

ISSUE 59

# EXPLOITS

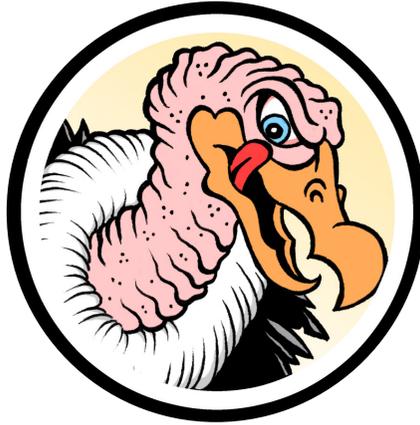
an UNWINNABLE publication

FEBRUARY 2022



David Shlomura on  
**YELLOWJACKETS**

**BACKLOGS • NEIGHBORHOOD TUNES  
• MAD LOVE • The ETERNAL CYLINDER •  
FRIEREN: BEYOND JOURNEY'S END**



*Publisher* | Stu Horvath

*Vice Publisher* | Sara Clemens

*Editor in Chief* | David Shimomura

## **EXPLOITS**

A MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO THE REASONS WE LOVE THINGS

*Feature Editor* | Melissa King

*Music Editor* | Ed Coleman

*Books Editors* | Noah Springer, Levi Rubeck

*Movies Editor* | Orrin Grey

*Television Editor* | Sara Clemens

*Games Editor* | Rob Rich

Copyright © 2023 by Unwinnable LLC

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Unwinnable LLC does not claim copyright of the screenshots and promotional imagery herein. Copyright of all screenshots within this publication are owned by their respective companies

Unwinnable  
820 Chestnut Street  
Kearny, NJ 07032

[www.unwinnable.com](http://www.unwinnable.com)

For more information, email:  
[info@unwinnable.com](mailto:info@unwinnable.com)

[Subscribe](#) | [Store](#) | [Submissions](#)

This machine kills fascists.

# The BEAUTY of BACKLOG

by Connor Queen

Speak to most gamers, and they'll probably tell you the same thing: *Backlogs are annoying*. They're stressful to work through and overwhelmingly irritating to keep up with. I felt the same way for a long time, I must admit, but after months of working through my own messy backlog, my outlook changed.

Regarding my own personal backlog, our story begins on the 18th of May 2015. For me, this was my 19th birthday; the rest of the world, however, will know it as the day *The Witcher 3* was released. Given the overlapping of these events, I was lucky enough to receive *The Witcher 3* as a birthday present and promptly jumped into its world. I did some quests, killed some monsters, found some treasures . . . and then completely dropped the game. In short, I clearly had no taste when I was younger.

And on my shelf *The Witcher 3* stayed for many years, slowly collecting dust. Well, except for the rare attempts I would make to actually get through it – none of which were successful. That is, until my most recent attempt!

That's right! As of right now, I am just over 50 hours into a brand new playthrough of *The Witcher 3*, and I don't plan on stopping! But how did I manage such a huge turnaround? Well, it all comes down to slowly building a more loving and intimate relationship with my backlog.

I began by playing the shorter games in my backlog, such as *Concrete Genie*, *Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons* and *Journey*, making notes on each as I went. This act of noting down my thoughts mid-playthrough not only ensured that I spent more time with each game, but also gave me something to look back on once I completed them all. *Concrete Genie*, *Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons* and *Journey* all had their own pages worth of thoughts, notes and analysis, making the journey of playing through them feel truly special, as if it was something utterly unique to me.

Following this, I made my way through several more classics, in the form of *God of War (2018)*, *Outlast* and *Bayonetta*. This time, however, I added pictures to

my notes on each game, slowly building out my “personal scrapbook of gameplay.” Making my way through these wonderful games, I made sure to take photographs at interesting moments throughout. I did this mostly to keep as personal reminders of events I considered truly beautiful but also for showing to friends when discussing my favorite parts of each game.

And, as I sat down to show my many notes and photos to my friends, I finally realized: I now love my backlog. No longer was I saying, “Oh god, I still have all these to play,” but rather I found myself scrolling through my backlog wondering, “What do I want to write about, discuss and enjoy next?”

