

Writing samples
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Game Script - Qareen

This sample is an excerpt of the game script for Qareen, which is a 2.5d side-scrolling story game. The narrative system plays out scenes in the backdrop as the player moves along.

Context: Sherene and her immaterial ghost-twin Qareen are on the run from security forces. They have escaped into Al Gamaa, once a university campus, now it is a ruin none dare venture into. Here they will find BU6A, a bot from our time (which is now the ancient past). Sherene has been having visions of BU6A and his companion Sahar as they attempted to prevent the conquest of the world in the ancient past.

EXT. AL GAMAA - NIGHT

Al-Gamaa lacks the oases and forcefields that cover the rest of the city. All is ancient and blown over with sand.

The cellar door CREAKS as Sherene peaks from it, then:

A humanoid LEAPS from an alley and SHRIEKS. Its monstrous, glowing neon and spotted like a hyena. This is a **GHOUL**.

The ghoul is SHAKING- In that state of **fear** that makes feral animals dangerous, ready to strike anything that moves.

It slashes at an ancient market booth, SPLITTING it in half, then dashes off around the corner SHRIEKING.

...

QAREEN (V.O.)

This is why we don't go to Al-Gamaa.

SHERENE

We'll be safe at the old library.

Limping, we sneak past rabid ghouls through the dark ruins of the ancient campus and the vast refugee camp it hosted.

We reach a grand domed library blown over with sand and collapsing in disrepair. We climb in through a window.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

An inch of dust cakes dozens of cables snaking across the floor and up the grand central staircase.

Qareen separates from us, inspecting the cables.

QAREEN

They're powered. Something's here.

As we follow the cables, more cables join it, forming a meter thick bundle that leads through a narrow doorway.

We squeeze past the thick bundle into the room.

INT. COMPUTING NEXUS

The cables diverge through a low fog, feeding into a hundred blinking computers. Cooling systems BUZZ.

A robotic arm UNPLUGS a cable, WHIRS along a circular track to another computer, and PLUGS the cable in.

We approach the center, where through the fog we see:

BU6A in a state of stasis, dozens of small wires harnessing him to the mess of machinery.

The world GLITCHES, and in ghostly blue Sahar and BU6A fade in. Ghostly BU6A flies into Sahar's arms, her laughs ECHO.

SAHAR

Oh BU6A...

The scene glitches, replays like a skipping record. Then:

BU6A's eyes OPEN.

BU6A

Y-you're really there?

His mouth is still, his voice coming from unseen speakers.

SHERENE

You created the ghosts.

...

BU6A
No. But I helped you see them.

His tone is much more depleted than in the R-Shief memories.

SHERENE
What are they?

BU6A
Daydreams of a machine more aware of history than you or I can imagine. We called it **R-Shief**, our life's work.

Modern BU6A watches the skipping ghosts of himself and Sahar with gentle melancholy.

SHERENE
An *intelligent archive*, intact?

BU6A
Its useless. Al-Haala will destroy any sign of the truth.

SHERENE
What do they have to do with this?

BU6A
Forget it. In the end all that's left is to run far, far away.

SHERENE
I'm not very good at running.

BU6A
Then I'm sorry. Your life was over the moment you chased the truth.

SHERENE
You made that happen- This is your fault! What do you want from me!

BU6A is quiet for a moment...

A holographic map FLASHES into existence, showing the four regions of the world. Blinking PINGS mark many locations.

BU6A
I've spent centuries repeating the things I never said. I'll never swallow all my grief, but the work isn't done. R-Shief is in danger. Al-Haala have a lead: A liaison for **The North** knows something he shouldn't.

SHERENE
The terrorist organization The North?

QAREEN (V.O.)
This is insane.

BU6A
Codename **Faqqua**. That's all I know.

SHERENE
You don't know where R-Shief is?

BU6A
You can find it. Find Faqqua, find R-Shief, and **run-** *far, far* away.

SHERENE
Ok.

QAREEN (V.O.)
(whispering)
Sherene! This is *treason*.

SHERENE
I'm like a bird in a golden cage set free into a prison of lies. Only the truth in R-Shief will set me free.

QAREEN
No!

Qareen splits from us, casts a glyph that ZINGs brightly.
The robotic arm acts fast: SWINGS to Qareen, GRABBING her.

SHERENE
What are you doing!

QAREEN
Our life was beautiful.

BU6A
She's called the raaie to us!

SHERENE
We have a chance to change the world.

QAREEN
Al-Haala are gods. You can't win.

BU6A
I have to separate her from you.

