn't notice anything, you kept the secret of their precocious social and romantic life.

information and of people that was incredibly compelling *and reassuring*, to you.

You started playing that famous MMORPG\*, COP, and joined a levelling guild\*, "*Dissection*", with your rogue. Rogue was your go to class in all games. Cunning, powerful, stealth... In one word: coool.

In Dissection, no one was *really* good, but you all learned together, in a light-hearted way and eventually started to chat daily.

Sure, it wasn't always the most peaceful space. Kids can be brutal and immature when hidden behind their screens, and it was quite obvious to everybody that you "*didn't belong*", or wasn't the "*typical gamer type*". However, you learned to take remarks with humour, and instead of biting back, you'd partake in self-deprecating irony. (*or was it?*) Something that'd become your online trademark.

Once level max\*, you started discovering the challenges of PvP\* and getting more and more acute in your gameplay. It's around that time that you met **E**.

E was a weird kid, who played around the idea of being weird a lot. She would mix real facts with twisted jokes to the point truth and creepy absurd humour were blended entirely.

She became your favourite online mate, not only because you had quite a cool combo (you'd play rogue, she'd play druid, both can be invisible, deadly!) but also because of the content of your interaction altogether: she'd send you music, you'd send her movies

To keep an eye *-and a tie-* on K as you could, you asked her repetitively to join the same parties she was going to, but that was never in her plans.

You were kind of a nerd, a geek, a bit too clean, *a bit too soft*, a bit too accepting of your parents, perhaps.

*The rejection felt cold and sharp*, you parted and renounced talking to her at school.

You didn't have much issues with socialising IRL, truth is, you just fancied playing games and learning from the internet more.

All your duties had to be fulfilled, though, which involved being socially active and acceptable: you'd still go to the parties, you'd still partake in the physical activities and clubs and you'd even go occasionally to the movies with a few classmates.

Once in high school, you knew it was time for you to start dating, but you didn't want to simply pick randomly. It was too important to go with the motions: *you weren't your parents, and wouldn't go as far as to have kids, only because it was the next logical step.*

You did wait for someone to stand out from the crowd.

*You're not your parents, but why should you settle for anything lesser than what they have?*

And it happened.

Bookish, graceful, with a sweet smile that made her seem deeply caring.

Once your mind was set, you approached her very genuinely and she did accept to go on a date.

"Listen, I didn't want to embarrass you publicly, but you're not my type.

recommendations, and the both of you would laugh together, watching simultaneously old kung-fu movies.

The both of you had a fairly solid education, high-end taste and took pleasure in making a mockery of the gaming world and the real world alike.

The both of you would read countless books online, watch an incredible amount of movies, from the classic to the really obscure ones.

After the third COP extension\* went out, E and you felt bored and disappointed with the game.

E had found another MMORPG she wanted to explore, but you felt you couldn't keep investing your time in virtual worlds.

You did build up a solid reputation on your server, your inbox was always full of PMs, people liked you for your humour and you developed a sufficient skill to get respected...

You mostly stopped gaming. You'd play some FPS here and there, but that became very casual.

Internet, on the other hand, you ransacked. You kept yourself updated on games, movies, and would regularly post on forums and debate online.

- ... What is your type?
- I just don't think we're assorted."

And it stroke you.

Her hair, her ironed shirt, her nice shoes, *her noble pity*, the group of people constantly around her, always laughing, always active.

...But that was a miscalculation. All that social investment, all that training, would be much more profitable in real life.

After contemplating for 5 years the idea of joining a culinary school, at the end of high school, following the advices of your teachers and keeping your options open, you signed up for a business school.

*...Which was synonymous with joining socialisation bootcamp.*

Within two weeks you entirely changed your clothing style, and cut your hair. And it worked. One has to adapt to their environment.

You kept developing your cooking skills, and brought some of your creations at

You also joined a dating website, firstly because it was fun to create a profile and answer their personality test, and *then, because you realised how easy it was for you to hack it.*

You knew all the codes of internet; you had grown up in them. It was as though you had started playing that game earlier than the rest of the world, and you could understand exactly what people were trying to communicate on their profile, *and how to impress them.*

Quite surprisingly, you received an email from an almost forgotten name.