My backlog has truly become something I relish digging into, and I couldn't be more thrilled! 🍷



# MUSIC



**BIKING the BEAT** – When I moved to Brooklyn, my friend Sadie showed me how to bike in the city. Finding a line around cars not checking their mirror before turning, past bike lanes blocked with stacks of boxes being delivered, through the tourists pouring into the claustrophobic bike lanes in Midtown and listening to ska on a wireless speaker clipped to her belt. We listened through We Are the Union’s ska-punk era while I learned the grids, explored north Brooklyn to Bad Operation’s groovy new tone, and sweat in the late summer sun to the swing and pop of Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra’s far-reaching discography.

I don’t think of biking as exercise. I ride to go somewhere, or to feel the wind and the sun on a nice day. Even when I ride with friends upstate or bike the length of the city in an overnight scavenger hunt, it’s because I’m going somewhere, seeing something or someone. In high school I ran for exercise, and I listened to a bizarre mix of drum corps, pop and soundtracks that veered toward orchestral rock. My playlist rarely changed, and that was a crucial part of my pacing. Riding around different neighborhoods at variable times of day in all weather, there’s no perfect playlist I

could possibly make to fit each ride. In a city with seasons, inclement weather, and terrible drivers, no ride could possibly look the same – so it shouldn’t sound the same either.

After biking some 2,000 miles in the city last year, my memories of my new home are tied to rides and their soundtracks: the first time I biked up the entirety of the Hudson River greenway and listened to the jazzy beats of 2 Mello’s *Summer In Silent Places*, biking from the Bronx to Coney Island overnight running on caffeine and the mathy Latin rhythms of Zeta’s *Mochima*, biking through a foggy Prospect Park feeling the power behind the chorus of clipping’s “*Nothing Is Safe*.” It’s also the way the gridded sprawl of concrete looks from the saddle at night when I hear the air around me filled with the brutalist synths of Jack de Quid’s *Partizan OST*.

I often turn to lyric-less tracks alone and at night, less worried about finding a line and more about finding the flow to bike across the borough in near freezing temps. It’s about ambience and accompaniment. In Love With a Ghost’s *chillwave lo-fi beats*, or Crystal Cola’s *vaporwave*, or Andrew Prahlow’s ambient post-rock *soundtracks* and *singles* have been

# MUSIC

my heavy rotation. But my favorite moments are much louder. It's sunny summer evenings riding with friends, singing all the slurs and curses in the **queer folk punk** of Spoonboy together and reminiscing over the **expletive laden pop punk choruses** of The Max Levine Ensemble, bombing hills and chasing sunsets with crushes and watching the late summer sunset from the bike path on the Marine Parkway Bridge as we rode home from Riis..

— AUTUMN WRIGHT

## PLAYLIST

“Garden Wall Sunset,” by 2 Mello

“Mochima,” by Zeta, Ale Campos

“Nothing is Safe,” by clipping.

“Flowers,” by In Love With a Ghost, Nori

“2:30 AM VHS Skyline,” by Crystal Cola

“Feeling Everything but Lost,” by Andrew Prahlow

“Fireball of ‘What I Learned From TV,’” by Spoonboy

“Last Of The Assholes,” by The Max Levine Ensemble

“I Really Want to Stay at Your House,” by Rosa Walton, Hallie Coggins

“Ghost,” by Future Girls

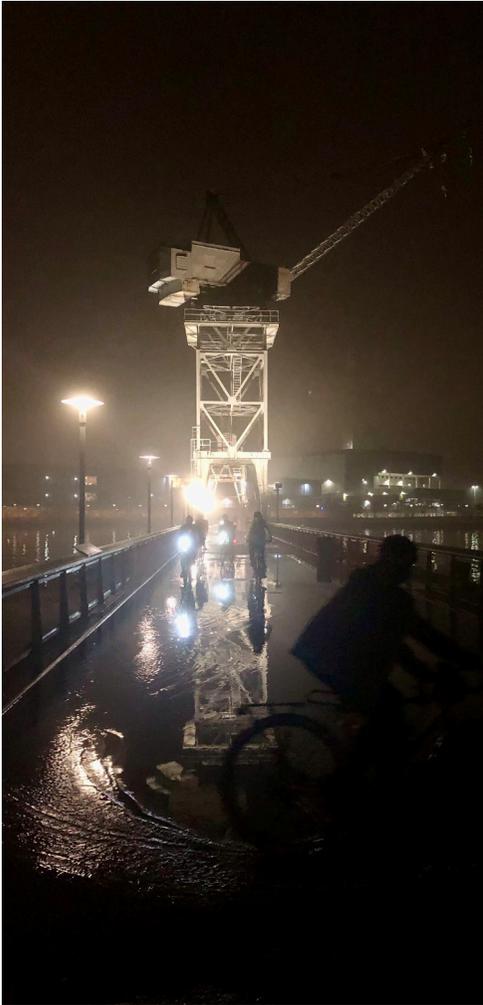
“ALMIGHTY - The Masked Promise,” by Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra, Yoohei Kawakami

