

BEING SOMEONE ELSE

VERSION 4.0

A play

by

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## CHARACTERS

(A list of characters and their corresponding avatars)

### **'REAL' WORLD:**

### **ONLINE WORLD:**

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**Alex**, F, 32 Blonde, Amazonian, strong, would be beautiful if she smiled. An unknown force, a skilled hacker with government connections.

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**Paul**, M, 28. Stout, ginger, nervous. Swears a lot. Thinks he likes 'feisty' women,

**Raeph**, M, 30, Tall, lean, red hair, chivalric. Hunter. Played for 9 RW years.

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**Jan**, F, 52, Matriarch, Black - Caribbean 7th generation immigrant. Very large. Big booming laugh.

**James**, M, 35, Black, tall, bald. Very deep voice. Queen's protector. Played for 12 RW years.

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**Sarah**, F, 15, mousey. Young, parentless. Very bright, but not good with people.

**Kite**, M, 15, Boy, Asian, dark hair. Thief. Played for 8 RW years.

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**Fi (Fiona)** F 28 Anglo-Chinese 4<sup>th</sup> generation (Hong Kong). Hair cropped into a bob. Quiet. Kind.

**Cassie**, F, 32. Tall, elfish, long blonde hair. Master Farrier. Played for 12 RW years.

*NB. Any '/' marks where the next line interrupts, though the previous line should still be completed.*

ACT I

SCENE 1

THE SETTING IS A BLACK BOX STAGE. AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE CAN BE DONE TO SUGGEST THE DIFFERENT TIMES, PLACES AND REALITIES PLAYED OUT IN THE SPACE AS THE DIRECTOR WISHES, HOWEVER THERE STILL NEEDS TO BE A 'FRAMED' ASPECT TO THE STAGE. A SMALL HINT AT THE FACT THAT THE AUDIENCE ARE THEMSELVES INDULGING IN FANTASY.

THE CAST CAN BE EASLIY DOUBLED, BUT CHARACTERS SHOULD ONLY DOUBLE UP THEIR RELEVANT AVATAR, EVEN IF THAT MEANS PLAYING A DIFFERENT AGE, ETHNICITY OR GENDER.

THIS DOUBLING COULD BE CARRIED OUT IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, BOTH NATURALISTIC AND REPRESENTATIVE ACCORDING TO THE STYLE OF THE PRODUCTION AND THE INTENTION OF THE DIRECTOR. HOWEVER THE WRITER WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THE USE OF BUNRAKU PUPPETS, SO THAT THE OTHER PERSONA WOULD ALWAYS BE VISIBLE, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GAMER AND AVATAR SYMBOLICALLY PRESENTED. HOWEVER THE PIECE ALSO AIMS TO CONFUSE THE AUDIENCE AS TO WHAT IS REAL AND NOT, SO THIS SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THROUGHOUT.

THE PIECE OPENS WITH THE LIGHT FLICKERING ON LIKE IT DOES ON A SCREEN.

CASSIE IS CENTRE STAGE. A MOMENT OR TWO, THEN SHE SMILES

CASSIE: Right, so I guess this is my entry. My name's Cassie, and I'm a Farrier in the fourth district of Ferelas. I'm level 64, and have been playing for, um, about 12 real-world years... kinda sounds like a while when you say it like that. It said on the forums this wasn't about gold, right? So I won't go into that. I do ok though, been here since the start, near the start anyway. Know a lot of people, a lot of the regulars. And of course I meet someone new every time they want to shoe their horse. They say I'm the best, and well, they're generally not wrong. My level isn't as high as some 'cause I've never bothered levelling up the easy way, you know, killing stuff, I levelled up through artistry instead. And they are right; it does take literally twice as long (she laughs). Ok, so that's the about me bit, now... ok, why do I play 'The World'. (PAUSE) well, that's a big one isn't it?

ACT I

SCENE 2

FI SITS NERVOUSLY IN A CORPORATE-STYLE ROOM, CHAIRS, THE ODD PLANT ETC.

SHE LOOKS AROUND AT HER SURROUNDINGS. SHE IS UNCOMFORTABLE BUT EXCITED. AFTER A WHILE SHE STANDS, WALKS OVER TO A LARGE WINDOW ON THE SL WALL.

A DOOR OPENS. SHE SPINS ROUND. PAUL ENTERS.

HE LOOKS SLIGHTLY TAKEN ABACK. THEN CLOSES THE DOOR AFTER HIM

PAUL AND FI: Hello.

FI: Oh, sorry.

PAUL SHRUGS

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

I'm Fi, um, Cassie.

FI COMES OVER AND REACHES OUT HER HAND. ON HEARING WHO SHE IS PAUL LOOKS MORE INTERESTED, AS HE SHAKES HER HAND HE LOOKS HER UP AND DOWN UN-SUBTLY.

-And you're?

PAUL: Raeph

FI: (smiling) Ah.

SILENCE. A LITTLE AWKWARD. PAUL COMES FURTHER INTO THE ROOM, LOOKS AROUND. FI LOOKS AWKWARD.

You look quite a lot like your avatar

PAUL: Is that a joke?

FI: No! I mean, well you do. (SLIGHT PAUSE) I know I don't.

PAUL SHRUGS

And you're just as talkative out here too.

HE LOOKS CONFUSED, BUT SHE'S STILL  
BEING LIGHT HEARTED

A LONGER PAUSE.

I'm still surprised you entered you know.

PAUL: Why?

FI: Dunno, I suppose it doesn't really seem like your  
thing. Spilling your guts to the mods (MODERATORS)  
for some competition. Would have thought it was  
beneath you (SHE IS STILL BEING CHEEKY)

PAUL SHRUGS. TURNS AND LOOKS OUT OF THE  
WINDOW. FI SITS, FIDGETS.

I couldn't believe it when they told me I won, that  
I was one of the winners, I mean.

PAUL GRUNTS

I mean how exciting? Four people, only four people  
selected out of the whole of The World. The people  
that entered anyway. But they, or the Founder, they  
chose us. Out of everyone.

(PAUSE) FI GENERALLY MARVELS. PAUL  
TURNS 'ROUND.

PAUL: Supposed you sobbed into the camera did you?

FI: What?

PAUL: Or bribed one of the mods?

FI: Bugger off!

(PAUSE)

I can't believe I won.

PAUL SHAKES HIS HEAD.

Close call though, I mean we, the winners are all  
over level 60 aren't we?

PAUL SNORTS

Fine! I won't talk then. We can just sit here in  
silence.

SHE TRIES TO DO SO.

(bursts out) It's much easier to level up your way you know.

PAUL: That's because it's the way you're supposed to

FI: Nuh-uh

PAUL: Why waste time fannying around with tools and shit?

FI: Because it's a *challenge*.

PAUL: Killing 12ft high monsters isn't exactly a picnic. You're all snobs

FI GRINS. SHE'S HAVING FUN.

FI: So, what did you think, about the others?

PAUL: Some kid, and a part-timer.

FI LOOKS INTRIGUED

FI: Interesting, though.

PAUL: What?

FI: Well that makes it sound like it definitely wasn't random doesn't it? Looks like they're choosing an even spread - a fighter, an artisan, a part-timer and a kid.

PAUL SHRUGS AGAIN.

A WHILE

PAUL: You're really Cassie?

FI: Yeah, why not?

PAUL: (A moment) no reason.

FI: Regretting all those names you called me?

PAUL: I don't do regret.

FI: Or that time I had to call the-[mods]

PAUL: Your fucking choice if you want your character to be frigid

FI: Whatever!

PAUL GRUNTS. GOES TO LOOK OUT THE WINDOW AGAIN.

A LONG PAUSE.

So what did you talk about?

PAUL: What?

FI: On your entry- why'd they pick you?

HE SHRUGS

PAUL: Dunno.

FI: Hm.

PAUL: What now?

FI: A bribe I reckon. You do alright for gold, don't you?

PAUL: Do you always talk this much?

FI IS A LITTLE OFFENDED

FI: No worries. I'll just shut up.

AFTER A PAUSE, SHE LOOKS UP AT A CLOCK

Not long.

A FIELD. A HAZY SUMMER'S DAY. THE SOUND OF RUSTLING WIND, RUNNING WATER AND SUMMER BIRDS. A WOMAN IS PICKING FLOWERS. HER FACE IS ODDLY BLURRED. IF THE PIECE IS BEING PERFORMED WITH BUNRAKU PUPPETS, THIS WOMAN'S MANIPULATOR IS ALL IN BLACK, HER FACE COVERED.

THERE IS THE SOUND OF A HORSE, FAR OFF, GETTING CLOSER, IT DRAWS TO A HALT, AND WE HEAR SOMEONE IN ARMOUR DISMOUNT. RAEPH ENTERS THE MEMORY. HE BREATHES IN THE AIR. HE WATCHES THE WOMAN WORK.

RAEPH: I fell in love with the game. I fell in love with it. There's no where on earth I ever, I never fitted as well as I did in The World. I hate my real life. I didn't before. I just put up with it, you know, I was nothing special, I got what every fucking 'nothing special' person got. And then I saw a news article, some fucking horrible day at work. One of my many lunch hours spent at my desk, minimising Firefox anytime my boss went past. And I saw this article. Sure I was a gamer before. Nothing special. I had a console, but only ever really played it with- well I just didn't really play it much. But I saw this article, about this hacker who'd gone legit, and this new kind of game, new system of immersion, all that bullshit. And I thought, why not? It said it was getting, like viral popular. So why not? So I bought the gear, and set up an account.

I remember when it arrived. There was something, it felt like, well a new gadget is always exciting, but I liked the idea that I was part of this thing-like not just me here, loads of other people were doing this. Like a conspiracy, we were deserters and we knew it.

