



GAME NARRATIVE
SUMMIT

The Lives of Others: How NPCs Can Increase Player Empathy

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE March 14–18, 2016 · Expo: March 16–18, 2016 #GDC16



FORGET
PROTAGONISTS:
WRITING NPCs
WITH AGENCY



MR. RENTAL











- Production methods for creating more NPC-focused content
- Writing techniques for NPC characterization
- Humanizing enemy NPCs

HOMEFRONT

FARCRY4

RAINBOW 6
PATRIOTS

ASSASSIN'S
—CREED—
SYNDICATE

SHAPEUP

FOR
HONOR

HOMEFRONT
THE REVOLUTION



PRESS  TO SKIP



PRODUCTION METHODS

- **Production Plan**
- **Micro-Personalities**
- **Call-and-Response Lines**



FARCRY 3



NORTH ISLAND

ROOK ISLANDS

SOUTH ISLAND

LEGEND

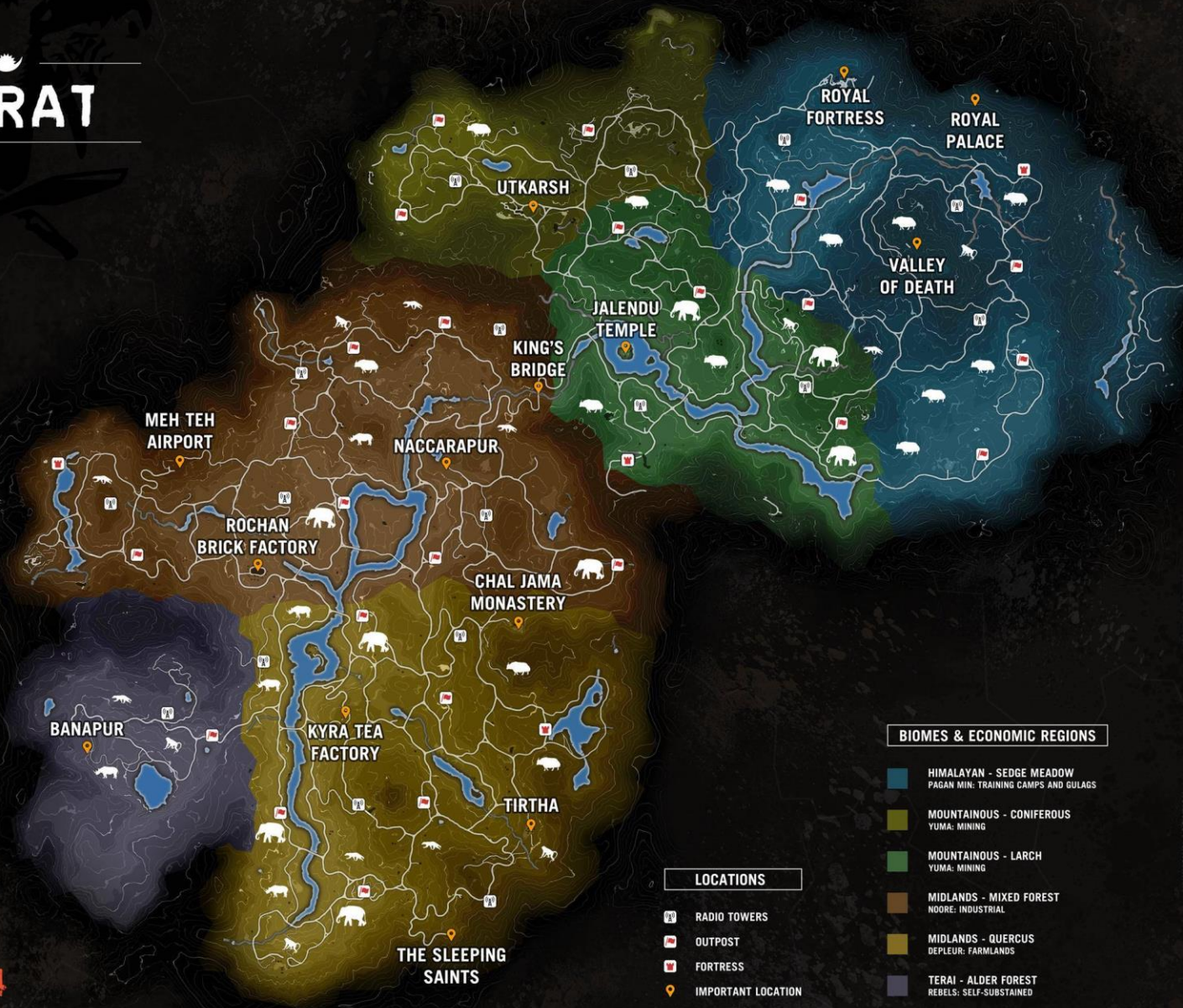
- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Global Activities | Safehouse |
| Shooting Challenge | Radio Towers |
| Racing | Region Borders |
| Knife Throwing | |

