My Mom Is Going To See This Isn't She?

HOW TO WRITE A FILTHY GAME TO BE PROUD OF

with Bendi Barrett

CONTENT WARNING!

This presentation contains:

- Coarse language.

- Frank discussions of and references to sex and sexual practices.

- Conversations around consent and a single usage of the term "sexual assault".

- Non-explicit, but sexualized images.

- A primarily queer angle.

- Content not fit for anyone under 18.

Please consider your comfort and willingness to engage these topics. Also, feel free to leave this presentation at any time if you become uncomfortable!

WHAT THE SHIT IS THIS?

GOALS:

Get you thinking about why you might want to make an interactive fiction game.
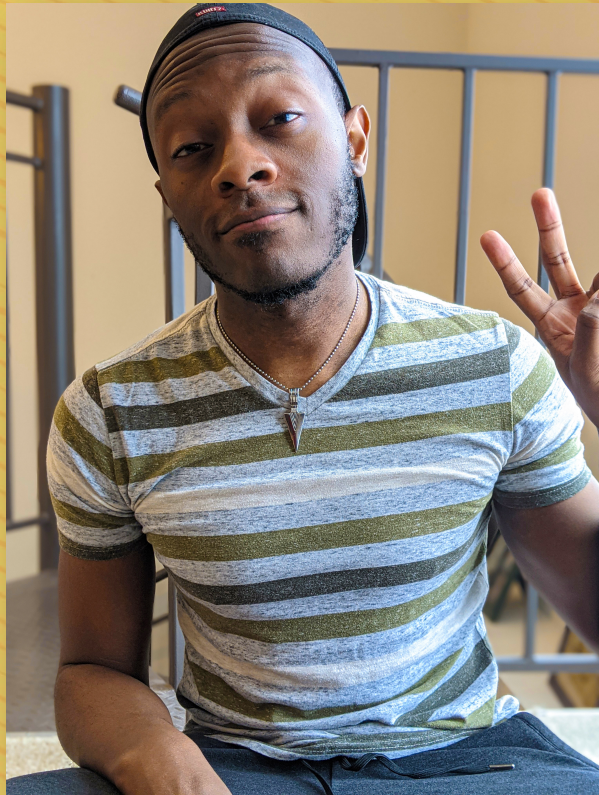
Raise a few concerns worth considering before you start.

Give you a framework for making something small to start.

Help you avoid some pitfalls that you may want to avoid.

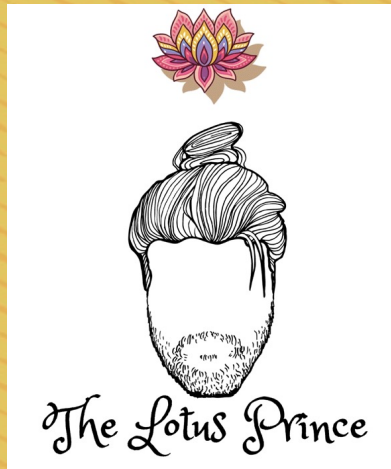Not make an ass of myself.

WHO THE SHIT AM I?

I'm Bendi Barrett. Also, Benji Bright (my smut alias!)
I write interactive fiction.

Under my given name, I wrote:

COOL, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE DIRTY STUFF?

Well, I also wrote:

