

# Non-Player Character

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# Non-Player Character

## **Characters**

KATJA (ARIA)

TRENT (CASPAR)

FELDRICK

MORWYN / OFFICER

NAOMI / CRONE / VOICE

GRANT / FARMER JENKINS

DENIZENS OF SPEARLIGHT

## **Settings**

SPEARLIGHT: A Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game, with a world akin to Tolkien, Elder Scrolls or Warcraft. It is full of magic, color, monsters and cliches.

THE SOCIAL: a simultaneous hybrid of feeds from Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, online news and basically anything that has a comment section.

KATJA'S GAME: In-progress.

THE REAL WORLD: Boring.

TIME: Presentish.

## **Notes**

The digital realms of the play should be rendered through a healthy blend of projections, puppetry and practical design. Online personas are idealized and armor-clad versions of their real-life counterparts.

An Ensemble of 4 or more plays any characters who aren't Trent or Katja. The double-casting above is a suggestion, but feel free to have fun with it.

Literally no one in this play needs to be white. (Except Trent. Trent is white as hell.)

PROLOGUE

*Inside of a video game in progress.*

*KATJA stands alone in a blank, open space.*

KATJA

Tonight I'm going to make a tree.

*She gestures while she speaks, and the world responds.*

KATJA (CONT'D)

So for a tree I need....a trunk. No...wider. Taller. There.

Now I need some branches. One there, and there, and there. Smaller ones, there.

With leaves.

The tree is young. It's new. Just planted.

Its leaves are changing. Orange, and red. Brown.

They rattle lightly in the breeze.

What breeze. Okay. I need a breeze. So, for that, you need...direction.

Speed.

And Frequency. Woosh.

The breeze catches a leaf. The leaf comes off, it's caught, and it...doesn't move.

Oh. Duh.

It needs gravity.

I give it gravity.

I put some gravity on the leaf, and...

Voila. It falls.

*A messenger window pops up, from TRENT.*

TRENT

U THERE

*(Ignoring it)*  
Maybe it falls a little faster.

KATJA

WE DOIN THIS

TRENT

Or, no, too fast. Um.

KATJA

KATJAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

TRENT

What if--

KATJA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

TRENT

Okay, okay! One second.

KATJA

NO NOW NOWWWWWW

TRENT

I'm coming.

KATJA

FUCK YES SPEARLIGHT.

TRENT

*The chat disappears. Katja looks back at the game.*

Save as. Katja's game, version one.

KATJA

Title to be decided.

SPEARLIGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHT

TRENT

*She ignores it.*

*She takes a moment.*

I made a tree.

KATJA

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE ONE

*Inside SpearLight.*

*Darkness. A voice booms out of the nothingness, accompanied by music.*

VOICE

The Darkness is eternal. The Darkness does not sleep. The Darkness will exist when we are gone, and take no notice of our passing. And yet there never can be darkness...without light.

*We see a pinnacle of light begin to shine.*

VOICE (CONT'D)

High in the hills, the purest rays of light fall square on Silvervein, a last holdfast of goodness, truth, and valor. And through its hallowed halls stride legends.

*Lights up on ARIA. She is Katja, but badass.*

*She is standing in the center of a lush, fantasy wonderland. It's glorious.*

VOICE (CONT'D)

But peace is a tenuous thing. The elders of Nikvar have sensed a changing in the waters, with much portent. Only rumors, yet they continue on the breezes and in the leaves and down the mountains as they--

CASPAR (O.S.)

Skip.

*The Voice stops. Then, the narration jumps to the next paragraph.*

VOICE

Far in the West, Councillor Falsham plots his return among the bugmold--

CASPAR

Skip.

*CASPAR enters; he is a paladin played by Trent. Big sword, cross on the shield, gleaming white armor.*

ARIA

Trent, stop.

VOICE

While further West, on the fellplains--

CASPAR

Skip.

Stop that! ARIA

For all know true that in the deepmoats lie-- VOICE

Skip, skip. Jesus. CASPAR

Pause. ARIA  
*(The music stops. To Trent)*  
 I'm listening.

Why? CASPAR

Because I like it. ARIA

It's so cheesy. CASPAR

It's setting the scene! ARIA

I bet you watch the credits, too. CASPAR

Sometimes. I might know someone. ARIA

Well I don't know anybody, and I want to level up at least once before midnight. CASPAR

It's not my fault you're three hours ahead. ARIA

It kind of is, though. You moved. CASPAR

Unpause. ARIA

*The music starts up again.*

And now the distant rumblings mean the deepbirds perambulate once more-- VOICE

SKIP. CASPAR

ARIA

Pause!

*(The music stops. To Trent,)*

It's not that long.

CASPAR

It doesn't matter, though! Get to the loot.

ARIA

Just let it finish.

CASPAR

Fine. Unpause.

*The music starts again. They listen. Caspar is impatient.*

VOICE

Now, in the waning light of day, a secret band assembles--

CASPAR

That's us.

ARIA

Sh.

VOICE

Sent on a mission of intrigue and danger, into the deep. But what waits, lurking, far below the topcrust?

CASPAR

"Topcrust" means ground.

ARIA

Shut up.

VOICE

There is only one way to find out: To venture forth. Far from Silvervein, far from the gates of ancient ancestors, and through the bloodwoods...to the unknown. With hearts aflame, the quest begins...and darkness waits.

*A music fanfare. A title sequence:**SPEARLIGHT CHRONICLES III -  
BETRAYER'S BOND*

CASPAR

Can we play now?

ARIA

Why are you so grumpy?

CASPAR

I'm not.

You are! ARIA

I'm fine. CASPAR

We don't have to play if you-- ARIA

It's nothing. I'll feel better once I kill something.  
*(A beat.)*  
 I'm sorry I nerfed your exposition. CASPAR

Help me slay some leafrats and we'll be even. ARIA

Spoken like a true badass-ass-ass-ass-ass-ass-ass-ass CASPAR

*Caspar is hung up; skipping like a record.  
 Then, he stands stock still. Empty.*

...Trent? Are you lagging?  
*(A beat.)*  
 Oh, come on. ARIA

*A moment goes by. Then, he reactivates.*

Sorry. Router crapped out. CASPAR

Gotcha. ARIA

The joys of Lancaster. No broadband, no job, no friends around and I have to ask to use the car. CASPAR

Sorry for ditching you. ARIA

It's alright; I'm used to it. CASPAR

...Um. ARIA

Sorry. It's not...  
*(A beat.)*  
 I had an interview today. It wasn't great. CASPAR



ARIA

I'm sorry.

CASPAR

Thanks, but it's okay. I didn't even, like...it was just a temp job.

*(A beat.)*

You're good out there, though? Seattle's good?

ARIA

Yeah. Better, now that I'm out of the data mines. I mean I still don't really know anybody.

CASPAR

You will.

ARIA

I guess, yeah.

*(A beat.)*

I'm actually working on something.

CASPAR

Yeah?

ARIA

It's a game. An idea for one. I'm just kind of playing around with it, but I think--

*FARMER JENKINS, an NPC, appears.*

FARMER JENKINS

Help me, oh, help me! A nefarious warlock has made off with my prize pumpkin! Surely none but the bravest adventurers could withstand his dark ensorcelings!

ARIA

Wanna go rescue a pumpkin?

CASPAR

Sure, why not.

*Aria and Caspar step forward.*

VOICE

A New Quest Begins!

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE TWO

*Katja's game, again.*

KATJA

So now the tree needs a story.

Its story is...keywords. Words like:

Um. Growth.

Memory.

Death?

Yeah, death. That's catchy.

Memory. Growth. Death.

They are the story.

The story is put on the tree. Into its branches.

*She gestures.*

KATJA (CONT'D)

Run Program.

Okay. That looks weird. That's...

*Something bad happens.*

KATJA (CONT'D)

Oh, shit. Oh, that's very not good. Stop. STOP.

Mental note: story breaks tree. That's a big problem.

I can fix this. I can fix this.

What time is it.

Holy shit late.

Fix it tomorrow.

Save as, Katja's game, version two.

The One That Sucks.

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE THREE

*Back in SpearLight, a few weeks later.*

*Farmer Jenkins is standing on a platform, cackling maniacally and clad in wizard's robes.*

*Aria and Caspar are squaring off against him.*

FARMER JENKINS

YOU FOOLS! You played right into my hand! By returning my enchanted pumpkin to me, you have completed the circle of rebirth and unleashed my darkest powers!

ARIA

I told you he was evil.

CASPAR

You did not.

FARMER JENKINS

Cower before the might of my vengeful agricultomancy!

ARIA

I totally told you.

VOICE

NEW ENCOUNTER: Evil Zucchini!

*A group of enchanted, vicious zucchinis appear and start attacking.*

*Aria and Caspar fight the zucchinis with a series of fixed, calculated and rhythmic attack moves. It's like choreography.*

*Occasionally one of them asks for, and receives, a healing potion or spell from the other.*

*They're a good team.*

CASPAR

When did you tell me he was evil.

ARIA

Last week, we were talking about it and I told you that the farmer is always the big bad-- on your left.

CASPAR

Thanks. You did not say that.

ARIA  
I did and you know it, it was after the-- oh. Oh, no, nevermind.

CASPAR  
Heal, please.

ARIA  
Got it.

CASPAR  
Thanks. After the what?

ARIA  
Hm? Left.

CASPAR  
Right. You said it was after something but you cut out.

ARIA  
Oh, no, it...it was a game jam out here, I was talking to some people afterwards.

CASPAR  
A game jam? Coming around.

ARIA  
Yeah. It's, um. A bunch of game people all get together, and get matched up. You're on a team, together, with other devs, and there's a theme. You make a game. In, like, a day. Underneath.

CASPAR  
Got him. That sounds like fun.

ARIA  
Yeah. And then we were hanging out afterwards and I said it, but you and I played that night, too, and so I must have thought--

CASPAR  
I told you you didn't call it.

ARIA  
I did call it. Just not to you. AOE over there.

CASPAR  
I'm out.

ARIA  
Shit. Okay.

*She kills the final zucchini with an awesome spin move.*

CASPAR  
Fuckin' badass.

I know. C'mon.

ARIA

*They travel a bit further down a path.*

How do you hear about all this stuff?

CASPAR

What stuff?

ARIA

The game jam.

CASPAR

Some guys out here. A friend of mine from school knows them.

ARIA

*Farmer Jenkins is back.*

Sliced and diced my zucchinis, have you! Well try pruning *these* hedges!

FARMER JENKINS

NEXT ENCOUNTER. Enraged Rose Bushes!

VOICE

*A couple of animated rose bushes attack.*

Back-to-back?

CASPAR

Sure thing.

ARIA

*They stand back to back as they fight. The rosebushes are harder enemies so a bit more focus is required.*

Did I meet her?

CASPAR

What? Who?

ARIA

The friend. From MIT.

CASPAR

Him.

ARIA

Hm?

CASPAR

Not her.