0 0.5 km 1 km 1.5 km 2 km 2.5 km



KYRAT

FARCRY4



LOCATIONS

- RADIO TOWERS
- OUTPOST
- FORTRESS
- IMPORTANT LOCATION

BIOMES & ECONOMIC REGIONS

- HIMALAYAN - SEDGE MEADOW
PAGAN MIN: TRAINING CAMPS AND GULAGS
- MOUNTAINOUS - CONIFEROUS
YUMA: MINING
- MOUNTAINOUS - LARCH
YUMA: MINING
- MIDLANDS - MIXED FOREST
NOORE: INDUSTRIAL
- MIDLANDS - QUERCUS
DEPLEUR: FARMLANDS
- TERA - ALDER FOREST
REBELS: SELF-SUBSTAINED

ANIMALS

KNOWN LOCATION

- ELEPHANT
- YAK
- RHINO
- MACAQUE
- HONEY BADGER

UNKNOWN LOCATION

- TIGER
- WOLF
- TIBETAN WOLF
- DHOLE
- BEAR
- WILD BOAR
- WILD PIG
- DEER
- BHARAL
- DEMON FISH
- SNOW LEOPARD
- TAPIR
- PYTHON



NORMAL



CHARGER



SNIPER/RPG



HEAVY



HERBIVORE



PREDATOR



7.5x



ZOOM IN



ZOOM OUT



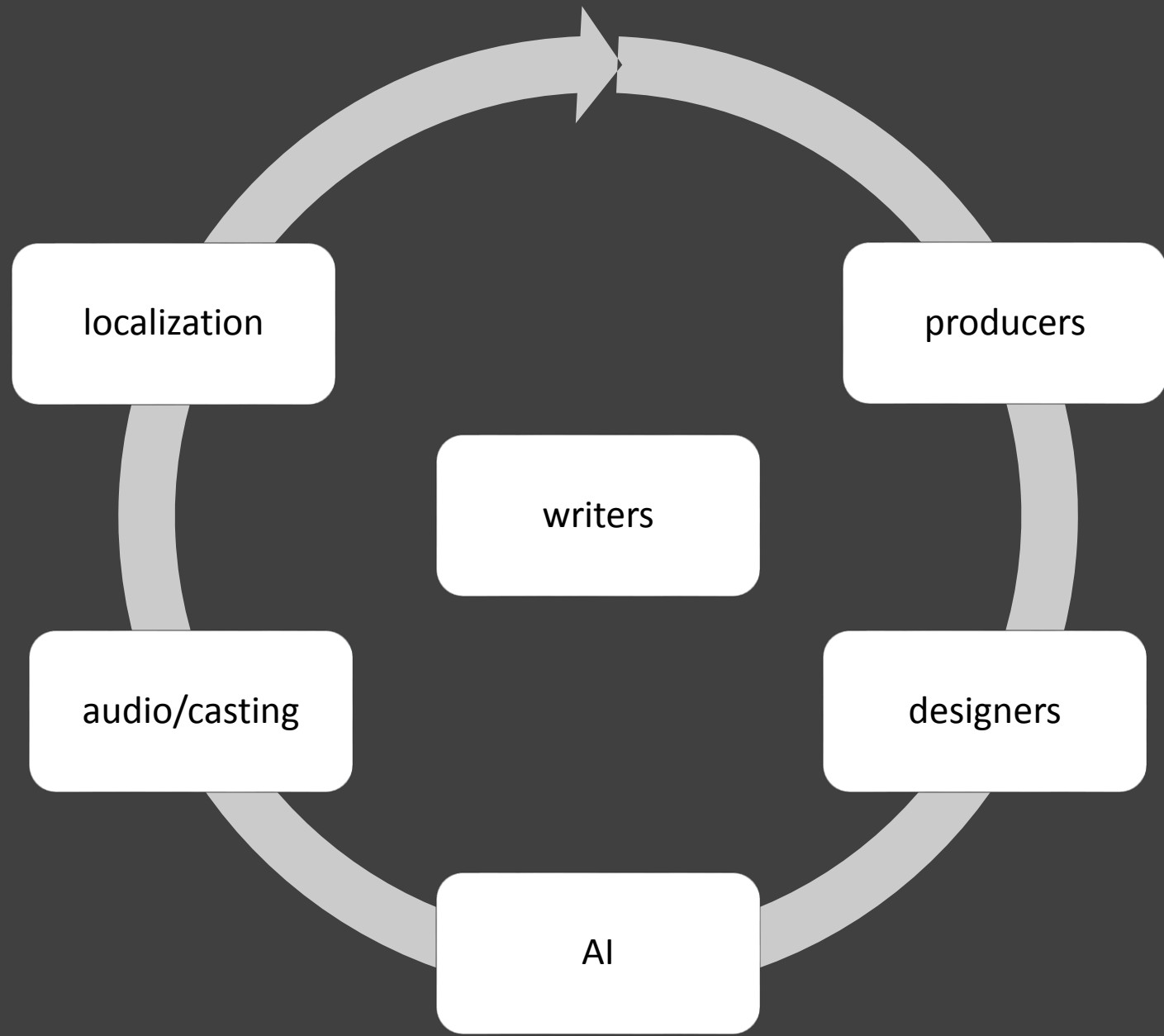
TAKE PICTURE

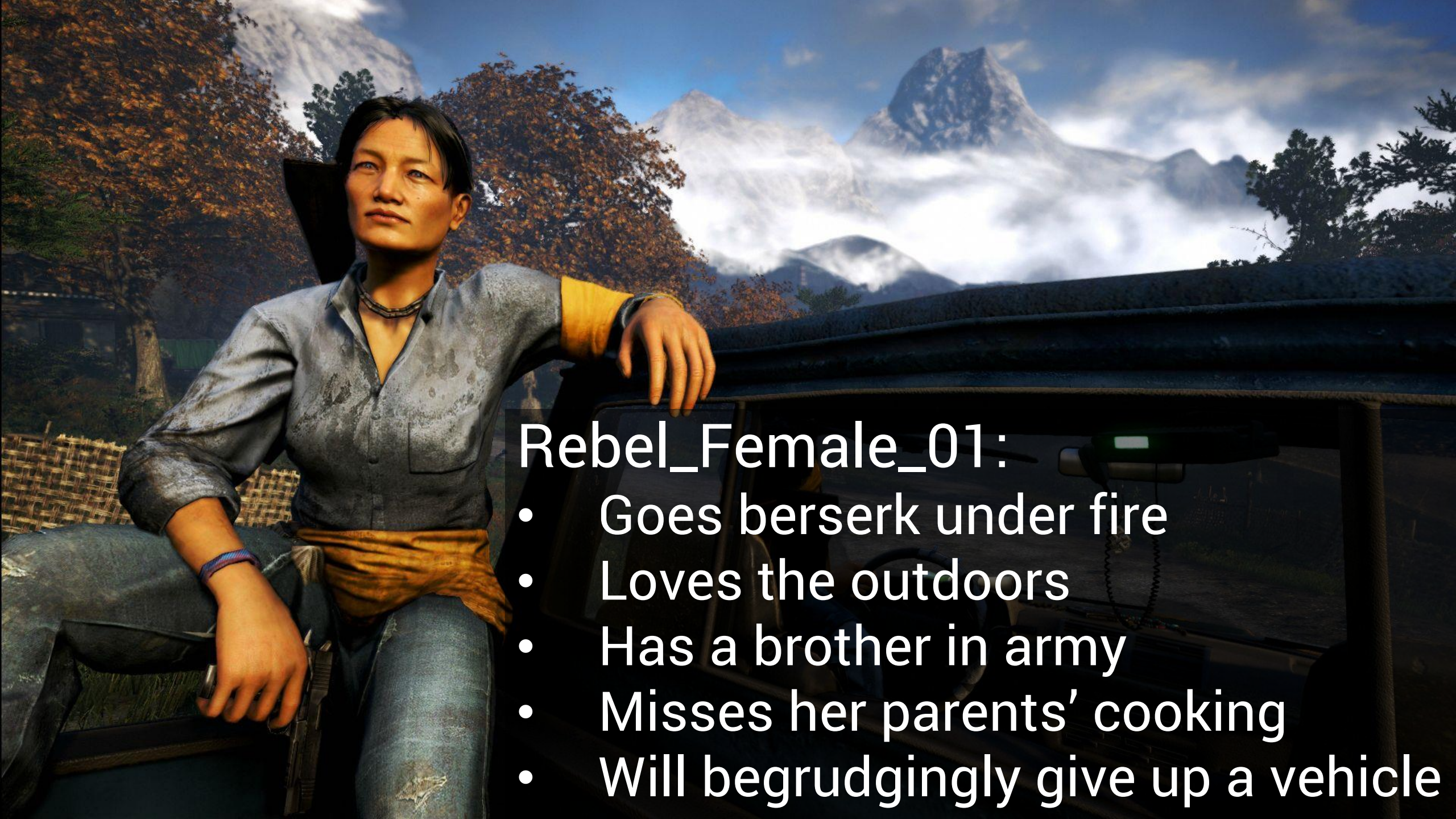


HOLSTER









Rebel_Female_01:

- Goes berserk under fire
- Loves the outdoors
- Has a brother in army
- Misses her parents' cooking
- Will begrudgingly give up a vehicle