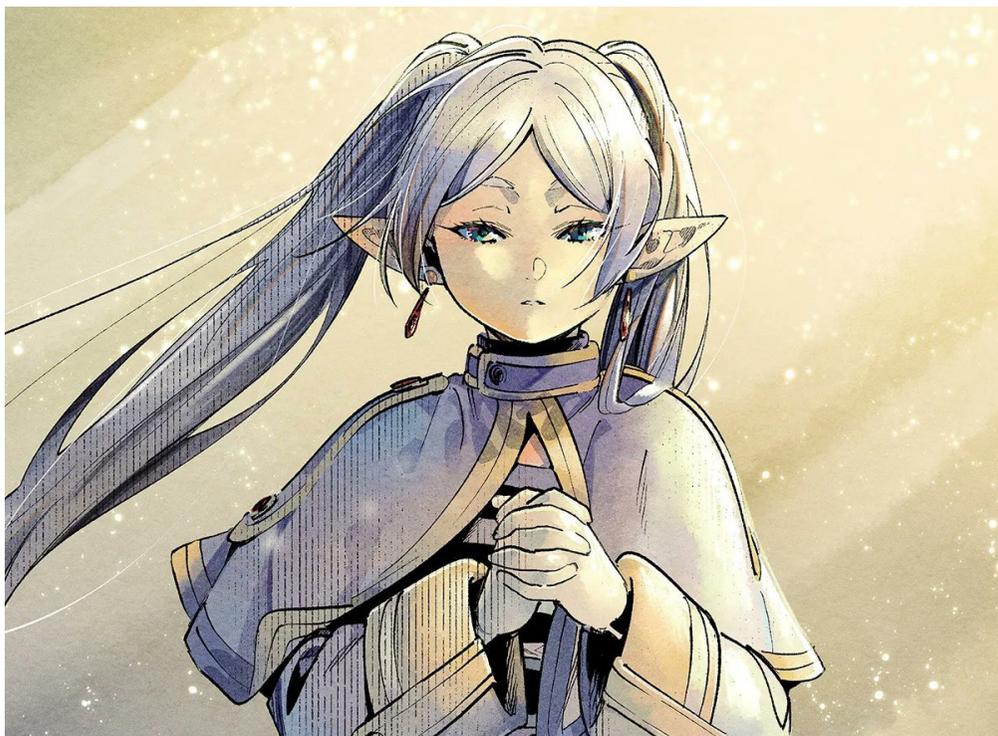
“BAD OPERATION,” by BAD OPERATION

“Cool Generator,” by Bad Moves

“Goldman’s Detective Agency,” by Martha

[LISTEN ON SPOTIFY](#)





**FRIEREN: BEYOND JOURNEY'S END** – How can this sad story about grief and trying to see your dead loved ones one more time be so heartwarming at the same time? First released in 2020, *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* is a shonen manga created by Kanehito Yamada and Tsukasa Abe. Filled with drama and fantasy, you play as Frieren, an elven mage who defeated the demon king. As someone who can live for hundreds of years and has almost all the time in the world to do what she desires, she fails to realize her comrades don't have the same luck. Years later, deeply affected by the death of one of her friends and comrades, the hero Himmel, Frieren travels with her apprentice, Fern, to find Heaven and get a final chance to see the people she cared for.

In every chapter, we are bestowed with Frieren's ridiculous, fun and beautiful memories while she strives to make new ones with her

current party. It's impossible not to empathize with how much she values those adventures; even though they were merely a fraction of her life, they were marvelous and significant moments. Those events taught her that she should aspire to get to know others and appreciate their time with her.

Whenever I read *Frieren*, I'm moved and begin to remember the uplifting moments I had with all the people I loved. I, too, want to keep sharing and making those kinds of memories with my friends and family. It's not only a story about dealing with grief but also about learning how to keep going on your next journeys and treasuring who you have in your life at the moment. Of course, you don't have to turn that into your life's goal, but meeting new people and deepening your relationship never are a waste of time.