**E** wanted to come spend some time in the capital city and needed a place where to crash.

During E's stay, you both signed up for that online space game and spent more time exploring the intergalactic glitches and trolling around than actually building your spaceship army.

school, where they were always warmly welcomed. People started to call you "Chef", and it felt good to fit in so nicely.

During your first Uni years, you dated more than you can remember. *All you had to do, was to pretend it was normal.*

*"I'm here, smiling, around these people, absolutely normal. Giving the movies look, completely normal. I'm gonna ask this person I just met out, totally normal. Now I'm kissing her flamboyantly, the codes have been applied properly, superbly normal."*

You invited her to stay at your flat for as long as she'd need.

That online meeting much more off putting than those from dating apps, as weird as they could get.

And E arrived.

There was absolutely no questioning. *E's physicality was every last bit what you imagined.* Very stylish yet eccentric, a half smile and a very calm demeanor. She was almost as peculiar IRL as she was online. A true character.

The both of you had an amazing time during her stay. It ended up to be quite long, 3 months, but you fancied having this mysterious animal, hidden in your apartment.

During that period, you didn't date all that much. The two of you would spend your evenings trying to find the most bizarre movies, sharing some fine wine, and discussing. Although she tends to speak in riddles and although it's

However, you were progressively getting bored of all those love websites.

*You were physically overdosing of reading profiles, which would always use the same keywords, the same expressions, the same pictures.*

You were bored of your own profile too. It was quite a successful showcase; people would message you, give you positive feedbacks...it seemed you had mastered the codes. *But the more you looked at it, the more you were getting annoyed and slightly nauseous.*

Provisionally, E dropped you a message to say she had found a private COP Vanilla server\* and started playing again.

Minutes later you were downloading the files, and hours later, your old rogue was reborn.

That server was an interesting mix of young players and old, very experienced and skilled\* players, such as E and you.

impossible to perceive what she thinks or expects, her company was stimulating and brought you back to some of your old forgotten self.

When E left, you did instantly feel lonely, started going out every night, and hooking up, *a lot*, again.

At a party, you bumped into one of K's friend.

It had been ages since you had seen your sibling. You briefly saw her last christmas at your parents house, but she stormed out very fast.

Chatting with K's friend, you learned your sibling had gotten engaged a few months ago. The news had a bitter taste of disappointment. *Or treason. Or fear?*

You also felt a bit mortified. *K would probably find your way of life repulsing. That would be unfair... getting engaged and settling is something you'd like too! perhaps.*

Playing while keeping up with school and with your very active social life, you entered the busiest time of your life.

That wasn't *too bad*, as you like to always have something to do, to share, *to fill up the void.*

Once level 60, you and E went back on the battlefield\*, where you met **C**. C had already a good stuff\*, solid skills and a very compelling confidence. She wasn't one to thrash anybody - quite rare in PvP - . She was efficient, she knew her combos and her calmness was compelling.

You initiated a discussion with her, and she soon confided that she wasn't satisfied with her guild: too many casual players and bad players to be able to move on to PvE HL.

Back in the days of the original COP - Vanilla, you and E never got the chance to partake into proper HL PvE\*.

The guilds were very selective and, at that time, none of you were committed or serious enough to join disciplined raids\* of 40. But circumstances were now different, and it seemed to you like an interesting challenge.

E was too easy to convince: something new, that was always the best argument to get her on board of anything.

Here you were, C, E and you, creating a guild, deciding who was gonna be GM, picking its name, putting a forum up, and starting recruiting promising players.

A few players from C's guild followed her...She was a natural born leader.

Sure, your grades weren't as shiny as they used to be and you hooked up less, but overall the balance was satisfying.

At that time, you started dating **J**, whom you had met at a dinner with friends. J was attractive, successful, *and most importantly, a friend of your friends.*

The match wasn't too bad. You always treated nicely your dates and J seemed to appreciate your little attentions.

That year, you graduated with honors and started immediately your first fully paid internship, doing marketing for a big creative agency.

Advertising was easy for you. You spent all your time feeding upon information, trends, news, and your job was the simplest way to use all that knowledge.