I fell in love with the game. It just, fucking, it just made sense. I still worked, I even think I worked harder, I got a raise but I didn't care, I spent all my time, all my time just waiting to get home, to log on, to just... Breathe. It's like when I was at work - that was when I was asleep. On auto-pilot.

That was... 9 years ago now. I know people at work, they thought I was a bit odd, but there are more of us now. I can always spot them. I don't care what they think. If you don't play, you just don't get it. Simple as fuck.

HE WATCHES THE WOMAN

I fell in love.

ACT I

SCENE 4

BACK TO THE CORPORATE ROOM.

PAUL IS STILL STARING OUT OF THE WINDOW

FI IS DOING SOMETHING INCREASINGLY ANNOYING, I.E. TAPPING HER CHAIR OR SMACKING HER LIPS.

PAUL BECOMES MORE AND MORE VISIBLY ON EDGE. FINALLY HE SPINS AROUND.

PAUL:               Fucking hell!

CASSIE LOOKS UP

FI:                 All right, relax!

A MOMENT. THEN PAUL SIGHS. COMES BACK FROM THE WINDOW, TRIES TO PARTICIPATE. SHE SEES THIS, AND OPENS A LITTLE, HE SITS DOWN OPPOSITE HER, A WILD MOMENT AS PAUL SEARCHES FOR SOMETHING TO SAY.

PAUL:               Your name's Fi?

SHE NODS

So... what does that mean? (*IE he has assumed it is a Chinese name*)

FI:                 Mean?

PAUL:               Yeah like, what's it a word for?

(BEAT)

FI:                 It's short for Fiona.

ANOTHER MOMENT

THEN PAUL STANDS AND GOES BACK TO THE WINDOW.

MORE FIDGETING, AND THEN THE DOOR OPENS. FI AND PAUL TURN TO SEE JAN ENTER. SHE IS VERY LARGE. PAUL CLOCKS THAT SHE IS NOT 'OF INTEREST' AND LOOKS BACK TO THE WINDOW. FI STANDS AND GOES TO WELCOME HER.

Hi!

JAN: Is this the-

FI: This is the competition winners'- this is where they're putting us.

JAN COMES IN, SITS DOWN

JAN: Am I late?

FI: No, no nothing's happened yet. I'm Fi, by the way.

JAN: Jan, a pleasure. And-? (PAUL)

NO RESPONSE

FI: This is Paul.

HE TURNS AND GIVES A BRIEF NOD.

JAN: Ah, and I would say you're Raeph, correct?

FI: Yes, he is.

JAN: And you're Kite?

FI: No, No I'm Cassie.

(BEAT)

JAN: Oh. *(She hadn't expected Fi to have been playing a different race.)*

FI: What's up?

JAN: Nothing, love (smiles) well it's lovely to meet you!

FI: How was your hotel?

JAN: Nice, very nice, a real treat I'd say.

FI: Have you logged on today?

JAN: I haven't

FI: I was on the forums, I got up early, couldn't sleep. They're so jealous; they all want to be here.

JAN: Of course they do, who wouldn't, the Founder is a legend

FI: Exactly! A legend.

A SNORT FROM PAUL

And what's wrong with that?

PAUL: Nothing, nothing.

FI: You're giving me attitude again.

PAUL: I just think-

FI: You've got no- you don't want to believe, you've got no romance.

PAUL: It's just a competition, a publicity stunt, 10 year anniversary, all that shit.

FI: I think you're wrong, the Founder isn't like that, not part of the corporate-

PAUL: Doesn't say no to the money I'll bet.

FI: Why are you here then, hm?

NOTHING

If it's all such rubbish, a silly little meet-and-greet, why are you here? (to Jan) you believe it don't you?

JAN: I'm not sure what you-

FI: This whole thing, it can't just be, just be some kind of stupid-

JAN: I think it's best not to speculate.

FI: But that's not a no, is it?

(PAUSE)

You can believe what you want to, but this stuff, this stuff has been in the forums for ages, ever since I joined. It's got to be true. It's got to be.

JAN IS LOOKING AT HER KINDLY. SUDDENLY  
FI REALISES.

You're James?

JAN: I am.

FI: James!

SHE SMILES, AND GOES TO SIT NEAR HER.

JAN: Cassie.

FI: How are your kids, grandkids?

JAN: They're well, thank you.

FI: They must be pretty impressed that you're here.

JAN: Yes, I've got a list as long as my arm of things to ask.

FI: It's so lovely to meet you.

JAN SMILES. THEN STANDS.

JAN: Would you like some water?

FI NODS

Paul?

PAUL: No.

SHE GOES OFF.

ACT I        SCENE 5

A CRAGGY, WINDY, HARSH GREY PLACE. AN EAGLE SCREEES OVERHEAD. FIGHTING SOUNDS OFF SR.

CASSIE IS ON ALL FOURS, HACKING, COUGHING. SHE IS INJURED, AND AFTER A MOMENT OR TWO APPLIES A RAG TO HER HEAD, STANDS. SHE LOOKS AROUND FOR HER SWORD, PICKS IT UP. A SCREAM OFF SR, BUT SHE DOESN'T LOOK UP. JAMES COMES ONSTAGE, OUT OF BREATH, BUT NOT INJURED. CASSIE STILL DOES NOT LOOK.

JAMES:            You did well.

CASSIE:           I did not.

JAMES:            You're much newer than them.

CASSIE:           I should have been able to take them on.

JAMES:            There were 3 of them, how could you-

CASSIE:           They were idiots.

JAMES:            Melees are not about cunning. Are you trying to level up?

CASSIE:           No! I was just- I've come looking for some materials, some precious metals. They just picked on me.

JAMES:            Yes.

CASSIE:           There were some other guys around, but they just walked away.

JAMES:            It is not their problem, they did not wish to get involved.

CASSIE:           I always get bloody picked on. There's plenty of other noobs

JAMES SIGHS. HE SITS DOWN AND GETS A PACKAGE OUT OF HIS BAG.

What?

HE OPENS THE PACKAGE AND OFFERS THE CONTENTS TO CASSIE.

JAMES: You want some? (Nothing) it'll raise your HP, come on, sit down.

CASSIE DOES SO, TAKES SOME OF THE FOOD.

It is because you play as a girl.

CASSIE: What?

JAMES: How many of the players you've met have been female?

CASSIE: What do you mean?

JAMES: For every female avatar you meet, how many male?

CASSIE: I, I dunno, I guess like maybe, maybe one in 10 or something.

JAMES: That's probably about right. Actual subscription is more like 60% female.

CASSIE: Really? (JAMES NODS) but-

JAMES: Most of us think it's not worth the hassle.

CASSIE: But that's not right. If people played as they really were then it wouldn't be-

JAMES: It will always be a problem. The men, some of the men that come here, they come here to be more of a man than they could ever be in the real world.

CASSIE: But-

JAMES: I have seen it. I help police these plains, I was part of the first vigilante groups at the beginning of the whole world, we formed, a mixture of Mods and civilians-

CASSIE: I'm not creating another character. I'm sticking with this one.

JAMES: Good for you.

CASSIE: You think I'm stupid don't you?

JAMES: No. I think you're going to have to be twice as good to get half the respect as a male avatar.

CASSIE: Whatever

SHE GETS UP TO LEAVE

JAMES: I'm James.

HE STANDS TOO.

Welcome to the World. It has a lot of potential. And a lot of idiots. Just like the real on in that respect. You'll want to be going that way (points opposite direction to the one she was about the leave from) there's a gang of looters over there.

JAMES LEAVES

CASSIE STAYS WHERE SHE IS.

ACT I

SCENE 6

THE CONFERENCE ROOM.

JAN ENTERS WITH TWO GLASSES OF WATER,  
HANDS ONE TO FI.

FI: Thanks.

JAN: So how long have you both been here?

FI: Not long, half an hour.

JAN: So we're waiting for-

FI: The kid, yeah.

PAUL: (Unexpectedly) The kids freak me out.

JAN: Ah, would you care to join us?

HE DOESN'T MOVE

FI: Kite's not such a kid anymore.

PAUL: Still, fucking wrong isn't it?

JAN: (Who winced at the swearing) There's nothing wrong-

PAUL: I mean how long has this one been playing for?  
They're too good.

FI: Ah so *that's* your problem. Of course.

PAUL: There's nothing wrong with the game, but there's  
parts of your life where you need to- where playing  
a game is an ok thing to do, and parts of it where  
you should just be running around and, fucking,  
climbing trees or whatever.

JAN: Is there really any need for the language?

PAUL: Delicate ears?

JAN: I ask you in game, and you're fine with it. (PAUSE,  
*with a sad smile*) But in game I could take you on I  
suppose? Today I'm just -

PAUL: I mean-

JAN: What do you mean?

PAUL: It's just dishonest, isn't it?

JAN: Dishonest? Your character is taller, thinner, stronger-

PAUL: Yeah, but he's still ginger.

FI: More reddish brown I'd say.

PAUL: Look it's not the point, some things, some things should stay.... Separate.

SILENCE

Look, I didn't mean-

JAN: It's fine, people always react like this. It's a bit of a shock, am I right? I'm so strong; enforce justice over the whole of the plains-

PAUL: You see! This is why I- In the real world you always have to... To fucking... Mediate. Like-censor everything, you can't say one thing, or do another, but you're told this stuff, like the stuff you're taught by your mum and dad, the stuff that comes from here (*taps chest*).

JAN: Ah, we must be missing some of that.

PAUL: Some stuff just makes sense. Has made sense forever. But you can't fucking say it.

JAN: Some of the world's best, more intelligent, most valuable people have been-

PAUL: But that's not what it's about is it-? The game, it's about guts. And earth. And blood.