ARIA

Oh. Him. CASPAR

When would you have met-- ARIA

That weekend I visited. Last year? CASPAR

Oh, uhm. I think maybe? His name's Samil. Up top. ARIA

Samil? CASPAR

Up top. ARIA

I don't think-- CASPAR

Dude, up top! ARIA

What? CASPAR

*He takes a big hit from a rosebush. Aria wades in and kills it.*

*All the rosebushes are dead.*

*Aria helps Caspar up and heals him.*

Thanks. CASPAR (CONT'D)

No problem. On to the lair? ARIA

Let's roll. CASPAR

*They travel into Farmer Jenkins' lair.*

I think he was at that party, right? Samil? That we went to? CASPAR (CONT'D)

Yeah, maybe. We dated for, like, two weeks senior year. ARIA

He's in Seattle? CASPAR

ARIA

No, but he has some friends out here who work together.

CASPAR

I thought all of the guys in your program were, like. Y'know. Assholes.

ARIA

Most of them, yeah. Samil wasn't, so we kept in touch.

*They reach the inner sanctum. Farmer Jenkins makes a final appearance.*

FARMER JENKINS

Very well, you've bested my minions, but now you shall face ultimate, pumpkin-spiced DOOM!

VOICE

FINAL ENCOUNTER: The Pumpkin's Revenge!

*An animate pumpkin shambles out.*

*It's a boss level, so they have to space out their conversation a bit more and really bear down.*

*They battle.*

CASPAR

These guys sound like a good hookup.

ARIA

I mean, it's not a hookup, they're just some friends of Samil's.

CASPAR

Wish I had the hookup.

ARIA

In games?

CASPAR

In anything.

ARIA

Something will come up.

CASPAR

Sure.

ARIA

And in the meantime, your mom does your laundry.

*Aria kills the pumpkin with a spell.*

BOOM. Nailed it.

ARIA (CONT'D)

*The pumpkin falls.*

*Farmer Jenkins descends from his perch.*

Nooooooooo! Years of preparation!

FARMER JENKINS

*He throws himself at their feet.*

Please, have mercy on me! I knew not what I did! I was a pawn! And I can lead you to where I hid all my treasure, if you just--

FARMER JENKINS (CONT'D)

*Caspar wheels around and kills Farmer Jenkins with one blow.*

BOOM, BITCH. What now.

CASPAR

Dude! He was gonna give us loot!

ARIA

He was a traitor.

CASPAR

He was begging for mercy.

ARIA

So?

CASPAR

That's gonna kill your alignment.

ARIA

I'm sick of fighting plants.

CASPAR

Okay, fine. Your call, obviously.  
(A beat.)  
I'm sorry.

ARIA

For what?

CASPAR

For what I said.

ARIA

What did you say?

CASPAR



ARIA

You know, about your mom? Nothing, never mind.

CASPAR

Okay.

*(A beat.)*

Sometimes I do my own laundry. Just to feel like I'm alive.

*(A beat.)*

It's just frustrating, I guess. I can't find anything, and you have this whole career, just, like--

ARIA

I have a day job at Starbucks.

CASPAR

Only because you quit the job you actually went out there for in the first place--

ARIA

It wasn't a good fit--

CASPAR

After a month.

ARIA

A month was enough to know that it...and, anyway. I can't code all day and then come home and code my own stuff, my head would explode.

CASPAR

I know, I know. Sure.

*(A beat.)*

I'm sorry.

ARIA

I am, too.

*(A beat.)*

The Starbucks near your house is probably hiring. If you need something temporary, it's got benefits, and--

CASPAR

Hey, next week we should try the undercrust. I hear it's cool.

ARIA

You need a guild for that.

CASPAR

It's just four people, I could bring some friends in.

ARIA

Yeah?

CASPAR

I do have friends.

I thought everyone moved. ARIA

There's some guys from my forums. CASPAR

Ah. Internet friends. ARIA

Well that's what you are, too, now. So. CASPAR

*A beat. It's weird for a second.*

There are some cool drops in the undercrust. ARIA

You want to? CASPAR

Sure. Why not. ARIA

Okay. CASPAR

Do you want to run the marshlands in the meantime? ARIA

Nah, uhm, I should probably turn in. Is that cool? CASPAR

Totally. Same time next week? ARIA

Absolutely. And I'll bring back-up. CASPAR

Sounds good. ARIA

*Caspar disappears.*

*Aria looks after him for a moment.*

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE FOUR

*The Social.*

*Katja stands in the middle of a stream of gaming news, opinions, thoughts, hashtags, retweets, videos, and gifs.*

*She's alternating between researching bug solutions and wasting time. She has lots of tabs open.*

KATJA

Broken condition when tagging, Unity. Search.

Persistent breakdown when I run this code, anyone else?

What? Oh, bullshit, no. That game was epic.

Stay focused.

Github, keyword tagging. No, tried that.

Tried that.

Asset Store had nothing.

Someone has had this problem. Right? Someone?

Oh, new launch trailer.

Focus.

Stack Exchange, maybe? Reddit. Ugh.

Oh. That's...okay. Maybe? Try it.

Run program.

No.

But.

Where was that other one, which tab...okay. Yeah. This block, but then this line, here.

Run program.

...Tree's not dead. Better.

Still not there, yet, definitely, but close.

Okay.

(MORE)

KATJA (CONT'D)

Good for tonight.

Save as, Katja's Game. Version Three.

Hope Springs Eternal.

Time for bed.

*She starts to sign off.*

KATJA (CONT'D)

Holy shit that dog is cute.

...A few more minutes.

*She dances with Information. In, and out,  
back and forth.*

*It coalesces around her. Spins. It breathes  
with her.*

*She keeps on dancing.*

*She puts her arms out.*

*She is at home.*

## SCENE FIVE

*SpearLight. The entrance to the undercrust.*

*Aria and Caspar are waiting for the rest of the guild.*

ARIA  
They knew it was Tuesday, right?

CASPAR  
They did. They'll be here.

ARIA  
They know it's nine Eastern?

CASPAR  
I think so. I mean...I said that but I don't know where...I only really know one guy; he's bringing a friend.

ARIA  
Oh.  
*(a beat.)*  
You said you'd bring friends, though--

CASPAR  
I am! I'm friends with him; we met on a forum and we've been talking for, like, months. We're gonna do a con meet-up.

ARIA  
I can probably see if some college people are around on gchat, if-

CASPAR  
Give it a minute? He was excited.

ARIA  
Okay.  
*(A beat.)*  
Which forum?

CASPAR  
Huh?

ARIA  
Which forum did you meet him in?

CASPAR  
Oh, uhm. Tenclick.

ARIA  
Really.

CASPAR  
It's fun.

ARIA  
It's full of assholes. You have to, like, wade through eight pages--

CASPAR  
It's not that--

ARIA  
Of pinup shit.

CASPAR  
I only go to the forums. The one where I met him, it's gamers, mostly.

ARIA  
That's not a ringing endorsement.

CASPAR  
They're fun.

ARIA  
It's a bunch of trolls pretending that they're hackers. When did you start going to Tencluck?

CASPAR  
In school. It's, like. It's funny. I was there before it got shitty, and now I stay in the parts that aren't. They're funny guys.

ARIA  
I mean, if you like him, okay--

VOICE  
FELDRICK THE BARBARIAN has logged on!

*FELDRICK appears.*

FELDRICK  
WHAT'S UP BITCHES LET'S GO RAIDING.

*He sees Aria, and bows ridiculously.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)  
M'lady.

*A beat.*

ARIA  
Hello.

CASPAR  
He made it. See?  
*(To Feldrick)*  
Feldrick, this is Aria-

She runs a mage?

FELDRICK

*Feldrick directs most of what he says to Caspar.*

A battlemage, yeah.

ARIA

FELDRICK

*(Looking her over)*  
You didn't do a custom skin?

ARIA

Nope. Just the basic build.

FELDRICK

Aw man you should go custom, there are some battlemage ones that are sick.

ARIA

Okay. I like this one.

FELDRICK

Makes you look like a noob, though. Right?  
*(Pointing to himself)*  
This skin, people see this shit coming.  
*(To Caspar)*  
Right, man?

CASPAR

Yeah, it's pretty cool.

FELDRICK

But she should probably run a rogue, though.

ARIA

What?

CASPAR

What? No.

FELDRICK

We need some sneak up in this bitch.

ARIA

I'm level six. I'm not making a new character just because--

FELDRICK

We can take care of you, don't worry. We've got you covered. Oh! Or a nightblade, yeah. Go roll a nightblade, it's girlfriend-proof.

ARIA

I'm sorry?

She's not my--  
 CASPAR  
 That's what Busby was saying. This girl he was dating runs a nightblade and even she--  
 FELDRICK  
 Oh, well if *Busby* says it--  
 ARIA  
 I don't know Busby.  
 CASPAR  
 Yes you do! On Tenclick! He's all over SpearLight, man, you must have talked to--  
 FELDRICK  
 Where's your friend?  
 ARIA  
 Huh?  
 FELDRICK  
 Your friend. Trent said you'd bring one.  
 ARIA  
 She isn't here?  
 FELDRICK  
 She?  
 ARIA  
 Yes.  
 FELDRICK  
 Well, no. She isn't here. Maybe *she* wants to be a nightblade.  
 ARIA  
 Highly unlikely. I'm gonna chat her; brb.  
 FELDRICK  
*Feldrick's character freezes.*  
 ARIA  
 Yup. He's cool.  
 CASPAR  
 I'm sorry. He's just excited--  
 ARIA  
 Seems like it.  
 CASPAR  
 He wants to impress, is all. He loves SpearLight. He'll be great when we start playing.



ARIA

If he can swallow his disgust that I'm not a fucking rogue.

CASPAR

He's not that bad. He called you m'lady.

ARIA

Exactly.

CASPAR

Just run the raid. Check out the undercrust. If it doesn't go well we'll ditch them both next week.

ARIA

If he gets killed I'm not healing him.

CASPAR

Come on.

ARIA

I'm not.

CASPAR

You will if we need him.

ARIA

Not if he stays that smug.

*(A beat.)*

His friend's a girl?

CASPAR

Sounds like it.

ARIA

That's surprising.

CASPAR

Oh, come on--

ARIA

I just mean, I wouldn't have expected that he--

VOICE

MORWYN THE FIRECASTER has logged on!

*With a flourish, MORWYN appears. She looks like a Wizard magazine pin-up.*

*She has on, like, three square inches of red leather armor.*

*Aria takes her in.*

Oh. Well, that makes sense, then.

ARIA

*Morwyn stares at them.*

*A beat.*

...Hello?

CASPAR

*Morwyn makes a gesture.*

...Um.

ARIA

*Morwyn freezes. A text bubble appears:*

no mic

MORWYN

*A beat.*

Seriously?

CASPAR

You don't have a mic.