*Isn't there a better way to spend your time?*

So what, to be perceived as a loser? To be surrounded with nothing but books? Books do not breathe, do not talk, do not hold.

*What about this cooking school?*

Cooking is easy. It doesn't require a network. One can always cook if they want. Plus who'd want to spend their life secluded behind ovens.

Cooking is just. A craft.

You got assigned with leading the raids, which meant guiding everyone through the strategy, something quite gratifying.

You started killing a few bosses and raised the interest of excellent players. Among them, **A**, who was kind of famous on the server. She joined, under the condition of taking the raid lead. That was a bit presumptuous of her, but you obliged and welcomed her warmly. It's good to have an expert on board.

The guild progressed incredibly fast. It was a great adventure. The raids were filled with a beautiful energy, everybody was focussed, applied, and you only lacked a couple of players to start the 40 players raids.

**B, F and H** joined around the same time.

B had never played COP but became, in a matter of weeks, one of the most subtle and precise players you had ever seen...even on videos.

Later, A linked a few videos showing B playing a couple of other games. She was apparently famous in the community but never said anything about it publically.

She never said much, sometimes it was hard to know whether she was really there or just AFK.

You tried to reach out a couple of time, in a friendly civilised way, *but she might be too over herself to dare developing an interaction with a peasant player like yourself.*

It's not a career.

At that point, you had to spend 3 nights per week raiding, and started lying to your "real life friends" (*"friends"*) and to J.

You said you were spending more time with your sibling, that you had started a project together.

Sometimes you said your parents felt lonely and wanted you to spend more time with them.

Eventually, you said one of them was sick and you had to spend time with them.

*You wish...*



You remained friendly.

with the guild.

During that time you didn't correspond all so much with E. She seemed entirely absorbed with F, that she was apparently dating.

F was certainly doing her best, but there was an obvious gap with the rest of the guild. You can feel a familiarity with her, though: should it be her or you, you clearly aren't the typical gamer type and although you found a way to deal with it from an early age, you got teased enough about it not to perpetuate the bullying.

As for H, she was older than the rest of you by a good 10 years. She became some sort of iconic figure in the guild, with her kids yelling in the background when she would talk on Teamspeak, and her spouse getting mad at her gaming "use".

With all the new players, the guild had more than enough DPS, and C approached you to ask if you could switch to your reroll\*, a War Tank, and become Off-Tank\* for some complex strategies.

You took one for the team and agreed. You're all aiming for a common goal, and it's good to be where you're the most useful, plus, you didn't really want

You kept feeling less and less involved in your IRL relationships. Your life of partying and couple nights ended up mostly feeding the good stories you'd share

J started texting you a lot all the time to ask what you were doing, demanding more and more details.

*She knew you're not what you pretend to be.*

And you got more and more defensive about it.

This didn't look like you, protecting yourself at the expense of another.

You could see J was second-guessing herself. She started apologizing for being jealous and paranoid, explained how her ex used to cheat and lie about it.

Pressure was building up, you couldn't stand causing such unfair torture, *but at the same time, you weren't ready to bring the two worlds together.*

You went to J's flat, with a homemade

to have an unpleasant interaction with C.

You learned after everybody else, *again*, that E and F broke up. They weren't exactly the demonstrative type. It's odd to think E could get involved romantically...or physically. She seems so detached from reality.

*Or is she just detached from you?*

You all thought F would vanish, as quickly as she had gone there, but she stayed and kept raiding, and chatting here and there. She was more committed.

The guild was more active than ever when D joined. Both C and A were enthusiastic about that, which was quite surprising to everybody else. D was new, she had zero stuff and rather medium skills.

*It all made sense when she started dating A.*

A must have put the work in, as D improved fairly fast. At least she played priest and the guild was always lacking more healers.

Still, you couldn't understand why C would promote her officer so fast. *You felt a bit left out of that little group, which was revolving around D.*

*Was she that beguiling?*

When C mentioned she had to see some physical therapist in the capital, you saw it as an opportunity to shut down your negative voices: you offered C, D and A to all meetup for a few drinks.

three course meal that you spent the whole day preparing. You broke up with her that night, and stayed there, cuddling in silence until the sun was up again.