– GABRIEL SANFINS RODRIGUES

# BOOKS



## HISTORY of the PARIS COMMUNE of 1871

– This book by Prosper Olivier Lissagaray is an old one but a good one, so old in fact that it's currently in the public domain, meaning that you should really just get out there and read it. *History of the Paris Commune of 1871* is quite unsurprisingly a history of the Paris Commune of 1871, a critical point in working class history that much like the rest of working class history tends to be downplayed in college courses and high school textbooks. Basically, if you want to hear about a wonderful experiment that was never allowed to fully come to fruition, this book is the book for you.

– JUSTIN REEVE

**The WAGES** – A well-researched historical novel written by a poet about a white slave in the American South at the dawn of the Civil War. Honestly didn't know that was the story when I started it, I came as a fan of Howe's poetry, and if I had known, I'd probably have a preconceived notion about even trying to put such a story together. It's a book about slavery and how that's affected Black people, but also how easily that designation slides away from "skin color" when people are able and willing to justify it. I might have worried that it would try too hard to appeal to closed-minded white people pleading for empathy by association, but it doesn't. Which is nice since those kind of folks probably wouldn't read it anyways.

– LEVI RUBECK



**The THREE BODY PROBLEM** – I really wish I had read this when it came out in 2014, but I guess being eight years late will have to suffice. Ted Chiang's incredible ability to synthesize dozens of fields into a single narrative is unmatched, and the way he ties the various characters and storylines into a unified whole is perfect. Just tip-top hard sci-fi!

– NOAH SPRINGER

# MOVIES



**MAD LOVE** – In Karl Freund’s *Mad Love*, Doctor Gogol (Peter Lorre), a surgeon and transplant expert, turns from a virtual saint, saving the lives of children, into a progenitor of body horror, a harbinger of a monstrous new flesh.

Doctor Gogol is obsessed with the performances of a woman he does not fully understand, Grand Guignol actress Yvonne Orlac (Frances Drake), who is primarily seen around breakdowns of body politic, acts of violence and sadomasochism. She is an erotic temptation in the midst of death, decay and decadence. She is also engaged to Stephen Orlac (Colin Clive), a pianist whose hands are destroyed in an accident.

Gogol agrees to fix Stephen’s hands after the object of his affection pleads with him. He reluctantly saves this man’s livelihood while creating tension between body and self. Stephen’s hands are not his own, they are not the hands that brought him both prosperity and love. So, Stephen believes they are leading him to murder. *Mad Love*, years before its time, tackles these complicated questions

with Gogol taking on a biomechanical guise to sway a poor brainwashed dupe, and buying a wax statue of Yvonne.

Racy, one might say, intense for the time – but it’s more than that. *Mad Love* shows us people dealing in various ways with breakdowns of flesh and image. Stephen struggling with his new hands, Gogol transforming into a monstrous madman because of an image that does not match the person who projects it. Almost fifty years later, Cronenberg’s *Videodrome* would depict a man turned assassin by alien flesh, hallucination and the image of a woman floating amidst violence and decay. That film’s ancestry is clear in *Mad Love*, as are the consequences of those obsessions.

We are warned that image can eclipse self, that mind can conquer the body politic, that love, as Cronenberg quotes Medici saying, “comes in at the eyes.” Gogol, Renn and Orlac all become something entirely different due to their obsessions, fears and mortal terror of the new flesh. It has already lived quite a long time.

– GARRETT COOK

# MOVIES



**AVATAR: The WAY of WATER** – There's a particular irony to watching a sci-fi movie that is at its most imaginative when appropriating and simplifying the beliefs of various colonized peoples into Hollywood spectacle and getting harassed in the theater afterwards for trying to go to the bathroom as a trans person in the US. But I'm so glad heterosexuals can see a future in which the nuclear family can carve out its own space in the hegemony patriarchy has already made for it, and that humans can find ways to recenter themselves as messiah figures in soon-to-be colonized cultures. As the world of Pandora grows with new indigenous stereotypes (Oceanic, this time!), Cameron can only think to throw a rusty old spear through the expansive, expensive sci-fi setting he's hodgepodged together.

– AUTUMN WRIGHT

**WITCHHAMMER** – A good companion piece for *Witchfinder General* or *The Devils*, if you want to feel like absolute shit.

