SUMMER 2025



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Will peace ever prevail on the Thai - Cambodian border?

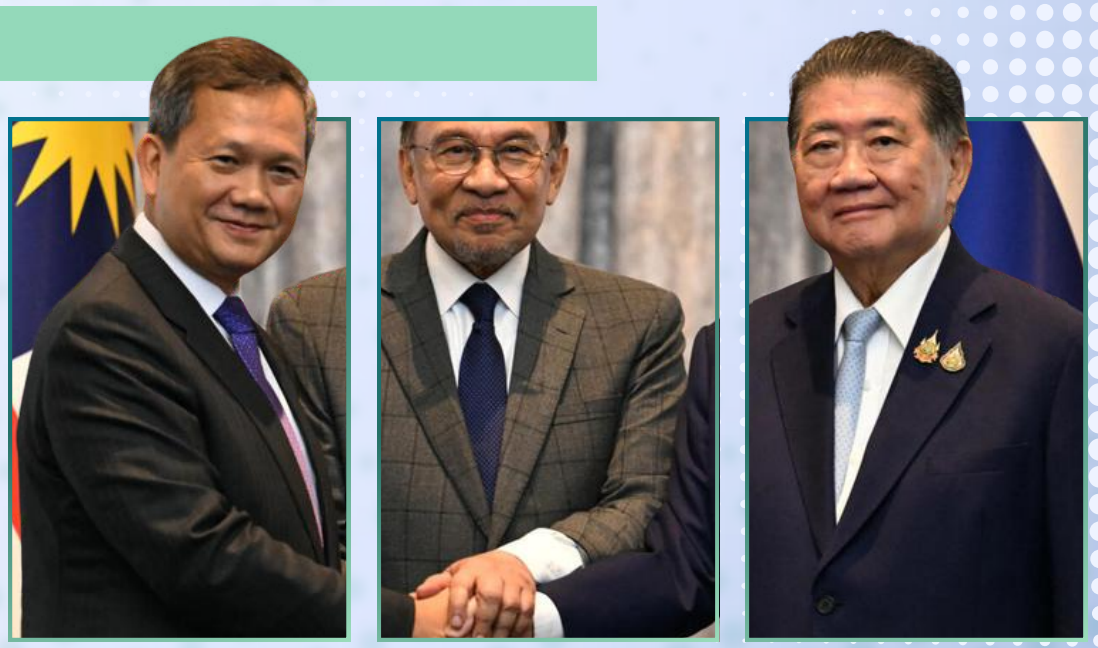
On July 24, 2025, Thailand and Cambodia entered open conflict over a long-term border dispute, exchanging gunfire and airstrikes. This strife marks the deadliest clash between the two countries in over a decade, representing months of simmering tension.

History

The border controversy between Cambodia and Thailand stemmed from the 1904 and 1907 Franco-Siamese treaties that left sections of the border undemarcated (mapped improperly) and controversy over French maps differentiating from on-paper treaty agreements (Strangio).

Even as technical disputes over cartography persist — Cambodia identifying itself with colonial French maps and committing itself towards Thai charts — the controversy is stoked by nationalist passions. Cambodian identity coheres within a “fear of extinction” as a result of territorial loss since the end of the Angkor Empire, a narrative fortified during the period of French protectorate rule, while Thai nationalism entails pride in having evaded European colonization along with memories of “national humiliation” over lost territories at the hands of the West (Barnett et al.).

By Mutita Nou



Current Situation

On the 28th of May, 2025, a brief exchange of fire occurred near the Emerald Triangle, resulting in the death of a Cambodian soldier (Fresh News Asia). Both nations accused each other of initiating the skirmish, making it the first direct clash since 2014.

Subsequently, tensions escalated with both sides mobilizing troops and artillery towards the border. Cambodia sent heavy munitions to the Preah Vihear and Odor Meanchey provinces, while Thailand imposed border restrictions and closed trade routes (National Ministry of Defense, Cambodia).



After a short period of relative de-escalation, a significant political event occurred in the morning of June 23, 2025. The Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated a protest against a leaked recording of a phone call between former Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, which Thailand deemed a ...

breach of diplomatic etiquette (Khmer Times).



In the call, Paetongtarn referred to Hun Sen as her “uncle”. She asked for his sympathy and promised to handle any political requests. She also criticized a Thai military commander (unnamed) for being uncooperative. The leak sparked public anger in Thailand (Khmer Times).

Consequentially, the leak caused the collapse of a Thai coalition partner, raised accusations of undermining national sovereignty amongst the public, and suspended the Thai prime minister Paetongtarn from office by the Thai constitutional court. This was followed by a series of domestic protests, whilst the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen faced national scrutiny and criticism (The Guardian).







In July 2025, the longstanding border tensions between Cambodia and Thailand escalated into a full-scale conflict, with intense fighting near the disputed Ta Muen Thom Temple. Both sides accused each other of initiating the hostilities, which quickly escalated into artillery exchanges and airstrikes. The fighting continued fiercely over several days until July 28th when a ceasefire was brokered and took effect at midnight, facilitated by Malaysia, the United States, and China. Following the ceasefire, high-level talks in Kuala Lumpur involved Cambodian and Thai defense officials alongside international observers, aiming to solidify the agreement and prevent further clashes, though tensions remained fragile (Karuppannan).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR

According to Reuters, as of August 2025, the Thailand–Cambodia border conflict has resulted in at least 43 confirmed deaths and the displacement of over 300,000 civilians. The casualties include military personnel and civilians from both nations with significant infrastructure damage reported (Teekah).

In Cambodia's Odor Meanchey province, 45-year-old Meun Saray shared her experience:
“We ran for our lives, leaving everything behind. Now, we wait in these shelters, hoping for peace, but we are scared to go back."

On the other side of the border, a 56-year-old Thai civilian sheltering at a temple in Kanthararom, Surin province, mentioned:
“Relations used to be good -- we were like siblings. But now things may have changed. I just want the fighting to end so we can go back to being like siblings again.”

She also expressed a desire for peace to allow safe returns: “I want them to negotiate, to stop firing quickly... so the elderly can return home and the children can go back to school.”

The conflict has also led to economic repercussions including the displacement of migrant workers and damage to healthcare facilities. Despite a ceasefire agreement, tensions remain and the situation continues to evolve. It is understood, however, that civilians, soldiers, and those displaced across lines share one common interest —

PEACE.







CONCLUSION

The 2025 Thailand-Cambodia border conflict, based on a longstanding territorial disagreement made worse by strong nationalism and unclear boundaries from the colonial period, led to its most deadly outbreak in many years. It started with a brief exchange of gunfire in May and then escalated into major battles in July.

These clashes caused more than 40 deaths and displaced over 300,000 civilians from their homes. Although a truce was agreed upon in late July, the conflict revealed deep historical issues and weaknesses in the region that still pose a risk to peace. In the end, the common wish for peace among both civilians and military personnel highlights the importance of ongoing diplomatic work to settle the border issue and address the damage caused by this violent period.







WHEN WILL YOU BE MINE?

(Red String Theory)

By Chansowath Huch

"Next in line! Welcome to McDonald's!" The cashier's voice rang out as I stepped forward. Just as I was about to order, I hesitated — something about them felt familiar. But why did I feel such a strong connection to a complete stranger? In a fast-paced world where everybody has their goals and ambitions, love still figures out a way to slip through the cracks and blossom within your life. Whether you will meet them tomorrow, or when the world comes crashing down, it is not until your very last moment that it's truly over.

Love is no exception. To family members or to future partners, they can come in many different times and forms; they can be across the world or sitting and doing their homework in a coffee shop.









It almost feels like you have been waiting your whole life for that one interaction. This is the beauty of the ...

RED STRING THEORY

THE ORIGINS OF THE RED STRING THEORY

This enchanting concept, known as the red string theory, tells a story that every individual is fated to meet their soulmate regardless of the context or the scenario.

The Red String Theory's origins came from ancient Chinese mythology, which was used as more or less as an explanation for the reason why people were connected.









The deity who brought this concept to life was none other than the lunar matchmaking god, Yue Lao (Mondrone). The Red String may stretch and tangle, but it never breaks, eventually bringing two people together. Although it may take months, years, or even decades — they will come eventually. Similarly, in a different folklore, the ancient Japanese have taken their perspective on the Red String and evolved upon it.

It tells the tale of a young boy meeting an old man on a fateful night where he cites his destiny to him. Being young and having no interest in a wife, the boy decides not to put much thought into it, rather, proceeds to throw rocks at the young lady beside him.

When he grew up to marry a young woman through arranged marriage, he was surprised to see the same scar on the bride's eyebrow, the exact same one the boy gave the little girl all those years ago (Medium). Although both concepts differ in context and stories, one thing remains true: love and destiny could never be changed — no matter how hard that individual tries to escape it.

Separated by time, reunited by fate

The Red String does not need to relate to romance entirely. It can also symbolize deep and fateful connections. In Eastern culture, it is most common to see many individuals wear red string bracelets or an accessory that includes a red string. Family members tend to wear them to show the love they have for each other goes beyond just conditional love, but a deep bond between each member.

In modern times, it does not just serve as a form of protection between bad omens and spirits, but as a symbol to the community around us that through hardships and adversity, the deep connection these individuals share is unbreakable.







From myths to the movie screens

Although popular, not many people know the name of the trope. The red string theory still resonates with us to this day, with it producing some of the greatest romantic movies of our generation. Themes such as destined love and an unwavering connection, have been with us since the beginning of film history.

One citation of this trope is the movie "Kimi No Nawa". Straight from the heart of the belief, it showcases a deep connection between two strangers from two different timelines. Despite being from different timelines, both protagonists showcase unwavering love, which is a testament to the original concept of the Red String Theory. All in all, it's a great piece of film and deserves to be recognized as an iconic representation of this cultural belief.

Destiny Still Arrives

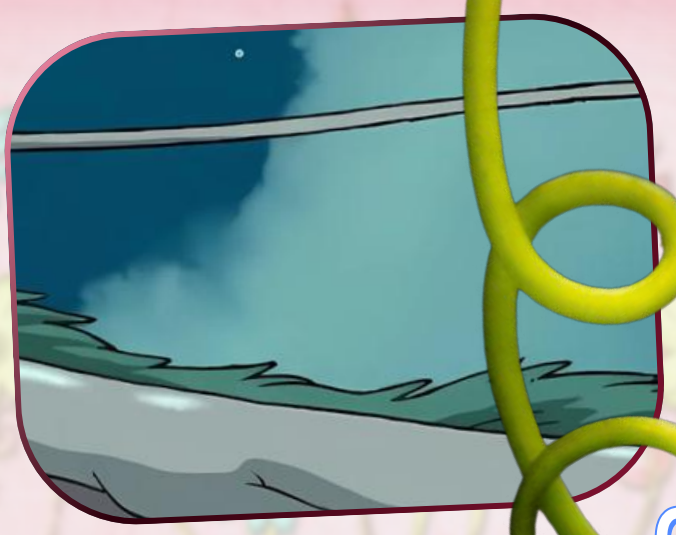
Whether through ancient myths, storytelling or cultural traditions, the red string is a portrayal of a bigger principle, that we should always strive to create connections to the ones we hold dearest to.

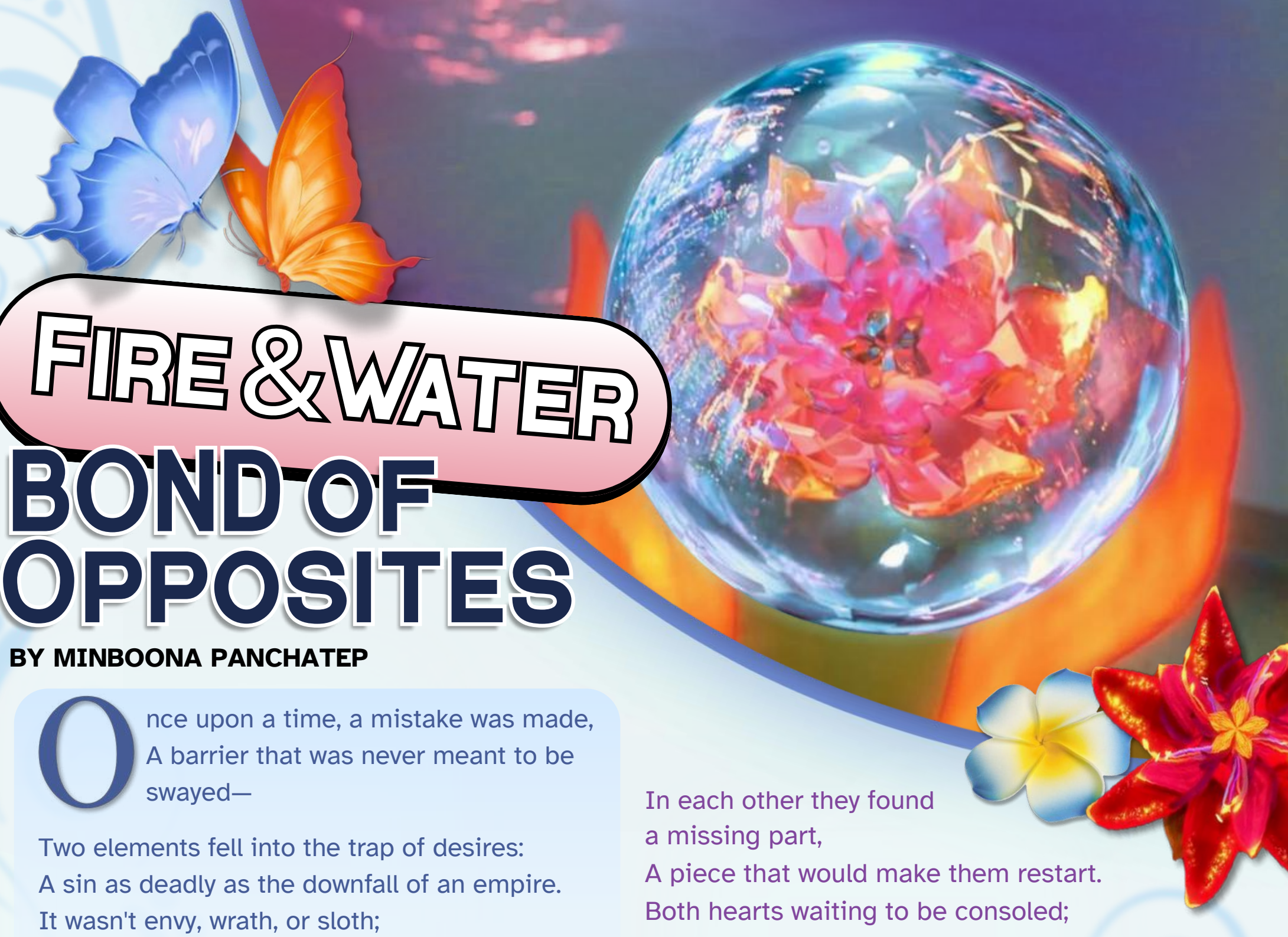
Whilst they are predetermined since the day you came into this world, what remains true is that it will unfold even at the most obscure timing.