FUCK THAT GUY
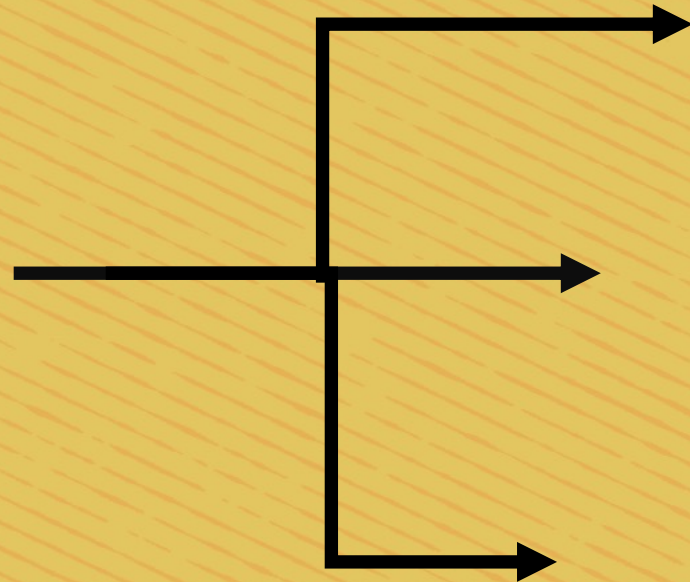
BENJI BRIGHT

God(s)

The Lotus Prince

DOORS
by benji bright

WHAT THE SHIT IS INTERACTIVE FICTION?

LINEAR/TRADITIONAL FICTION

INTERACTIVE FICTION

WHY IF?
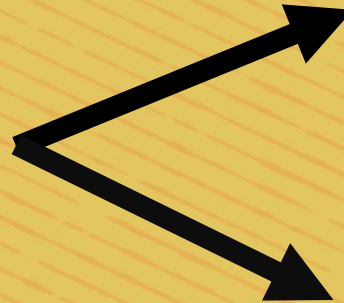
TRADITIONAL/LINEAR FICTION

Sexy Thief

Vs.

Sexy Detective

WHY IF, CONT.

INTERACTIVE FICTION

Sexy Thief

Sexy Detective

Sexy Thief 2

SO, YOU WANNA' MAKE SOME SMUT, HUH?

DO YOU NEED A PSEUDONYM?

PROS:

- Job hunting anytime soon?

- Fewer perverts in your DMs.

- Decide <u>exactly</u> how much to share and with whom.

CONS:

- Fewer perverts in your DMs.

- Running dual identities is time consuming.

- Success may mean scrutiny.

- Your mom might find out.

BOTTOM LINE:

A pseudonym is a protective tool but can also obscure your work. Weigh out the options before you start for less headache.

PLEASURE OR CLOUT?

Remember: "Because Horny" is as good a reason as any to create art.

However: Once you start chasing clout and monetary success, it might take away from the 'pure' elements of the work.

So?: Be honest with yourself about what you expect to get out of the process of making erotic work.

MODELLING CONSENT

WHEN WE SAY CONSENT...

Sexual consent at its most basic is the ability of a participant in a sexual scenario to agree to that sexual contact.

Sexual consent[1] is:

- **Freely Given**

- **Revocable/Reversible**

- **Informed**

- **Enthusiastic**

- **Specific**

[1] Planned Parenthood. (n.d.). What is sexual consent?: Facts about rape & sexual assault. Retrieved April 14, 2021, from https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/relationships/sexual-consent

CONSENT IN GAMES

Human sexual interactions are messy.

Messiness is part of the appeal of sex in games as in life.

However, messy and complicated interactions aren't a justification for abusive behavior in digital or real-world settings.

Creating work that specifically aims to titillate and arouse should come with a burden of responsibility to do so thoughtfully.