JAN: The game is what you make it. That's the point.

STALEMATE. A PAUSE.

FI LOOKS AT THE CLOCK

FI: Come on guys, it's nearly time!

JAN: I wonder where Kite has gotten to?

PAUL: Maybe his mummy wouldn't let him go.

JAN: I don't think so.

PAUL: Oh yeah?

FI: Kid lives on his own, Paul, makes a living out of the forums. Pays someone to home-school I think.

(PAUSE)

I really hope this is- I really hope the forums were right about this.

(PAUSE)

I mean the official people haven't told us anything really have they?

SARAH APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY

PAUL TURNS AROUND TO HAVE A GO AT FI, AND SEES SARAH, A MOMENT OF CONFUSION AND THEN HE REALISES, THE KID: ANOTHER GIRL.

PAUL: Oh bloody hell.

KITE WALKS ONSTAGE. LOOKS AT THE AUDIENCE FOR A MOMENT, THEN GRINS.

KITE: This is destiny, yeah? (PAUSE) let's not beat around the bush or whatever, I know you're going to choose me- it's just right. I'm not a part of this world, I *am* it. I've lived here longer than I've lived in the real world. And it's just better, right? I mean people don't get that do they? They think 'oh, poor them' like 'wasting their life', but we *live it*, man. They think they're living they're lives? Sat in little pens, doing the same thing every day, travelling in grey trains over grey land, everything connected by stupid bridges. Maybe life wasn't always like that, I dunno, but there's not enough space now, not enough space to live. So they exist, and think they're all better than you, that something's wrong with you because you can see it for, like what it really is, yeah? And you don't want a part of it. *This is living*. They think you've got no social life. I've got more friends than they ever have, this is a *community* you're part of something, people look after to each other, look after The World. Everyone has their own part to play, there's no, stupid, walk on bits here. You're the main part. Everyone is, yeah? You work hard, and you see the effect. You kill something, it dies, you fight someone, you get better, you plant something, it grows. Like... Cause and effect.

I need to meet the founder, not because I'm some-stupid fan or whatever, I mean don't get me wrong, I- but I'm going to meet the founder, because she made me, she gave me life, a place to be. And I think it's kind of, I think it's just polite to say thanks, yeah? So... Yeah. That's why I think you should pick me. It's my destiny.

ACT I

SCENE 8

THE CORPORATE ROOM. SARAH ENTERS.

FI STANDS TO GREET HER

FI: You must be Kite.

SARAH: Yeah, hi.

SHE LOOKS UNCOMFORTABLE, AND COMES IN QUICKLY, SITS DOWN

JAN: Was your journey-?

SARAH: Journey was fine, I just logged on, missed the time.

JAN: Well, no harm done, you're here now. I'm Jan, and this is Fi. James and Cassie.

SARAH: Kite.

(PAUSE)

What's wrong with him?

JAN: No idea, love.

PAUL: I'm right here you know.

JAN: Before you came we were debating the pros and cons of playing in different gender, and how that's different to, say, playing a different body shape or hair colour.

PAUL MAKES A 'PFFT' SOUND

SARAH: Oh.

(PAUSE)

So how long have we got?

FI: Until the Founder-?

SARAH: Yes.

FI: Well she was due around about now, so any time I guess.

THEY ALL SIT IN SILENCE

Did you hear anything more, on the forums, about what we're (SHE CATCHES THE LOOK PAUL IS GIVING HER) What?!

PAUL: Nothing.

FI: Look, we were asked here for a reason, I know we were, the way we've been chosen, the mystery, the anniversary. You *know* the story!

JAN: Look, I don't think-

PAUL: There is not bloody stupid real world quest, no magic swords or chances to be a hero out here, it'll just be some stupid chance to shake hands with the person who created the game and-

SARAH: I don't agree.

THEY LOOK AT HER

The Founder is coming for us, I know that's true. The Founder is the original rebel, the first person cast out of this grey world, who created a new one. It's laid in the very code.

PAUL: (Weakly) Look, love.

FI: She's not your love, and what if she's right?

SARAH: They say on the forums that the Founder is the best hacker of our age, just because we can't imagine what we might be asked to do, doesn't mean there isn't anything.

FI: Ah, see? I knew you were alright, kid!

PAUL: You're all the fucking same- complete (*nutters*)

A PHONE IN THE ROOM BEGINS TO RING. THEY ALL STOP, SURPRISED. AFTER A SECOND, CASSIE STANDS UP. WALKS OVER TO IT. PICKS UP. THE OTHERS WATCH.

FI: H-Hello? ... Yes... you're- no, sorry, but you're really sure? Oh... No I get it, of course. Yeah, thanks, thanks for letting us know... Ok. Bye.

SHE PUTS THE PHONE DOWN. THEN LOOKS UP AT THE OTHER THREE.

SARAH: What is it?

(PAUSE) FI STRUGGLES.

FI: She's not coming.

PAUL: What?!

FI: They're giving us a, a 'goody bag', and one year's free subscription.

PAUL: Fucking typical

SARAH: But why not?

FI: 'Communications have broken down'

SARAH: What does that mean?

PAUL: Means some fucker is throwing a tantrum, because the dipshit who founded the whole thing can't even-

FI: Don't talk about the Founder like that!

PAUL AND FI LAUNCH INTO AN ARGUMENT.  
JAN LOOKS OUT OF THE WINDOW, SIGHS.  
SARAH GETS UP AND WALKS TOWARDS THE  
DOOR WITHOUT A WORD.

THEN THE POWER CUTS OUT. AN ALARM GOES  
OFF. THEY ALL LOOK AROUND. A SHADOW IS  
CAST ACROSS THE STAGE.

SARAH: Ah, there you are.

THE LIGHTS FLICKER OUT LIKE THEY DO ON  
A SCREEN.

## ACT I

## SCENE 9

CASSIE IS CENTRE STAGE AS AT THE BEGINNING. SHE HAS JUST FINISHED LAUGHING.

CASSIE: Ok, so that's the about me bit, now... ok, why do I play 'The World'. (PAUSE) That's a big one isn't it? Well there's a lot spoken about online worlds, a lot spoken by people who don't know much, and a lot spoken by the kind of people who like to shout about it. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle, where the rest of us live. And we do *live*. My life is no less for the way I spend it. I'm not one of those people that say there's no difference, there is, of course there is. All the sensory and pressure technology in the world couldn't make it feel like real life, technology right now anyway. But I mean 'is it real' all depends on your idea of realness doesn't it? People are scared of it, they either get it, or they're scared, they say it's weird, or they feel sorry for you. I think they're scared, though, because they can see, just see a little bit why we want to do it. You start again, you take control, and you go to a place where you know the rules. You work hard: you get better, you plant something: it grows. Real needs proof, doesn't it? Real is cause and effect. You get that. You see that you put stuff in, and get stuff out. I'm not going to apologise for feeling more alive in a world with sunshine, and trees and running streams. With people who stop and talk to you, with people who need things from you. I do feel more alive there, because that's where I live, because there, living means something. And I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm thankful. I'm really grateful. I want to meet the founder, just to say thank you. Thank you for giving us all of this. Thank you.

ACT I

SCENE 10

AN UNKNOWN SPACE, ABANDONED.

ALEX ENTERS, FOLLOWED IN A RUSH BY JAN, FI, PAUL AND SARAH. FI IS LEANT AGAINST JAN AND APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SHOT.

PAUL:               Fucking guns!

ALEX:               Calm down.

PAUL:               They have fucking guns!

ALEX:               So do we.

PAUL:               You have A gun, A fucking gun

ALEX:               It's ok.

PAUL:               How, how is it fucking ok?

SARAH IS STANDING AROUND, BLANKLY. JAN IS LAYING FI DOWN, TALKING TO HER.

JAN:                It'll be ok, you'll be ok.

PAUL:               Look, what the fu-

JAN:                Alex, Alex we need to call an ambulance.

ALEX:               We can't.

JAN:                Yes, we can, call one now.

ALEX:               I've knocked out the power for the whole grid. The whole region.

JAN:                What?

ALEX:               There's nothing, it's black.

JAN:                Hospitals have backup generators

ALEX:               You can't leave.

PAUL:               Look, I think you've both forgotten that there are people with GUNS after us.

JAN:                Cassie needs help.

PAUL:               I mean this isn't a fucking... FPS [FIRST PERSON SHOOTER], there just aren't guns!

ALEX: You're implicated now, you have to stay, I can keep you safe.

JAN: Listen to me. She has been shot. If we do not get her to help she will bleed to death.

PAUL: They have *guns*

JAN: Oh just think about someone else for the first time in your life!

PAUL: Fuck off, you hormonal piece of cunt, she's fucking dead, how about we try and get out before we get shot?

JAN PUNCHES HIM. HE FALLS TO THE GROUND

JAN: In case you've forgotten, when people die here, they stay dead.

PAUL: What the fu-

HE TOUCHES HIS NOSE BLEARILY, SEES BLOOD.

ALEX: That's enough! Stop it!

THERE IS SILENCE.

JAN: (To Alex) Look, this was all very nice, all very exciting, but she's hurt, the quest has to stop.

ALEX: I'm sorry I really am, but this, this isn't a quest, I was telling the truth, I need your help.

SARAH: What do you want us to do?

JAN: Sarah, love, Cassie - Fi she's dying-

SARAH: Alex is right, we have to cut our losses.

JAN: Our-?! Our losses?! You'll let her die?

ALEX: We're all in danger now, if they find you, if they find her, believe me, that is far more dangerous.

JAN: It is time to end the fantasy!

ALEX: You're safe here.

JAN: Cassie isn't.

SARAH: (Hisses) shut up.

(PAUSE)

ALEX: I didn't - she made her choice, she knew the risks.