Whether it would be friends, family or a loved one, we're all connected. It's only up to us to make them happen. So until then, we'll keep asking,

"When will you be mine?"







FIRE & WATER
BOND OF OPPOSITES

BY MINBOONA PANCHATEP

Once upon a time, a mistake was made,
A barrier that was never meant to be swayed—

Two elements fell into the trap of desires:
A sin as deadly as the downfall of an empire.
It wasn't envy, wrath, or sloth;
A path shared akin, though none will win.

Throughout history, they remained rivals.
Their feelings' a mystery, though fearing survival.
Narrating about two lovers separated by fate,
Protecting their love behind a mask of hate.

Water and fire despised each other, they say.
One, a power heavy when weighed,
The other agonized everything in its way,
Generating life, a symbol of growth;
The other, a cause of strife, death's silent oath.

Destiny forged them to battle,
Ruling their lands,
Protecting their castles,
Seeking power and eternal glory.
There is nothing they want more than
The heaping gold quarries.

Infernal fury entwined,
Yet, their hearts chose another path to be aligned.
Indeed, they were different, that is a fact;
But as they say, "opposites attract."

In each other they found
a missing part,
A piece that would make them restart.
Both hearts waiting to be consoled;
One was hot, the other cold.

Fire was overrun by rage;
One, that only water could salvage.
Water, though gentle in its tranquil stream,
discovered in fire, a more assertive dream.

They were so different, yet so alike.
Contradiction as its finest,
Destruction and creation in love.
What a surprise!

So let their love be heard.
Its sound echoing through the blue of the skies,
Reaching its destination, guiding the lovers,
Whom, like fire and water, waits to be discovered.

MARVEL RIVALS: OVERWATCH'S WORST NIGHTMARE

An Opinion Piece

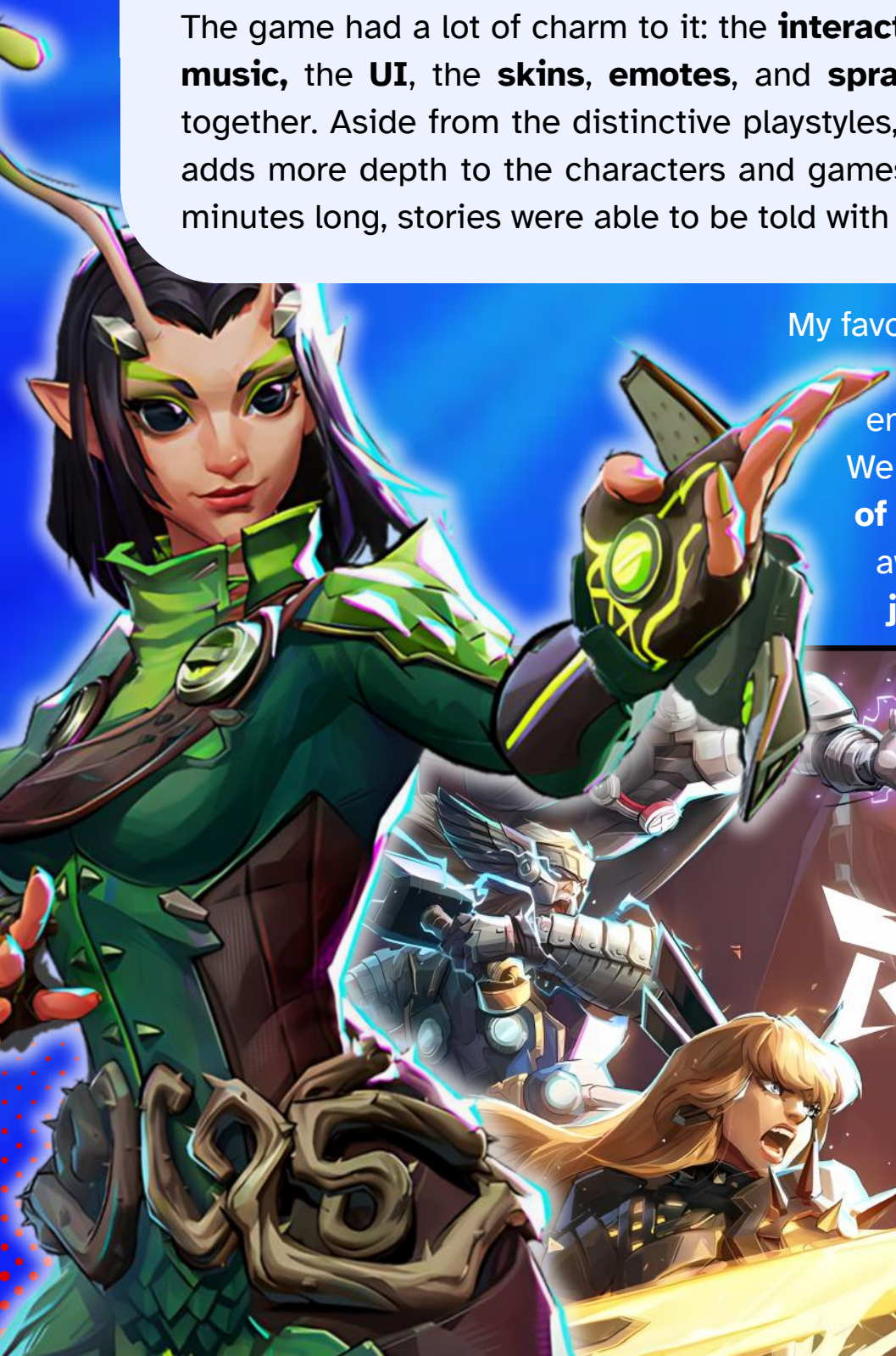
By Chingtithsamnang Phann and Arphinorak Sophea



Overwatch is a **team-based** 6v6 first-person shooter (fps) game deeply loved by the gaming community. In contrast to other fps games like **CSGO** or **Call of Duty**, where everyone has the same kit and relies solely on aim and strategy. Overwatch sets itself apart through its multitude of characters with **special abilities setting**. A game would be composed of two tanks, two damage dealers, and two supports, alongside with different characters with unique playstyles.

The game had a lot of charm to it: the **interactions** between characters, the intensive **background music,** the **UI**, the **skins**, **emotes**, and **sprays** were all meticulously crafted to perfectly blend together. Aside from the distinctive playstyles, the brief but beautifully produced **cinematography** adds more depth to the characters and games. Despite the fact that each cinematic was only ten minutes long, stories were able to be told with rich and intriguing lore.

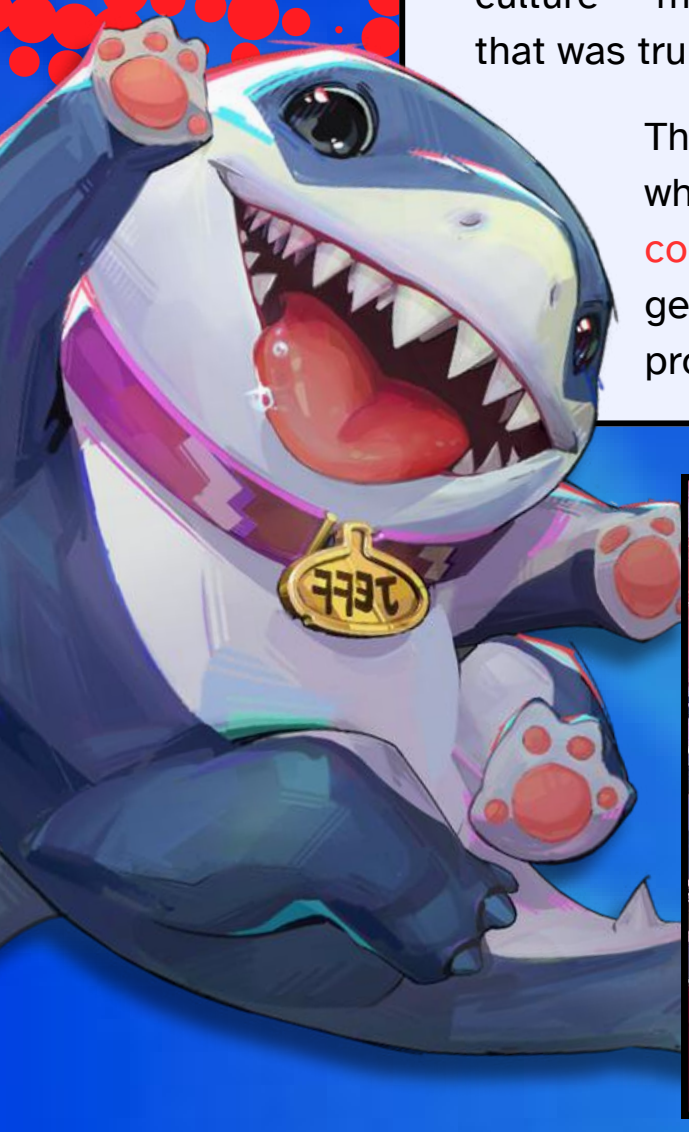
My favorite was **'The Last Bastion',** a cinematic story of a robot called Bastion. No words were spoken, yet it was able to entail a story that conveyed **heartfelt emotions** unlike others. We learned that the robot was the last of its kind — a **survivor of a war.** The unit sat in the middle of a lush green forest; It awoke as a ganymede chirped, and followed a **nostalgic journey.**





With these cinematics, the characters become more than just playable heroes, they became captivating storytellers that encouraged us to explore, comprehend, and engage with in-game. The fanbase rapidly grew, and before we knew it, Overwatch became a culture — memes, fan-made comics, and animations were also on the rise. It was a game that was truly special with indescribable influence.

The game went on an amazing run over the years until it went downhill in 2020, when the running company, Blizzard, began to get lazy. The game lacked content, the balance changes were indecisive, and new competition in the genre caused players to move on. In 2022, Overwatch 2 was announced, providing Blizzard with a glimpse of its past successes.







Unfortunately, however, it was only successful for just a few months.

Overwatch 2 was expected to be the game's comeback, but it could never match the first game. The game was changed from 6v6 to 5v5 in an attempt to fix the long queue per game. A character was introduced, which shut down a whole meta. Tanks were miserable and unplayable. Not to mention, queue time actually became worse due to the lack of tanks and support players. There followed a long period of content droughts and unbalanced gameplay. The masterpiece of a game that everyone once loved was long gone. What was left? A cash grab game filled with toxic players who believe that winning was the only objective in mind. **The fun was gone.**







During the lowest point of the game, where content was limited, and player rates were declining, just when the Overwatch community had lost all hope, a new game emerged — Marvel Rivals. Its arrival came with a spark of excitement that was lost with Overwatch. With the team-based combat, special hero skills, and a lively, dynamic setting, the game promised to bring back the excitement that Overwatch once possessed. This time, however, it took place in the adored Marvel universe.