Be <u>very</u> liberal with content warnings if you violate/subvert those rules.
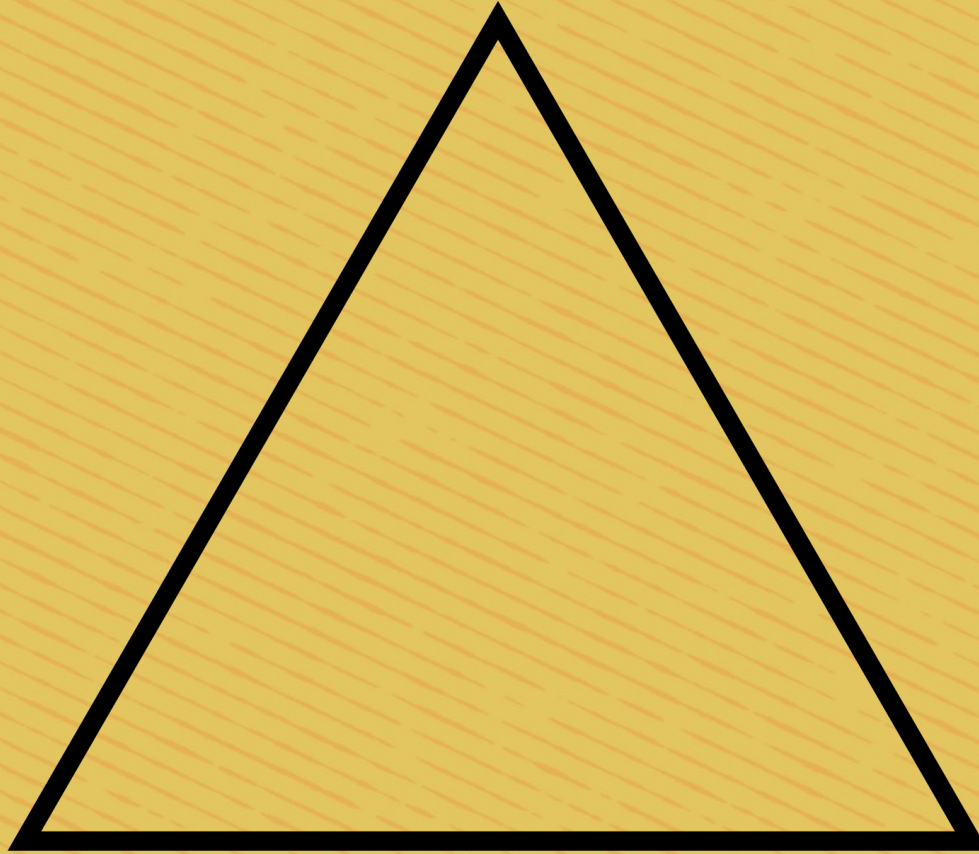
WHAT I'M NOT SAYING

I am not trying to imply that writing fictional work in which consent is unclear is inherently unethical.

I am also not obliquely condoning depictions of sexual assault.

I am saying that being clear, communicative, and unambiguous about those lines is incredibly important.

WHO CONSENTS TO WHAT?

CREATOR

PLAYER

NON-PLAYER
CHARACTERS

EXAMPLES

Themes (so far)

Hypnosis (Himbofication)   Muscle Worship
Masturbation   Watersports
Domination/Submission   Light (so-far) Bondage

Back
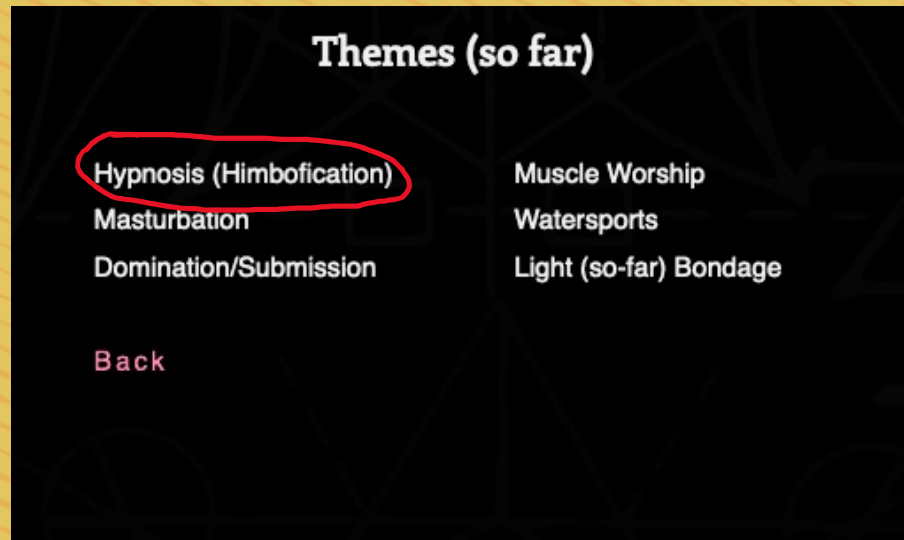
Screenshot taken from my game DOORS (2020).