Another robotic arm pulls an **extractor** to Sherene's head.

SHERENE

Wait.
(to Qareen)
Do you love me?

...

QAREEN

I am you.

Sherene hangs her head low.

SHERENE

No- You're not.

Sherene pulls the extractor to her temple and ACTIVATES it.
Qareen GROANS as she is SUCKED into the extractor.

All is silent.

SHERENE (cont'd)

Is she ok?

BU6A

She's already past the firewall. But
we've got to run!

The wires HISS as they detach from BU6A. His ancient
levitators CYCLE weakly as he begins to float.

SHERENE

Let's go together BU6A.

Ghostly blue Sahar fades in, hugging ghostly BU6A. Modern
BU6A floats up to her, looks her close in the face.

BU6A

I'm scared.

SHERENE

I know, but you don't have to be
alone.

Sherene offers a hand. BU6A hesitates, then floats to her
shoulder, perching just as he once had on Sahar's.

They leave together.

But:

We don't follow them. Instead, we PUSH FORWARD and into the
extractor: into the cybernetic realm of **noospace**.

NOOSPACE

Glowing **data fragments** ZIP past, their ELECTRIC HUM GROWING into an ominous ROAR. To:

Qareen SURGES through the torrent of information at incredible speed.

We come close to find her CRYING, dejected. Then:

On her face CURDLES a steely DETERMINATION, the kind which could only be borne from OVERWHELMING RAGE.

Ink Prototype - Qareen

This sample is an excerpt from the Ink prototype for Qareen. Qareen does not have a branching narrative, but I used Ink to prototype when and how the player's actions would trigger the next part of the story. I write out the triggers with Ink's choice markup.

-> The_Grove

=== The_Grove ===

An emeraldine Wisp keeps pace with you as you slink stealthily to a break in the brush.

Ahead is a tall wall of honeycomb presenting an orifice like a plant's stomata.

* [Wait for it to do something]

-

The stomata contracts, spilling to the ground an orex-like creature, a child. It tries to stand but stumbles half-blind and weak.

* [Approach it]

-

You clutch the gemstone Wisp as you approach. You hesitate.

"Maybe an adult will come next," you say.

"The future is fickle, only the now exists," says the stone as a hungry vortex of energy lights up inside it. The stone descends into your hand.

The orex stares up at you, half-blind.

* [Harvest]

-

The Orex rips into energy that flows into the stone, igniting a bright blue glow. Your hands are shaking as the stone buoys back into the air.

Cinematic Script - Maw

This sample is the first few pages of my feature screenplay Maw. The Snow/Trench scene is a good character scene sample.

OVER BLACK

In the not too distant future, nuclear war destroyed the great cities of Earth. Many civilizations collapsed, but a few persisted. Decades later, ash continues to rain from the sky.

TITLE CARD: MAW

EXT. ASH TUNDRA - DAY

A dead raccoon, half-buried, well-rotted. TRENCH (fur coat, goggles, dust mask) buries a shovel in the ash around its corpse, digs. Two more people run up and join him.

PITCH BLACK

Dim light and ash rush through as a hole punches in. Trench's face blocks the light momentarily.

LATER

Ash-dimmed sunlight silhouettes Trench. He lights a flashlight, revealing he is in an apartment kitchen.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He scans the room: collapsed roof, moldy sink, rotting food in tin cans torn open, a live raccoon: It rushes out a warped door frame.

INT. STAIR HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Trench crouches under the warped door frame into the stair hall, then leans over the banister. Ten floors of stair hall stretch below.

MUCH LATER

Flashlight beams crisscross as an army of people search through the rooms systematically. They murmur like scavengers or archaeologists at work.

INT. BASE CAVE

Crowded, people working, hauling, living. The flowing crowd bends around an artificial barrier dividing the cave. Trench, carrying a satchel, pushes through the crowd to an unlocked door in the barrier, goes through it. On the other side:

INT. SERVER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Server cabinets packed incredibly close. At the end of the row, a small table packed with monitors, sitting before it is SNOW, an incredibly thin woman; Her face bones contour unnaturally deep. She turns frowningly to Trench.

SNOW

You have it?

Trench places the satchel on the ground, unzips it, folds the cloth down, revealing a yellow four-legged robot with a single folded claw arm. Snow leaps to study it, amazed.

SNOW (cont'd)

Its pristine. You found the lab?

TRENCH

An apartment.

Snow glares at Trench suspiciously, rummages through a bag for tools, starts disassembling the robot.