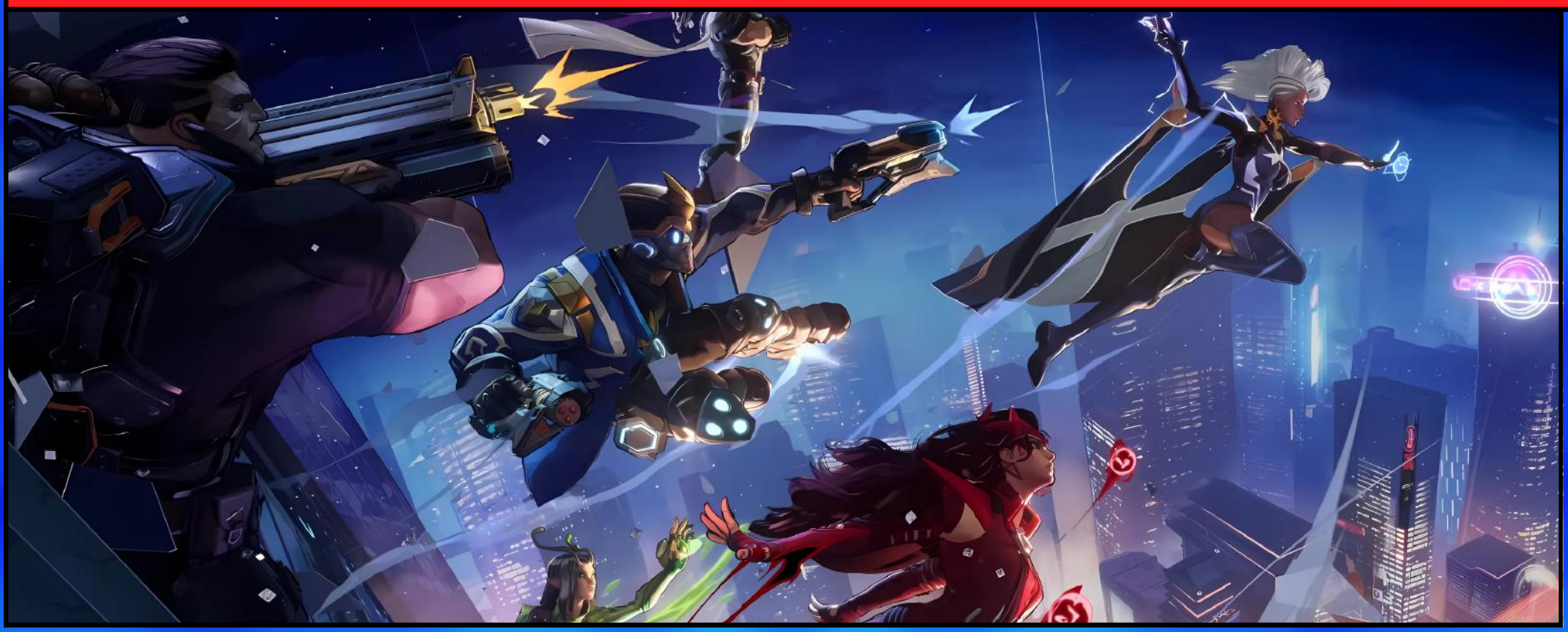


The game launched on December 6th of 2024 ...

with Season 0 that included 33 beloved and unique characters from the Marvel franchise. While categorized into **3 main roles**, namely the vanguards (tanks), duelists (dps), and strategists (supports), each category can be further broken down according to their differing playstyles and abilities. Flankers, lifeline supports, pokers, anchor tanks, and brawler dps are just a few of the sub-categories for us to choose from based on our own unique playstyle.

For instance,

Adam Warlock, categorized as a strategist, actually does a lot of damage with his attacks and heals in short bursts which makes him a utility-based strategist. It is also possible for characters to be within **multiple sub-classes** at the same time like Magik, who can both brawl head-on and flank the enemy's backlines. Needless to say, there will most likely be characters that will perfectly fit your playstyle and creativity would be the only limit on how a character can be played.



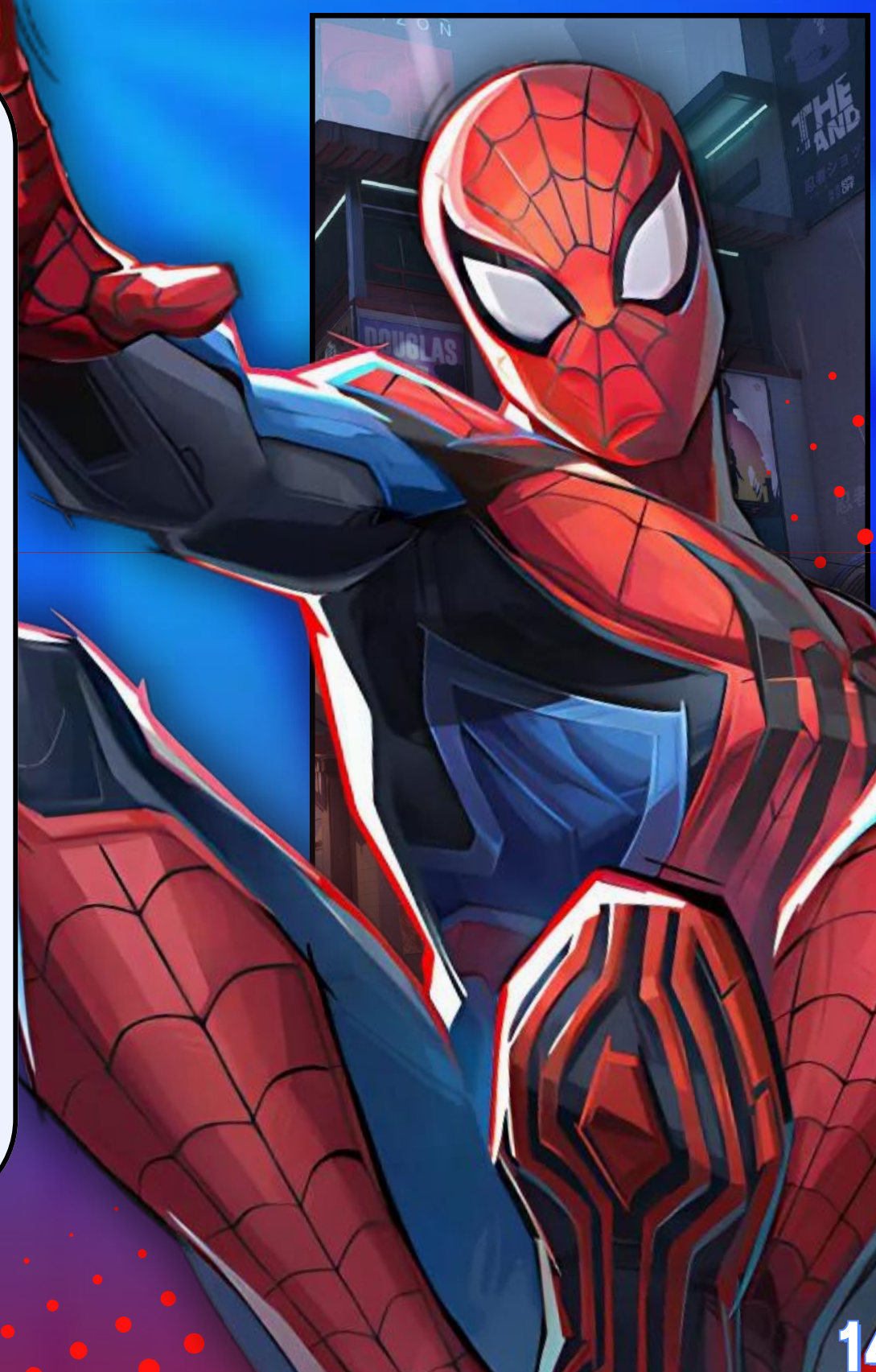
THE GAME'S MECHANICS

... are simple at the baseline yet have a charm to it that reels in players through the creative use of character abilities. Take **Dr. Strange's portal ability** for example. While it does have a long cooldown to it, the possibilities it allows for a team to simply go behind the enemy or right on the objective presents an unpredictable element to a simple fight.

One of the main selling points of the game are the team-up abilities gained when using a certain combination of heroes that can range from a good utility tool to an overpowered ability that increases the power of those selected heroes. Speaking of which, the way that Marvel Rivals chose to go about with their balancing is rather interesting. When everything is overpowered, then nothing is overpowered (Syndrome reference!).

Ultimates in this game are absolute game changers that can turn the tides of battle in mere seconds with powerful one-shot ultimates to ultimates that make you practically immortal. This encourages proper communication with teammates to combine ultimates or manage when to use ultimates to reap the most benefits. All of the aforementioned features pair with an absolutely stunning comic style that works surprisingly well in 3D.

Forget realism, we want to **FEEL** powerful when we are playing as our favorite heroes and this game delivers that, spectacularly.





A Clash Between Two Video Games...

By Mutita Nou

When it comes to sandbox gaming, few rivalries have stirred as much debate and controversy as the likes of the pixelated-gaming industry giants — Minecraft and Terraria. To some, both games peacefully coexist in a genre of complete or at least close similarity, but to others, Minecraft and Terraria are seen as blatant copies of one another. Some Minecraft players see Terraria as a direct copy of Minecraft, whilst Terrarians contend that they are completely different games. And yet, even after all these years — over a decade of back and forth debate, the contentious question still lingers in the gaming community: **“Which game is better?”**

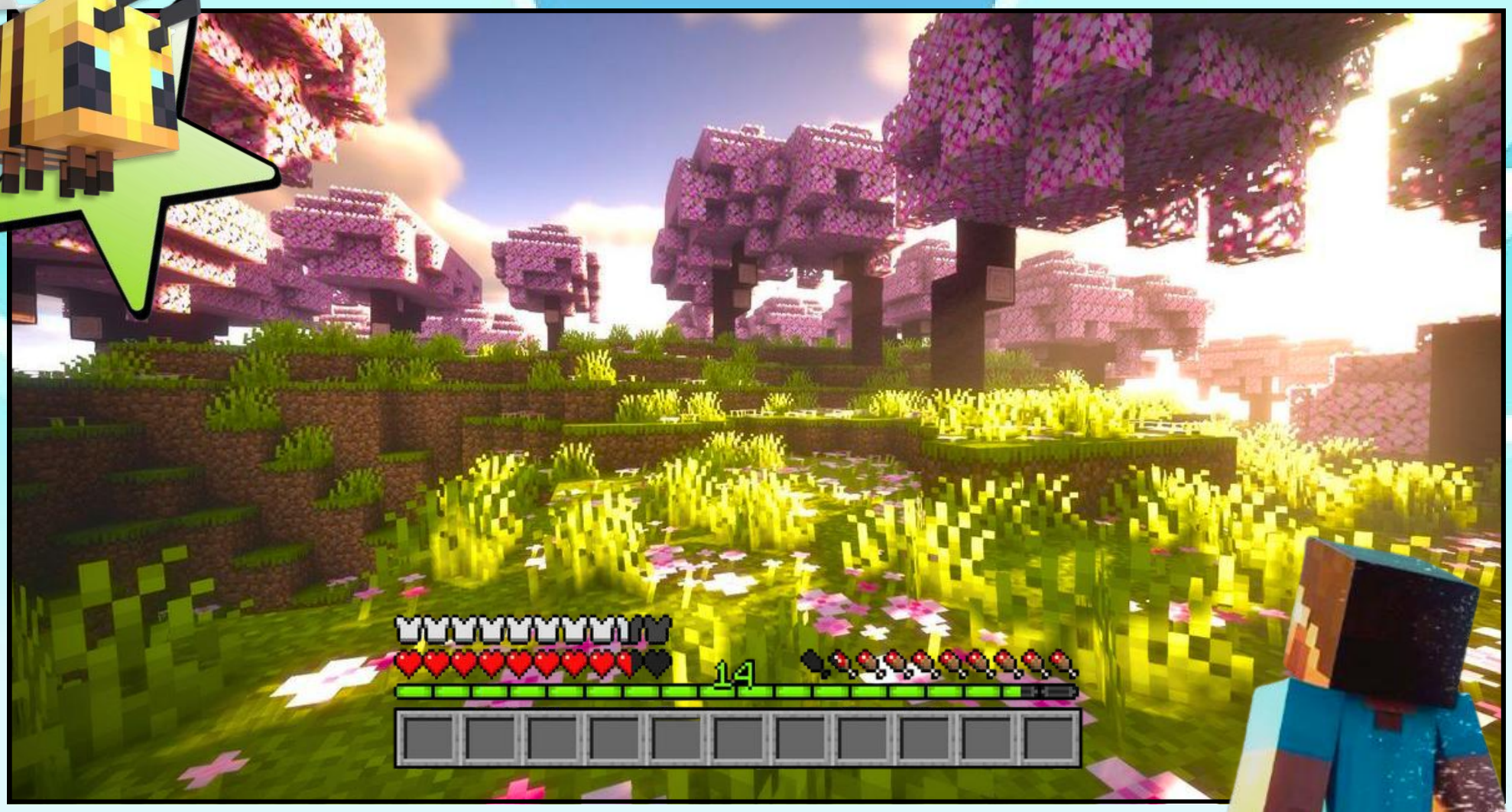
MINECRAFT or TERRARIA?

But before that…
What is Minecraft?
And what is Terraria?











You land in an infinite 3D world

... that stretches beyond what the eye can see. Beginning with nothing but your bare hand, you are immediately challenged to accumulate resources, craft weapons, and find shelter before night falls and dangerous creatures emerge. As the game progresses, the world opens up further. While some choose to settle down, others continue to explore and wonder what their world could give to them (Mojang Studios).