EXAMPLES

ALL POWER EXCHANGE MUST BE NEGOTIATED

Fiction is a safe space. In real life, there's nothing more important than clearly communicating your desires and limits in advance, without either party feeling uncomfortable or pressured.

Ladykiller in a Bind (2016) features an opening that foregrounds the importance of communication and consent.

(Screenshot used with permission from Christine Love, Love Conquers All Games)

MAKING THE DAMN THING

WHAT I USE:

TWINE:

Twine is an open-source tool for telling interactive, nonlinear stories.

You don't need to write any code to create a simple story with Twine, but you can extend your stories with variables, conditional logic, images, CSS, and JavaScript when you're ready.

Twine publishes directly to HTML, so you can post your work nearly anywhere. Anything you create with it is completely free to use any way you like, including for commercial purposes.

Twine was originally created by **Chris Klimas** in 2009 and is now maintained by a whole bunch of people at **several different repositories**.

CHOICESCRIPT*:

Introduction to ChoiceScript

A basic guide to the ChoiceScript programming language. Please post on the ChoiceScript forum if you have questions about this document.

What is ChoiceScript?

ChoiceScript is a simple programming language for writing multiple-choice games (MCGs) like Choice of the Dragon. Writing games with ChoiceScript is easy and fun, even for authors with no programming experience.

*Asterisks denotes NON-open-source software.

WHAT'S OUT THERE:

OMG. LITERALLY SO MUCH.

Inform 7**

Unity*

TADS

Ink

Quest

Ren'py

*Asterisks denotes NON-open-source software.

**Inform 7 appears to be in the process of open-sourcing.
It is currently and will remain free to use.

WHERE DO I START?

BRAINSTORM & RESEARCH

SCOPE -!!!-

WRITE A LOT/DESIGN A LOT

CUT THE FAT

FINISH? YEAH, MAYBE

NOT FUCKING IT UP

SEX WRITING TIPS? YUCK!

FOLLOW YOUR INNER CRINGE METER:

Don thrust his manhood into his gasping partner.

"I-I-I've never felt like this!" Robbie gasped.

Don grinned. "Well, just wait, because this is about to get a lot...deeper."

DID THAT TURN YOU ON? PLEASE SAY NO.

SINS: Clumsy repetition. Stuttering dialog. Overuse of innuendo. Terrible use of genitalia synonyms (srsly, dick and cock are FINE). No sensory details. Flat writing all around.

MORE SEX WRITING TIPS?!?

FOCUS ON SENSORY DETAILS

We don't have sex with our genitals and eyes alone.

Think about a particularly memorable sexual experience.

Is there an aspect of touch/smell/taste/sound that stands

out?

PLEASING EVERYONE PLEASES NO ONE

You absolutely can't make everyone happy or horny, so

don't try. You occupy a corner of the erotic spectrum,

speak to that authentically.

LAST SEX WRITING TIP

AUTHENTICITY/EMOTIONAL RANGE

Much of the best sex writing includes a range of emotions far beyond the horny ones. Hesitation, nervousness, curiosity, disgust, shame, irritation, humor, all of these have a place in erotic writing.

Maybe especially humor. Sex is ridiculous and it can be both hot and funny.

DEVELOPMENT TIPS? UGH!

AVOID COMBINATORIAL EXPLOSION

Start small. Keep it simple. Hide your work.

A hard game to code isn't more fun than an easy one.

TRY A GAME JAM!

Working within a tight time-span forces you to make

decisions about scope that are hard. It's great practice.

Itch.io hosts jams on an ongoing basis.

Ludum Dare is a twice-yearly game jam competition,

if you have competitive streak.

DEVELOPMENT TIPS DEUX

DON'T SWEAT THE DETAILS

Is perfecting the animation of a single circle worth losing sleep? Is that clever idea going to be memorable to your player after a month?