COMBAT BARKS

IDLE FILLER



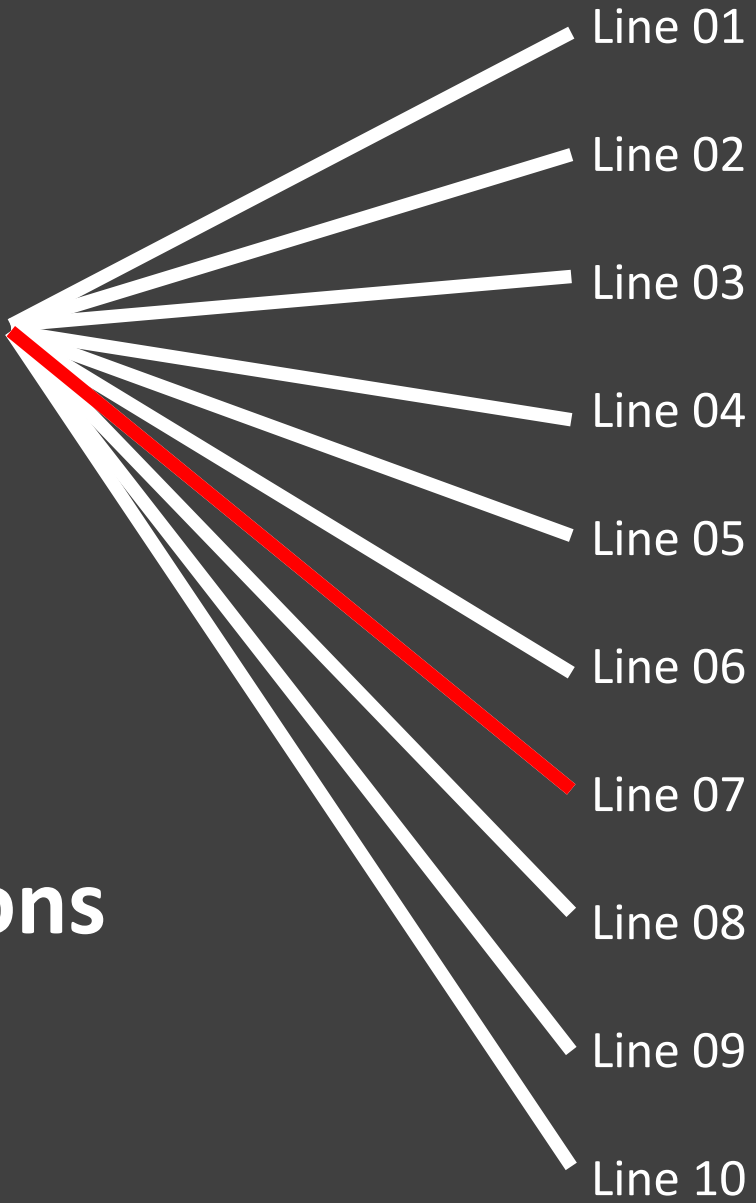
I'M ALTERING THE DEAL

PRAY

I DON'T ALTER IT ANY FURTHER

NPC A

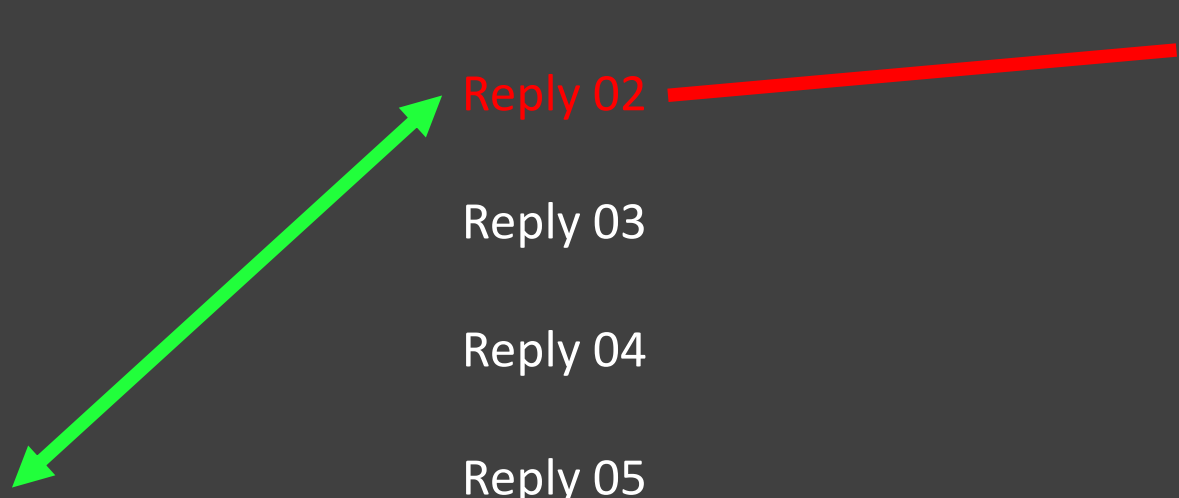
War
Home
Family
Food
Gear
Rain
Night
Locations



NPC B

Reply 01
Reply 02
Reply 03
Reply 04
Reply 05

Family



▲
19
▼



Far Cry 4 Enemies/Location/NPCs Thoughts (self.farcry)

submitted 1 year ago by stylz168

I was a little late jumping on the game, was distracted by MCC. Now that I started playing Far Cry, I can't stop laughing at the commentary of the enemies and the NPCs. They are speaking in actual Hindi, and as an Indian, I find it hilarious.

Far Cry 4 > General Discussions > Topic Details



EbonHawk ▼

Jan 25, 2015 @ 11:54pm

What are your favorite NPC quotes?

I have two:

When fighting some bad guys, one of the Golden Path blueshirts will scream, "You have pretty skin! Would you like me to remove it for you?!?!"