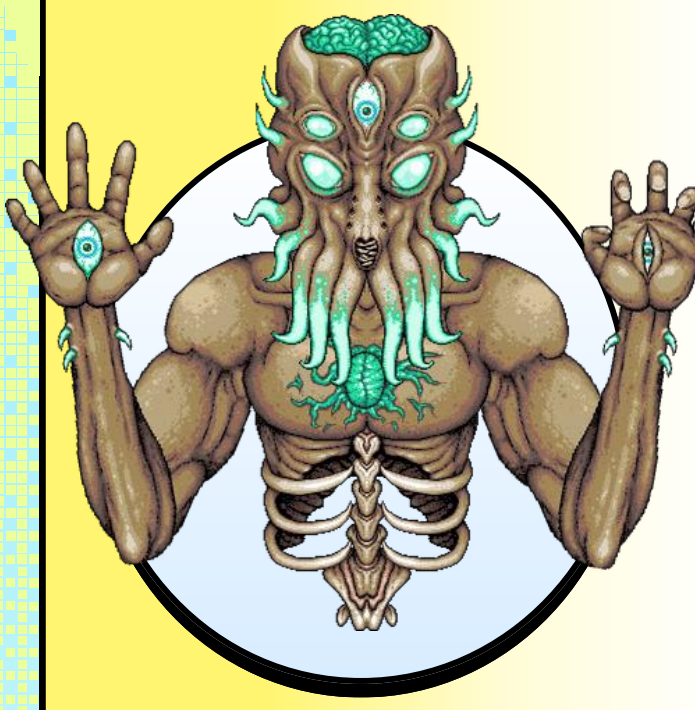
In Minecraft, there are no set goals; you can play it however you'd like. If you like being creative, then you can gain an abundance of materials at no expense of your time through creative mode. If you appreciate adventure, then you can play on survival. If you like to interact and socialize with other players within the community, you'd play on multiplayer servers or realms (Mojang). It is truly a sandbox game.



WHAT IS MINECRAFT?

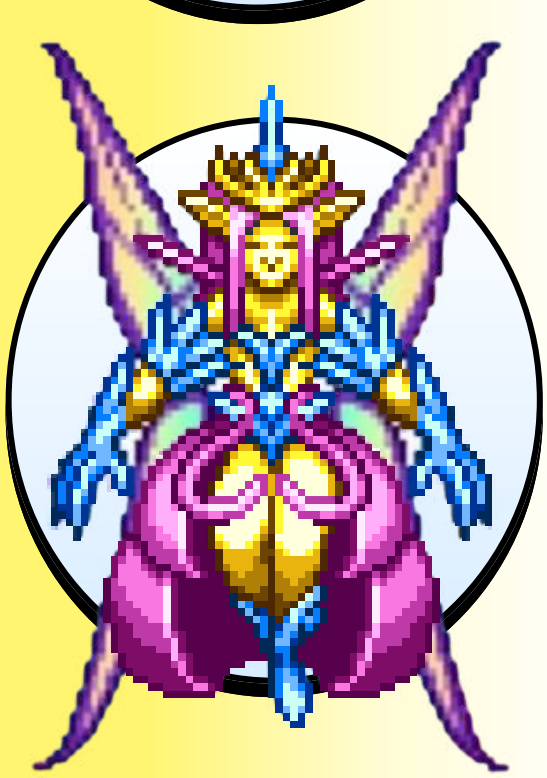
WHAT IS TERRARIA?

Terraria is a sandbox, action-adventure, role-playing, and platformer game. It offers gameplay that revolves around exploration, building, crafting, combat, survival, and mining, without having any set goals (Terraria Wiki). At its core, Terraria is a progression-driven game that focuses on unlocking different items and completing tasks to get to the next stage. There are a total of 33 bosses: 8 pre-hard mode, 11 hard mode, and 14 event bosses (just to name a few: Eye of Cthulhu, Wall of Flesh, Mech bosses, and Moon Lord) — all of which contribute to better and/or quicker progression in the game by giving players access to more post-boss weapons and/or items —important to slaying more bosses (Terraria Wiki).









History of Minecraft & Terraria

Minecraft began as a humble passion project by Markus “Notch” Persson in 2009. Inspired by block-based building and survival concepts, it invited players into an open-ended, generated world where the only limit was their own creativity. By 2011, when the full version “Minecraft Java Edition” launched, Minecraft was already a global phenomenon, amassing over millions of gamers worldwide — a complete game changer for the indie game market (Heaney).

In the same year, Terraria emerged from the small indie studio Re-Logic...

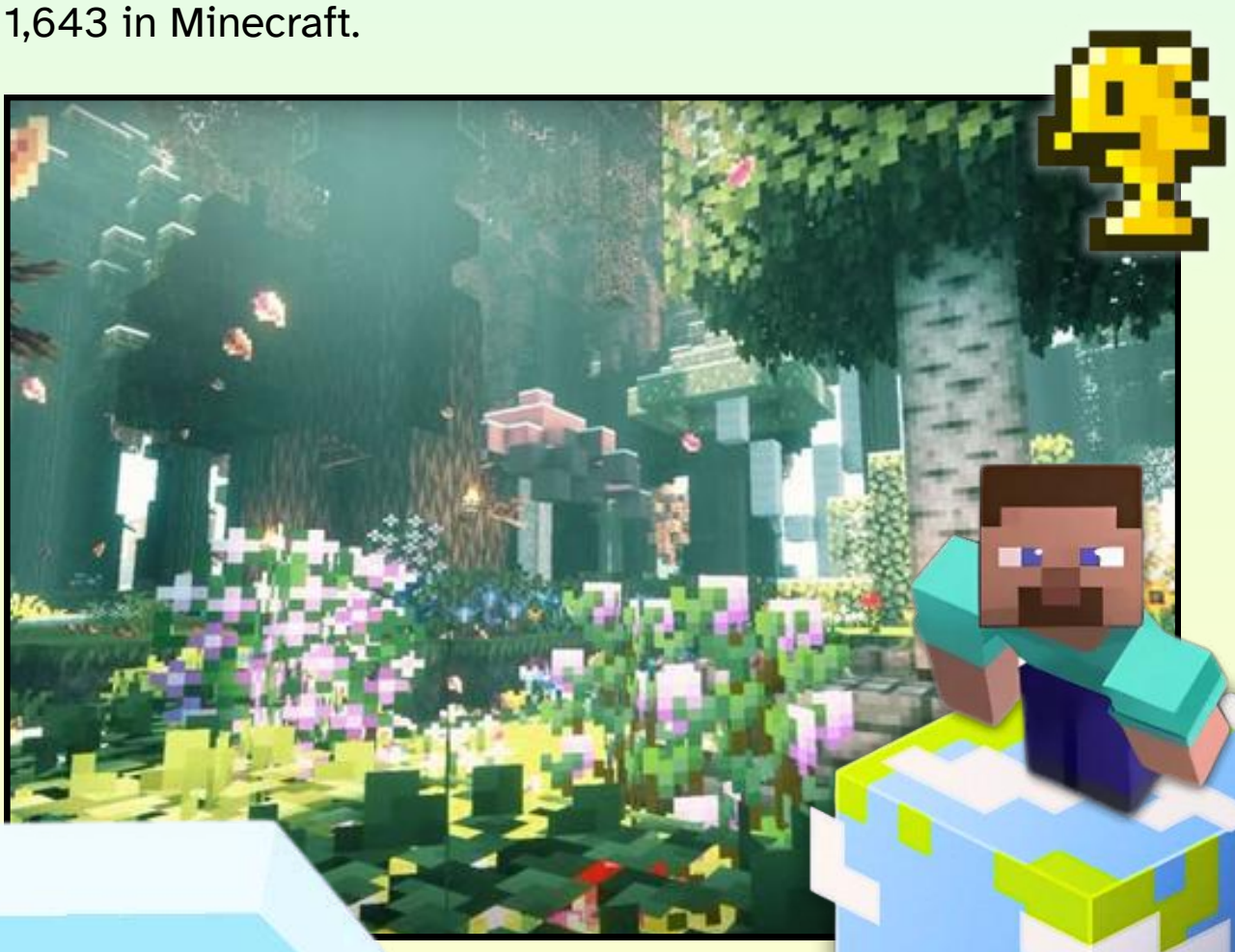
Though it looked like a 2D spin-off of the sandbox idea, Re-Logic made its own niche by mixing world-building with action-adventure elements, RPG-style progression, and massive boss fights. Even at the time, Terraria differentiated from Minecraft as it had featured a variety of items, weapons, bosses, and most importantly — a more structured progression style (Scalacube).



Both games were released in a period where indie games were starting to be able to compete against genres such as first-person shooters, strategy, role-play, and more. Alongside one another, Terraria and Minecraft helped define the sandbox survival genre and inspired a generation of new modders, streamers, and game designers.

Similarities & Differences

Terraria is a 2D world that features a variety of different enemies, boss battles, hidden biomes, and an endless stock of weapons alongside NPCs that sell items and special mechanics, while encouraging exploration and combat. On the other hand, Minecraft is a 3D builder's paradise that has a much simpler enemy variety, less RPG action (with bosses and progression), and a larger focus on sandbox (more freedom, less progression). One key difference is that there are significantly less items and weapons in Minecraft than there is in Terraria, with over 5,455 items in Terraria but just 1,643 in Minecraft.



This is particularly due to the fact that there is a vast number of crafting trees in Terraria (the “Zenith”, the longest crafting tree, an endgame weapon requiring over 36 items and weapons!), which naturally makes room for more in-game resources and items to be added. These differences show how Terraria is more focused on adventure and RPG elements, while Minecraft emphasizes on creative building and player creations.





Heat of Controversies

From the start, Terraria sparked controversy as Minecraft fans labeled it a "2D knock-off," while Terraria fans stood their ground, defending their game as having "real bosses and real progression" unlike Minecraft's "aimless block stacking." Angry Redditers made claims like "Terraria is just pixel Minecraft with swords," or “Terraria’s supposed ‘sandbox’ and RPG-experience is just an obvious knock-off of Minecraft’s progression.” Terrarians often responded by affirming how much fun Terraria actually is, "Minecraft is boring after an hour, but Terraria keeps you fighting for hundreds of hours."

Memes and videos continued to add fuel to the fire with arguments rekindled with every major update, game sale, and other such events that brought out even the slightest of similarities between the two games. Some fans thought the whole rivalry was petty while others thrived on comparing both games and concluding in their minds, to which one was better out of the two. Even to this day, some people still argue over which is the most authentic version of what sandbox indie games should be interpreted as.



CONCLUSION

Ultimately, both companies (unironically) benefited from the controversy, as it garnered free-media attention to their games. Moreover, it also allowed people to try out both Minecraft and Terraria, which made them realize that although they are in the same genre, each held their own unique characteristics, and are fun in their own ways. Just know that at the end of all of its contention, both games share title screens of: “Also try Terraria”, and “Also try Minecraft”.





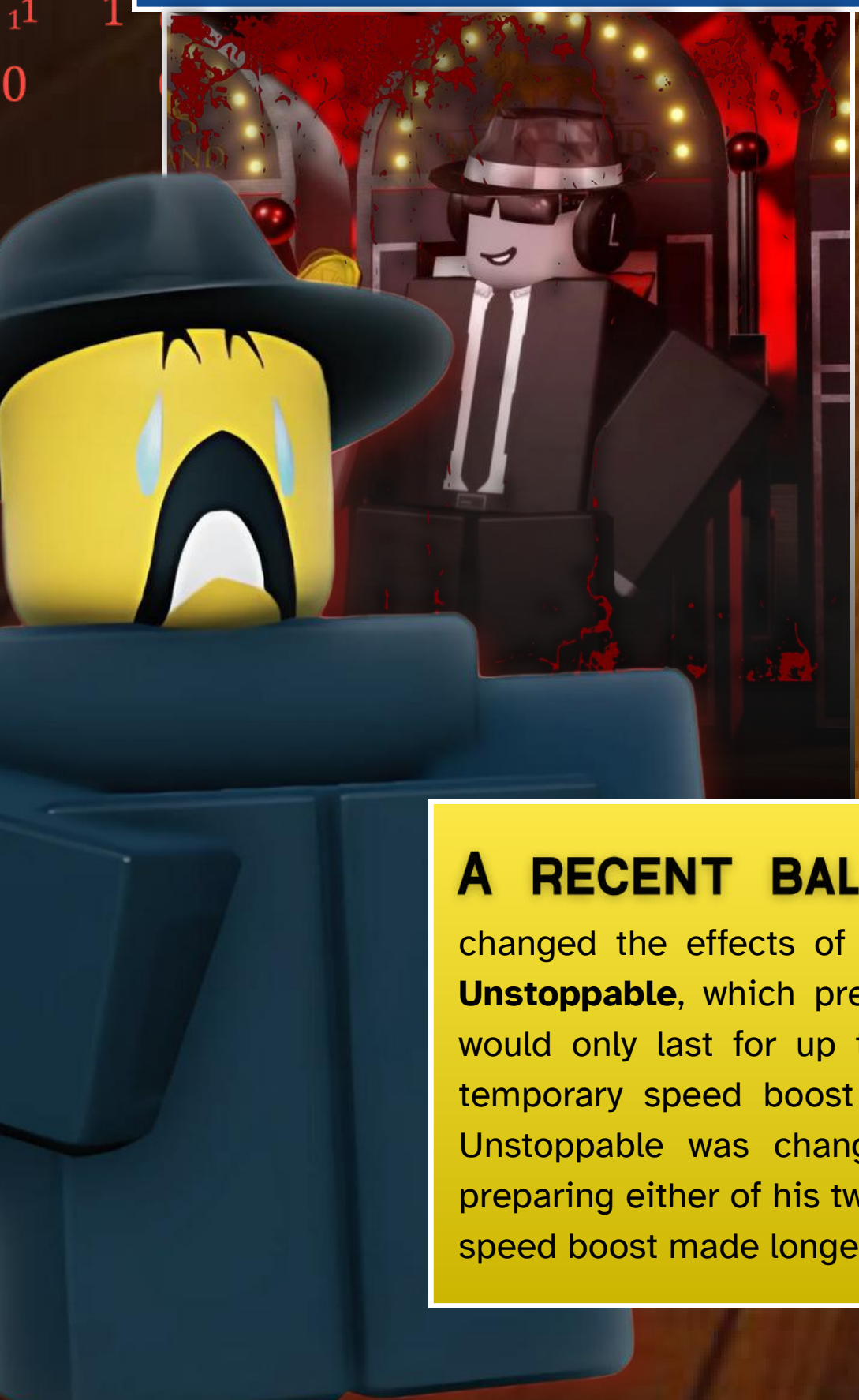


Why John Doe From Roblox Forsaken Should Be Unnerfed

By Bornei Mom

Forsaken

is a Roblox game similar to Dead By Daylight, Identity V, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, and other asymmetrical games of their type. **One killer** goes up against a lobby of maximum 8 survivors, and to win, they must kill all survivors.