ARIA

*Morwyn freezes again. She will do this whenever her user needs to type a response.*

no it broke

MORWYN

Then how are we supposed to talk during--

ARIA

*Morwyn suddenly makes a stiff, quick character gesture. Maybe she waves her arms above her head, while bending her knees.*

*She stops.*

We need to be able to talk during a battle.

ARIA (CONT'D)

We'll figure it out.

CASPAR

This is gonna be a shit show.

ARIA

f u MORWYN

*Feldrick reanimates.*

BOOM. We are a party.  
*(He sees Aria, then turns to Caspar)*  
 I thought she was changing classes. FELDRICK

I never said I-- ARIA

We need a rogue. FELDRICK

Then go be one-- ARIA

I just roll tanks. FELDRICK

And I'm a mage! ARIA

Guys, guys, come on-- CASPAR

She's being unreasonable-- FELDRICK

She really isn't. CASPAR

It's just strategy, though. We need a balance. It's obvious-- FELDRICK

*Morwyn interrupts with a cycle of three gestures. She looks ridiculous.*

*They all stare.*

Her mic's still broken. FELDRICK (CONT'D)

We saw that. ARIA

r we playin MORWYN

I don't know. Are we? ARIA

MORWYN  
we need a rogue

FELDRICK  
Thank you, Morwyn. That's what I'm saying.

ARIA  
We don't need sneak. The undercrust is mostly battles.

FELDRICK  
How do you know?

ARIA  
Because it always is. Both games before this one, it's, like, wall-to-wall molemen.

FELDRICK  
You played SpearLight II?

ARIA  
Of course I did. Trent and I both--

CASPAR  
She's better than me.

FELDRICK  
Well, that doesn't change the fact we need some distance--

ARIA  
I've got plenty of distance attacks. Healing, too. Anyone with bow specialty is wasted in there because it's tight.

FELDRICK  
But there are vaults, though, and they're locked.

ARIA  
She's a firecaster, she can blow doors down and keep up visibility. You two will be up front, Caspar will stay close for buffs and I'll cover the rear. We'll be fine, Christ.

*A beat.*

FELDRICK  
*(to Caspar)*  
She really needs to learn how this game works.

CASPAR  
That makes sense, though.

FELDRICK  
She only rolls a mage because the robes are pretty.

ARIA  
And you like loincloths, right?

lol MORWYN

We're gonna get murdered. FELDRICK

Do you want to raid or not? CASPAR

Obviously. But if we-- FELDRICK

CASPAR  
We will be fine. Her plan makes sense, she's played SpearLight longer than me, she's designing a new game, from scratch, she--

FELDRICK  
Is it about unicorns that fart feelings?

ARIA  
What does that even fucking mean.

FELDRICK  
It is a joke, it is humor, I am joking--

CASPAR  
Look you guys we're wasting time let's play!

ARIA  
...Sure. Fuck it.

CASPAR  
Okay. Morwyn and Feldrick on the point. Let's kill some molemen.

FELDRICK  
*(to Aria)*  
Let me know if you need any help, m'lady.

ARIA  
Just do your job.

*Morwyn makes a gesture. They form a group.*

VOICE  
DARKNESS DESCENDS. A new quest begins!

*They step into the undercrust.*

*Darkness descends.*

## SCENE SIX

*The Real World. Starbucks.*

*Katja behind the counter. It's slow. She's bored.*

*She looks around to make sure she's alone.*

*Pulls out her cell phone. Checks it.*

*Immediately, she's in the Social.*

*An information swirl. A furtive dance.*

*She hears someone coming.*

*Puts her phone away. The information stops.*

*NAOMI, her manager, enters.*

NAOMI

A homeless guy used the bathroom.

KATJA

Um.

NAOMI

For, like. A shower.

KATJA

Gross.

NAOMI

Yeah. And...okay. I am the absolute worst manager in the history of the, forever, but. I have this thing about smells. I mean, if Chuck ever comes home from the gym and doesn't shower, like, *immediately*, I just--

KATJA

I'm on it.

NAOMI

Oh my God really.

KATJA

Yeah. Sure.

NAOMI

You are amazing. You are...I mean, it would have just been my vomit in there, on top of everything else, and maybe also me passed out on it, and then you'd *still* have to--

I can take care of it. Promise.

KATJA

*A beat.*

It's *really* bad in there.

NAOMI

It's cool.

KATJA

Okay, awesome.

NAOMI

*Naomi exits.*

*Katja braces herself.*

*Her phone pings.*

*She looks at it.*

*She opens an e-mail. Reads.*

*She smiles.*

*Reads it again.*

*She smiles bigger.*

*Naomi re-enters, pulling a mop and bucket.*

You'll need this.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

*(Hiding her phone)*  
What? Oh. Okay.

KATJA

*Katja takes the mop.*

*Naomi appraises her.*

NAOMI  
...You should come out with Chuck and me tonight. After closing. We're meeting friends.

KATJA

Yeah?

NAOMI  
Totally. If you can handle what's back there then you can handle our friends.

KATJA

Ha. Thanks. I'd love to, but...I actually just got an e-mail? And I think I need to get some work done tonight.

NAOMI

Oh, no worries.

KATJA

Rain check?

NAOMI

Absolutely. Open invitation.  
*(She salutes Katja)*  
Godspeed.

*Katja salutes back.*

*Naomi exits.*

*Katja glances at her phone again.*

*Smiles again.*

*Exits with mop.*

*Lights shift.*



## SCENE SEVEN

*Inside of Katja's game.*

*Katja is showing Trent around.*

It's...wow.

TRENT

It's pretty rough.

KATJA

Well, yeah, but I can see once it's built out--

TRENT

I mean, it's glitchy, that rock, there, you can walk right through it.

KATJA

It's really cool. I'm glad you showed me.

TRENT

Thanks. You're the first person that's seen it.

KATJA

You didn't show them yet?

TRENT

Who?

KATJA

The guys. Samil's friends, who e-mailed.

TRENT

Not yet. I want to get it more...presentable, and stuff.

KATJA

But you said that they asked about--

TRENT

I just told them the idea. Like, the mechanic, and the premise. It was really in passing, after the game jam, but I gave them my info and then one of the guys, Jason, shot me an e-mail saying that they'd liked the thing my team made.

KATJA

That's awesome.

TRENT

Yeah. I mean the game, it was dumb, nothing, like an endless runner or whatever, but the people there said it was fun to work with me, and Jason said he and Samil had talked and Samil had let them know I was competent.

KATJA

Competent.

TRENT

KATJA

That's really good. Like, really really good. For game people.

TRENT

Ah. Okay.

KATJA

And so then Jason asked if I wanted to get together and talk about the scene out here, and about my game, he said that we should get a beer sometime next week. He has some contacts that he works with on, like, funding, and finding assets, that sort of thing, and wants to talk.

*(A beat.)*

Does that sound sketchy?

TRENT

What?

KATJA

Does it, like. The beer thing. I forwarded you the e-mail; it doesn't look sketchy, right?

TRENT

Not at all, no.

KATJA

Okay. Cool. Good.

TRENT

No, totally. He's interested. He thought the idea was cool, he mentioned Samil. This is how you network, right?

KATJA

Right. Yeah, you're right, I'm being paranoid.

TRENT

And, y'know. Show some cleavage when you go and you'll be set.

KATJA

Fuck you.

TRENT

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. The e-mail is totally normal.

*(A beat.)*

It's really cool, Katja.

KATJA

It could be. This is really just, like, a demo? I'd need so many more people to actually build it out the way that...but the concept, I've got down. I just need to flesh it out.

TRENT

*(Looking around)*

It seems...cool.

Watch.

KATJA

*She waves her arm.*

*They look at the result.*

...Huh.

TRENT

It's a tree.  
(*A beat.*)

I mean, it's not now, it's just some lines and stuff, but eventually--

TRENT

No, I can see it. Totally.  
(*A beat.*)

So it's a drawing game? You draw in it.

KATJA

Sort of, but. Um.  
(*She sweeps her hand.*)

See? You can, like, change it. The stuff around it. You build terrain, and then...  
(*Another gesture.*)

There.

TRENT

It's...a rock.

KATJA

A headstone.

TRENT

Okay.  
(*A beat.*)

So it's a world-builder.

KATJA

Sort of, but then, the real mechanic, the thing about it, really, is the stories.  
(*A beat.*)

You can...okay. So everything that you make, when you make it, the tree, or the earth, mountains, or even people, maybe, later, every time that you make one of them no matter what it is you can put a story in it. Like, the tree has a story that someone died there. A, um, an explorer, maybe, discovered this valley, but then died here on this spot, and the tree grew. It's, like, a marker. The stories have, there are some formats to them, templates, and the game is made to be able to see similar formats and types and modes of story and then connect them. So as you build out the world, and give everything a story, the game tracks them and then all the stories start to intersect and connect and eventually you've made this, like, mythology about everything in the world that you built. And then after that, at a particular point, some of the aspects of it start to automate, and build out on top of what you're doing, and so you can see the way that the stories that you make all play out and keep connecting, and how the world changes.

(MORE)

KATJA (CONT'D)

And you can help it.

*(A beat.)*

Basically, I mean, it's like Minecraft but with storytelling. And less blocky.

TRENT

That sounds really cool.

KATJA

That's what Jason said. But there are so many things to figure out--

TRENT

No, yeah, but it sounds--

KATJA

Just all of the styles of how the stories work and how to connect them but not make them cliches, and, like, the tropes and and--

TRENT

You can do it, though. That sounds awesome. I'm sure they'll love it.

*(A beat.)*

How do you win?

KATJA

What?

TRENT

Like, the victory condition.

KATJA

Oh. I mean, I don't think...it's more just about seeing how things play out, but graphically. And over time.

TRENT

That's surprising.

KATJA

Why?

TRENT

Because, I dunno. I never knew you liked those kinds of games.

KATJA

What kind of games?

TRENT

The kind with no murder.

KATJA

I like all kinds. And sometimes it's nice to have a break.

TRENT

Right, but it's not, like, a *gamer* game, or-

KATJA

It doesn't have to be. Jason, and his friends, the kinds of games they're doing, there's a whole market, really, it's more niche but there's...there are people who would want this.

TRENT

Okay.

KATJA

And it'd still be collaborative, like, with friends. I guess you could compete if you wanted.

TRENT

No, I mean, they wouldn't have to.

KATJA

Right.

*(A beat.)*

Art-style wise I think it's really geometric, y'know? Like, I'm working on shading--

TRENT

Yeah. That would be cool.

*(A beat.)*

Thanks for showing me.

KATJA

Thanks for looking. I've got to get used to talking about it, I guess, so this helps.

*(A beat.)*

Thanks for not doing SpearLight this week.

TRENT

No, it's good to take a break. And for what it's worth, he said he was--

KATJA

I know--

TRENT

He didn't mean, like, half the stuff that he was--

KATJA

I know he didn't, he just was trying to be funny, but. And he's a good player, we kicked ass, it was really fun. I just kind of need to cool down for a bit.