TRENCH (cont'd)

An employee's home, we think.

Snow takes a camera from the bag, takes snapshots of the robot's innards. Trench watches impatiently.

TRENCH (cont'd)

You're welcome.

SNOW

Screw off.

They glare at each other in silent pause, unhappily.

TRENCH

Why aren't you more grateful?

Snow takes a breath, inspects the machine's innards.

SNOW

It hurts knowing we have to relearn these things.

Trench laughs, relaxes.

TRENCH

I think it was good we unlearned so much.

Snow scoffs, glares at Trench, works at her desk.

SNOW

Bullshit. Knowledge is what separates us from the rodents suffocating in the ash.

Trench sighs.

TRENCH

Snow what bug is up your ass.

Snow ignores him, staring at her terminal.

Trench reaches into his pocket, pulls from it some soil, rolls his thumb around in it.

TRENCH (cont'd)

I needed you.

SNOW

You survived.

TRENCH

I survived, yeah and not much else.

SNOW

You *needed* more? That's what need is about. I survived too.

TRENCH

I needed to feel alive or human, or maybe happy.

SNOW

Right yeah, but you don't *need* any of those, not really.

TRENCH

You don't need to feel human?

SNOW

AI's certainly don't, neither dogs or bacteria too.

TRENCH

Oh, what a lazy philosopher you are.

SNOW

What do you care. I thought you were a stoic.

TRENCH

Why do I have to be? I want to play, I want to be free of the one-voiced instrument of emotion. I want to feel everything at once, or at least two things at once.

SNOW

I'm not saying you have to be whatever that is. And you can feel two things at once. You have enough brains for it. Two lobes, all those wrinkles.

TRENCH

I'm more than brain wrinkles.

The pair quiet down, stare faintly unhappily into space. Snow taps her shoes together therapeutically.

SNOW

I didn't miss you.

Trench looks at Snow disgusted.

SNOW (cont'd)

I loved you. But I didn't miss you. They're different.

Trench processes, gets up, walks down the hall, all while Snow watches. He turns toward her:

TRENCH

Always the emotional scientist. I want to keep my confusion, Snow, I hate the truth of it all.

SNOW

With the truth comes the possibility
of intention. Do you intend to get
better Trench?

Trench stares deeply into Snow's eyes, as if to telepath his
feelings to her.

TRENCH

I suppose I don't.

They stare, each frowning sadly. Trench sniffs, then walks
away.

Illustrated Cinematic - Qareen

This sample is an illustrated cinematic that plays upon booting the game Qareen.

A Cave - Several hundred people lying on slates in five concentric circles, their heads lodged in machinery.

NARRATOR

Sometime in the mid 21st century, a group calling themselves **Al-Haala** uploaded their consciousnesses into exotic virtual realities.

Exotic VR - A crowd of avatars celebrate the arrival of a massive, towering AI avatar from a portal.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

There they devised powerful machine minds with which they could take over the world.

Server Farms - On screen left there are endless windowless skyscrapers under dark clouds, connected by massive, hanging wire bundles. On screen right are homes ablaze and a family fleeing. On screen center is a gigantic, autonomous bulldozer rolling over the blazing homes.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Their ever-expanding server farms quickly displaced humanity to the brink of extinction until, 150 years ago...

The Sanctuary - Massive concrete construction projects. Endless refugee camps.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The last refugees were permanently relocated to a region of the former Middle East known as **The Sanctuary**.

The Layer - The same image of the sanctuary, except now an augmented reality layer adds a pseudo-utopian digital glint.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

To suppress revolt, Al-Haala systematically erased history, and created **The Layer**: a hypnotic, ever-present augmented reality.

The Present - A banner declaring **The Eye Protects** hangs over a crowd of humans. Machine enforcers fly overhead.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Now in 2211, the last descendants of
humanity know nothing of the past, or
the true nature of their world.

INTO GAME:

EXT. BALCONY ABOVE CITY SQUARE - LATE AFTERNOON

We're on a skyscraper balcony looking over a wide vista.
Several onlookers lean on the rail.

A prominent skyscraper bears the Hamsa Hand sign, declaring:
The Eye Protects

Directly below is a futuristic city square filled with
thousands of protesters.

Just beyond is a dilapidated neighborhood in a deep pit.
It's rimmed by tall concrete walls, and a massive highway
soars over it. This is Al-Gama'a.

And beyond Al-Gama'a is a massive, mountain sized cube
dotted with tens of thousands of lights - this is Qaf city.

The main menu fades in:

Continue
New
Load
Options
Quit