On the survivor's end,

they must work together to survive, and can repair generators to reduce the total time on the countdown and end the match faster.



A recent balancing update

changed the effects of a specific killer's passive ability — **John Doe's Unstoppable**, which previously made it so all stuns dealt to John Doe would only last for up to **roughly 1.5 seconds** and would give Doe a temporary speed boost after the stun. With the new update, however, Unstoppable was changed to **only take effect** when he is stunned preparing either of his two abilities, Corrupt Energy and 404 Error, with the speed boost made longer for every additional sentinel currently alive.

Lingo Note

A passive ability is an ability that activates on its own, while an active ability needs the player to specifically activate/use it.
Chase means... chase, so essentially actively chasing after/pursuing the survivor.
Map control refers to cornering and trapping survivors in order to kill them – slightly more technical.
A 'nerf' just means the character was made weaker in some way, while the inverse is true for **a 'buff'.**
A sentinel is a character who can harass or stun the killer, **a support** can heal or buff a survivor, and **a survivalist** has abilities that help them survive for as long as possible.



John Doe is already considered by the community at large to be **one of**, if not, **the most technical** to play, being quite **difficult** to use effectively. His m1 (regular attack) is the most telegraphed, making it easier to dodge and/or block and parry. He really only has one ability — **the Corrupt Energy,** which sends out 26 spikes in a row following your camera.



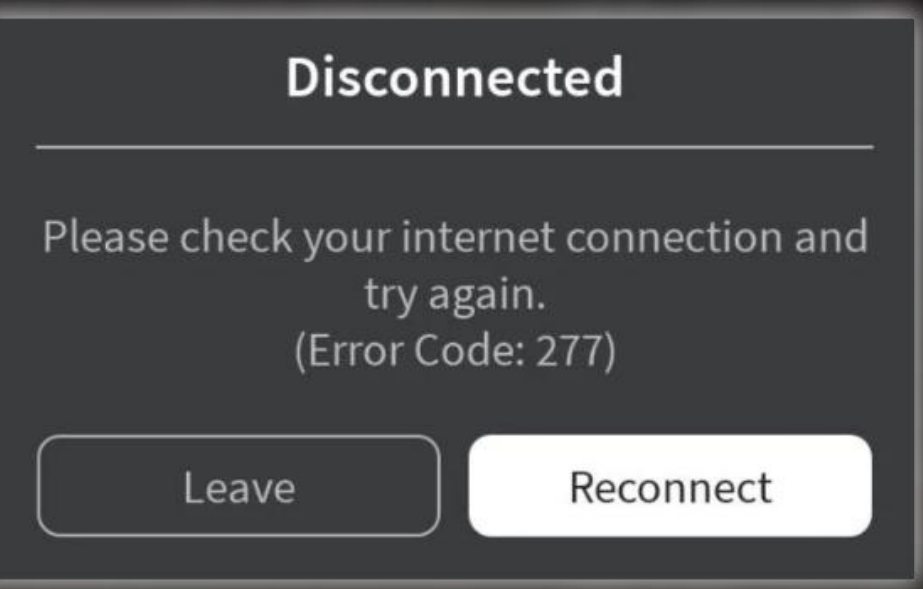
It has practically **100% uptime**, in that the spikes last 14 seconds each while the cooldown of the ability is 18 seconds, which is useful. Still, these spikes can sometimes work against you, because they are essentially a giant wall after they deal their initial damage. His **two other active abilities** are less useful generally and are more situational (especially Digital Footprint), and his other passive trait, **Natural Malevolence** — a trail of corruption that follows him and deals damage when crossed, is easily avoided or healed.

He has a **very weak** chase capability and a playstyle that favours trapping and map control, setting him slightly apart from the other killers (C00lkidd being a chaser, 1x1x1x1 being a sniper/long range attacker, and Jason being a stealth/melee attacker – in the end they all boil down to chase-oriented playstyles, though). While he is the **second fastest killer** (by the barest smidgeon .5), he **cannot close distances** easily by dashing like C00lkidd, stunning survivors like 1x1x1x1, or using raging pace to recover stamina while still moving quickly like Jason; **he lacks mobility.**



Doe also is quite **vulnerable** to stuns, especially if you **don't** 'parry' by using his abilities right before you get stunned in order to activate his passive trait. C00lkidd's pizza minions and 1x1x1x1's zombies can punish a survivor if they stun them in a bad spot, and Jason players with good reaction time can outright avoid stuns by using Raging Pace, which makes them **immune to stuns** while the ability is active.





Previously,

John Doe was largely **unaffected** by stuns, as they would only last for a short while, and the distance that the survivor gained could be made up for with his speed boost. But, obviously, a well timed stun would still be a pain for John Doe — it **wasn't** that he was **impossible** to stun, one just had to be more strategic with their stun. Interrupting attacks and such.

Now, it's a lot easier to harass a John Doe, **especially** one who can't react as quickly either due to their internet connection or their own reaction speed. If you aren't careful, you can lose your target **very easily,** giving them time to heal, which is especially bad for John Doe considering his **lack of mobility** and vulnerability to additional attacks. All in all, John Doe was already a balanced character, and his nerf was totes **uncalled** for, in my opinion.

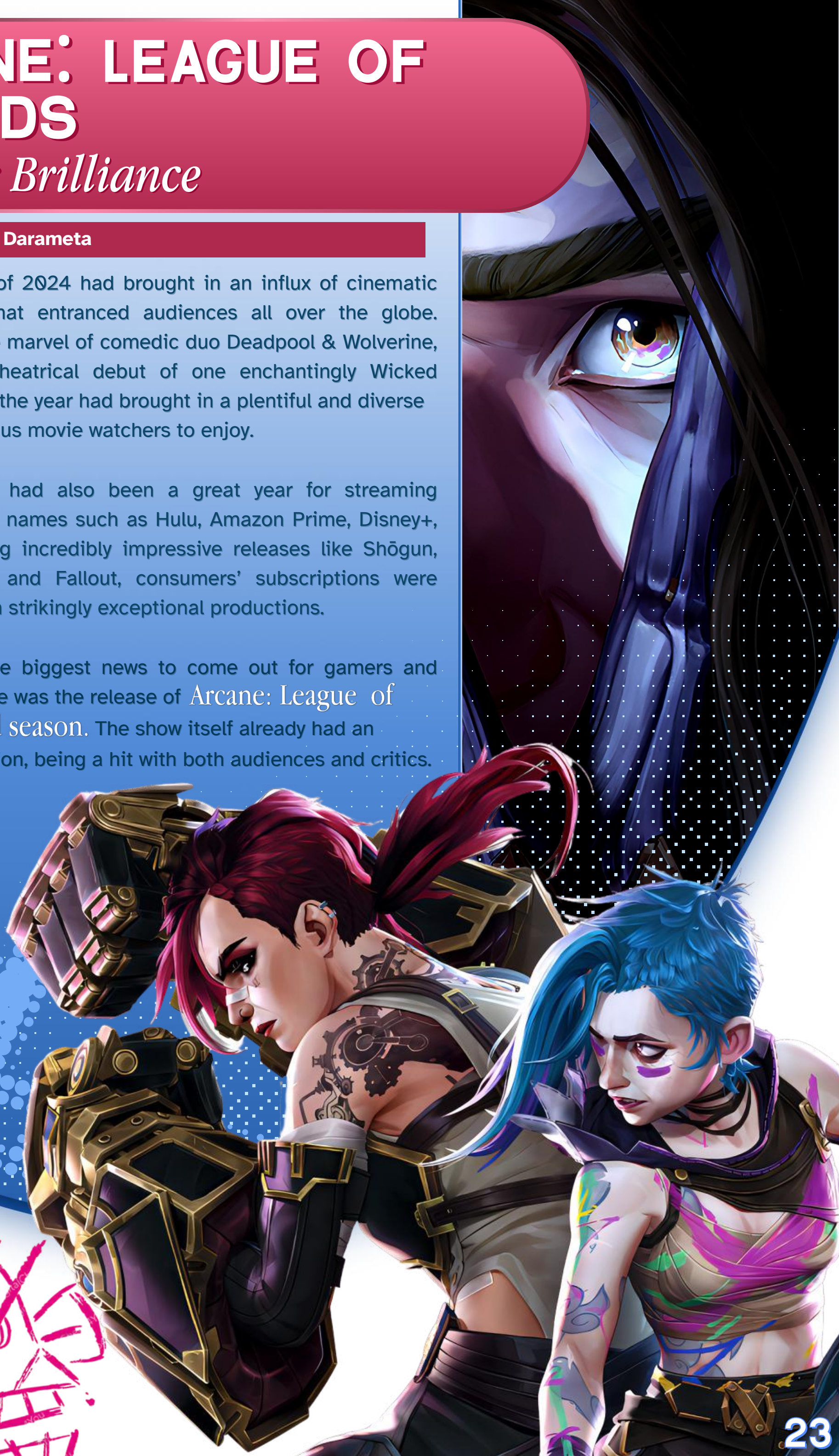
ARCANE: LEAGUE OF LEGENDS
& Artistic Brilliance

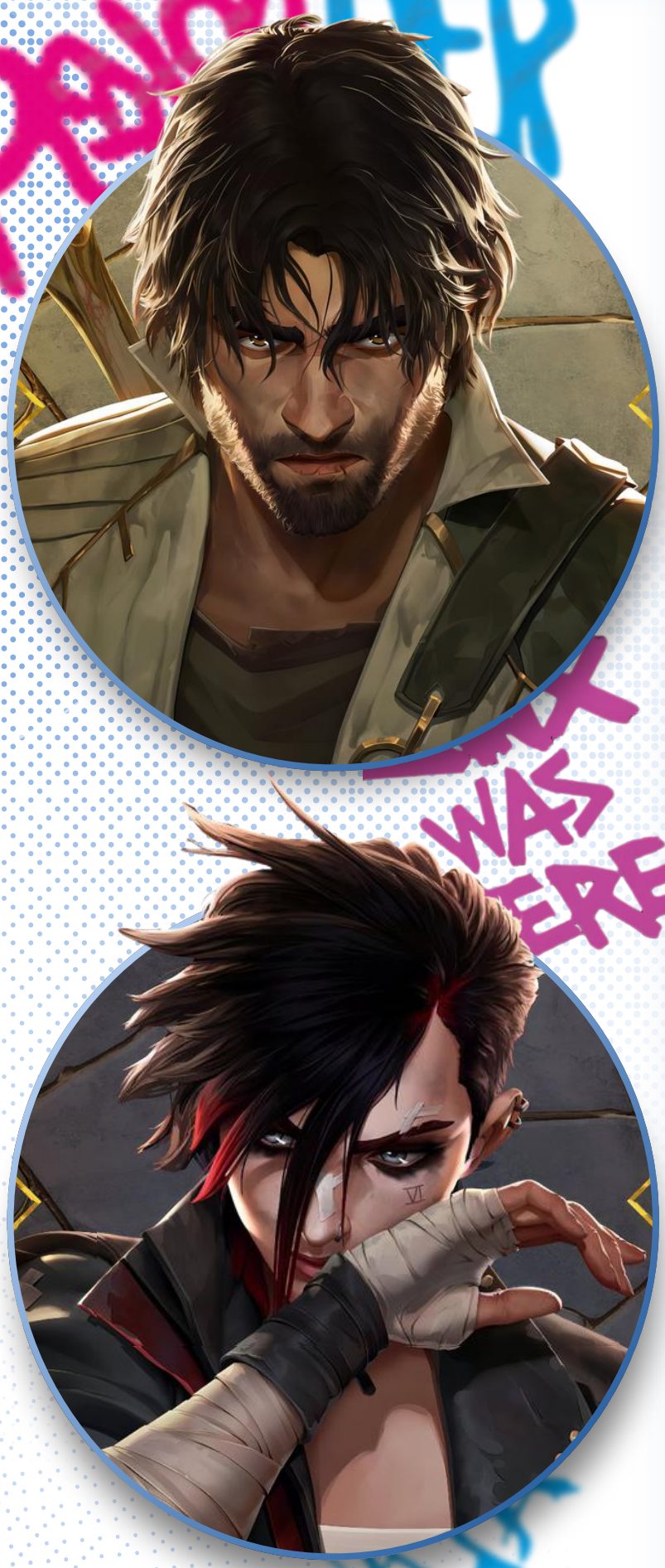
By Sisowath Doung Darameta

The year of 2024 had brought in an influx of cinematic media that entranced audiences all over the globe. From the marvel of comedic duo Deadpool & Wolverine, to the theatrical debut of one enchantingly Wicked musical, the year had brought in a plentiful and diverse catalogue for all of us movie watchers to enjoy.