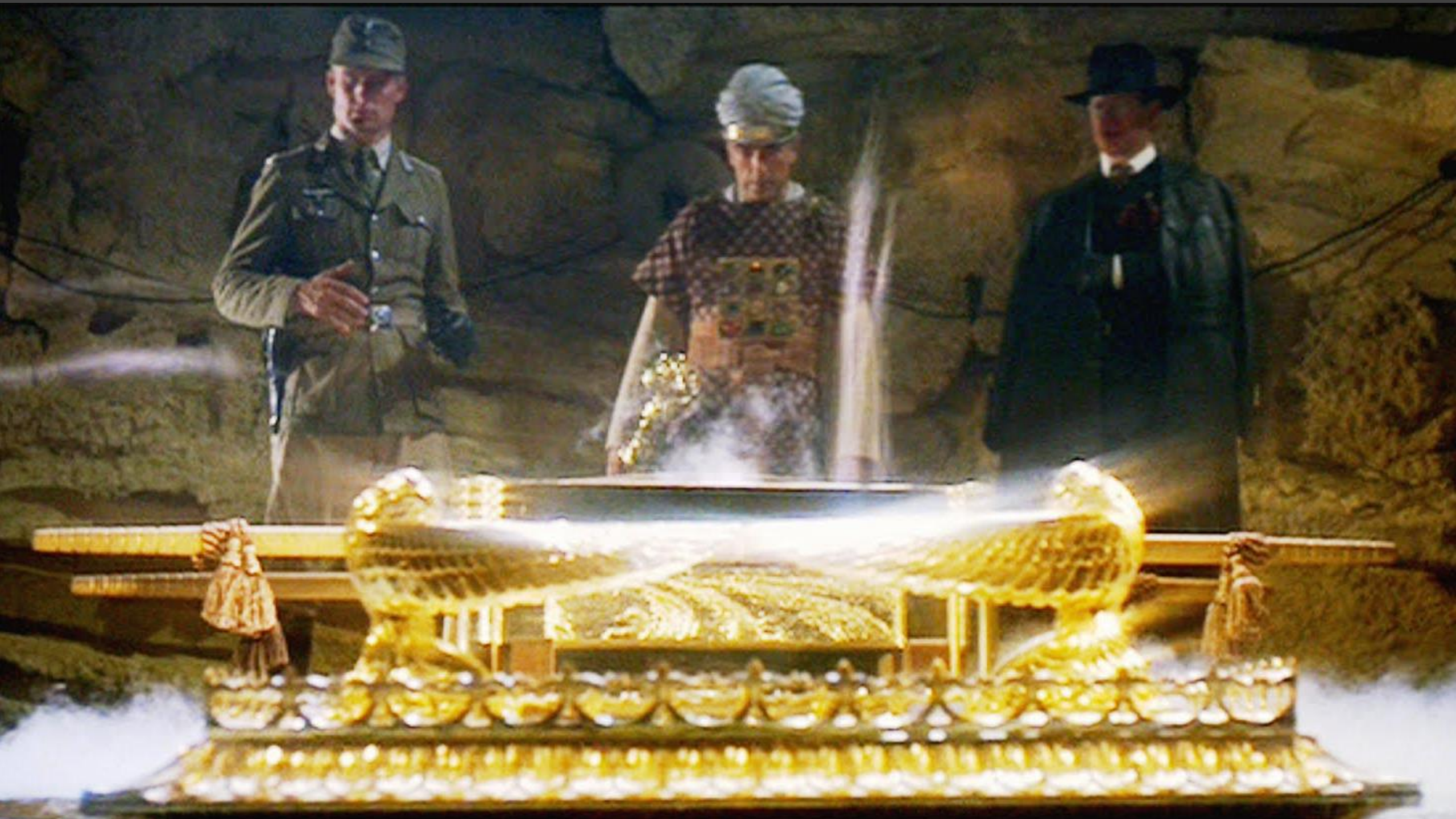
Or: "Scream!! Scream for me, so I can hear how you will sound in Hell!!!!"

Classics. :-D Makes me laugh every time.