JAN: Choice?! Choice?! We followed you in the belief we were playing a game.

ALEX: Why would you think that?

JAN: Why?!

PAUL: Fuck this. I'm going.

ALEX: You're alive.

PAUL: What?

ALEX: But you won't be if you leave here.

PAUL: They're after you, right? They must be. Well I'll just turn you over.

ALEX: (Raises the gun) Who said it was them who are going to kill you?

PAUL: I am not going to be stuck here, with one dead body and a room full of fucking crazy fucking women I never even -

JAN: She needs help!

ALEX: (Still training the gun on Paul) Raeph, you've known each other for years.

PAUL: Why should I trust them? Half of them were lying!

JAN: You need to think straight!

PAUL: I'm going to die aren't I?

SARAH: Shut UP, man.

PAUL: Fuck you.

SARAH: Seriously, give it a rest! What are you, 12?

PAUL: She just got your best friend killed!

JAN: She's not dead! She just needs help!

ALEX: ENOUGH.

(SILENCE)

Please, I understand that this is scary, horrible, but I just need you, your attention for a few minutes. I won't have another chance.

(PAUSE)

I need your help.

JAN: Let us help her, let me go and find a doctor.

ALEX: We haven't got time.

JAN: Time for what, to save a woman's life?

ALEX: We need to destroy the world.

JAN: You're talking about murder.

ALEX: I give life, I can take it away.

PAUL: Fuck.

JAN: You created the World, not us.

PAUL: You're actually insane.

ALEX: I'm not, please, you have to listen to me-

JAN: Let me help her.

ALEX LOOKS AT FI, THEN JAN.

ALEX: I can't. We'll lose everything.

JAN: You'd kill her?

ALEX: I kill people every day, every fucking day you hear me? I create people and I kill them. That's my fucking job! Now you are going to sit here, and listen to me!

PAUL LOOKS SHOCKED, SARAH EXCITED.  
SILENCE FROM JAN. SHE STANDS. ALEX  
RAISES HER GUN.

JAN: There's only one of you, three of us.

PAUL: No, fucking hold on.

JAN: Sarah, take it off her.

ALEX: I think you've got it wrong, part-timer.

JAN: Paul, Sarah.

SARAH: No.

JAN LOOKS AT HER, ALMOST FORGETTING  
ALEX

JAN: Love, this is Cassie, she's practically a sister to  
you.

SARAH: There's bigger things. Bigger.

ACT I

SCENE 11

CASSIE IS LYING ON THE GROUND, RECLINING. IT IS AN EARLY SUMMER'S DAY, SHE LAZYILY RAISES HER ARM, AND SWISHES IT ABOUT IN THE AIR, PRETENDING TO CATCH THE SUN.

KITE COMES RUNNING ON

KITE: Cassie, Cassie, look what I found!

SHE SITS UP, LOOKS

CASSIE: Not bad.

KITE: Not bad! It's Young's Helleborine, *really* rare.

CASSIE: You're doing OK, kid.

KITE CAREFULLY PUTS THE SPECIMIN IN A CONTAINER AND THEN PUTS IT INTO A BAG.

Nice to get out the city, huh?

KITE: Yeah! There's loads of stuff. Always thought it was just, y'know, like fields and things, like what's the point?

CASSIE: Mm.

KITE: But it's really cool, there's loads of stuff, and you're not, like, ducking and diving all the time, right?

CASSIE: Right.

PAUSE.

KITE: I made level 63 last week.

CASSIE: Ugh, thieving is such a... straightforward class, all one-up-manship

KITE: It's better than, than, furrier, faaryer-ing

CASSIE: I'm a *farrier*, Kite.

KITE: Whatever.

(PAUSE)

CASSIE: 63? Really?

KITE:            Yep!

CASSIE:         And you've been playing-

KITE:            Eight real-world years.

CASSIE:         Sheesh.

KITE:            Well it's how I make my money, right?

CASSIE:         Yeah.

(PAUSE)

KITE:            I lost another tutor.

CASSIE:         Had another falling out?

KITE:            I don't fall out with them, they just always end up trying to 'help' me n stuff. Don't need helping, just need to prove to the council that I'm learning, right?

CASSIE:         (smiling) I'm sure you had nothing to do with it, all sweetness and light.

KITE:            I'm just fed up, you know? Bored of them always saying 'wah wah it's not healthy', 'wah wah human contact'.

CASSIE:         Particularly eloquent these tutors are they?

KITE:            And I said I have plenty of human contact. And they always try and hug me, yeuch.

(PAUSE)

Have you, have you been on the forums much lately?

CASSIE SMILES

CASSIE:         Might have been.

KITE:            So you've heard...?

CASSIE:         Depends, what've you heard?

KITE:            For the anniversary, they're running a competition, 4 people get to meet the, well it said some people are going to meet the Founder.

CASSIE:         I did hear that.

KITE: And all you have to do, like all you have to do is say why you play, like say why it is you play the game!

CASSIE: Yep.

KITE: Are you going to enter?

CASSIE: (Yawning lazily, sits up) I might.

KITE: Thing is, why is that all we win, just, like a meeting, why don't they have some money, or cool character mods or something? In the last competition, my friend Boris, he won this well good-

HE SEES CASSIE LOOKING AT HIM

What?

CASSIE: Kite, the Founder is the heart and soul of this place. Everything, everything we have we owe to the Founder, the interface, the career systems, the artefacts, anything you care to name, the Founder created it. Every single piece of technology, researched, designed, programmed. Can you imagine? Genius.

KITE: So?

CASSIE: So?

KITE: Yeah- I mean they're probably a freak, right?

CASSIE: The Founder isn't a freak.

KITE: But what if -?

CASSIE: The Founder is not a freak.

KITE: You don't know that.

CASSIE: We were made. Without the game, where would we be?

KITE: But what for! I mean why would someone care- I mean you'd take the money, but-

CASSIE: Look, you're too young.

KITE: I'm not, I'm not too young, people are always telling me I'm too young.

CASSIE: The Founder's not a freak. A visionary. Sometimes people mix them up.

(PAUSE)

KITE: So you don't know?

CASSIE: Hm?

KITE: You don't know why, like why some people are going to get to meet the-

CASSIE: Kite, I know as much as you do.

KITE: But it must be some kind of quest, right?

CASSIE: (BEAT) Some people say certainly say that.

KITE: I mean it makes sense doesn't it? Why would you make a world, like a world that's so much better than the real one, and just leave it? It's a plan, isn't it, it's got to be, there's a real world quest. We're supposed to do something, I mean the founder was one of the biggest hackers ever, I read that in *A History of The World*, caused proper mayhem, like power cuts and everything before the legit work. Some kind of, protester or something, I dunno. There's got to be something, like we're meant to do, you know? A way we can make people see our world is real, really real, get rid of the power, destroy the rotten bits, make the World real.

(PAUSE)

I'd give anything to be a part of that.

CASSIE: Me too kid, me too.

ACT I

SCENE 12

BACK WITH THE BLEEDING FI.

ALEX: You *will* listen to me.

JAN STARES, THEN GOES TO TEND TO FI

Why are you moving! I'm pointing a gun at you!  
You're not allowed to move!

JAN: So far you haven't shot me. Let us get her to help.

ALEX SAGS

ALEX: I can't.

JAN: You mean you-

ALEX: I don't know who's followed us, how many are out there, if you leave we could be- we're all in danger.

PAUL: Fucking brilliant, so you brought us here to die.

ALEX: I brought you here to save, to save people.

JAN: I don't know who you think you are to bring us anywhere.

PAUL: We're all fucked, we're going to die.

SARAH: You've brought us here for a special task haven't you? The rumours on the forums are true; you've returned to us, this is it.

ALEX: I have.

PAUL: Die surrounded by gender swapping nutjobs, and the craziest fucking piece of cunt I have ever had the misfortune to meet.

SARAH SLAPS HIM, HARD

ALEX: Stop!

PAUL: Will people stop doing that!

SARAH: You do not talk to the Founder like that.

ALEX: (weakly) Sarah, please.

SARAH: My name is Kite, and I'm here to serve you. You gave me us life, he should give you respect. You're our god.

A MOMENT.

ALEX SITS DOWN SUDDENLY, HEAD IN HER KNEES, GUN HELD LIMPLY BESIDE HER

(PAUSE)

THEY LOOK AT HER

PAUL: Is she-?

JAN: Are you crying?

ALEX: I'm sorry!

(SILENCE)

I didn't think, I knew there would be- I thought I could protect you. I need, I need to tell you why we're here.

SARAH: (Confused) You already did- to destroy the world! So, how we gonna do it? EMP? That's the best bet- on the forums and stuff, that shit would take away every piece of technology out there, it'd just be all of us, as we should be, the world could get back to -

ALEX: No.

(PAUSE)

SARAH: What do you mean- [no?]

ALEX: Look, the reason I brought you all here, the reason they're after us. We need to destroy The World.

SARAH: I knew it! We're going to finally show them!

ALEX: The online world. We need to end it.

PAUSE

SARAH: What?

JAN: Why?

ALEX: And I need you, I needed you to help me- it isn't about me anymore. I created the World, but you made it, you all, millions of you live it. I need to be able to convince you, and if I convince you, I know that my reasons are right, they're ok, I'm not killing something that shouldn't be killed.

SARAH: You're joking.

JAN: Then why were they shooting?

ALEX: I- this game, this game is very lucrative, subscription costs alone, and then the kit, the upgrades, the gold farming - which they pretend they don't know about - and the advertising. It makes trillions of dollars every year. It's ridiculous. I was edged out artistically long ago. They've been very clever at keeping the tone the same though. That's why they did the competition, because that's something that's part of the-

JAN: Why were they shooting?