Additionally, 2024 had also been a great year for streaming platforms. With big names such as Hulu, Amazon Prime, Disney+, and Netflix bringing incredibly impressive releases like Shōgun, Agatha All Along, and Fallout, consumers' subscriptions were surely well-spent on strikingly exceptional productions.

Perhaps one of the biggest news to come out for gamers and animation fans alike was the release of Arcane: League of Legends' second season. The show itself already had an upstanding reputation, being a hit with both audiences and critics.



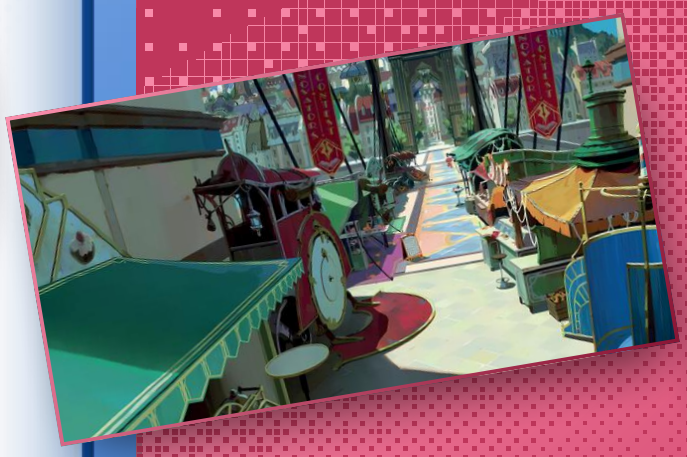




One of the show's most standout features is its incredible animation and artistic direction. As a project, Arcane is the result of a partnership between Riot Games and Fortiche Productions, who were also responsible for many of League of Legends' other cinematic projects, which included promotional animations and music videos.

Visually, Arcane: League of Legends has always stood out amongst Netflix's other animated projects, marketing itself as a gritty, adult, fantasy with mature imagery, plot, and characters.

Arcane's unique visual style comes from a blend of both 2D and 3D animation. This multimedia approach allowed for a dynamic but (mostly) budget-friendly method for Arcane's visual expectations. The show's unique, distinct painterly style had immediately caught the attention of watchers who stumbled upon its name, further separating it from any other of Netflix's more mature works, such as Castlevania, and Dota: Dragon's Blood — both being video game adaptations as well.

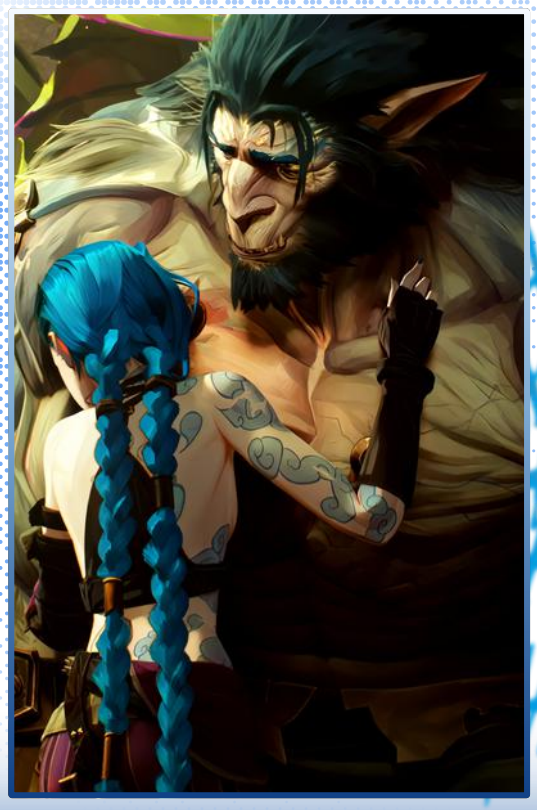




The show's creation itself had come from about a decade of negotiating, planning, and conceptualizing. Co-creators Christian Linke and Alex Yee, first pitched the idea back in 2014–2015, which was first rejected and seen as an impossible feat.

Arcane's concept was an extremely daring task, being the most expensive animated series ever made with a budget of $250 million dollars. The budget allocated itself to several different factors, from standard animation costs to hiring writers, casting actors, and producing original music for the show.

As aforementioned, Arcane's creative direction goes much further than its impressive visuals. The show's crew had also committed to creating a completely original soundtrack for both seasons, which led to the release of certified hits such as 'Enemy' by Imagine Dragons and 'Ma Meilleure Ennemie' by Stromae and Pomme.

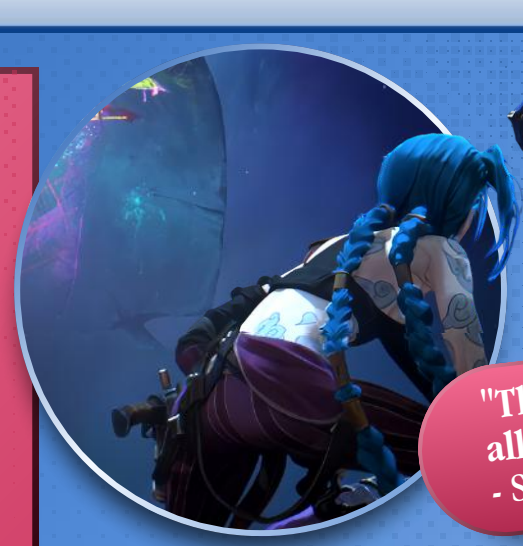












"There's a monster inside all of us."
- Silco

Much of the show's praise mainly stems from its amazing plotline and beautifully-written characters. In fact, the show had prompted a surge of many video essays on YouTube, addressing Arcane as a masterclass of story in its genre.

Arcane's incredible method of conveying real-world concepts into fictional realities allowed viewers to properly connect with personalities in a way that many other animated shows cannot. One aspect of League of Legends that made Arcane a much more difficult task than other video game adaptations is the lack of characterization for each champion in the game.

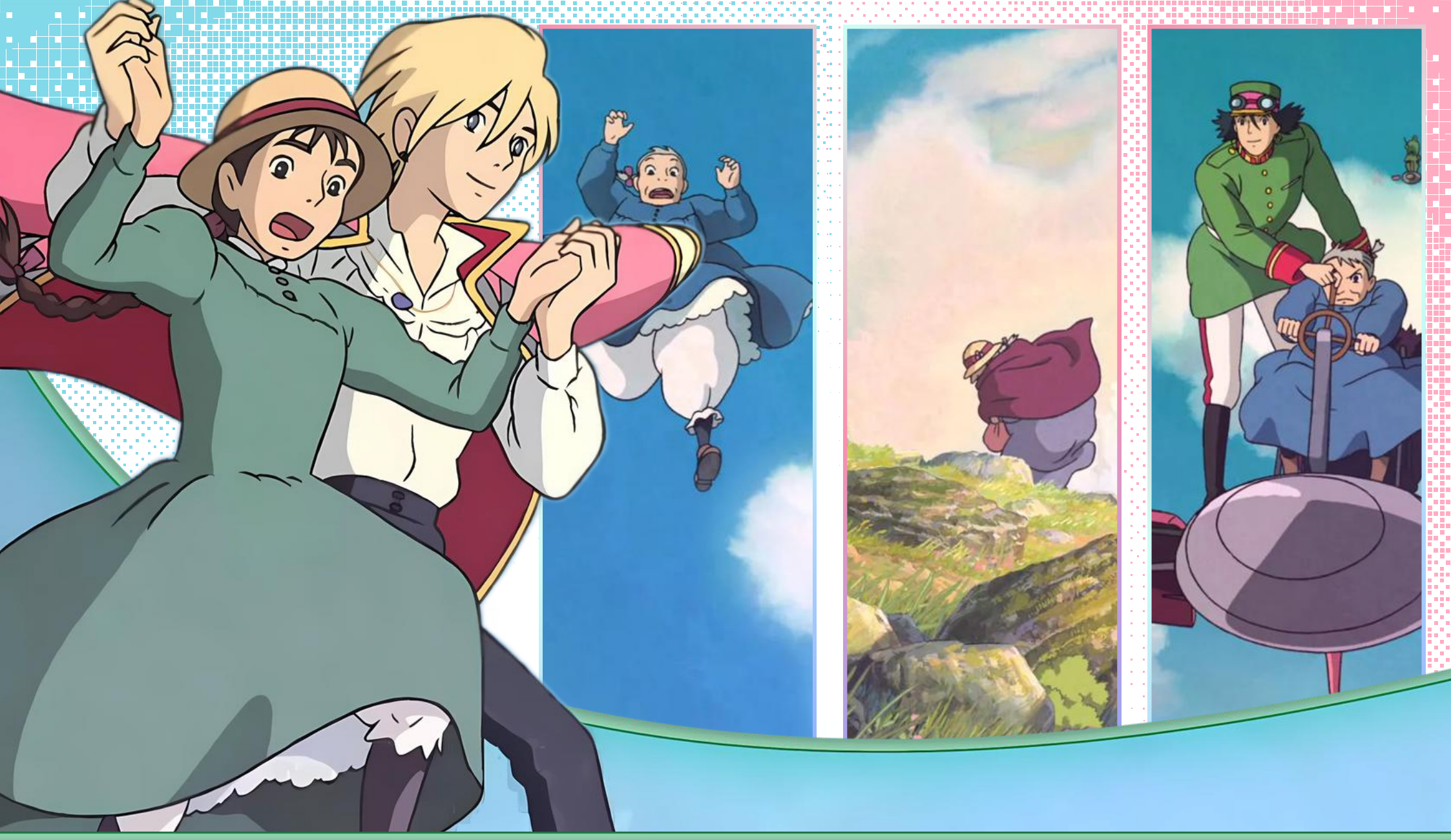
Basically, each character in Arcane started as pretty blank slates. The show itself had the concept of showcasing character origins and their lives separate from League of Legends as a game, which further disconnected the Arcane cast from any previous associations and presumptions based on the game.



Arcane's centralized theme is conflict. Conflict between classes, conflict between sisters, conflicts between universes. The show served to showcase great parallels between its characters throughout the plot, which varied from their physical appearance to their verbiage and abilities.

The duality between prominent leads such as the sisters Jinx and Vi and intriguing faces that have never interacted, such as Viktor and Ekko, leads to an incandescent story of life, love, and war, with every aspect of each persona being purposefully enriching to leave audiences wanting to find out more after every watch.

Simply put, Arcane: League of Legends is a perfect blend of outstanding visuals, interesting characters, and a compelling storyline all coming together to create a project that was full of depth and soul, setting it apart from any other show during its run. Now, fans are eagerly anticipating the next League of Legends' animated project, with the prospect of finding something different, but equally just as extraordinary.



Why I Love Howl's Moving Castle

An Opinion Piece

By Je Ah Yang

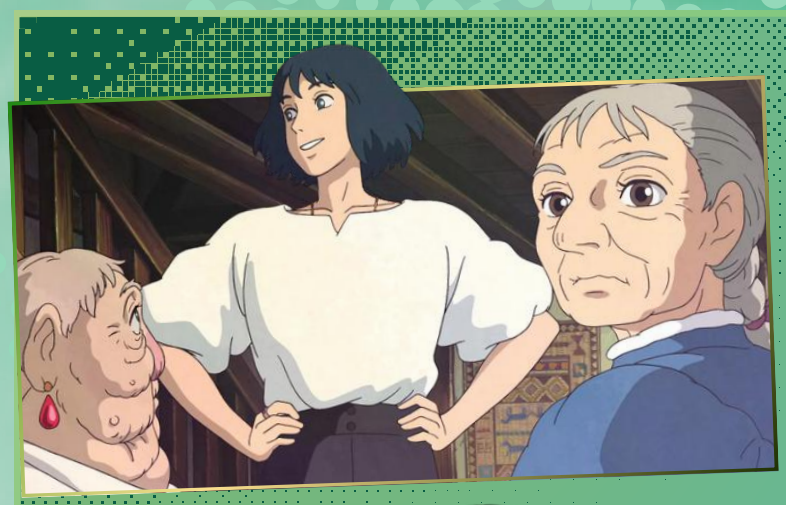
Howl's Moving Castle, directed by Hayao Mizayaki and inspired by the novel of Diana Wynn Jones, follows the female lead named Sophie, who was cursed by the Witch of the Waste and transformed into an old lady. In search of a cure, she ends up meeting a walking castle with chicken feet, a scarecrow, and a mysterious and vain wizard named Howl. As Sophie becomes part of Howl's strange household, she discovers many secrets and burdens Howl carries throughout his life. Together they face war, magic, and personal fears, and discover love and stories alongside the past memories of Howl through Sophie's time traveling – all told through stunning visuals.