*She was going to break up anyways.*

You had handled the situation; you had saved the appearances.

Nobody at your job suspected you were into games or you ever were a "nerd", nobody would picture you yelling at a bunch of pixels or laughing alone behind your screen.

You even were able to make it an advantage when you proposed a campaign concept for a car using first player perspective, and a minimap like a rallye game would.

Your boss was enthusiastic.

*Lies, sales, detours...*

You got hired permanently over that project.

There is a bridge between the two worlds apparently. But for some reason you didn't want to take it. It made you feel dirty.

Maybe should you take it the other way round.

After a few more months the guild entered the very last raid of the extension: The Maze.

F was asked to switch specialities and become a heal which she took quite harshly. You tried to explain to the best of your abilities, but she was probably too upset to listen.

The guild ransacked that raid until the very last boss. For months you all tried different strats, farmed more potions, optimised your stuff, kicked a few players and had a few others joining. It was resisting you.

The night you killed Astaria, the very last boss of the Maze, everybody was absolutely hysterical on Teamspeak. You may always remember D's deep voice cheering up the troupes, everybody yelling when the life bar was dramatically reducing and the collective joyful cry: GG!

Everybody got flooded by messages from other guilds players, and even

It was in late december and A proposed that you'd all go to hers. D was apparently living there, and C answered promptly she'd be present too.

Of course, you had at least 4 other options for New Year's Eve, but you still accepted.

A and D were living in a small yet cosy apartment. Surprisingly, they weren't socially awkward at all.

A was fairly charismatic, seemed a bit bourgeois, and D was charming and well educated.

The both of them were *fairly* normal, especially compared to E.

C got there a bit later. She seemed to personify her IG function. Tough, not very talkative but rather loud, friendly in a very rustic way.

You had a good time. So did they. *They liked being together, but they didn't like you.*

It was gratifying to think you took part into creating the guild, organising this IRL, bringing people together.

*Too bad that's the only way you can be with people.*

"Hey, wanna hang out tomorrow? -K"

"Oh hey, good to hear from you. I can't, tomorrow. I have an important project to finish, deadline in 2 days."

"Ok."

players from the other faction connecter their spy characters to congratulate you.

Yes, that was a collective effort and a striking moment.

E immediately left the guild to join a PvP one, while the rest of you kept playing, to farm stuff, to be together, raiding in a more flexible and relaxed way.

A couple of months later, the server's website was colored in a dark theme and announced they were due to close within 8 months.

It seemed as though justice had waited for the guild to clean the content, yet that was hardly any satisfaction.

You've been stalking her on Facebook from time to time. She doesn't seem to have met anyone else.

G: let's meet before it closes.

A: ^

H: I probably couldn't make it but take pics

A: oooo let's discover G's trendy lair

D: Will you cook for us this time?

C: F, B, H, E, you better drag your asses to our final IRL

"Hello, are you going back home for easter?"

"No. G, can I borrow you some money?"

"What?"

"I'm buying a boat."

"What??"

"Yeah, it's with friends, we're gonna sail to Portugal and see from there."

"K, you hardly talk to me for years and all of the sudden I'm back in your good deeds...for money??"

"Look, I haven't played around it. You do your things, I do mine, everybody's his own person. If you don't wanna help that's fine."

"Just send me your details."

"Ta"

Once it's closed, you'll put some more order in your life, that's certain.

Maybe you can go back to J. Tell her about K, how she left.

She could understand.

Once it's closed, you can focus more seriously on work too.

Network more, attend afterwork drinks... You could have progressed much faster if it wasn't for all that time spent online.

*Don't close*

<E left the channel>

A: lol

G: that mofo

B: why not

H: well can I come with my kids?

C: yeah, watching A and D is like watching a fucking disney movie

G: If they can hold their liquor

A: <3

D: F will be there.

C: F?

F: .

It will be at yours, this time.

*Everybody will have a great time.*

*No one will ever want to disband.*

### PM Cheat List

G>A: What should I bring to the dinner?

G>B: Hey, how are things going in the guild?

G>C: Switching to Off-tank

G>D: Ahhh so you're dating A?

G>E: Remember when we used to play, bang bang?

G>F: I had to switch class too