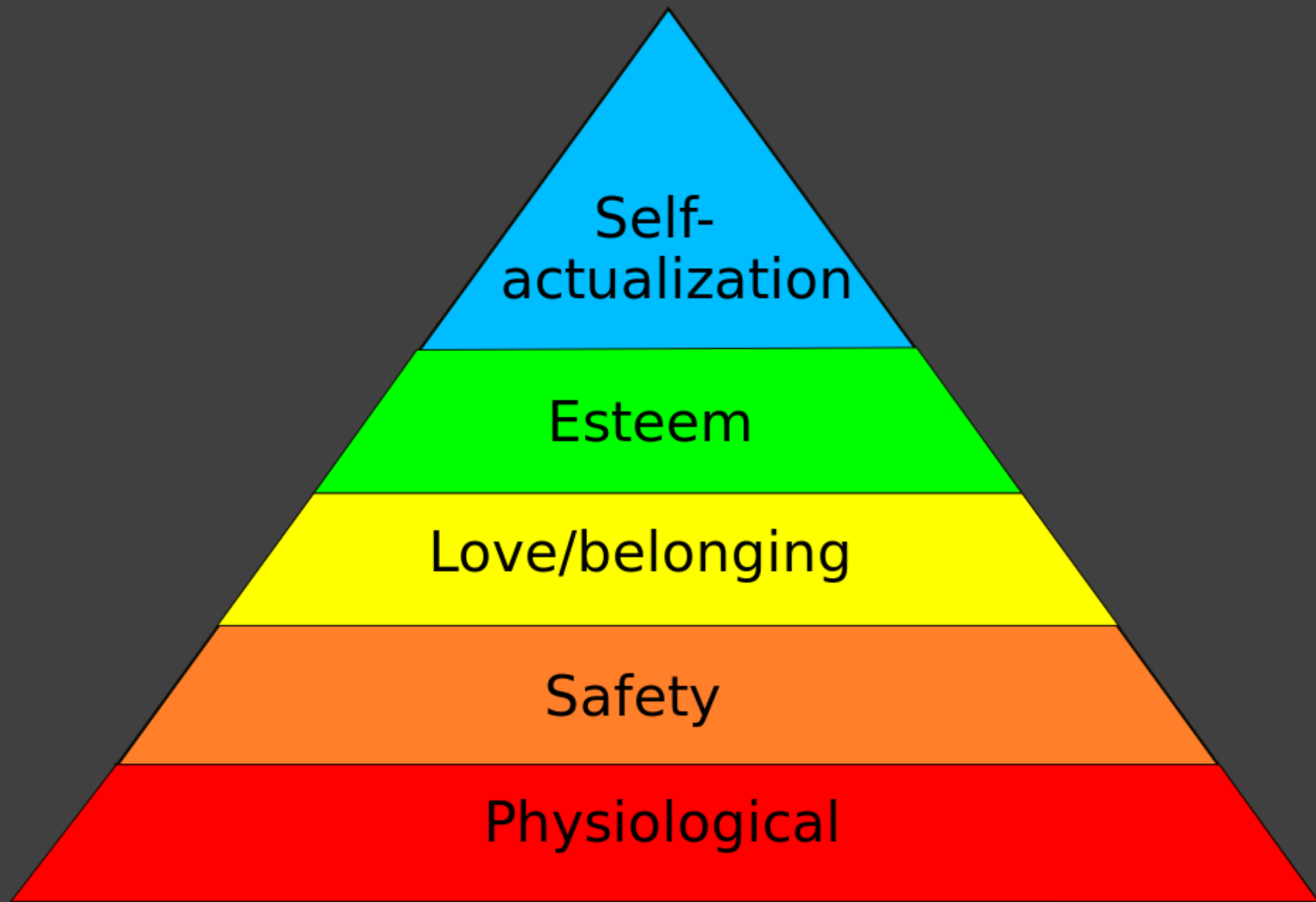


NPC CHARACTERIZATION

- **Wants**
- **Needs**
- **Desires and Beyond**









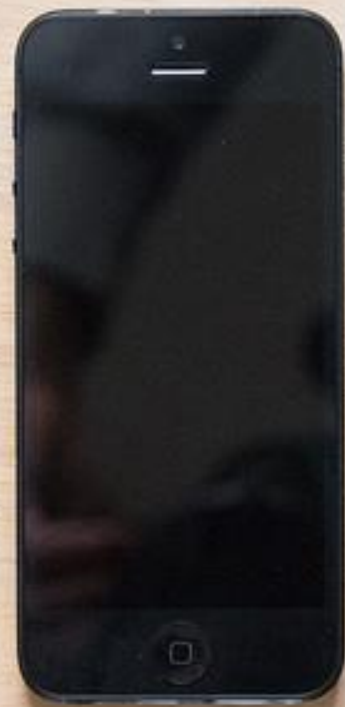
NARRATIVE CONTENT + SOCIAL SIMULATIONS

Mitu Khandaker-Kokoris
“Thinking About **People**: Designing
Games for Social Simulation”



DREAMS

DREAMS ARE LIKE RAINBOWS. ONLY IDIOTS CHASE THEM.





Tim O'Brien

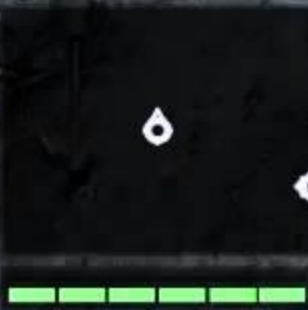
THE THINGS
THEY CARRIED

"A marvel of storytelling . . . a vital, important book — a book that matters
not only to the reader interested in Vietnam, but to anyone interested
in the craft of writing as well." — NEW YORK TIMES