TRENT

Cool. That's totally. And we don't have to play the rest with him--

KATJA

No, I love the quest chain that we're on, I want to finish that out and we can't if he...just maybe not after that?

TRENT

Totally. Totally, totally. He can be a complete dick when he's trying to, and I've told him that.

KATJA  
I don't even know why you keep talking--

TRENT  
He's cool, most of the time. He's a really smart guy, and he's good. But he can be a dick.

KATJA  
Yeah. He can.

*A beat.*

TRENT  
And that's why, y'know, I'm just...somebody like him, like Feldrick, would probably look at a game like this, and he wouldn't get it at all, he'd be like, "That's girly," or "That's not a game," or, something, and I wouldn't want that to--

KATJA  
It's not for him. Obviously.

TRENT  
Right, but someone *like* him--

KATJA  
Really doesn't factor in to this.

TRENT  
Right. No, you're right.

KATJA  
Thanks.

TRENT  
I just don't want you getting hurt, if this gets out there and--

KATJA  
I can take care of myself.

TRENT  
You can. Of course.

*A beat.*

TRENT (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

KATJA  
Why?

TRENT  
Because I feel like I said something wrong.

KATJA  
It's okay, you didn't. I'm just weird because you're the first person I've--

TRENT

No, I get that. It's okay. I'm sorry.

*(A beat.)*

I was going through old chat logs, today. On my computer? I was at home.

KATJA

Yeah?

TRENT

Yeah, I was real bored. I was re-reading all of our old chats. From, like, high school.

KATJA

Oh, shit. No way.

TRENT

They were *hilarious*.

KATJA

We were such losers.

TRENT

We really were. And it was cool, reading them, seeing, like, the evolution--

KATJA

Oh my God, all that shit we--

TRENT

How we grew up, like, together, tracking the change--

KATJA

I had so much shit from, like, Hot Topic.

TRENT

Yeah. It's hilarious. And it moves up through first year, college, until you transferred. You can really see it, it's like a map. All these stories I completely forgot. High school to college to now.

KATJA

Seriously. That's insane.

TRENT

We've been running a long time.

KATJA

We have. And it's so cool that we can stay in touch.

TRENT

It is. Like, it's not the same, obviously, but we already did the whole separate schools thing--

KATJA

And stayed friends, yeah. This is nothing, this, here. We can own this.

TRENT

Yeah. Yeah, we can.

*(A beat.)*

And so, like, yeah, I have this friend who's a dick, you know, but if he ever...I mean, if you ever feel, like...I don't care. I'm on your side, obviously.

KATJA

Thanks.

TRENT

I choose you, I mean. I have to. There's all this history.

KATJA

Absolutely. Yeah. Thank you.

TRENT

You're welcome. I think it's seeing this game just got me...dunno. Stories, right?

KATJA

Totally.

TRENT

Like, IMAX laser light shows with everybody after prom, and like--

KATJA

Yeah.

TRENT

You've known what you were doing since day one. You're doing such amazing things. And I'm living at home.

KATJA

You could leave, though, y'know? Go somewhere else, if nothing's there.

TRENT

You think?

KATJA

Of course.

TRENT

...Maybe. You're right, yeah. Yeah. I just need to think some, first.

KATJA

Of course.

*A beat.*

TRENT

There should just maybe be a way to win. In this. Is all I'm saying. It doesn't have to be the *overarching*...and it's totally your thing, I get it, but when you pitch it to the guys there should maybe be some points, or achievements...I dunno. Just an idea.



KATJA

No, that's a good point, that's good.

TRENT

Thanks. I mean, even Minecraft has a dragon, right?

KATJA

It does, you're right.

TRENT

Awesome, I'm glad to help. Just, like, not the main thing, but. Some kind of really small, clear way that you could win.

KATJA

...Totally.

*A beat. They look around the game.*

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE EIGHT

*SpearLight. The undercrust.*

VOICE

NEW ENCOUNTER. Shadowdrakes!

*Aria, Caspar, Feldrick and Morwyn are all engaged in a heated battle with a swarm of shadowdrakes.*

*They're losing.*

Up top.	ARIA
Shit. Fuck.	FELDRICK
I've got it.	CASPAR
Left.	ARIA
Right.	CASPAR
heal pls heal pls	MORWYN
AOE.	FELDRICK
heal pls	MORWYN
Heal Morwyn.	FELDRICK
I'm out.	CASPAR
Me too.	ARIA
pls pls	MORWYN
I'M OUT.	CASPAR

FUCK. SHIT. FELDRICK

*Morwyn is killed.*

She's down. ARIA

Fuck. FELDRICK

Keep together, we can-- CASPAR

*He is killed.*

Fuck, shit. This is-- FELDRICK

We're almost through, though, we-- ARIA

I'm out-- FELDRICK

No, we can get this if we just. ARIA

*A large drake looms up in front of them.*

Oh, fuck. ARIA (CONT'D)

*It kills them both.*

*Instantaneously, the party is transported to the Tavern home base.*

*There is an old CRONE Non-Player Character there.*

CRONE

Welcome to the tavern, weary travelers! Rest and relax here.

GODDAMMIT. I had full inventory. FELDRICK

We all did. ARIA

We just lost everything. FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK FELDRICK

CASPAR

We almost had it, we can go back--

ARIA

Not tonight, though, we--

FELDRICK

We are going back there and getting--

ARIA

No.

FELDRICK

Otherwise somebody else will pick it up--

ARIA

I have to work tomorrow, and that's like two hours in.

FELDRICK

Fine then, we'll go and you can puss out. Fuck. You got us all killed anyway.

ARIA

No I didn't--

FELDRICK

We needed a healer. You ran out of spells--

ARIA

So did Trent--

FELDRICK

Because he's a paladin!

ARIA

And I'm a mage, we both have healing but if you--

FELDRICK

It doesn't matter--

ARIA

I thought you wanted me to be a rogue anyway.

CASPAR

Guys.

ARIA

They don't have any healing at all.

FELDRICK

It doesn't matter! You should be some girly class. You didn't fight right.

ARIA

I was planning, and if you had just stayed back with all the rest of us--

Oh, okay--

FELDRICK

ARIA

Instead of fucking Leeroy Jenkinsing in there and blowing up--

FELDRICK

I AM A TANK IT'S WHAT I DO.

MORWYN

getting soda brb

*Morwyn freeezes.*

FELDRICK

We had the drop on them, but you wanted to--

ARIA

To plan, right.

CASPAR

Guys, it's no one's fault. It's a hard dungeon.

FELDRICK

You didn't want to plan, you wanted to hang back like a pussy, but then you don't even play a fucking rogue or cleric or anything useful you're just a mage and then you stand there and do jack shit.

ARIA

This is a high-level raid; if you don't plan then you're dead. Like us.

FELDRICK

If you don't fight then you're dead, too.

ARIA

I fight better than you.

CASPAR

Guys, you're both good--

FELDRICK

You don't fight at fucking all.

ARIA

I do.

FELDRICK

Oh, yeah?

*Feldrick points to the Crone.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)

Kill her, then.

What. ARIA

Kill the fucking Crone. FELDRICK

Greetings, weary traveler! CRONE

I can't, she's the inn-keeper-- ARIA

You fucking pussy. FELDRICK

No, I mean, I can't, literally. She's an NPC, she's part of the scenery, she doesn't die. ARIA

Well fucking try it. FELDRICK

What is your problem? ARIA

My problem is that you're holding us back, and now I lost all of my loot. FELDRICK

Greetings, weary traveler! CRONE

Maybe we should just call it a night. CASPAR

Kill the crone. FELDRICK

I can't. ARIA

Hit her, then. Show me that you know how to do that, even. FELDRICK

What is your problem? ARIA

My problem is that I'm here to play this game, and you're just coming in and shitting it all up because you're shit. I want you to fucking hit this stupid NPC so that I know you even know how to use your weapon instead of sitting back and getting us all killed. FELDRICK

I thought you wanted your loot back. ARIA

So? FELDRICK

So you're wasting time. ARIA

YOU'RE NOT COMING ANYWAY. FELDRICK

Greetings, weary travele-- CRONE

*Feldrick wheels and begins attacking the Crone.*

Like this! FELDRICK

*He hits the Crone.*

Ah! Mercy! CRONE

*She falls.*

*She pops back up.*

You see? You fucking see?! FELDRICK

*He hits her again.*

Ah! Mercy! CRONE

*She falls.*

*She pops back up.*

*He hits her again.*

Ah! Mercy! CRONE (CONT'D)

*She falls.*

*The Crone is a non-combat NPC, so she can't be killed. Every time Feldrick hits her, she yells for mercy, then falls, then pops back up, unharmed.*

*Every time she does it he hits her again.*

*This maybe starts off kind of funny because of the repetition, but quickly gets weird.*

*He keeps hitting her. She keeps asking for mercy.*

*Morwyn reanimates, back from getting a soda.*

k back  
wtf  
guys wtf

MORWYN

*They watch Feldrick hit the Crone.*

*Finally, he stops.*

*The Crone pops up.*

*A beat.*

Greetings, weary traveler!

CRONE

*(to Aria)*  
See? It's not fucking hard.

FELDRICK

We need to stop for the night.

CASPAR

We need to get our shit back.

FELDRICK

No, we don't. We're done.

CASPAR

Forever.

ARIA

Not forever. Just...we're all pissed, right, we--

CASPAR

Fuck you, I'm fine--

FELDRICK

You're not, though, man. You're really not.

CASPAR

Because she sucks!

FELDRICK



CASPAR

She doesn't, though. She's bailed us out, like, forty times. You've seen her play. But you've been harping on her the whole time, 'cause she's a girl--

FELDRICK

'Cause she's a girl?!

CASPAR

Yes, man!

FELDRICK

That has nothing fucking to do with it!

CASPAR

It does, though.

ARIA

Yeah, it really does.

FELDRICK

You're both insane. It's cause she's awful. I mean, look! Morwyn's cool, and she's a girl! I brought her in and she's--

MORWYN

im not a girl

*A beat.*

CASPAR

You're not?

MORWYN

no way fu  
im a guy bro

ARIA

This makes so much more sense now.

FELDRICK

But...what? Then why the fuck.

*(a beat. To Morwyn)*

Why the fuck do you play that, then.

MORWYN

bc look at her  
shes fukin badass  
check this shit

*Morwyn does a couple gestures.*

*A beat.*

FELDRICK

I didn't...you never...you never said on chat, you never said you were--

ARIA

What's wrong, Feldrick? Did she turn you on?

FELDRICK

What? No.

ARIA

I think this means you're gay now.

FELDRICK

Fuck you. Fuck you fuck you fuck you, you shut your--

CASPAR

Hey. Just stop it.

FELDRICK

I won't. I won't. Fuck all of you. I don't give a shit about you, or your fucking girlfriend--

CASPAR

She's not--

FELDRICK

Or anything. She's in your head, man, wrapped up tight, she's got you running all around and whatever but it's a lie. She's using you, she is a user, she doesn't care about anything except what she fucking wants, and she just gets it, just like that, because it's easy. You do it for her, everyone does, and when she's done she cuts us loose and just moves on.