– ORRIN GREY



**MIKEY and NICKY** – Will these two just fuck and get it over with already?

– NOAH SPRINGER



**THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW** –  
Dr. Frankenfurter: There is no crime in giving yourself over to pleasure.  
Theater Heckler: There is in Kentucky!

– AMANDA HUDGINS



# TELEVISION



**YELLOWJACKETS** – It's easy to sum up the formula at the heart of *Yellowjackets*. *Lord of the Flies* meets *Alive* but as an almost all-female environment. But in practice, the show hits some of the highest highs of television. It's tense, unpredictable and even occasionally mean. There's melancholy, shock, revulsion and so much to leave one slack jawed.

Core to this experience is how complete each character is, both as teens and as adults. The way that Taissa, Shauna, Nat and Misty express their cores that make them recognizable across eras is masterful. From its opening moments, it is clear that we won't be seeing the adult version of everyone. So, then the question becomes, what happens to the ones we don't? What *did* happen out in those woods and who is messing with them as adults?

After one season, many of those mysteries remain. And that's *great*. Clearly the characters don't like talking about what happened *out there*. Why would they? It sucked out there. No reasonable person would be out there talking about the worst time in their lives. But then again, that leaves room for all the questions.

And the cast sells this every moment they can. They're defined by the worst days of their lives but also attempting to live far beyond them. Do drugs, get married to your bestie's boyfriend, run for office, continue to get deeply strange! In a way, they'd have to. Or else be swallowed by the past. That time they saw their friend get [redacted] or when [redacted] attacked. Losing [redacted] after a stupid fight. That's the thing about being haunted, real ghosts are unique to you. Specters of who you were and what you did. And these are deeply haunted people.

There's a kinetic quality to the editing and pacing of *Yellowjackets*. For a show that bounces back and forth through different locations and into the past, it is never anything less than totally coherent. And there too is a source of tension. On top of everything it manages to be a pretty show that never overstays its welcome. And with season two coming in March, there's never been a better time to find out what the buzz is about.

– DAVID SHIMOMURA

# TELEVISION



**ANDOR** – Woah. This one really got good at the end.

– JUSTIN REEVE

Is this the best star war? Possibly.

– STU HORVATH

**LETTERKENNY** – I've only watched three of season 11's six episodes, but they're already all-timers. Wonder if this show has just reached its permeation point. Lots of folks I point this way just can't seem to keep up, which isn't a read on their reading comprehension. *Letterkenny* just doesn't really let up. The smartest people you knew in your dirt-caked hometown kicking it soundly, maybe with a smidge more idealism with regard to practicing what so many communities preach, but that was my experience for the most part. Nostalgia for a home that never really existed like this, probably, but I know I'd throw down at a chip debate and ask a friend to clarify the role of tightness in their fitspo.

– LEVI RUBECK



**ALCHEMY of SOULS** – This is my cozy, feel-good show of the season. I'm only about half-way caught up, but I'm enjoying the mix of lighthearted romance and dramatic court intrigue between the mages of Songgrim and the royal family and advisors of Cheonbugwan. Also, hear me out, but if you enjoyed the dynamics (and antics) of Ji-woo and Ji-hoo in *Love and Leashes*, you'll probably enjoy the relationship between Mu-deok/Nak-su and Jang Uk. It's not necessarily a dom and sub relationship, but there's interesting undertones to their roles as master and pupil that explore similar themes of trust and consent. The most iconic couple of the show though is actually Park Jin X Maideservant Kim though.

– PHOENIX SIMMS



# GAMES



**The ETERNAL CYLINDER** – It is rare that a game’s flaws bear out its themes. Every time you fire up *The Eternal Cylinder*, it introduces itself:

“This is not the story of the One; the One encompasses too much, crushing everything and making it the same. No, this is the story of the Many, who are blessed with difference and rich in strangeness. This is the story . . . of a family.”

To say this is a game “rich in strangeness” is an understatement. You play as a group of round, bipedal aliens with trunks called Trebhums, and you must flee an enormous, terrifying rolling pin before it crushes you along with everything else. When not fleeing, you are exploring the psychedelic landscape, hoovering up food – some of which will enable you to mutate. Some mutations are passive buffs, others are skills required for specific obstacles. And there’s one that makes you shiny. Strange, indeed.

The problem is, this game can be a little *too* strange. It’s unwieldy and often clumsy to control. It’s hard to know *what* to do, let alone *why* (thank heavens for the narrator). You’ll

discover all sorts of mutations – it’s just most of the time they’re pretty useless. But consider that this is the story of a family. It might be strange and difficult to love but . . . isn’t that what family is all about?