There's always something magical about the artwork of Ghibli. The films that go beyond just storytelling and animation. They become a part of you, like a warm inspiring storytelling or a lesson you never realized that you might need most. For me, that film is Howl's Moving Castle.

At first glance, the film itself may seem like any other fantasy story – a castle that walks on chicken legs and a mysterious wizard named Howl, alongside a girl who was cursed to be an old woman.

But the film itself has a deeper storytelling than just magic and castle. It's about self-worth, time traveling, romance, and finding beauty in unexpected places.

Regarding the characters, I relate most to Sophie, the main female character of the film. She starts off believing herself as a plain ordinary girl, worthless in her generation. But throughout the story, she proves that kindness, courage, and love make her successful. It made me realize, though sometimes I may doubt myself, there's still a long way ahead of me, and that commitment is strength to happiness.

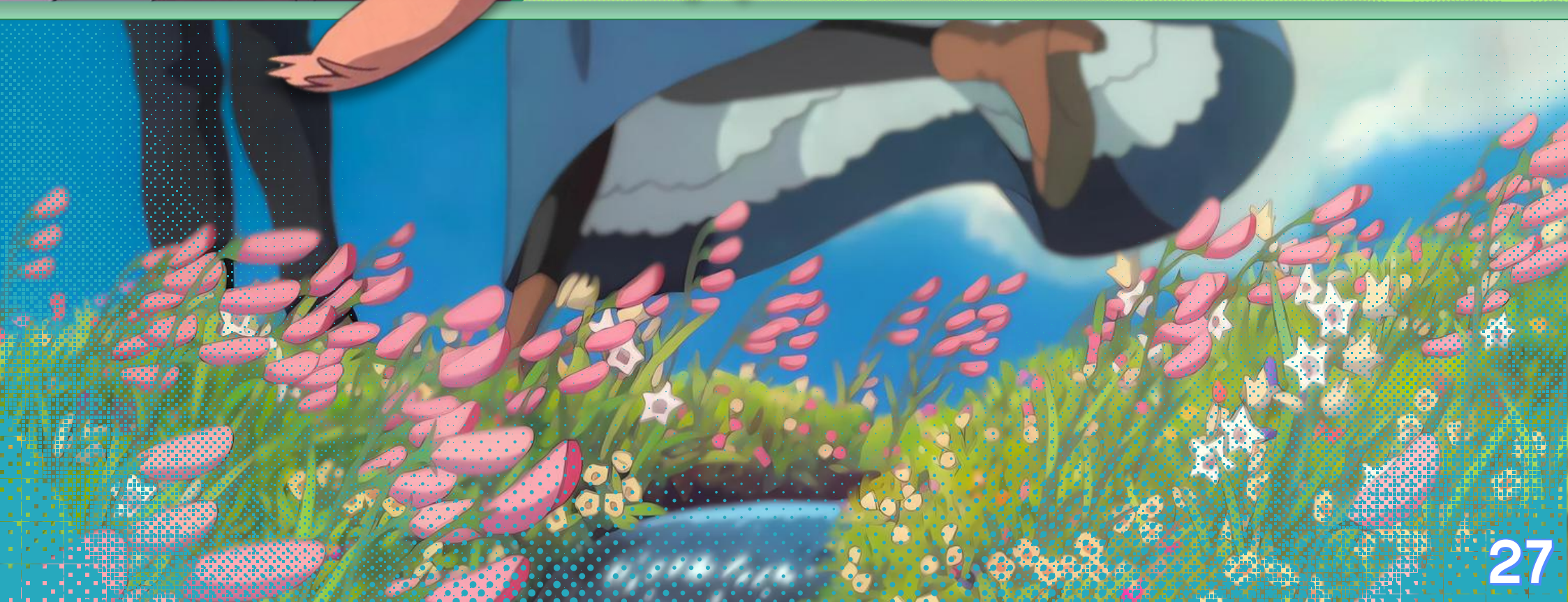


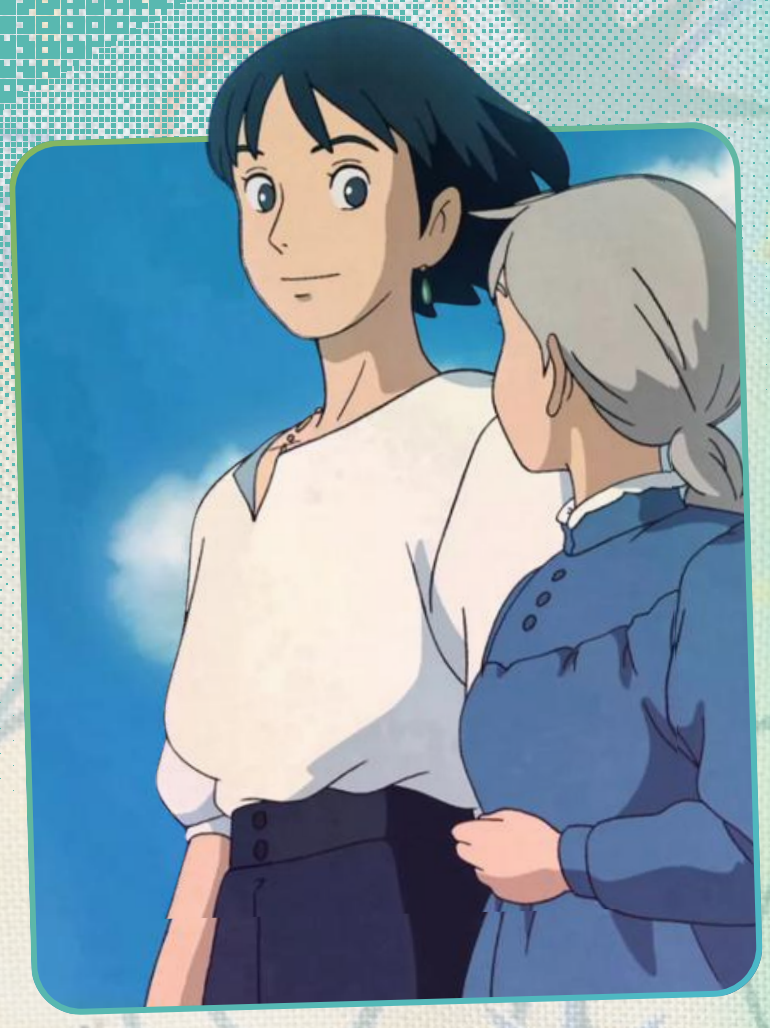


And then there's Howl.

Enigmatic and dramatic, yet deeply sensitive. He's not the perfect prince everyone sees; he's vulnerable, scared, and flawed. But he still chooses to fight with a curse. Looking back at his character, Howl reminds me that it's okay to be imperfect, to be messy and emotional, and still be someone who's great, valued and loved.







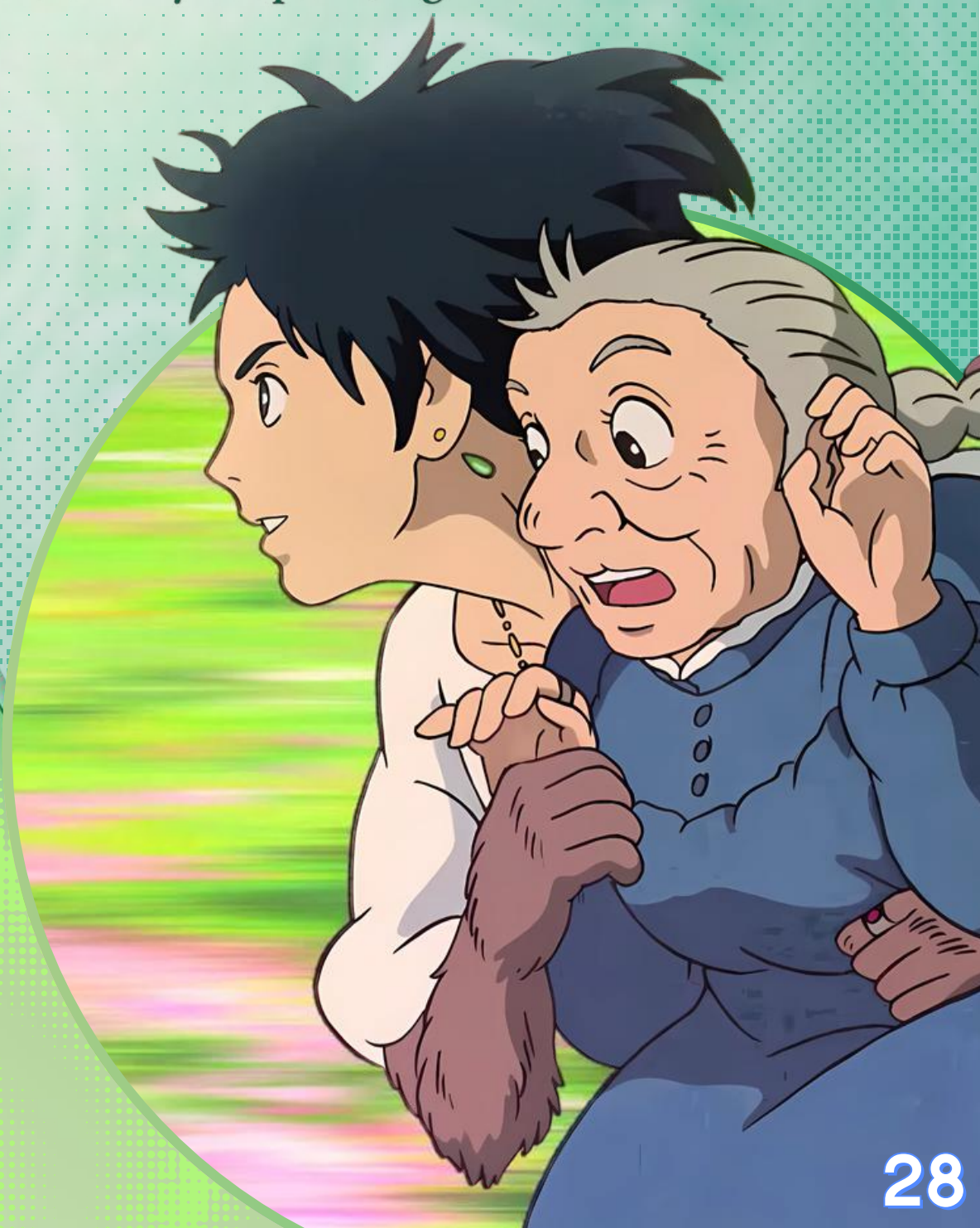




Visually, the film is breathtaking. The castle itself is a fever dream, filled with details that make it feel surreal. The music by Joe Hisaishi? It stays with you long after the credits roll. The themes of anti-war, time travel, and transformation feel timeless, and somehow still find a way to keep me feeling touched by the film.

I love Howl's Moving Castle and especially the creator, Hayao Miyazaki. I love this film not just because of its beauty or the character design, but because it teaches us that love is not about being perfect. It's about choosing and believing in each other despite fear. It's about finding your purpose and value in a chaotic world. It's about magic, not in spells or fighting demon lords, but in the beauty of forgiveness and being seen.

So to those out there that haven't watched Howl's Moving Castle by Studio Ghibli yet, watch it. Let it wrap around your shoulders like a cozy blanket and let it become your comfort film. Let it remind you that even when the world starts to feel confusing, you're still allowed to be gentle, to be brave, and to believe in a little bit of magic. Let that version of you spark bright.