*(To Aria)*

You fucking cunt.

*Feldrick vanishes.*

VOICE

FELDRICK THE BARBARIAN has left the game.

*A beat.*

MORWYN

r we still raidin

*A beat.*

*Morwyn does a gesture.*

*A beat.*

CASPAR

Are you okay?

ARIA

I mean...I'm fine.

I am so sorry--

CASPAR

It's fine. It is.

ARIA

Okay.

CASPAR

*(A beat.)*  
So. Obviously, we need to find a new guild.

MORWYN

nnnnnnnnnn  
nnnnnnnn  
ii need da loootz

pizzas here brb

*Morwyn freezes.*

*A beat.*

ARIA

How are you friends with them.

CASPAR

I'm not. I'm not, I swear. Not any more. Not after that.

ARIA

...Okay.

*(A beat.)*  
It means a lot that you stood up to him.

CASPAR

Of course. Of course I would. I said--

ARIA

I know, but saying and doing...thank you.

CASPAR

Anytime.

ARIA

You're really great.

CASPAR

I try.

*(A beat.)*  
Hey. Um.

*(A beat.)*  
Hey, what if I came out there.

ARIA

What?

CASPAR

To Seattle. What if I came out.

ARIA

To visit? That'd be...that'd be good, I mean--

CASPAR

No, I mean, like. Moved out there.

ARIA

...What?

CASPAR

Lancaster sucks. I've been here, just...thinking.

ARIA

Well, yeah, I mean, everybody should probably get out of Lancaster, but if--

CASPAR

It's like, what am I even doing, here, really. Looking for jobs that I don't want and sleeping too late and playing games and going on all the same forums I've been on since Sophomore year...and nobody's left out here, And I can feel myself getting, like, angry, and sad and lonely...but then I talk to you. And we barely see each other, and then when we do it's amazing, but it's just the game and if we were like both in the same place we could hang out and it could be, um. Just.

ARIA

You wouldn't have to move out here, though. You could visit.

CASPAR

I don't want to visit. I want to be there. You said it's great.

ARIA

It is, I mean, I like it--

CASPAR

And I could work, I've thought about it and I could work at a library, I've got experience from school, and maybe you and I could even, like, consult, I could help you, like with your game, the Minecraft, thing--

ARIA

But.

CASPAR

But, what?

ARIA

You really don't have to do all that, just to--

CASPAR

I want to.

ARIA

Why.

CASPAR

Um. For you. Obviously. I mean.  
*(a beat.)*  
 I want to come out there for you.

*A beat.*

ARIA

...I'm not that great.

CASPAR

You are, though. Really.  
*(a beat.)*  
 You're really, really great. And I don't know if anybody knows that like I do.

*A beat.*

ARIA

Thank you.

CASPAR

So?

ARIA

Can we, like, talk about this on the phone or, or on chat or--

CASPAR

No. No, this is good. I feel better this way.

ARIA

But--

CASPAR

This is my best. This is me, here, being at my best.  
*(A beat.)*

I was looking back at those chats? The ones I found? I've wanted to say this for...we share so much in those, we've always...you've always been there, and I've been with you. We make each other better, we push each other, and support...and all through college, we kept talking, even after you transferred and were in Boston, and that means something, but now you're far away, and there's timezones and there's traveling and that, like, hurts me, because it feels like more and more you're just this voice on the speaker, or, like, a bunch of pixels, something, and the fact that I am hurt by that means something. The fact that it makes my stomach ache to lose you means something, and so I don't want to. I want to be with you.

*A beat.*

ARIA

Trent, look.

CASPAR

You can say no. It's...it's okay. You can totally say no. But I've wanted to...needed to say this, for so long. And now I have.

(MORE)

CASPAR (CONT'D)

*(a beat.)*

It's okay. You can say no if you want to. But please don't.

*A beat.*

ARIA

Trent...

CASPAR

You can say--

ARIA

No.

*(a beat.)*

I'm sorry. You're, uhm, Trent, you're amazing, but we are friends. We are amazing, close friends, and you're so supportive, and you're great, but. I've never thought of it like that.

CASPAR

Never.

ARIA

No.

CASPAR

How. It always felt like, we were both--

ARIA

We weren't. We never dated.

CASPAR

Well, but. I mean, I always, like, was dating, or you were dating, someone. It...the timing--

ARIA

Not always, though.

CASPAR

Enough, though. It. It wasn't right.

ARIA

But now it is?

CASPAR

It could be. Maybe. If I moved--

ARIA

What would you do--

CASPAR

A library, I said--

ARIA

You don't know, though. There's nothing out here, you don't even...um, and games? You don't do games-

CASPAR

I play--

ARIA

Right, but. But I, like, *do* them, and I'm trying, and I am making some headway--

CASPAR

And I could help--

ARIA

But you don't know them, and the city, it--

CASPAR

I want to--

ARIA

No, you don't--

CASPAR

I really do! You are enough, you had to notice--

ARIA

Okay, so, yes, I might have, yes, I might have noticed, but, like, Trent, come on. You're not--

CASPAR

You see? I told you--

ARIA

No, Trent, listen. I'm not the thing that you, um, need.

CASPAR

But I am telling you--

ARIA

You're wrong. I think you...I think you're sad, you said you're sad, and, um, like, lonely, and maybe not feeling like you belong there. Which you don't. You might not, really, I believe that. But I am not a reason, um. To pull up stakes.

CASPAR

I think you are.

ARIA

I have a life. That I am building, out here. And you are a huge part of that, but you're not out here, and that's okay, I think. I need it that way, um. While I start out.

CASPAR

...I'll hold you back.

No. But you won't be happy. ARIA

You had to know. You had to notice, all this time. CASPAR

Notice what, Trent. ARIA

That I love you. CASPAR

Whoa. ARIA

You had to see that, had to register, you can't just ignore that if you see it and-- CASPAR

I didn't. ARIA

Um, yes, you did. CASPAR

I really didn't. ARIA

You had to-- TRENT

How was I supposed to notice that you loved me if you didn't ever notice I don't love you. ARIA

*A beat.*

MORWYN

o shit  
sick burn  
buuuurrrrrrrrrnnnn

*They realize that Morwyn has been watching this for some not-insignificant amount of time.*

*A beat.*

Look, let's talk offline-- ARIA

No. No, we don't have to. That makes sense. That makes perfect, perfect sense. CASPAR



ARIA

I'm sorry, Trent. I just...I think we're helping each other just like this.

CASPAR

And that's enough.

ARIA

For me, it is.

CASPAR

Well, not for me. I don't need *help*. And I don't need to be your *help*. You can't just use me.

ARIA

I didn't--

CASPAR

You did. You used me up until you were settled, and then you left.

ARIA

I didn't go anywhere--

CASPAR

You went across the fucking country! You moved out there for a dumb a job you didn't even want, but you took it, and then you quit, and stayed out there. You left me here, not doing anything, and all that time, you were leading...I have spent so much time on this relationship, so much of myself, and it's wasted-

ARIA

We're friends--

CASPAR

I don't want to be fucking friends! I did everything right. Y'know? I was there, and I was open, and I was nice...but I'm not important enough, or I don't play the right stupid games, go to the right college, or what.

ARIA

Trent.

CASPAR

No, it makes sense. I'm just this hick in Lancaster with no hookup and you're, like, career woman--

ARIA

Trent, stop.

CASPAR

Sleeping with fucking Samil just to get his connections--

ARIA

We dated in school, that is not--

CASPAR

And then you're fucking dating this Jason guy, now, because he has a studio.

ARIA

You don't know what you're talking--

CASPAR

Climbing the ladder, right? Just like always, and it's easy.

ARIA

You need to stop.

CASPAR

No, you need to stop, because I'm sick of it. Since I've known you, all you do is talk about you. All those fucking chats I went through last week? They're all you, and what you want, and what you're doing, and I'm just there to help you. I'm just a step on the path, and now you're done with me and moving on, and you think that you earn all this shit but it's just handed to you, because you're pretty and you know it and...I've earned more than you ever have, ever.

ARIA

That's not fair.

CASPAR

Like you'd know. They were so right.

ARIA

Who.

CASPAR

Everybody. All my friends, the whole...they called it from day one.

ARIA

What does that even--

CASPAR

Don't call me. Don't e-mail me. Okay? Enjoy your new hookups, because I am not helping you any more. I'm all helped out.

*He's gone.*

VOICE

CASPAR THE PALADIN has left the game.

*A beat.*

MORWYN

r we still playin

ARIA

No.

*A beat.*

MORWYN

we cud still play

I don't think so.

ARIA

ok watev  
u wanna cyber

MORWYN

*Aria stares at Morwyn.*

jk jk  
lol

MORWYN (CONT'D)

*Aria stares at Morwyn for one more moment. Then, abruptly, she signs off.*

ARIA THE BATTLEMAGE has left the game.

VOICE

*A beat.*

k bye

MORWYN

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE NINE

*The Real World. Katja's apartment.*

*Katja types at her keyboard.*

*Her phone pings.*

*She checks it.*

*Rolls her eyes.*

*Puts it down.*

*It pings again.*

*She checks it. Reads.*

*Goes to her computer.*

*The phone pings.*

*She gets an e-mail.*

*She looks up something online.*

*The phone pings.*

*She gets an e-mail.*

*She finds the page she was looking for.*

*She reads.*

*Feldrick appears, in a forum.*

FELDRICK

Dear Internet: this is the story of a girl who had it easy. Who wanted to get ahead, and managed to for a little while.

*Her phone rings.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)

But someone can't have it that easy for that long. It's not the world. It isn't fair.

*She picks up the phone. Hears something on the other end.*

*Hangs up.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)

So help us show her all that, now. Help us make things fair for her.

*Her phone pings*

*She gets an e-mail.*

*She checks her computer.*

*Her phone pings.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)

Because they should be fair. They should. Meet my friend, Trent.

*Trent appears, with Feldrick.*

*The Social starts intruding on Katja.*

*Things pop up.*

*Notification sounds.*

*White noise.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)

Trent has a story you won't like. It isn't nice. It isn't fair. But it's documented.

*Katja gets up from her seat.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)

We have chat logs from the past ten years. We have e-mails. We have evidence that shows just how this girl got ahead. And who helped her.

*The Social closes in.*

FELDRICK (CONT'D)

We've done the research. We've provided the evidence. We're telling the story. And so the rest now is up to you. Tell a new one. Fight back. Make it all fair.

TRENT

Because it needs to be fair, for once. Once and for all.