ALEX: You were supposed to be met by an actor. Some programmer from head office speaking in his ear. I hacked the building, locked down the -I came to get you but they, well they hire their own security, apparently they give them guns. I'm sorry.

JAN: You came armed.

ALEX: To protect you.

JAN: I'm going.

ALEX: You can't, they might have followed us.

JAN: There must be another way out.

ALEX: There is.

JAN: Well?

ALEX: I need you, I need all of you. You can leave after I-

JAN: She's DYING.

ALEX: I know, but there's hundreds of thousands of other lives at stake.

SARAH: I don't understand, is this part of the quest?

PAUL LETS OUT AN EXASPERATED SIGH.

ALEX: I need you, I need to convince you, so I know that it's right to let go.

JAN: That's it?

SARAH: There's no quest.

ALEX: This isn't real, you know it isn't. Come out. You have to come out.

THE LIGHTS FLICKER. SUDDENLY ALEX IS NO LONGER THERE. THEY ARE IN A DIFFERENT ROOM. THE UNIVERSE READJUSTS ITSELF.

A PHONE IN THE ROOM BEGINS TO RING. THEY ALL STOP, SURPRISED. AFTER A SECOND, CASSIE STANDS UP. WALKS OVER TO IT. PICKS UP. THE OTHERS WATCH.

CASSIE IS HOLDING THE PHONE,

SHE SUDDENLY DROPS TO THE FLOOR. EMPTY.

THE MOMENT SPINS OUT- FACES FALL- CONFUSION, THEN SUDDEN ACTION. JAMES JUMPS UP AND GOES TO PROP CASSIE UP, KITE RUNS UP TO HER.

KITE: Cassie!

RAEPH: Shit!

JAMES: Hey, hey, speak to me, speak to me.

RAEPH STRIDES OVER TO THE HANGING PHONE, PICKS IT UP.

RAEPH: Who is this-?

KITE: (To James) what's wrong with her?

JAMES: I don't know.

SUDDENLY THE LIGHTS FLICKER. THEY ALL  
LOOK UP

(PAUSE)

RAEPH: What was that, a glitch?

(PAUSE) THEN JAMES RETURNS TO THE  
MOMENT

JAMES: Who is it-? On the-?

PAUL: No one- there's nothing- do you think it had  
something to do with /the Founder-

KITE: What's wrong with Cassie?!

(PAUSE)

THEY ALL LOOK DOWN AT HER

JAMES LAYS HER GENTLY DOWN

RAEPH: (Gently) she's gone, kid.

KITE: What?

RAEPH: She's gone.

KITE: I don't get it- where's she-

RAEPH STRIDES AWAY FROM THEM

What?

RAEPH: Shit.

KITE: (To James) what does he mean- 'she's gone'?

JAMES: I'm sorry. Her character has been deleted.

KITE: But-

RAEPH: (Spins around) You don't know that!

KITE: But-

JAMES: (To Raeph) it's not gamedeath.

KITE: What are you talking about?

(BEAT)

JAMES: I think that there might some malign force at work in the-

RAEPH: Malign forces my ass.

JAMES: That wasn't gamedeath- that's not how it works- people slow down, it's not like that.

RAEPH: What would you know? Hm? We both know that she's been so excited, been planning this for fucking-

JAMES: (THREATENINGLY) Watch you language.

(BEAT)

RAEPH: All I'm saying is that we don't know how long she'd been online. And gamedeath's not just people fading, some have heart attacks and-

KITE: She- she's not coming back?

(PAUSE)

RAEPH: (To Kite) you've seen the warnings, right? "The world recommends you get at least 4 hours of sleep a day", "eat and drink regularly", "remember that your child's life should come before your avatar's".

KITE: I've never ... I've never seen anyone-

RAEPH: You don't find them in the streets, in the cities, but out at sea, in certain quests, you get plenty. 3, 4 days straight gaming, no sleep, nothing to eat, people just die, exhaustion, dehydration. The timing locks are easily hacked, and then that's it... Nothing left but an empty avatar.

SILENCE.

It's not our fault, if the world is too terrible to live in, if it hurts so much, you come here.

(PAUSE)

KITE: She's not coming back?

JAMES: Cassie is not the kind of person who would let that-

RAEPH: Not what kind of person, James, hm? Not what kind of fucking-

KITE: Stop it!

THE LIGHTS FLICKER AGAIN.

JAMES: This is not the sad demise of a dying gamer- the game does not feel right, something is- is trying to root us out.

RAEPH: Horseshit. She's dead, deal with it.

THE PHONE BEGINS TO RING. THEY ALL LOOK AT IT. NO ONE MOVES. AFTER A WHILE WE HEAR A MESSAGE. "PLEASE LEAVE YOUR NAME AFTER THE TONE", IT CLICKS ON.

ALEX: I know you can hear me. I know you're all in there. It's OK, you can speak, I can hear it in the code.

SILENCE. SUPREME STILLNESS

JAMES: Who is this?

ALEX: It is Alex.

JAMES: Alex-

ALEX: Alex, founder of this world.

RAEPH: Shit.

KITE: What's going on, where's Cassie? Where's she gone?

ALEX: There's no time- you need to leave your house and make your way to the co-ordinates that I have sent to your inboxes. Any GPS should find it. The room number should be in your-

KITE: But Cassie- she-

ALEX: She has been deleted, the authorities have caught up-

JAMES: She's hurt?

ALEX: She is making her way to the meeting point.

JAMES: She's not seriously-?

ALEX: She was thrown out of game, I got a message to her in time, but they seem to -

RAEPH: Who the fuck are *'they'*?!

KITE: Does that mean her character can't come back-? if they threw her out-

THE LIGHTS FLICKER

RAEPH: What *is* that?!

ALEX: Listen to me. You're in danger. You have to leave, you have to get out of your homes, make your way carefully and quietly, James, you go first- I can create a diversion, hack you a safe path, but you need to leave now, Raeph, Kite, you live closer, I can clear you a path together. You need leave when I next ring- make your way to the nearest subway station.

RAEPH: But-

ALEX: I cannot stress enough how vital it is that you follow my instructions. Please. I have to go. Good luck.

SHE HANGS UP.

THEY STAND. SILENT.

SUDDENLY JAMES BURSTS INTO ACTION, MOVES SWIFTLY, GRABS HIS COAT, AND STRIDES TOWARDS THE DOOR.

RAEPH: Wait!

JAMES PAUSES, LOOKS BACK

What are you-

JAMES: I'm going.

RAEPH: But-

JAMES: I'm following her instructions- I'm going to get out of the house, on that train.

RAEPH: It's just a prank, a game, some stupid, malicious hack

JAMES: You're going to stop me?

RAEPH: You're playing into their hands-

KITE: James, what- what if you lose your character, what if-

HE MOVES TO THE DOOR

RAEPH MOVES AND STANDS IN FRONT OF HIM.

Get out of my way

RAEPH: You don't know what you're doing!

JAMES: You would face me?

RAEPH: Yes I fucking will, your stats don't beat mine.

JAMES: Please, we've got to-

RAEPH: We don't have to do anything! Nothing's happening!

JAMES: It's not gamedeath

RAEPH: How can some stupid game have put us all in fucking- danger, hm?

JAMES: If there is even a small chance that this might be- if we might actually be in danger- we need to act. I have a family to think of.

RAEPH: Oh, and your safety's going to be improved by closer proximity to the most notorious renegade hacker the world has ever known, is it?

SILENCE. JAMES TURNS TO LOOK AT KITE.

JAMES: How old are you- in real life?

KITE LOOKS STUNNED.

Look, are you old enough, in real life, can you get to the station- can you leave on your own?

KITE: Yeah, no, I'm fine, right?

(PAUSE)

JAMES LOOKS BACK AT PAUL.

JAMES: You will not let me leave normally?

RAEPH: I just think that we should-

JAMES: This is not the time to think. Goodbye.

SUDDENLY JAMES CRUMPLES TO THE FLOOR.  
RAEPH JUMPS BACK, KITE RUNS FORWARD.

RAEPH: Shit!

KITE: James! (Looks up) What did he do?

RAEPH: I can't believe someone would just-

KITE: Where did he-

RAEPH: He deleted himself.

SHOCKED SILENCE. RAEPH SITS DOWN  
HEAVILY

KITE: Just, just like that?

RAEPH: Shit (he sits down heavily).

(PAUSE)

KITE LOOKS AT THE EMPTY AVATARS

THE LIGHTS DIM SLIGHTLY, THEN COME UP  
AGAIN.

KITE MOVES, SITS NEXT TO RAEPH

KITE: I'm scared.

(PAUSE)

Is this, is this part of the quest?

NOTHING

Are we just supposed to- (wait)?

(PAUSE)

Do you think Cassie will be able to come back?

RAEPH: Kid,

KITE: Her character- do you think it's safe?

RAEPH: Seriously.

KITE: But I don't understand!

RAEPH: Just shut up!

(PAUSE) HE DEFLATES

THE LIGHTS DIM, WHEN THEY RETURN, PART OF THE SCENE HAS BROKEN AWAY, LIKE THE CODE IS FLAKING AT THE EDGES. LIGHT SHINES THROUGH. IT HAPPENS SILENTLY. AND WITHIN A SECOND.

KITE: I don't understand!

RAEPH: Can't you see-?

KITE LOOKS UP

It's breaking apart.

KITE: It's just a glitch

RAEPH: James was right.

KITE: But you said-

RAEPH: I'm scared! OK!

(PAUSE)

KITE: But you've fought *armies*, massive creatures!

ANOTHER SECOND OF DARK, FOLLOWED BY LIGHT, AND A LESS COMPLETE SET.