+ 0

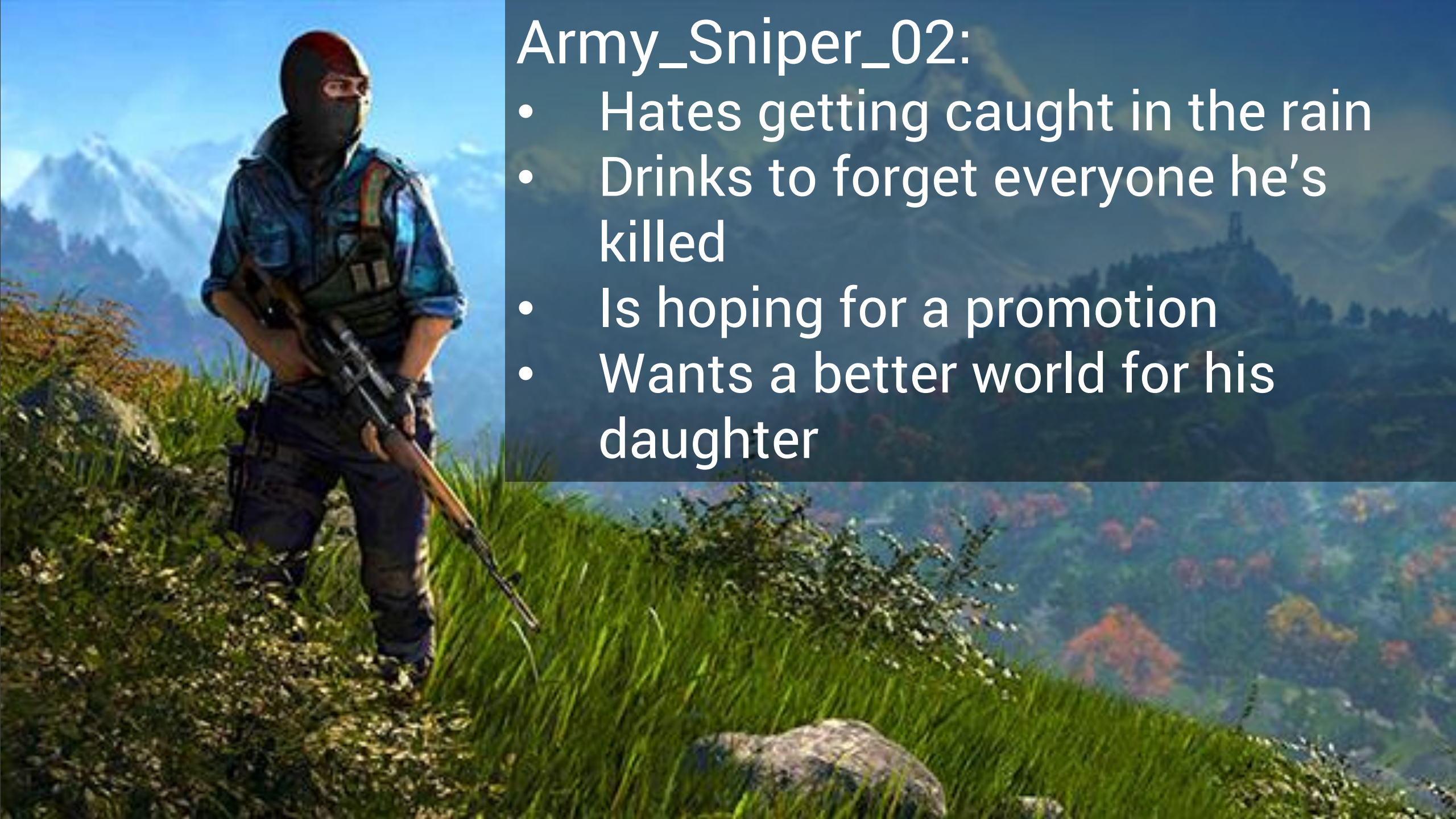


12

300

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

- **Micro-Personalities (Again)**
- **Othering**
- **Gotchas! vs Guilt**



Army_Sniper_02:

- Hates getting caught in the rain
- Drinks to forget everyone he's killed
- Is hoping for a promotion
- Wants a better world for his daughter