*The sounds keep coming, louder and louder.*

*Katja stands, caught, in the center.*

*Blackout.*

*End Act One.*

## SCENE TEN

*Somewhere on the Internet.*

*Trent appears, speaking into his webcam.*

TRENT

Hello, Internet. It's me. So, first and foremost, I just wanted to say that the last few days have been really rough, but I'm doing alright, and I appreciate everyone who's reached out. It's been really nice to know I'm not alone in this, even when some other people have been not, well, you know. Shoutout to Tenclick, most of all, obviously, and Feldrick for putting everything together. I also wanted to take a second to say that I know that some people have been behaving irresponsibly, allegedly, and crossing some lines, and there's lots of reports and hearsay floating around, but up front I just want to completely divorce myself from all of that.

My intention, from day one, with the infodump and the last video, was just to cast light on the kinds of special treatment that...I mean, you read the chat logs, you saw the data, I was in love with this girl, and I would never ever advocate the kinds of things people have said are going on. But keep in mind, too, guys: we know her, now, and people like her...she is a serial careerist, this is their thing. Manipulating things to their own ends, changing the story, playing the victim, it's what they do, to pull the focus. But it won't work. Feldrick and I are concerned with the bigger picture, here. This was a wake-up call about our culture, and the ways that certain people take advantage of others to get ahead, and obstacles that are put in the path of honest people. We've taken action, and will keep doing it, but it's a completely different thing than anything that may or may not be happening, allegedly, to other parties since we did it. We're only interested in the truth.

I distance myself completely from all of that, and I don't condone it. But it should not get in the way of my message. That's what matters.

Alright, cool, guys. Thanks so much. Talk soon.

*He clicks off his webcam.*

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE ELEVEN

*The Real World. Naomi's living room.*

*There is no color here.*

*Katja is lying on the couch, under a blanket.  
Not sleeping, just staring.*

*She lies there for a long time.*

*(Everything in this scene should take a long  
time.)*

*Eventually, she rouses herself.*

*She stands up.*

*She shuffles over to a desk.*

*She sits down at it. Her hands hover over a  
laptop that sits, unopened.*

*She decides not to open it.*

*She shuffles off to the kitchen. Comes back  
with water.*

*Her phone rings. She grabs it, silences it  
and puts it down without looking.*

*A beat.*

*Her hand hovers over the phone.*

*A beat.*

*She decides to check it, quick.*

*She picks it up.*

*Immediately, The Social pounces out of  
somewhere.*

## THE SOCIAL

YOU FUCKING COCKWHORE

*She slams her phone down. The Social  
disappears.*

*She sits at the table.*

*She shuffles back off, to the kitchen.*

*A moment of empty room.*

*She comes back with an apple.*

*She sits at the desk, eats.*

*Stops eating.*

*Looks over at the front door.*

*Stares at it.*

*Keeps staring at it.*

*Shakes it off.*

*Goes back to eating her apple.*

*Looks up at the door again.*

*A beat.*

*She goes to the door, checks it. Makes sure it's locked.*

*It is.*

*She looks out the window.*

*She goes back to the desk.*

*Her hands hover over the computer.*

*She takes a breath.*

*Braces herself.*

*She opens it up.*

*The Social explodes.*

#### THE SOCIAL (CONT'D)

think your special you fuking bitch

you dont deserve what you get

dont deserve me

think about making you feel just what you did

*She sits at the desk and tries to let it wash over her.*

*The Social moves closer.*



## THE SOCIAL (CONT'D)

go kill yourself you stupid bitch

think your so better

your not whore

got your address

you arent jack shit

nice curtains bitchslime

ill shut you up find you

see you

should be on fire

anybody need cuntfaces number check this site and-

*She shuts the laptop.*

*It's all quiet.*

*She sits.*

*She breathes.*

*She stands up, walks to the couch, reaches behind it and pulls out a wireless router.*

*She unplugs it.*

*She sits on the couch, holding the router.*

*She sits.*

*She breathes.*

*Naomi enters.*

Did the Internet just go out?

NAOMI

Um. Yeah.

KATJA

Well, shit. Can you fix it?

NAOMI

Yeah, sure.

KATJA

*A beat.*

NAOMI

Did you...cause it?

*A beat.*

KATJA

I might have. Sorry.

*(A beat.)*

I wanted to get some work done, but then I kept checking my e-mail, or Twitter, or anything. I needed a break.

NAOMI

Okay. That's cool.

*(A beat.)*

You can turn it off on your computer, though, right? Like, airplane mode?

KATJA

I know. This felt more final.

NAOMI

Yeah, I could see that.

*(A beat.)*

It's just, I was watching Netflix. So--

KATJA

Totally. Right. Sorry.

*(She plugs in the router.)*

Give it a minute. You'll be all set.

NAOMI

Thanks. It's funny, right? How we're, like, lost without it.

KATJA

Yeah.

NAOMI

There was a blackout a few months back? And I was sitting in the house, like, lighting candles, and it hit me. I don't even know what to do with myself anymore. I don't have, like, any books. And Chuck falls asleep pretty much as soon as the lights go off, so he just zonked. He was no good all weekend. And it's weird because I remember having no internet. Right? Growing up?

KATJA

...Um.

NAOMI

Okay, well, when I was growing up. I have these really clear memories of, like, getting a computer, but there wasn't even AOL yet, or anything. But I survived. I guess I must have had hobbies, or something.

*(A beat.)*

How are you doing?

KATJA

Better, I think.  
*(A beat. She's still holding the router.)*  
 All things considered.  
*(A beat.)*  
 Thank you for letting me stay here.

NAOMI

Oh, are you kidding? As long as you need.

KATJA

I know it's weird, though--

NAOMI

I'm your manager. I manage you. I can't make you cover people's shifts and clean up hobo shit in the bathroom if you're dead.  
*(A beat.)*  
 Sorry.

KATJA

It's okay. I don't think anyone would actually--

NAOMI

No, totally, I know they wouldn't. It's just, like, trolls and stuff, right? Internet people.

KATJA

Yeah.

NAOMI

It's, like, business as usual, I guess.  
*(A beat.)*  
 It's crazy, though, that someone could put so much of themselves into, just...being an asshole.

KATJA

Yeah.

NAOMI

It's just video games! They're all just games. They're little, stupid things that people play to, like, take their minds off their boring lives or not have to go to parties or talk to girls or anything--

KATJA

They're not.

NAOMI

What?

KATJA

There's more to it...there's this whole culture, a whole world, you get into it and make friends and tell stories and build histories and you can--

They published your address. NAOMI

That wasn't gamers. KATJA

It was. NAOMI

It was Trent. KATJA

Who is a gamer, and got all his gamer buddies to-- NAOMI

He lied to them, though-- KATJA

Who cares what he told them, I saw those tweets and that shit's scary. And out here, in the real world, it's not the way to treat people. All of them should be getting fucking arrested, or, or *fined*, at least, because you can't treat someone like that and just...*live*. You can't do that and be a person, publish someone's entire life on the Internet, fucking publish your *address*, without some motherfucking vengeance raining down on to your-- NAOMI

I don't want vengeance. KATJA

Well, you should! On behalf of everybody who's, like, normal. You should be fucking knocking down the police station door, and going online and telling the world what a tiny little dick this guy has-- NAOMI

I've never seen his dick. KATJA

So what? He's making stuff up, you can too. NAOMI

I just want it to stop. KATJA

*A beat.*

I know. Hey, hey. I know. NAOMI

I'm sorry. KATJA

NAOMI  
 No. I, like. Soapbox.  
*(A beat.)*  
 Fuck 'em. You know? Who needs them.

KATJA  
 Yeah.

NAOMI  
 Yeah.  
*(A beat.)*  
 What about that guy?

KATJA  
 What guy.

NAOMI  
 From the...game place. Your friend's friend. What does he think about it?

KATJA  
 Oh, I...I dunno.

NAOMI  
 I thought you had a meeting with--

KATJA  
 I skipped it. I, um. I didn't go. And I think he sent me an e-mail, like, to follow up, but I haven't read it.  
*(A beat.)*  
 I'm sure they just want to stay out of all of this.

NAOMI  
 They shouldn't, though. They should be helping you. And if they don't, they don't deserve you. You can, just, like, go work for NASA, or something. You're really smart. You don't have to do the games.

KATJA  
 I want to, though. It's kind of all I want to do. Forever.

*A beat.*

NAOMI  
 'kay.  
*(A beat.)*  
 I guess I get that. I was, like, fucking *addicted* to Bejeweled for a while--

KATJA  
 I'll go to the police.

NAOMI  
 You will.

KATJA  
 I will. I should. I can't just sit here.

NAOMI

Do you want me to go with you?

KATJA

No. I can do this. On my own. I can handle it.

NAOMI

Okay. I know you can. But you don't have to, if you don't...I've been there, too. Y'know?

*(A beat.)*

Not, like. *There* there. But there. And I can help.

KATJA

Thank you.

NAOMI

You'll be okay. Promise.

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE TWELVE

*A police station.*

*Katja is talking to a female OFFICER at the front desk. The Officer is busy.*

And these are actual threats. OFFICER

Yes. KATJA

Using Twitter. OFFICER

And other things...my phone. They call my phone. KATJA

You have their numbers? OFFICER

No, a lot of them use VOIP service to-- KATJA

Hah? OFFICER

Voice Over IP, it lets...it blocks the number. KATJA

What were the threats. OFFICER

They, um. Here. KATJA  
*(She starts pulling her laptop out)*  
 I'll show you--

On that? OFFICER

What? Um, yeah, I've been screenshotting and saving them to-- KATJA

Gonna take forever. OFFICER

Not necessarily, but...I can just use my phone. Do you have wifi? KATJA

Not public. OFFICER

KATJA

Okay. Well, still, it'll just be a second--

OFFICER

You can really just give me the Cliffs Notes.

KATJA

Um.

OFFICER

You know, the, like. The gist. And then if there's anything actually bad we can do a report. That's the process.

*(A beat.)*

So, what. Insults? Slut, whore, bitch, that kind of stuff?

KATJA

They, uhm. A lot of them, yes. A bunch of things. But some others--

OFFICER

They do that SWAT thing?

KATJA

What?

OFFICER

They send the SWAT team to your house. Over in Portland, guy called a threat to somebody's house and they--

KATJA

No. People do actually do that, sometimes, but not to me. Not yet.

OFFICER

That would be bad.

KATJA

It would, be bad, but these...okay, here, look. This one that I got, this one, here, was just my door.

*She shows her phone to the officer.*

OFFICER

Your door.

KATJA

Yes. A random person who I don't know sent me a picture of my front door. Of my apartment, where I live.

OFFICER

Huh.

*(A beat.)*

That's fucked up.