They'll just be taking it down for maintenance. (Pause) The World- you know- they've probably got a new patch or something.

RAEPH: I thought it was all part of the game.

KITE: It's not a game.

RAEPH: It- (is).

KITE: It's not. It's a world. It's people's lives, yeah? You reckon it's not real because you've not given yourself enough to it!

RAEPH: But-

KITE: How much do you go out?

RAEPH: I have a job.

KITE: Like *really* out.

(PAUSE)

And where do you feel better- more- like- together?

RAEPH: Look, kid.

KITE: Don't call me kid.

RAEPH: But you are a-

KITE: Am I real or aren't I? 'Cause if I'm not, then you can't call me kid, you don't know how old I am, or anything.

RAEPH: You're real, but-

KITE: I've spent my whole life being someone else, this one is the real me. The other one- it's just a zombie.

RAEPH: You're both.

KITE: I'm not.

THE PHONE RINGS. KITE JUMPS UP. RAEPH DOESN'T. THEY WATCH IT. THE MESSAGE CLICKS ON. ALEX'S VOICE.

ALEX: It's time.

RAEPH: Did James get out-?

ALEX: You need to leave now.

RAEPH: Is James OK?

ALEX: She's fine. You have very little time. They're closing it all down to get to you, if you move now, it'll look too suspicious, you have to stay there; as soon as you fall out, you need to-

KITE: Fall out, what-?

ALEX: The World, the World will- it's shutting down, the second that you're forced out, grab the GPS, and go. Follow the instructions. Do you understand?

(PAUSE)

KITE: Yes.

ALEX: Paul?

RAEPH: I do.

ALEX: Good. I will see you soon. Well done.

THE PHONE CLICKS OFF.

RAEPH AND KITE STAND, MOVE TO THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM, LOOKING AROUND THEM. KITE LOOKS AT RAEPH

KITE: Your real name is Paul?

RAEPH: Yeah?

(BEAT)

What's wrong with that?

KITE: It's a bit boring, innit?

RAEPH: What's yours?

KITE: (Firmly) Kite.

PAUL SIGHS

THE WORLD FALLS APART

LIGHT STREAMS THROUGH THE CRACKS

THEY HUDDLE IN THE CENTRE OF THE SPACE

KITE: I know that you think it's not. It's something else, something someone else has given me. Well it's not. This is me, this is all about me, I chose my name, I chose where I came from; this is all about taking control, being strong. Every time I log on I can finally breathe. I don't need the arms of other people, all I need is to be here, sink into it. The rest of the time I'm just holding my breath. I need it, I need it, this world was written for me. And now- Alex is all part of it, Cassie told me, Alex is like the legends behind this place, and now we're really, really going to be a part of it.

RAEPH: (Weakly) Did Cassie tell you that shit?

KITE TURNS TO HIM.

THE LIGHT IS ALMOST BLINDING NOW.

KITE: Just let it take you, this is it, she's doing it- she's breaking the barriers between the two worlds up, she's going to take everything beautiful about

this world, and get rid of the zombies driving it. This is it, it's going to be beautiful. It's going to be beautiful.

THE LIGHT BECOMES SO BRIGHT THAT IT IS ALL YOU CAN SEE. THERE IS THE SOUND OF THE LAST GASPS OF A DYING BREATH THEN DARKNESS. AND SILENCE.

ACT I

SCENE 13

THE CONFERENCE ROOM. THE SOUND SOMEONE MAKES WHEN THEY BREAK THE SURFACE; GASP FOR AIR. A PHONE IN THE ROOM BEGINS TO RING. CASSIE STANDS UP. WALKS OVER TO IT. PICKS UP. THE OTHERS WATCH.

CASSIE IS HOLDING THE PHONE.

SHE SUDDENLY DROPS TO THE FLOOR, FAINTS, HITTING HER HEAD HARD ON THE TABLE AS SHE GOES DOWN.

THE MOMENT SPINS OUT- SUDDENLY THERE IS ONLY FI IN THE ROOM, THEN PAUL, SARAH, AND THE BLEEDING FI. AFTER A MOMENT SARAH GOES OVER TO FI. SHE CROUCHES DOWN. SHE LOOKS AT HER.

SARAH: She's still unconscious.

PAUL: She didn't mean it, right?

SARAH: Knocked her head.

PAUL: We're not really in danger, we can't be.

SARAH: It's bleeding everywhere

PAUL: I mean we got here alright, got out of game. This is just the game gone wrong, right? Some stupid joke or-

SARAH TOUCHES THE WOUND, LOOKS AT HER FINGERS. FI DOESN'T WAKE.

SARAH: It's really red

PAUL: Ugh, don't.

SARAH: It never looks this red.

PAUL: Haven't you ever had, I dunno, a paper cut or anything, skinned your knees?

SARAH: I thought it'd be thicker (*grins*) cool!

PAUL: Look!

SARAH: (Stands) Alright, alright, (wipes her hand on her trousers) all gone.

SILENCE, PAUL IS STILL UNCOMFORTABLE,  
SARAH WANDERS AROUND.

PAUL: Look, don't you think we should, should sit her up  
or something?

SARAH: Hm?

PAUL: Shouldn't we- y'know fucking recovery position or  
something?

SARAH LOOKS AT HIM COMPLETELY BLANKLY.

Y'know, so she doesn't suffocate or whatever .

JAN WALKS BACK INTO THE ROOM, WITH A  
BANDAGE AND SOME WADDING

JAN: Fat lot of good you two are being.

PAUL: What's going on?

JAN: We can't get out, all of the lifts are out, and  
there's no one else on this floor, I found a first  
aid kit, but... (she shrugs)

SHE KNEELS DOWN AND TRIES HER BEST TO  
CLEAN FI UP.

It's alright, you'll be alright.

SARAH: Man, there's blood everywhere.

JAN: (Ignores her) It'll be ok, we just need to get you  
to someone that will help.

FI CARRIES ON MURMURING. PAUL PUTS HIS  
HEAD IN HIS HANDS AGAIN.

SARAH: (*Bursts out*) This is so cool!

THE OTHER TWO LOOK AT HER

It is you guys! We're, we're on the run, with the  
renegade founder of the online world, it's just  
like the legend /says-

JAN: /Love, /

SARAH: /Yeah? like we're ready, we're standing at the edge  
of /the-

JAN: Love, it's just a story.

(BEAT)

It's just a-

SARAH: If it's just a story, then why are you here?

JAN: Look, who are you?

SARAH: I'm Kite.

JAN: Alex is ... she's just a person. We need to look after Fi, now, after Cassie, she needs our help.

SARAH: She's coming for us.

JAN TRIES TO APPLY A BANDAGE.

THE LIGHTS FLICKER, THE BUILDING MIGHT HAVE GROANED.

PAUL: What the fuck was that?

JAN: They're probably trying to get it back on line.

PAUL: Fuck this.

SUDDENLY PAUL WALKS DETERMINABLY TOWARDS THE EXIT.

SARAH: Hey!

JAN: Woah, woah (she stands in front of him).

PAUL: Get out of my way.

SARAH: What you doing, man?

JAN: You can't get out. You don't believe me?

PAUL TRIES TO DUCK AROUND HER. JAN GRABS HOLD OF HIS WRIST SOLIDLY, HE TURNS TO LOOK AT HER.

PAUL: Let go.

JAN LETS GO OF HIS ARM

JAN: Please, help me move her, make her more comfortable.

SARAH: What's wrong, not man enough to stay?

JAN: Kite, stop it.

PAUL: At least I'm real! What are you hm? Both of you-  
living as fucking-

SARAH: Whatever.

PAUL: What is it? Envy? Want your own dick? Or can't you  
get as far as a female character, their stats too  
weak?

SARAH: Cassie is a girl.

PAUL: And look at her. Weak. You're freaks.

JAN: We're escapists, like you, please-

PAUL: I don't get it, you're just-

JAN: I wouldn't expect you to.

(BEAT)

Look just wait, let's hear what she's got to say.

PAUL: Stop being so fucking reasonable!

JAN: There's nothing else we can do.

SARAH: This is the beginning of the revolution!

THE OTHER TWO LOOK AT HER, NONPLUSSED.

PAUL LOOKS TOWARDS JAN, SPEAKS QUIETLY.

PAUL: Look, how do we know we can trust her?

JAN: Who?

PAUL: Alex, how do we know she knows what she's doing?  
Has she done this? Did she put out all the power?  
She might be messed up in the head.

SARAH: (Cutting in) She's the Founder!

PAUL: So what?

SARAH: She created everything that means anything to you,  
everything, yeah? She wouldn't bring us here unless  
it was *really* important.

PAUL: But-

SARAH: You're just pissed she's a woman.

PAUL: Fuck off.

SARAH: You were always the least good at being a man.

PAUL: Fuck off!

SARAH: You really are scared aren't you?

PAUL: Don't you d-

SARAH: I don't even know why you bothered to come.

PAUL: Fuck. Off.

SARAH: Such an eloquent response, yeah? What's wrong, don't quite measure up?

HE MOVES SUDDENLY, VIOLENTLY, BUT SARAH DOESN'T BACK OFF.

PAUL: How would you feel if I touched you?

SHE NOW TAKES A STEP BACK

SARAH: Don't you dare

PAUL: Can you feel it? The roughness, my skin against yours? The germs and the sweat, and the -

SARAH: You're being DISGUSTING

PAUL: Freak.

SARAH: Since when did you win prizes for normality, man?

PAUL: At least I go out - no one's ever seen you off game, you can't even stand the idea of someone *touching* you.

SARAH: Oh sure you do, pick up the odd piece of *cunt* or two.

PAUL: Fuck you. You know what FUCK YOU.

SILENCE.

JAN: Are you done?