Eager

Scared

Sociopath

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman

ON KILLING

The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society

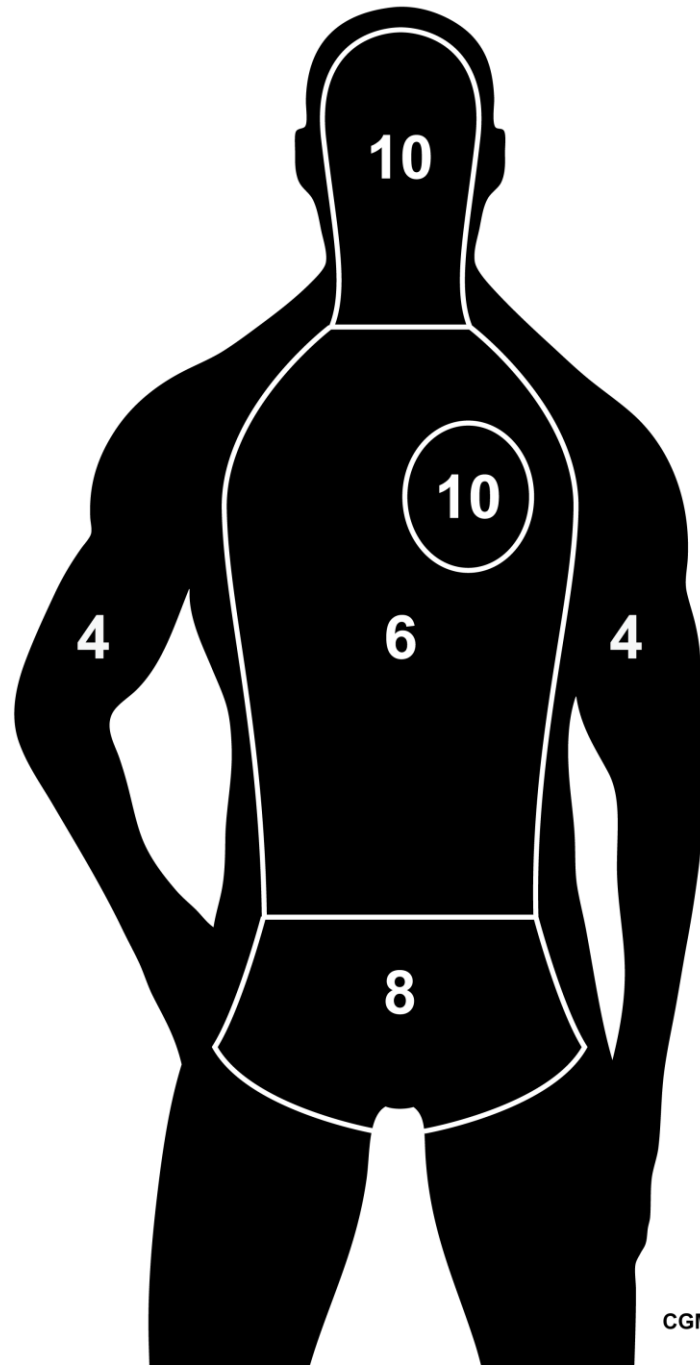
"An illuminating account of how soldiers learn to kill and how they live with the experience of having killed."

—WASHINGTON POST

Revised and Updated













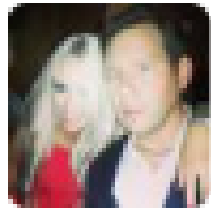
Makarov: Remember - no Russian.



Who are you? What is your name?



The US military does not condone the killing of unarmed combatants. But this isn't real, so why should you care?



Cliff Bleszinski ✓

@therealcliffyb



Following

A bad guy said something about his family in his death throes in Far Cry 4 tonight I don't need that kind of guilt in my murder simulator!

RETWEETS

23

LIKES

96



10:47 PM - 20 Nov 2014



Dearest Ekaterina,
May this letter find you well.

My thoughts are troubled this night.
I believe our leader, Lazarevic, has
gone mad in his want of the Cintamani
Stone.




In secret, I have begun to assemble a
band of like-minded men - men of firm
resolve, and sure of hand - to end this
barbaric quest.

I beg you, kiss our Julia.



And tell Misha that he
is daddy's treasure.





"I wrote one about this guy getting back together with his ex-girlfriend... Someone on the team pointed out that 'hey idiot, this is someone you are about to shoot in the head, not deliver flowers to,' so we decided, let's not go down that route. We had to cut out the dialog and make it more informative. We had to make sure the bad guys felt like bad guys so the player isn't as emotionally conflicted about the gameplay."

from Rob Auten's interview with Polygon

<http://www.polygon.com/features/2015/3/11/8187373/battlefield-hardline-and-the-silent-agony-of-villains>

THE WIRE®

THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON



LISTEN CAREFULLY

**FAKE COPS
REAL TROUBLE**



**LET'S BE
COPS**

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX PRESENTS A LUKE GREENFIELD / KINGBERG GENRE PRODUCTION A LUKE GREENFIELD FILM "LET'S BE COPS"
DAEMON WAXMANS JR., JAKE JOHNSON, ROB RIGGLE, NINA DOBBY, JAMES D'ARCY AND ANDY GARCIA REUNITE DEBRA MCGUIRE AND CHRISTOPHE BECK & JAKE MONACO EDITOR JOHN HOULIHAN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JONATHAN SCHWARTZ, BILL PANKOVIC & C. PRODUCED BY WILLIAM ARNOLD DIRECTED BY DARYN OKADA COSTUME DESIGNER NICHOLAS THOMAS MUSIC BY ADITYA SIDDHARTHA SAMUELS EDITOR SIMON KINGBERG EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LUKE GREENFIELD
PRODUCED BY LUKE GREENFIELD & NICHOLAS THOMAS

AUGUST 13





TAKEAWAYS

- Use your NPCs to tell truths about the world,
 - AND HAVE A PRODUCTION PLAN TO ACCOMMODATE THE INCREASED WRITING
- Give them their own personalities and agendas,
 - BECAUSE MOST PLAYERS GRAVITATE TOWARD WELL-DEVELOPED CHARACTERS
- Offer them a degree of agency.
 - BECAUSE THEY WILL ADD LIFE TO THE WORLD IN INTERESTING AND EMERGENT WAYS
- Acknowledge the humanity of your enemies,
 - BECAUSE VIOLENCE WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE IS MEANINGLESS
- Allow players to feel responsible for their actions.
 - BECAUSE EMPATHY AND COMPLEX EMOTIONS HELP THE INDUSTRY TO MATURE

thank you

special thanks to:

brie code

meg jayanth

susan o'connor

richard dansky

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