When a goal is shared and the reason is obvious, that’s when life is easiest. Let’s run away from that giant cylinder as fast as possible! Good work, team! Given a little freedom, however, and marshalling everyone towards a common end is like herding cats. While Gebba and Tula are busy sucking up mushrooms of their own accord, Lemba has dropped a probably-important item off the edge of a cliff. Dave is shiny but otherwise useless. You’re going slowly bananas trying to work out where to go next whilst avoiding predators and other hazards. Family camping trip, anyone?

The Trebhums’ planet may appear several kaleidoscopes removed from ours, but maybe it’s not so different: Vibrant and sprawling, yet hard to navigate and often lacking purpose. I felt lost many times, as I often do on Earth. The more lost I felt, the more I clung to the pursuit of finding (and hatching) more Trebhums. Even though I wasn’t always sure how to make them work together (nor to what end), I knew that having family was important.

(continued from previous page)

This is an apocalypse story “blessed with difference” – it’s a game that finally reflects my own prospects in an apocalypse. I’m no Joel from *The Last of Us* (the one-man army crushing everything in his path). I’m much more of a Trebhun; stumbling around, pocketing random bits of food whilst clinging to whatever dysfunctional family I can find.

– BEN JACKSON



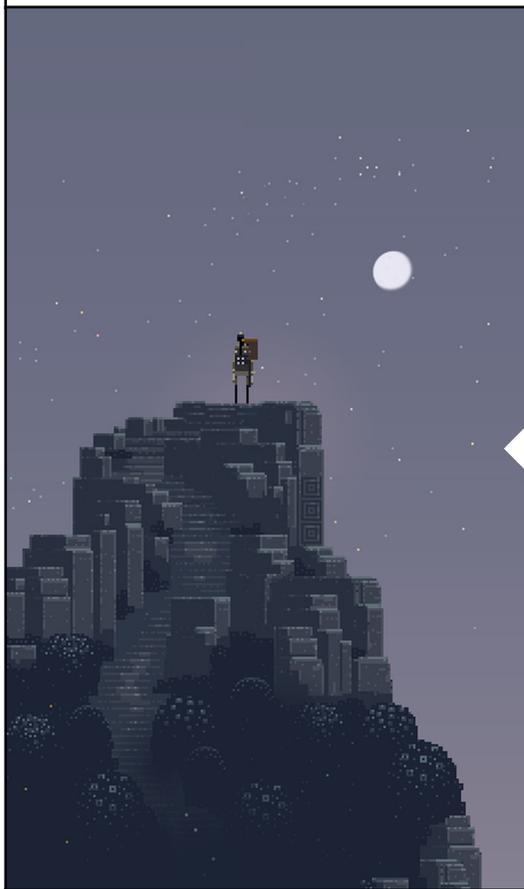
## **SUPERBROTHERS: SWORD & SWORCERY EP**

– I know, I should’ve played this one a long time ago. My initial excuse is lack of a mobile device that could play it. My second excuse is I was super busy with uni for a while. But both excuses are insufficient. I loved this indie classic! The soundtrack is both a wonderful mechanic and a perfect mood-setter, the dialogue is weird time-capsule of 2011 and I’m super glad I got to play this on a tablet so I could experience the touch mechanics that didn’t make it to the PC port.

The ending felt a bit abrupt to me, but I loved the strange sense of horror that crept in over the course of my play-through as the game forced me to think about how in some ways we players are always sacrificing protagonists for the sake of our escapism. Best of all was the structure of the game’s “sessions” and its use of the lunar calendar to get players to play with more intention and take more breaks to socialize with others playing the game.

If you’re like me and still haven’t played this yet, here’s your sign!

– PHOENIX SIMMS



**STREET FIGHTER 2** – I remember losing real bad at Street Fighter 2 and telling my mom how angry I was and she said, “You aren’t angry, you’re frustrated.” Thus began my love of words and pedantry.

– LEVI RUBECK



# HOROSCOPE

I JUST WATCHED INFINITY WAR  
WITH MY WIFE AND THANOS  
LITERALLY CASTS METEO(R)  
AND RAINS THAT MOUNTAIN  
DOWN. R.I.P. TELLAH. WATCH  
OUT FOR WIZARDS CASTING  
SPACE ROCKS DOWN ON YOU. 🏰