KATJA

It really is. And then another--



Are you still staying there?  
OFFICER

No, I'm with my friend, I'm on her couch.  
KATJA

Probably good.  
*(A beat.)*  
That's really weird.  
OFFICER

It is. And, then, this. Look.  
*(She shows the Officer a picture)*  
That's me.  
KATJA

...The fuck?  
OFFICER

They Photoshopped the picture. With all the blood, and stuff. My eyes.  
*(A beat.)*  
My Mom got that.  
KATJA

Your Mom.  
OFFICER

They e-mailed her. I had to lie, and tell her it was a prank. A fucked up prank.  
*The officer flicks through some of her pictures.*  
OFFICER

So, yeah. These are real messed up.  
*(A beat.)*  
They're not *threats*, though.  
OFFICER

They're not.  
KATJA

Not..credibly. You know? Nothing that says, like, "I will kill you."  
OFFICER

There's a *knife* there, I just showed you--  
KATJA

But, Photoshopped. You just said, yeah? And we can't trace them. It's like that phone thing.  
OFFICER

There actually are some ways to trace them, if you--  
KATJA

OFFICER  
The FBI, maybe, sure--

KATJA  
It's pretty basic. I could help you, I have some friends, even, who--

OFFICER  
How long has this been going on?

KATJA  
For a week, now.

OFFICER  
And nothing's happened.

KATJA  
I mean, I had to leave my apartment, they freaked out my mother, my work is suffering--

OFFICER  
You work at Starbucks?

KATJA  
I work...in games.

OFFICER  
Video games?

KATJA  
Yes. And there's a lot of social media stuff that goes with--

OFFICER  
So it's kids, probably. Like, teens. Just playing pranks.

KATJA  
It doesn't matter if they are or not, it's not...it's happening, constantly, and it doesn't stop and it is scary. So I came here to make it stop, with your help, please. Can you help me.

OFFICER  
I understand. I know it's scary. It sounds scary. And we can start up a report, and I can write it all up, here, and you can show me everything. We want to help. But beyond that...nothing has happened. Legally, we need an imminent, a credible threat, before. You'll be okay. We see this stuff a lot. Somebody says something, online, gets some assholes riled up--

KATJA  
I didn't say anything.

OFFICER  
Or *does* something, whatever. Then this happens to them for a few days, and then it stops. They're like bees, yeah? You poke the nest, they buzz around, they tweet, whatever. And then it's done.

KATJA

They aren't bees, though. They're not buzzing--if there was a street that I walked down, every day, and guys lined up on it and said that they would kill me, and, and *threatened*--

OFFICER

That would be different.

KATJA

How.

OFFICER

They'd be real people.

KATJA

*These are real people.*

OFFICER

You're right, you're right. I'm sorry. But, okay. To tell the truth, hypothetically? With this street, here, that you mentioned. We'd do exactly what we're doing right now. Make a report. Take your info. And then I'd tell you, very nicely, like, supportively, that that is probably not a street you should be walking on.

*(A beat.)*

Just as advice.

*(A beat.)*

Would you like to do a report?

KATJA

Will it help?

OFFICER

We'll have a file, here, on hand, in case--

KATJA

They hurt me.

OFFICER

Which they won't. But you can do one.

KATJA

Yes, please.

OFFICER

Okay. Good. Great. It's this form, here.

*The Officer hands her a form.*

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Make sure to put their account names down, and--

KATJA

I can also e-mail some screen shots--

OFFICER

Can you print them? It'd be easier. We have a fax--

KATJA

Yeah, okay, maybe. Sure. When I get home.

OFFICER

Okay. That will help, really. You print 'em out, you fax 'em in, we have a file.

KATJA

Great. Okay. Got it.

*She keeps filling out the form.*

OFFICER

My kid has an Xbox. I try to make sure he's not an asshole about it. Right? Some of that stuff, though--

*Katja hands her the form.*

KATJA

Here.

OFFICER

Okay, great, thanks.

KATJA

Are we done?

OFFICER

Yup. You're good to go.  
*(A beat.)*

Just keep your head down, for a bit. It'll get better. And if you get something usable, a real definite threat, you come back in and ask for me.

KATJA

Okay, sure. Right. Thank you.

*She starts to leave.*

OFFICER

Take care. It really sucks out there sometimes.

KATJA

Where?

OFFICER

...Everywhere, I guess.

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE THIRTEEN

*Naomi's apartment.*

*Katja storms back in. She throws down her bag.*

*She goes to her computer.*

KATJA

They want specific threats. Fine. Fine.

*Takes a breath.*

*Opens it up.*

*The Social appears, swirling around her.*

THE SOCIAL

must be nice to be a privilege bitch

get whatever they want

make you love them

love is dead

you a goddamn slut

*Katja stands up and antagonizes the Social.*

KATJA

Alright, fine. Here I am.

THE SOCIAL

whore

bitch

with your cuntly shit-face i hate it

KATJA

Give me something.

THE SOCIAL

it looks like shit

your shitty face

ill come find you

KATJA

Yeah, sure, find me.

right where you live  
THE SOCIAL

Come on come on come on SAY IT ASSHOLE  
KATJA

*Katja fights the Social.*

*It moves around her, closing in but always  
just out of reach.*

You want me? Come and get me, fucking pussies.  
KATJA (CONT'D)

look out we got a badass over here  
check out warrior woman  
THE SOCIAL

Don't shy away just say it  
KATJA

say what that your pretty  
its not about you  
what makes you so important  
THE SOCIAL

I'm right here you fuckers, do something fight me.  
KATJA

who gives a shit about you  
THE SOCIAL

You do you keep texting me.  
KATJA

just want you to realize  
your nothing bitch  
your nothing  
THE SOCIAL

Don't be a pussy I need something to show them give me something I can take a  
picture of tell me you'll find me tell me you'll hunt me down again fucking say it  
FUCKING COME AT ME COME ON ASSHOLES  
KATJA

## THE SOCIAL

dont get emotional

jesus christ woman

how are you gonna work in games if your just on the rag every day

KATJA

I'm making a game, I'm doing this, you will not stop me doing--

*Out of the Social comes a video.*

*It's Trent, talking to Feldrick, doing an "interview."*

FELDRICK

And she actually said that.

TRENT

She did! She really did. That people would actually like this stupid game.

*Katja watches the video, gobsmacked.*

*The rest of the Social recedes.*

FELDRICK

It sounds so stupid.

TRENT

It didn't even have a plot. And then she wanted my advice, but, like, the second that I gave it she was, like "Well, that's not the point, what I'm--"

FELDRICK

They always are. They're all like that. And, but, you caved.

TRENT

Totally caved. Because you want them to be happy.

FELDRICK

Yes. You *want* them, they make you *want* them--

TRENT

To just tell them what will make them happy, right? And so, like, sure. I said it was good. That's how wrapped up I was. And then, these guys, these other guys, this studio that she had met? They're, like, the same way. She's dating one, and so of course they're interested--

FELDRICK

She's dating one.

TRENT

Yeah, he asked her out, you know, to "talk about networking." And she said, you can see in the log, she knows it's sketchy but she says yes, anyway.

(MORE)

TRENT (CONT'D)

Just to move up in the world, and it works! And this is why games suck so much, now. Because of this shit.

FELDRICK

These guys just think with their dicks--

TRENT

Yes, exactly, and she takes advantage of it and now they're stuck publishing this shitty game that has no story and no one wants. I mean, you literally, just walk around, like who would want--

FELDRICK

That's terrible, that's nothing, right?

TRENT

It's not...I mean, the art is fine, I guess, but it's nowhere near good enough, and the plot, there is no plot, you just--

*Katja slams her computer shut.*

KATJA

Fuck you. Fuck you fuck you fuck you.

*(A beat.)*

You want a game? Okay, so, fine. I'll make a game.

*She opens her computer again, and before the Social can encroach--*

KATJA (CONT'D)

New file, Katja's game. Version whatever. Let's fucking do this.

*Lights shift.*



## SCENE FOURTEEN

*Katja's game.*

*She stands in the center, trying to make things.*

KATJA

I made a tree. I gave it leaves.

It grows. And grows.

It has a gun.

It's coming at me.

But, I shoot it. Right? I blow it up.

It is on fire. I set it on fire.

The tree is dying. I give it gravity.

The tree falls down.

It drops its gun.

The gun explodes.

The tree explodes.

The ground explodes.

It's all on fire.

Five million points.

I make a man. Under the tree.

He is on fire.

*The TREE MAN enters, on fire.*

*He looks like Trent.*

KATJA (CONT'D)

He tries to beg.

He begs for help.

No one can hear him.

I hit him, hard.

*Katja hits the man.*

The tree man dies.  
He gets back up.

KATJA (CONT'D)

*She waves her hand; he stands.*

*She does it again.*

The tree man dies.  
He gets back up.  
The tree man dies.  
He gets back up.

KATJA (CONT'D)

The tree man dies he gets back up the tree man dies he gets back up the tree man dies.

I'm fucking winning.

I'm beating you.

I made a game.

*She starts casting about with her arms.*

And no one cares. And no one cares. And no one fucking knows the story and no one cares and it all--

KATJA (CONT'D)

Hey.

NAOMI

*The Real World snaps back.*

*Naomi is standing in the doorway.*

*Katja sees her.*

Oh. Hey.

KATJA

...I brought some coffee.

NAOMI

Cool. Thanks.

KATJA

Have you just been...hanging out?

NAOMI

I guess so. Yeah.  
*(a beat.)*  
 Doing some work.

KATJA

All night?

NAOMI

Um. Pretty much.

KATJA

I came in late and you were, like, locked in.

NAOMI

That happens, yeah.

KATJA

Okay.  
*(A beat.)*  
 How did it go yesterday. At the police--

NAOMI

Not great.

KATJA

Sorry.  
*(A beat.)*  
 Um, listen.  
*(A beat.)*  
 There's a shift open tomorrow morning. Louise bugged out. Do you want it?

KATJA

I...

NAOMI

I think. Um. I think, I know it's weird, but it might help? I think you should, please. Take it?

*A beat.*

KATJA

I should. I really should.  
*(She looks around the room.)*  
 I really should.

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE FIFTEEN

*The Real World. Starbucks.*

*Katja and Naomi are behind the counter.*

*It's slow.*

NAOMI

...and so Chuck really wanted a Playstation with a whole VR type thing, but I was, like, "I want to have sex sometimes," and so he didn't, but now he just plays old, like, Mega Man games on his computer. So, he wins, I guess.

KATJA

Uh huh.

*GRANT walks in.*

NAOMI

Hello.

GRANT

Um. Hi.

*(A beat.)*

A, um. Venti white mocha?

NAOMI

*(Calling back to Katja)*

Venti white mocha.

KATJA

Venti white mocha.

GRANT

Thanks.

*Katja goes to make the drink.*

*Grant pays for the drink.*

*Grant watches Katja.*

GRANT (CONT'D)

Hey, um. Are you.

*(A beat.)*

Aria?

*Katja stops.*

NAOMI

That's Katja.

(Turning around)  
 Who are you. KATJA

Um. I'm Grant. I-- GRANT

How did you find-- KATJA

I didn't--I thought that you-- GRANT

Oh shit. Oh shit, is that-- NAOMI

I'm calling the fucking cops. KATJA

No, wait! Don't, please. GRANT  
 (Katja moves to the phone)  
 We played together!

A beat.