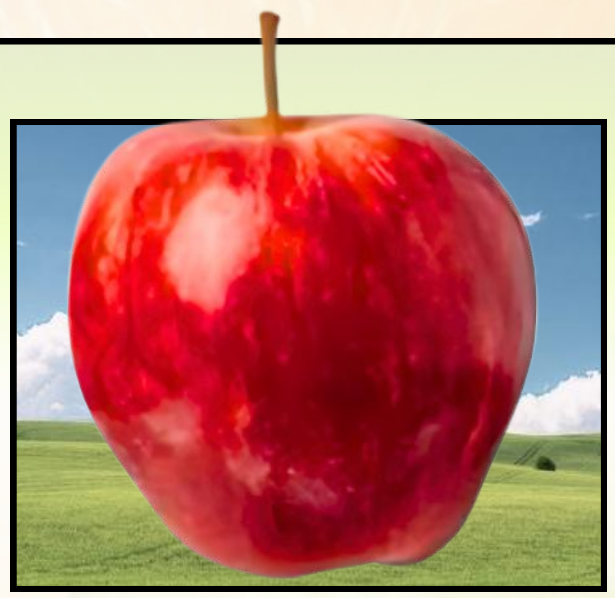
The Timeless Gift of Travel

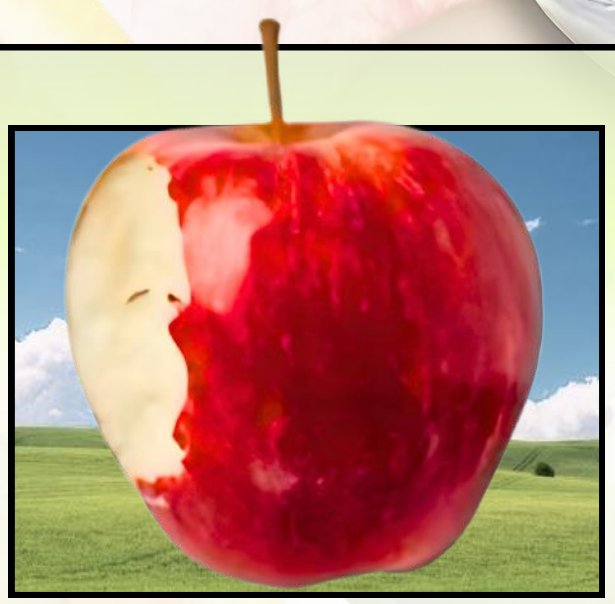
"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page."
- St. Augustine

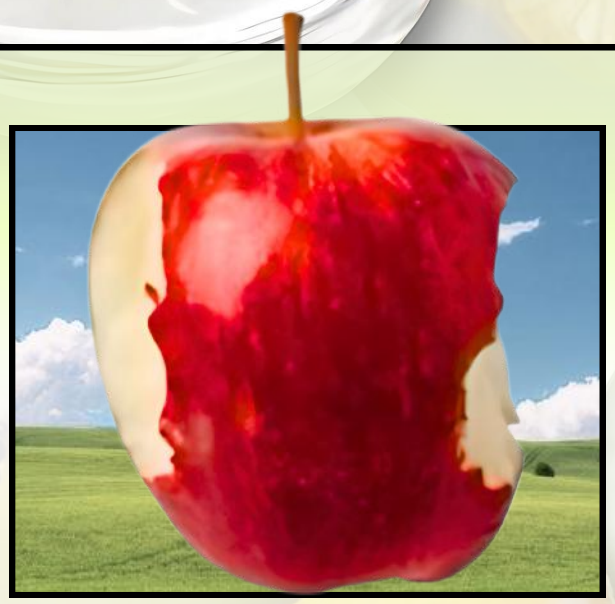
Long ago, wise ones said the Earth is full of wonders waiting to be seen — mountains that touch the heavens, seas that whisper to the stars, and cities that carry the breath of carry the breath of empires past. To travel is not merely to move from place to place — it is to awaken the soul, to stir the heart, and to drink deeply from the cup of life. When we journey beyond the walls of home, we leave behind the noise and weight of daily troubles. The mind, tired from the grind of lessons, numbers and rules, finds an unfamiliar path. Like a candle newly lit, the spirit burns brighter. The world feels new again.

But travel is not just rest — it is a teacher in disguise. In far-off lands, history rises from the stones beneath your feet. You may walk through the temples carved by ancient hands or stand where kings once stood. You may taste the spice of a land unknown or hear songs sung in a tongue older than your own. These are not lessons from paper but from life itself — and they will stay with you longer than any book.









By Moonlight Aethereus

And what of the people?

Each place is a world of its own, with faces painted by different suns and stories shaped by different skies. Their ways may be strange to you at first, but with time, you will see the beauty in their customs, their kindness, and their pride. In learning about others, you come to understand your own heart more clearly. Respect grows, the world no longer feels so divided.

The summer season, bright and full of promise, is a perfect time for such adventures. Students, whose minds are eager and eyes wide, can use this time to explore not just places but themselves. Teachers, who guide others through knowledge, can find their own inspiration in quiet forests, busy markets, or peaceful shores.

Not all journeys require riches. Even a walk through a nearby village, a visit to a museum, or a weekend in nature can bring new light to the soul.

Some may choose to serve while they travel — to help others, to listen, and to give. Others may write, draw, or take pictures, keeping the memory of their journey like a jewel tucked safely away. Each step moment, becomes a part of your story, one that no one can ever take from you.

So if the road ever calls to you — listen. Take the path. Let the wind guide your feet and the sky be your roof. In travel, you will find not just new places, but a stronger, wiser, and braver version of yourself.

By Bornei Mom

What Big Tech Won't Tell You About Generative AI: *A Crop's Thoughts*

An Opinion Piece

In recent years, the rise of AI as well as changes to algorithms and policies across different platforms have reduced the number of safe places for creators to post their work. For instance, Meta's user policy states in no unclear terms that they will use "information shared on Meta products and services" — which includes posts and photos — to use in their generative AI models. It's not just Meta. Twitter's terms of service also include a similar clause. Really! Go and take a look.

As an artist, there are very few places to turn to. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter; all explicitly state that your work is at constant risk of being scraped and fed to an AI model unless your account is restricted or private.



Even places like ArtStation and DeviantArt (well-known art platforms) have had issues with AI-generated art. ArtStation users had a huge protest a few years back when they found that their work had been used to feed AI, while DeviantArt had a whole other issue with AI-generated work being posted to the platform. Pinterest technically still remains as an option, but there has been a truly awful rise in AI slop on the site, and posting your own original art on there is a surefire way to have it stolen, reposted, and cropped without your watermark. Now, these are just the more popular or standard platforms — so, what about the smaller, nicher ones, or the ones that aren't owned by notorious tech bros (unpleasant individuals who happen to be prominent in the field of computer science)?





Whole, Soy, or Almond Milk?— Reviewing Alternatives

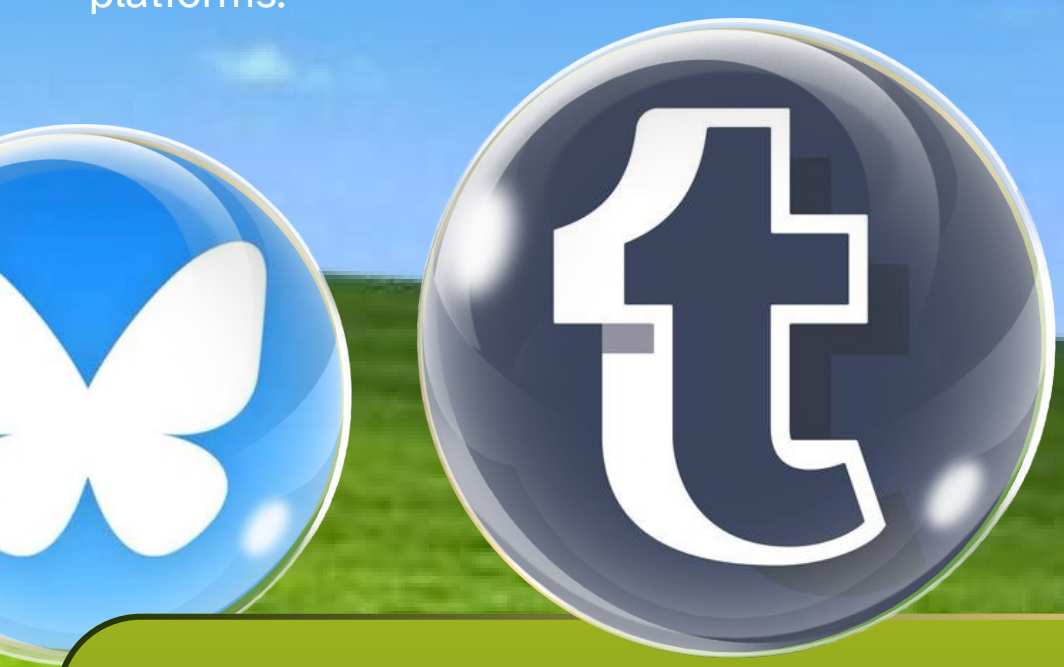


Well, let's go over some of them.

Bluesky is one of the more popular alternatives, specifically for Twitter, but many are still questioning fully moving to it because it's still relatively new. The X-shaped wound is still incredibly fresh for many, making people understandably wary of Bluesky. Similarly, Tumblr sits as a popular choice but falls short on the opposite side — its archaic status and reputation, along with its older user population. Thus, Tumblr's etiquette can be challenging to adjust to, as the environment is incredibly different compared to more modern social media platforms.



TikTok is popular, but the general nature of the art community on TikTok makes it akin to walking in a minefield. The people there tend to be from a younger demographic, with the maturity and discourse to match. Additionally, the algorithm seems to favor videos over slideshows and photos, making it difficult to post individual artwork rather than short-form videos.







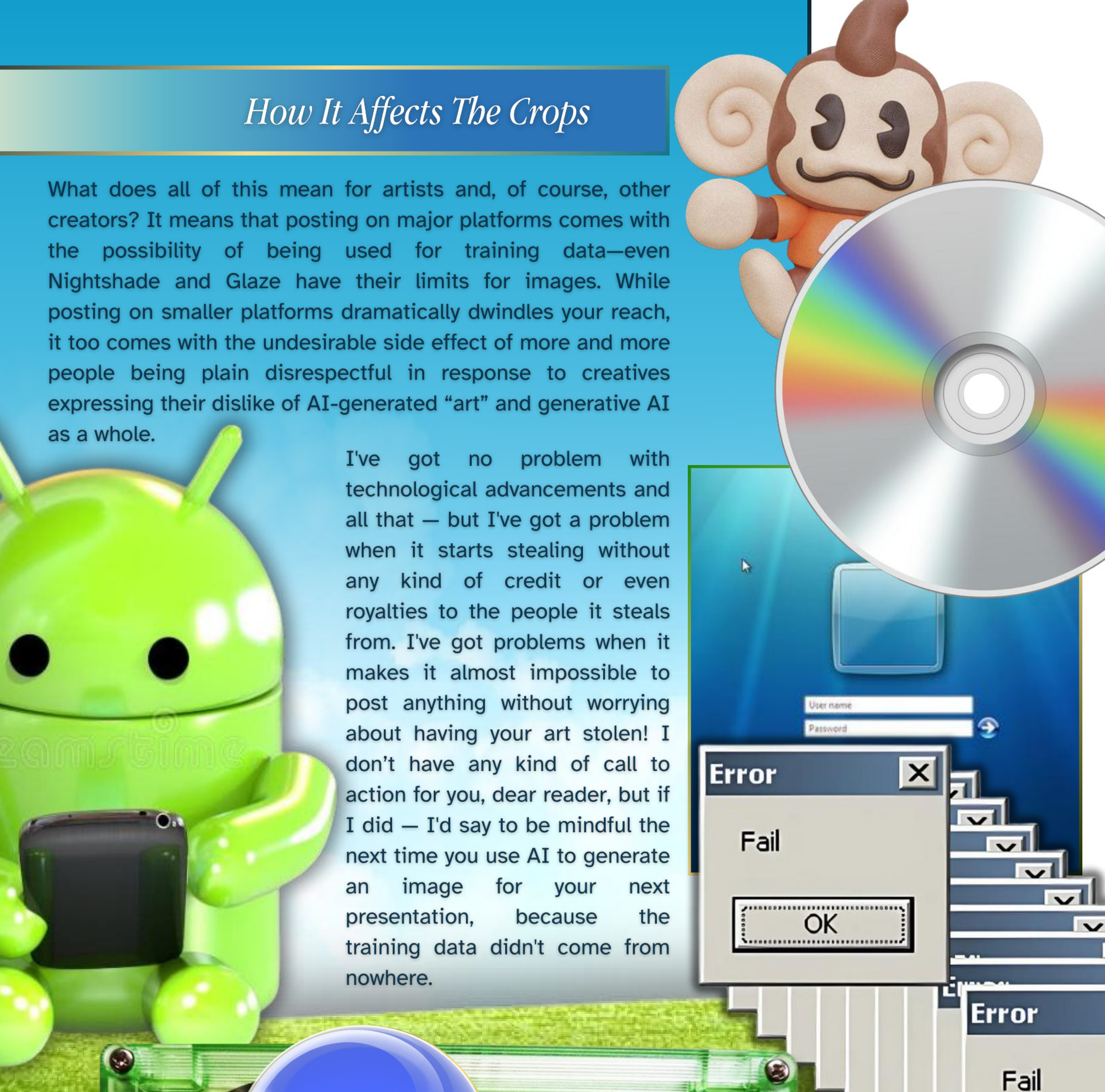
Cara is a promising platform, claiming to take measures against AI and catered towards a more professional audience. However, again, it's incredibly niche. Cara's aim at enabling artists to find commissions and commissioners reduces the possible number of people it could reach. Plus, its professional vibes are a little (a lot) intimidating. Smaller, even atypical or older options like **Amino** and **Sketchers United** suffer from their lack of traction — you can post there, but it's unlikely to get a lot of attention outside of the communities. Discord technically falls into this category as well; however, big servers suffer from a plethora of problems — while small servers risk dying out or being dominated by a 'main' friend group. The limited file size afforded to free users, along with the compression of files, has also been at times a great annoyance.

I'm not a robot
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Privacy - Terms

How It Affects The Crops

What does all of this mean for artists and, of course, other creators? It means that posting on major platforms comes with the possibility of being used for training data—even Nightshade and Glaze have their limits for images. While posting on smaller platforms dramatically dwindles your reach, it too comes with the undesirable side effect of more and more people being plain disrespectful in response to creatives expressing their dislike of AI-generated “art” and generative AI as a whole.

I've got no problem with technological advancements and all that — but I've got a problem when it starts stealing without any kind of credit or even royalties to the people it steals from. I've got problems when it makes it almost impossible to post anything without worrying about having your art stolen! I don’t have any kind of call to action for you, dear reader, but if I did — I'd say to be mindful the next time you use AI to generate an image for your next presentation, because the training data didn't come from nowhere.



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