PAUL TURNS HIS BACK ON THEM BOTH.

SARAH WALKS OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WATER TOWER.

JAN LOOKS DOWN AT FI.

She really did knock her head.

SHE LOOKS TO WHERE SARAH WALKED OFF.

Paul, (he grunts) *look after her*

JAN GOES AFTER SARAH.

PAUL LOOKS BACK AT FI

HE SITS NEXT TO HER

PAUL: Cassie? Wake up.

ACT I

SCENE 144

JAZZ PLAYS. CASSIE IS DANCING TO HERSELF AS SHE POURS HERSELF A DRINK. SUDDENLY THERE IS A COMMOTION OUTSIDE, SHOUTS AND SCUFFLINGS THAT CULMINATE IN A FOUL MOUTHED SHOUTING OUTSIDE THE DOOR

RAEPH: (OFF) Oh yeah! Come and say that to my face you cock sucking son of a dragon, I'll take your poxy potion and shove it up your big, fat-

CASSIE TURNS DOWN THE MUSIC AND GOES TO ANSWER THE DOOR.

CASSIE: Raeph, always a delight.

RAEPH STUMBLES IN. HE HAS A SPLIT LIP, AND FRESH BRUISING AROUND HIS EYE. HIS CLOTHING IS RIPPED. HE CARRIES A LARGE EMPTY SATCHEL

RAEPH: (Slurring and meandering in past Cassie) Cassie! Wha' a wonder-wonderful house you have (spots the table) and what a wonderful table and what wonder-wonderful chairs.

CASSIE WATCHES, WITH HER HANDS ON HER HIPS, AS RAEPH, ON THE SECOND ATTEMPT, MANAGES TO SIT DOWN.

I'm just going to, going to-

HE GIVES UP, AND HIS HEAD DROPS ONTO THE TABLE.

(PAUSE)

CASSIE FETCHES SOME CLOTH, AND WATER IN A CERAMIC BOWL.

CASSIE: Honestly.

SHE PLACES THE BOWL NEXT TO RAEPH, WETS THE CLOTH AND THROWS IT IN HIS LAP

RAEPH: Argh!

CASSIE: Come on, clean yourself up. Are you drunk?

RAEPH: Ah fuck off.

CASSIE: Charming. So, was that the Connellys?

RAEPH: We had a disagreement.

CASSIE: Drank more than you could afford?

RAEPH: 'M not drunk, just got hit.

CASSIE: Hit? Where?

RAEPH: At the, the White Horse

CASSIE: No, where did they hit you, genius? (Raeph just groans and puts his head on the table, Cassie stands up) ugh, it was one of the landlord's daughter's I bet.

RAEPH: Was only talking.

CASSIE: They take anything?

RAEPH GRUNTS

Ugh. You stink! How much have you drunk?

RAEPH: I told you, 'm not drunk.

SHE LOOKS OVER, HE IS INEFFECTUALLY ATTEMPTING TO CLEAN HIS FACE. SHE SIGHS, GOES OVER, TAKES THE CLOTH, AND DOES IT HERSELF. HE WINCES MORE THAN IS STRICTLY NECESSARY.

CASSIE: It's only a scratch or two - have you got any healing potion? Might not be worth it.

RAEPH: Bastards.

CASSIE: The Connelly brothers?

RAEPH: Didn't do anything.

CASSIE: You obviously did something.

RAEPH: Too bloody sensitive.

CASSIE: Well yes, I suspect a slap and a tickle goes down a treat in the mountains.

RAEPH: Bloody ponces.

CASSIE: You never were much of a people person.

HE MURMURS.

CASSIE: Don't know why you came here.

RAEPH SHRUGS

'I've known you for years Cassie, you're a good friend Cassie, you're the only woman who's ever talked like a grownup Cassie' well, except your Laura-

SHE BREAKS OFF. A HEAVY SILENCE.

Shit. I'm sorry, it's today isn't it?

SILENCE

Shit.

CASSIE GETS UP, GOES AND FETCHES A BOTTLE, AND TWO GLASSES, POURS THE BOTH OF THEM A SHOT.

To Laura.

THEY THROW THE DRINKS BACK

CASSIE DROPS DOWN, UNCONSCIOUS. RAEPH STARES AT HER.

ACT I

SCENE 15

SARAH COMES BACK IN WITH A GLASS OF WATER.

AFTER A WHILE.

PAUL: It's weird meeting everyone isn't it.

SARAH SHRUGS.

Can't believe the founder is a-

SARAH: A what? A girl?

PAUL: (Sighs) I don't want to fight-

SARAH: Well I do. You're wrong. People like you are why we play as boys.

PAUL: Well you shouldn't!

SARAH: Why not exactly?

PAUL: You're pretty.

SHE SNORTS A LAUGH

I mean it.

(PAUSE)

SARAH: Great.

SILENCE.

PAUL: Can't believe James is a fucking- I mean he's so strong.

SARAH: She didn't play properly.

PAUL: But she's-

SARAH: She doesn't believe. Not really, to have a whole other life, it's like cheating.

PAUL: And you've been playing full-time for-?

SARAH: For 8 years. I live on my own. My parents died when I was 6, it was bad water, from the floods, have a sister, I don't see her. Anything else you need to know?

SILENCE

PAUL: Have you ever kissed anyone?

(BEAT)

SARAH: You're joking.

PAUL: Just curious.

(PAUSE)

You, you really believe in the game don't you?

SARAH: Yes.

PAUL: I don't believe in much.

SARAH: Right.

PAUL: But y'know-

SARAH: We're here for a reason.

PAUL: Yeah, yeah, I mean-

SARAH: You believe that, yeah?

PAUL: Yeah- yeah- sure.

SILENCE. SARAH SHIVERS.

You cold?

SHE HALF NODS.

SARAH: No heaters

HE SMILES, TAKES OFF HIS JACKET, HE APPROACHES HER, SHE LOOKS FREAKED OUT.

PAUL: It's OK, it's just a coat, right?

SHE LETS HIM PUT IT AROUND HER SHOULDERS, THERE IS AN ALMOST TENDER MOMENT,

SUDDENLY PAUL HAS HER BY THE ARMS, HANDS OVER HER SLEEVES, HE TRIES TO 'FORCEFUL MAN' KISS HER- LIKE PASSIONATE MOMENTS YOU SEE IN FILMS. SHE LUNGES AWAY FROM HIM.

PAUL: Kiss me.

SARAH: What?! Get off! I don't want to!

PAUL:               Fucking kiss me!

SARAH:             You're hurting!

PAUL:               I'm not.

SARAH:             Get off! No! No!

PAUL:               Just once. We could die! We have to! I need to!

                    HE SHAKES HER HARD. THE STRUGGLE STOPS.

                    A MOMENT. THEN HE MOVES HIS HEAD IN,  
                    VERY LIGHTLY BEGINNING. HE KISSES HER,  
                    IT THEN BECOMES HARDER, HARDER STILL -  
                    THEN SUDDENLY HE JUMPS AWAY WITH A  
                    YELP- LETS GO. HIS LIP IS BLEEDING.

PAUL:               You bit me!

SARAH:             Is that not how it's supposed to go?

PAUL:               Bitch!

SARAH:             You're the one trying to get it on while someone  
                    dies.

PAUL:               Someone's always dying.

SARAH:             You're disgusting.

PAUL:               You need to get out into the real world.

SARAH:             I don't need teaching!

PAUL:               You're a kid.

SARAH:             And you're pathetic.

PAUL:               Fuck you.

SARAH:             No one wants you. You're fucking, you've run out,  
                    man, you're obsolete. You don't get it do you? You  
                    think it's all about what you kill and, and you  
                    leer and try and get into girls pants and you have  
                    no clue, and no one will ever fucking love you  
                    because you're a pig, a big, hairy, disgusting fat  
                    ginger pig-

SUDDENLY PAUL LUNGES FORWARD AND GIVES HER A RINGING BACKHAND SLAP TO THE FACE, THERE IS A LOT OF FORCE BEHIND IT, BUT SHE DOESN'T FALL DOWN. SHE STANDS, STARES.

PAUL: Fuck you! Fuck you! Did you like that huh? Want some more? This isn't the game, this is real, this is where you have nothing to fucking hide behind, and this is where I'm stronger than you. Fact. Fuck you, fuck everything, I've got nothing anyway, I've got nothing!

HE LUNGES TO SLAP HER AGAIN BUT THIS TIME SHE'S READY FOR IT. HE TRIES TO HOLD HER DOWN BUT SHE FIGHTS TOOTH AND NAIL, PAUL MANAGES TO PIN HER DOWN WITH HIS HAND OVER HER MOUTH BUT SHE BITES HIS HAND HARD, AND KICKS HIM IN THE BALLS.

SHE STANDS ABOVE HIM, PANTING, THEN SPITS ON HIM. THEN MARCHES OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF JAN.

ACT I

SCENE 15

RAEPH AND THE WOMAN WITHOUT A FACE

RAEPH: She died.

WOMAN: I'm sorry.

RAEPH: She died.

WOMAN: I know

RAEPH: I didn't know what to do.

(PAUSE)

She died right in front of me and I didn't even- I didn't even (he cries)

WOMAN: It's ok

RAEPH: It isn't! I loved her, I loved her so much and I never thought- she just- we loved the game so much, we shared it, she was always there- while we played and- she had this long, long hair. Like red, it shone, it was so beautiful, she used to tie it up and put a, a pen or a stylus through it to hold it there, when we played, when we were on a quest or something and we won, she would throw her headset down and look at me, she'd pull the pen out- her hair would sort of swing down and she'd kiss me and- and-

WOMAN: Sh... Sh.. It's OK

PAUL: She died. Right next to me. I had all the gear on, I'd been on a separate mission, just let her know how I'd done, I took the headset off and looked at her, I expected to see her smiling. But she'd... she wasn't-

WOMAN: I know.