Where. KATJA

In SpearLight. GRANT  
 (A beat.)  
 I'm, um. Morwyn?

...The firecaster. KATJA

Yeah. GRANT

A beat.

So...you know him. NAOMI

Now I'm really calling the cops. KATJA

(Stepping towards her.) GRANT  
 No come on please don't.

NAOMI

*(To Grant)*  
Back up.

KATJA

*(Wheeling on him)*  
You found me? You looked for me, you fucking doxxed me and--

GRANT

I didn't! I told you, I didn't. I didn't tell anyone any...You talked about, when we were playing, you said you were in Seattle and you worked at Starbucks. So.

*A beat.*

NAOMI

There are a lot of Starbucks in Seattle.  
*(A beat.)*  
Did you go to every Starbucks in--

GRANT

Not every...just like the ones near me.  
*(A beat.)*  
It sounds creepy.

NAOMI

It is creepy. It is incredibly fucking creepy.

GRANT

I know, I know, but--

KATJA

You asked me to cyber with you.

GRANT

That was a joke.

KATJA

That was the last thing that you said.

GRANT

Um, no, it wasn't, but.

KATJA

You asked me right after you'd seen Trent...you know those guys, you're from Tenclick.

GRANT

Not anymore. I stopped, when this all happened...I don't go on there anymore.

NAOMI

I should kick him out. Want me to kick him out?

KATJA

Yes.

GRANT  
No, come on--

NAOMI  
I love it when I get to kick somebody out--

GRANT  
Just, please! I want to say I'm sorry! Just, I'm sorry.

*A beat.*

*Katja signals to Naomi to hold off.*

KATJA  
You're sorry.

GRANT  
On their, behalf. Like...all of them. They all messed up, and they know it. They really...they were looking for something to do, or whatever, and Trent and Brian--

KATJA  
Brian?

GRANT  
Um, Feldrick.

NAOMI  
Feldrick.

GRANT  
He played with us, even he's backing off, though, he's worried that, like, if they find him then his job--

KATJA  
His job, what. Bagging groceries.

GRANT  
No, he's, like, a law student, or something? He wants to go into politics. And if it comes out, who he is--

KATJA  
Well then he shouldn't have shared my entire fucking life--

GRANT  
I know, I know that and...it really sucked, what they both did. I read it all, and they had, like, no right to say any of--

KATJA  
You read it.

GRANT  
Well, yeah, but, um. Before, you know? When they first did it...but, I haven't joined in, at all, on other stuff.

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

I've just been following, from, like, afar, and feeling bad and then you live here, in Seattle, and I do too and I just...felt, like I should go and let you know that we're not all...not everybody is a shithead. And I was gonna go by your place but that'd be weird--

NAOMI

That *would* be weird--

GRANT

And so I didn't! But I like coffee and so I thought, like, oh, I'll try and find her, not, like, hard, but just a little, I'll go to Starbucks, different ones, and just see, and, if you weren't, like, then I wouldn't, and that'd be fine, but I just feel like someone should apologize, to you, or just, I should--

KATJA

Stop talking, Grant.

GRANT

But, I just want--

KATJA

I don't care.

GRANT

But--

KATJA

I don't--

GRANT

This is important--

KATJA

I don't care, Grant, Jesus, just. Stop.

*A beat.*

GRANT

Sorry.

KATJA

Don't say that word.

GRANT

What word.

*(A beat.)*

"Sorry?"

KATJA

Yes, that. Do not say it.

NAOMI

It's time to go.



KATJA

*(To Naomi)*  
 No, wait. Not yet. I want...just wait.  
*(To Grant)*  
 Grant.

GRANT

Yes?

KATJA

I want you to do this for me, now. Are you listening?

GRANT

...Yes.

KATJA

I want you to stop saying you're sorry. I don't want to hear it. Honestly, I don't want you to have ever even been here, but you are here, you came, you did it, and, so please. Just. Stop saying you're sorry. Can you do that?

GRANT

Um. Okay, but I am, though--

KATJA

That didn't stop you from reading the chats. Reading my life. Watching them all as they...have you done anything, besides be sorry? Did you try, even, ever, while they did this? Say anything? Or is it like SpearLight, for you, with Morwyn, when you just sat and ate your pizza, listening while they...it's just a game, for you. You watch. And you feel bad. And you find me.

GRANT

I don't think it's a game.

KATJA

You don't fix it, though, either.

GRANT

I mean, I could, I guess, talk to--

KATJA

I don't care, Grant. I don't give a shit if you do or if you don't. And if you do, don't say anything. Don't come and find me, and make me tell you you're a good guy. It's not an achievement, you don't level up, you don't get to be celebrated by me just for the bare minimum of being a decent fucking person.

GRANT

I don't want you to celebrate--

KATJA

Shut up. Shut up shut up shut up. I don't care what you want; what is your deal?

*(He starts to answer)*

No. You know what, I don't care. I really don't, this is not about you. Or your friends.

(MORE)

KATJA (CONT'D)

It's about me, and I don't give a shit that you feel bad, because...this is practically the first time I've been outside. Did you know that? From where I'm staying? Since this all started. This is the first time I've come to work and then you show up looking for redemption and prove how easy it is for them to find me if they want to, and you weren't even trying! You weren't even attempting to scare me, do something to me, but you are here and it is bad. Do you get that?

GRANT

I didn't mean--

KATJA

Of course you didn't, you're a good guy. Right? Yeah? But you have no fucking clue what this is like, and it fucking sucks, Grant. It sucks a lot, and it's not normal.

GRANT

I didn't say it was--

KATJA

OH MY FUCKING GOD stop talking. This is what happens when I do nothing. Do you get that? The consequences of doing jack shit. Can you imagine, can you just fucking guess, what will happen if, no, *when* I put something out there for real? In the world, with my name on it, that really scares your friends? If this is what I get for just existing, breathing air, just not feeling the way they want me...well fuck them, Grant. I'm done with them, with you, starting this second. I will make something, it will be scary, and I won't care. I am not losing anymore. I am now playing, and I am winning, and I am beating all your asses. I am making whatever I want, and feeling however I want, and not thinking about any of you because you are not normal. You're not the world. You're not the story. You are the bad guys, you are the trolls, the fucking orcs, the big black hats and you are over, you're all done now, fucking game over you pathetic motherfucker do you get that?!?!?

*Katja is towering over Grant.*

*Like, she might actually be standing on a table at this moment.*

GRANT

I shouldn't have found you.

*Katja is suddenly very tired.*

GRANT (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have, I just. I wanted to tell you that I--

KATJA

Go home, Grant. Just go home. Just disappear.

*A beat.*

GRANT

I'm sor-

GO, GRANT.

NAOMI

*He exits.*

*Naomi closes the door.*

*A beat.*

That was intense.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I know.

KATJA

*Naomi looks after Grant.*

He's really running.  
(*A beat.*)  
It's kind of sad.

NAOMI

How is it sad?

KATJA

I mean, he's, like, a puppy.

NAOMI

He's not.

KATJA

He is. And you just kicked him.  
(*A beat.*)  
You kicked the shit--

NAOMI

I don't care.

KATJA

Okay.  
(*A beat.*)  
Me either, really. It's how they learn.  
(*A beat.*)  
Oh my God I don't actually think that about puppies. I can't believe I said that I would literally never you know I'd never actually kick a real live pupp--

NAOMI

I know.

KATJA

Okay.

NAOMI

*A long beat.*

Are you alright? NAOMI (CONT'D)

I don't know. Maybe? KATJA

Well, that's a start.  
(A beat.) NAOMI  
They know they're losing. Right? They all know.

Who. KATJA

All of them. Just like you said. And they can feel it. NAOMI

...Yeah. Yeah.  
(A beat.) KATJA  
Can I show you something? Later? After we close?

Uh, sure. Of course.  
(A beat.) NAOMI  
What is it?

*Lights shift.*

## SCENE SIXTEEN

*Somewhere on the Internet.*

*Trent speaks, making a video.*

*He's looking rough.*

TRENT

Dear Internet: There's been a lot happening on this end, and I...I'm tired. I just want to be up front with you, I'm very tired, and I'm feeling like a lot of you are still insisting on tying me to things that...I've also been dealing with a lot of attacks of my own, over here, and it's completely uncalled for. I didn't do anything here, you understand? I did nothing. All that I did was ask some questions, show you the truth, and some of you....and yes, some things have gotten out of hand but I already disengaged from all of that, that isn't me, that isn't...but. There are a lot of fucking asshole social justice whatever people out there who are insisting on rolling me into it, and it's not fair. So stop. Jesus.

There is some good news, too, which is: I'm starting a website. I'll be consulting, on video games, I have lots of experience with, uhm, narrative, design, topics, and so I'm launching that as soon as I find a new place to stay. There's a Kickstarter, coming out, Feldrick and I are setting it up and you'll be seeing it soon, and I hope that those of you who get what I am doing will support it. This is true outside art, what we're doing, this is the pushback on the system, that is keeping people like us locked out. This is the fair thing, what is fair, it's what I deserve. What we all do.

*(A beat.)*

What's fair matters.

*He stares into the camera.*

*For, like, a couple seconds too long.*

*He shuts off the video.*

*He disappears.*

## SCENE EIGHTEEN

*Inside Katja's game.*

*Katja is showing it to Naomi.*

So...it's pretty rough.	KATJA
I couldn't tell.	NAOMI
There's all these broken conditions.	KATJA
I don't know what that is. But, cool.	NAOMI
<i>(A beat.)</i>	
So, you--	
Watch.	KATJA
<i>(She waves her hand.)</i>	
See?	
...Huh.	NAOMI
It's kind of kludgy. I'm gonna--	KATJA
No, it's...hm.	NAOMI
<i>(She waves her hand.)</i>	
That's pretty cool.	
It's a tree.	KATJA
Yeah.	NAOMI
And then the stories.	KATJA
Stories?	NAOMI
Yeah. Whatever you want. You add them in, and it builds out.	KATJA

That all sounds...cool.  
*(A beat.)*  
 Where are the guns?

They're not.

I thought--

It doesn't have them.

Oh. Well, that's.  
*(A beat.)*  
 A little disappointing, actually.

It is?

Well, yeah. I mean, I play shooters with Chuck, sometimes. They're fun.

They are. But this isn't one.

Makes sense.

This isn't for, like, stress relief. Or killing zombies. They don't all need...it's just for stories. For telling stories. All kinds, any you want.

That seems cool. I think some people will definitely like that.

You do?

I really do. I think a lot of people will, and I think they don't even know that they will yet.  
*(A beat)*  
 Does that make sense?

...It does.  
*(A beat.)*  
 Thank you.

It's cool.

I know.

KATJA

*Naomi waves her hand.*

*Something appears.*

*They build together, for a minute.*

It'll get better.

KATJA (CONT'D)

Okay.

NAOMI

...Otherwise, what's the point?

KATJA

*Naomi nods.*

*They continue building.*

*Lights fade.*

*End of play.*