

ESCAPING REALITY

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EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Aaron, 30's, overweight and disheveled, slowly drags his body out of his rust covered vehicle.

Walking past the car his phone VIBRATES in his pocket. He pulls the phone from his sweater pocket while ascending the steep, cracked stairway to the third floor. The screen shows a text from Shelly.

SHELLY (TEXT)  
Is everything ok?

AARON (TEXT)  
Yeah, I just got fired!

SHELLY (TEXT)  
What? Why?

Reaching the third floor he trudges his way past window after window. Moving his thumb back and forth across the phone screen he settles on the dial screen and calls Shelly.

The call connects, and he listens to her RINGBACK TONE until she angrily answers and demands to know what happened

AARON  
My coworkers spilled the beans on my theft. Police were called. I was escorted out. No charges ...

SHELLY (V.O.)  
What the hell were you stealing?

AARON  
Computer Mice, Keyboards, Monitors, Tablets, and a few small printers.

Finally reaching his door he puts his key in and fights the latch.

SHELLY (V.O.)  
What the FUCK? Computer Mice? Why?

The lock CLICKS, he throws the door open and quickly rushes inside SLAMMING the door behind him.

AARON  
I'll explain later. I'm at my house now and I'm gonna relax for a while.

He hangs up before she can respond.

## INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Powering down the phone he tosses it into the corner. The phone lands with a loud THUNK onto a wooden table in the corner next to the sofa. The room is littered with boxes, cardboard, foam shells, and plastic - the remains of packaging for the products he had been stealing. Along with a tall tower of computer mice still in their original packages.

Aaron wanders into the kitchen.

## INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Reaching into the refrigerator he pulls out expired milk and some leftovers.

Turning, he shoves the food into the microwave.

Waiting for the food to heat he grabs a relatively cleanish cup from the counter and pours the milk.

The microwave BEEPS, he pulls out his lonely meal, snags a fork and retreats to his game room with his food and drink.

## INT. APARTMENT GAME ROOM - DAY

On the wall is a vast assortment of screens, monitors, and tablets arranged to transform the entire wall into one vast display. In the corner sits a giant throne of keyboards - still under construction.

Sitting in his favorite, musky chair he quickly inhales his food while the soothing lights and sounds of his system come to life.

The room is illuminated only by the enormous screen as he has blacked out the windows.

Using his customized control station he selects a game.

When the game menu appears he selects a campaign to play, and begins scrolling through the list of groups to play with.

AARON

Won't be playing with the bastards  
that turned me in today. I wonder  
if anyone on here is worthy of my  
assistance.

Opting to play alone with a team of NPCs he than selects his character. Choosing his female hafling, JULIE for this adventure.

While the game prepares he dawns his headset, before relaxing into the grimy chair.

BLACK - TITLES

Welcome player Julie.

Your adventure begins in ...

5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1

Enjoy.

EXT. GAME ENVIRONEMT - DUSK

The avatar of Julie appears standing in a clearing with several other characters. There was a YOUNG HUMAN, female, 20's, barbarian in furs and carrying a large hammer. A DWARF, male, 40's, burly and covered in leather armor, bearing a shield, and a large axe. Finally, an ELF, female, 30's, an erotic dream brought to life wielding a crossbow rounded out the group.

While surveying his environment and teammates a deep rumbling GROWL pierces the air.

JULIE

What the hell was that?

The group quickly forms up in the center of the clearing each facing out. Everyone draws their respective weapons ready to face whatever is coming.

Another GROWL shakes the air, deeper, and far more primal than before.

And another.

And another

Each louder, and closer than the one preceding it.

DWARF

I know not what manner of beast  
approacheth, but it shall taste the  
steal of my blade.

ELF

Agreed. This creature shall not  
continue to stalk the ...

The human in the group SCREAMS and drops his weapon in terror  
as he points uphill.

A large silhouette appears in the forest with fiercely  
glowing purple eyes. It approaches quickly and the group  
jumps collectively at its loudest ROAR yet. Leaping over the  
clearing and CRASHING to the ground nearby. Creating a crater  
as it lands.

The creature glares at the party from across the clearing.  
Its deep purple eyes are set within a scarred face, resting  
at the end of a long draconian body covered in alternating  
layers of thick, black fur and shimmering white scales.

DWARF

(cheerily)  
Tis a Manticore! We shall dine  
well this eve.

The human manages to pick up his weapon just as the beast  
lunges at the group.

ELF

(gleefully)  
Have at thee!

The beast covers the clearing in moments, and uses its tail  
to sweep them from their feet.

DWARF

I shall not be felled so easily  
Beast.

As he falls the dwarf deftly launches his axe at the  
creatures wing.

The Manticore moves too quickly and the weapon misses.

The Dwarfs axe lodges deeply into the side of a tree.

JULIE

Everyone, regain your footing so  
that we might prove a true  
challenge to our foe.

No one hears her cry as they slowly stagger upright, winded  
from the strength of the blow which had lain them flat.

DWARF

It comes round again for a second  
pass, we must not let it...

He is interrupted as the creature effortlessly batters him  
away, causing him to fly across the clearing and land against  
a tree with a resounding THUD.

The Dwarf lies limp and unmoving in the thrush.

HUMAN

(terrified)  
It killed the Dwarf! What do we  
...

He is silenced as he is impaled through the chest by a long  
claw.

JULIE

Our numbers are dwindling. We must  
retreat if we wish to live.

JULIE moves to position herself between the enraged monster  
and her companions. Quickly reciting the appropriate  
incantation she lets loose a powerful energy blast which  
would stun the enemy.

Nothing.

No energy blast comes forth.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Oh SHIT! I forgot Julie can't use  
magic!

The beast focuses on the small halfling and a monstrous smile  
tears across its face as it swiftly approaches.

JULIE (CONT'D)

(deciding to lay it on thick)  
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEK!

In moments Julie's cries cease as her body goes lax beneath  
the teeth of the brute.

**BLACK - TITLES**

GAME OVER

INT. APARTMENT GAME ROOM - NIGHT

AARON

FUCK! How could I have been so  
careless.

On the giant display he watches the replay as the team is  
slowly consumed or decimated by the beast.

AARON (CONT'D)

I'll have to try that one again  
with my Elven Wizard tomorrow.