PAUL: You're not there are you?

(PAUSE)

You've gone. And I'm all alone. And I love you, I love you so much it makes me feel sick.

(PAUSE)

I love you.

ACT I

SCENE 17

ALEX, JAN, SARAH AND PAUL ARE SAT  
AROUND A TABLE IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM.

FI IS STANDING A WAY OFF, WATCHING  
THEM, CRYING.

ALEX: This is why I'm here. Why you are too. Should I  
destroy the World?

(PAUSE)

I have the server cloud down, all of it; I can wipe  
it in a second.

JAN: Why would you want to?

ALEX: I need to put it down. Put it out of its misery

SARAH: We're not miserable

ALEX: (Sighs) I wrote the World, I wrote it so that  
people could have a chance to be somewhere else. I  
thought by being somewhere else they would see  
where they are, for what it is. So many people just  
think the world isn't their responsibility, think  
they can go through it, taking what they want, but  
also thinking that it owes them.

SARAH: What, like the environment?

ALEX: Well, that yes, but other things too, politics,  
government, the wars that happen, the people that  
die, that are hurt. They walk along thinking about  
what they're going to have for tea as someone's  
death is announced over the tannoy, and all they're  
annoyed about the delay.

PAUL: It's not our-

ALEX: It should be your problem. The reason the world  
works is because of what people put in, without the  
people it would be nothing. But I'm not comfortable  
that no one has seen that, that the irony of it has  
just passed them-

SARAH: Fucking irony!

ALEX: Yes.

SARAH: There is no irony. Only this world- this grey  
shitty spit of earth that rejected us- the floods

washed away anything I felt for this world, these 'people'. So I ran away. Found The World. Found the legend- I dug and I dug and I found the clues that you left, I have spent my whole life getting to this moment-I wrote that book- the one on the forums, yeah? That was me. And then I was chosen, and now, now you're telling me it means shit to you.

ALEX: It matters to me when people die. People die.

SARAH: They love it, yeah? They *live* there.

ALEX: They die there too.

PAUL: There are worse ways to go.

ALEX: I killed her, so many others.

PAUL: You have no idea- she loved the World.

ALEX: I have blood on my hands.

SARAH: So fucking what? This is just about your fucking conscience, yeah? Well don't worry. We're already dying. We're already dead. Nothing to do with you, can't you just let us have a life in whatever's left?

ALEX: You've just put too much of yourself into the other world- and that world- it's not real, no matter how much time you spend on it.

SARAH: There's nothing here either!

ALEX: People have been saying that things are beyond saving for too long, just because an idea or, or a challenge is big, doesn't mean you can't match it. Revolutions happen, that's proof, but there are little revolutions, every day, little steps that make a difference, and they change the world.

PAUL: You have no idea how it works.

ALEX: Every time we wake up we have the chance to make a difference- tell someone we love them, realise that we're part of something bigger- we all breathe the same air- drink the same water. We've spent so long concentrating on the little stories, that we've forgotten about the big ones- no- not religion or anything, just... we used to have big stories- ones that explained everything. I'm not saying they can

be explained- but I am saying we still need a big story- one about all of us. Well I wanted people to see that that story is society, and-

JAN: It's not a story, it's a dream. It's all a dream.

ALEX: It's *real*.

JAN: None of it's real.

ALEX: They're using you; they're using you as vessels, making money out of you

JAN: How is that different to real life?

ALEX: You don't know what you're-

JAN: Yes. I do. You know I'm a part-timer. I do both worlds. And I can tell you now, they're as real as each other. You think society isn't a dream? It's all made up, built on imaginary things, imaginary money, ideals, laws. You show me an atom of a law, or of justice, a piece of proof that isn't made up by us. It works because everyone plays along. If people wanted to rise up, have a revolution or whatever, no one could stop it, you'd need 3 police to every civilian to stop that, so they use stories don't they? Well it's up to us what stories we read.

(PAUSE)

ALEX: I wanted to help; I wanted to show people the worth of it all.

PAUL: We see it, that's why we play.

ALEX: There's someone out there for you- there's hundreds and thousands and millions of people out there who need you.

(PAUSE)

You need to let go.

(PAUSE)

JAN: I think you should keep it.

SILENCE

Who are you to tell people how to live their lives?

ALEX: I just want you to see!

JAN: Most people won't. That's not their job. If everyone saw the big picture nothing would ever get done.

ALEX: You think the game should stay?

JAN: It's a refuge. They took our stories. They made them about money, all of it, about buying things to make yourself worth more. These games are about taking our stories back. It might inspire people. Or they might die. But they were walking dead before, there's a reason why they turned. You have their hearts. You tried to give us somewhere else, but we made ourselves someone else, if you take that, you're killing all of us.

ALEX: Sarah,

SARAH: My name is Kite.

ALEX: There's a whole world out-

SARAH: Are you going to listen to us or not?

ALEX: You, you know there's a bigger plan.

SARAH: I- I believed in you, we all did. But we were wrong weren't we? We knew it couldn't just be the world- here had to be more-right? A bigger plan, it was too perfect to just stay as it is. You had a plan, you wrote it in the very code. But it's not your world, is it? Not anymore. It's ours.

ACT I

SCENE 18

NOWHERE. EVERYWHERE.

CASSIE: I'm not saying, I'm not saying you don't get people who take it too far, but isn't that true of all of life?

JAN: I play, that's what I do, it's a game, a version of me I try on for part of the day. No different to when I'm a mother, a grandmother, a wife, a bus passenger. Every time I put on a different skin.

PAUL: I'd never had much luck with girls, never much luck. I could never do that thing, that thing you're supposed to do, translate what you want into the words that are supposed to help you get it. I'd see these guys, these real dickheads, they'd always be chatting shit, absolute shit about girls, real filthy, disrespectful stuff, and then they'd be with girls, acting like normal people, listening, making them laugh, being 'sensitive'. It wasn't fair. It was like there was a book somewhere, the lines to a script I'd never read.

KITE: It's my life. It's always been my life. People are always there for me. I'm real there. When I walk around out of game, I feel like I'm in a dream, like this is the dream. I walk around with my head down and get where I need to be as fast as I can.

RAEPH: The World freed me up. I was able, I was able to worry about less, I was already good looking, already strong. I was the alpha; I had the stats to prove it. And I - I met her in the plains, she was gathering rare flowers.

CASSIE: It's not just the system of immersion- it's more than that, it's the system of immersion we have built into us already. Stories sell. Someone said that to me once, some guy in PR, trying to chat me up. Stories sell. But it's true isn't it? We learn through stories, we keep ourselves safe, protect our children, convince ourselves - we evolved because we could predict the future, see all the different things the future could be, and adjust our behaviour accordingly.

RAEPH: It was a proper love story. A proper one. Better than the movies, because it was me, it was me.

JAMES: When I play as James. I am strong. Oh I'm a strong woman, my family listens to me. But as James-it's different.

KITE: Sure I've had friends who have died, was hospitalised myself once. But I got what I was fighting for, right? I hung on in time to get this well rare artefact, and I guess it was the danger, the hard work, it made it worth it.

PAUL: I lost my wife. She died. She was sitting next to me.

CASSIE: And these stories, these are stories we're writing ourselves.

JAMES: When I am James I don't need to raise my voice, I don't need to announce my power, I just have it, my power is in silence, in inaction. Its power I don't have to fight for. It is the power of being a man, and I like that.

KITE: So they brought in the warnings, the time limits, but these things can be hacked. You still have to be careful, if you're under 16, they brought in this law or something, they can watch you, take you into care if you play too much.

PAUL: She was sitting next to me. She had a heart attack. Dehydration. We'd been playing all weekend. I was on a different quest, working hard.

KITE: This is how I choose to spend my life. It's my life isn't it? Some people still smoke don't they, drink, eat too much, this is way less dangerous than that. So why do people treat us like freaks?

PAUL: When I came back to her- it was like they say but you never believed. She was just hanging there, a faint smile on her face. But empty. I couldn't take off the head gear. I knew something had happened. But I froze. I froze.

JAN: This game gives me something that the real world never could, it gives me the chance to disappear. Someone else to come forward.

CASSIE IS CENTRE STAGE AS AT THE  
BEGINNING. SHE HAS JUST FINISHED  
LAUGHING.

CASSIE:

OK, so that's the about me bit, now... ok, why do I play 'The World'. (PAUSE) That's a big one isn't it? Well there's a lot spoken about online worlds, a lot spoken by people who don't know much, and a lot spoken by the kind of people who like to shout about it. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle, where the rest of us live. And we do live. My life is no less for the way I spend it. I'm not one of those people that says there's no difference, there is, of course there is. All the sensory and pressure technology in the world couldn't make it feel like real life, technology right now anyway. But I mean 'is it real' all depends on your idea of realness doesn't it? People are scared of it, they either get it, or they're scared, they say it's weird, or they feel sorry for you. I think they're scared, though, because they can see, just see a little bit why we want to do it. You start again, you take control, and you go to a place where you know the rules. You work hard, you get better, you plant something, it grows. Real needs proof, doesn't it? Real is cause and effect. You get that. You see that you put stuff in, and get stuff out. I'm not going to apologise for feeling more alive in a world with sunshine, and trees and running streams. With people who stop and talk to you. I do feel more alive there, because that's where I live, because there, living means something. And I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm thankful. I'm really grateful. I want to meet the founder, just to say thank you. Thank you for giving me all of this. For letting me breathe. Thank you for letting me be someone else. For letting me be myself.

THE LIGHT FLICKERS OUT LIKE IT DOES IN  
A SCREEN.

THE END.