STEAL FROM YOURSELF SHAMELESSLY

Don't reinvent the wheel. Think of your code as a pantry, keep it stocked and take what you need from it.

BE FUCKING NICE TO YOURSELF

MAKING SMUT IS TOUGH

Writing sex and sexuality with seriousness is a vulnerable act.

Allow yourself to have mixed emotions about your goals and try to have fun with it.

If you make something that you enjoy, but you don't think it's ready for the world to see. That's cool too!

PUTTING IT OUT

FIRST: TERMS AND CONDITIONS

READ THE TOC. SERIOUSLY.

Does the platform you intend to publish on allow explicit content? What are the limits?
Example: Steam allows erotic games now, but not images of real people.

READ THE TOC AGAIN. FOR REAL.

Publishing erotic work is a minefield. Every time a TOC is updated it's worth your time to double-check that your work is still compliant.

SELF-PUBLISH OR FIND A PUBLISHER?

PLATFORMS

PATREON

The crowdfunding behemoth. The current top adult games account makes $76,663 a month (via Graphtreon.com).

You will likely not make that much. Sry. Also, not a discovery engine.

STEAM

As of this writing (4/16/21) Steam has 24,762,439 concurrent players (via store.steampowered.com/stats/). At least one of them will probably play your dirty game.

PLATFORMS, CONT.

ITCH.IO

Itch.io is a hub for erotic games. Currently it features over 2,000 games bearing the erotic tag (via itch.io/games/tag-erotic).

MARKETING? YEAH, ABOUT THAT...

REMEMBER THE THING ABOUT TOCS?

Marketing erotic work on social media is even harder than making it.

Understand what's allowable and what's not on social media and skew conservative. Losing a following because of a ban sucks.

If you're in this to make money, get to know other erotic creators and learn from their successes (and their mistakes).

GOING "PRO"

PUBLISHERS

SANA STORIES

A romance publisher offering **"25% of the subscription revenue based on how much their stories are read by our subscribed users."** (via sanastories.com/submit-a-story)

CHOICE OF GAMES/HEART'S CHOICE

Heart's Choice is Choice of Games' romance imprint and features erotic games. Choice of Games offers royalty-based contracts. (via choiceofgames.com/looking-for-writers/)

JUMP IN, DON'T DROWN

A SUPER BASIC CHECKLIST

Am I comfortable with how I've dealt with consent in my work?

Have I considered whether players will be comfortable
playing my game?

Have I written something I find hot?

What are my goals? (Get royalties from it? Release it for free?)

Is the process I used to create this work sustainable?

Am I going to let my mom see this?

WINDING DOWN

THERE IS AN APPETITE FOR EROTIC STORIES IN GAMES

Games with sex may be hard to market, but that doesn't mean they're not worth making.

GAME MAKING EATS TIME

Game making is time consuming. Understand your goals before you start for fewer headaches.

BEN RECOMMENDS!

MONSTER PROM & MONSTER CAMP

Monster Prom is Developed by Beautiful Glitch, published by Those Awesome Guys. Copyright Beautiful Glitch SLU.
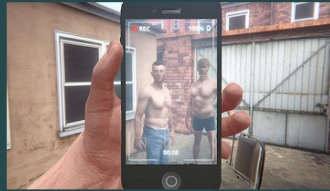
LADYKILLER IN A BIND

Ladykiller in a Bind is developed and published by Love Conquers All Games. Copyright Love Conquers All Games.

BEN RECOMMENDS X2

GAMES

GAME Hard Lads

British masculinity simulator about smoking, drinking, kissing, and pain. Based on the viral video British Lads Hit Each Other With Chair. (June 2020)

GAME Rinse and Repeat HD

Male shower simulator about punctuality and submission. Give him a helping hand... when he says so. (September 2015, remastered November 2018)
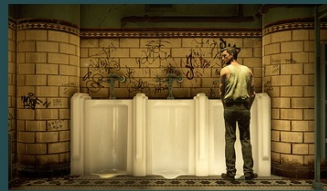
GAME Ruck Me

Gay sports TV game / art installation inspired by Aussie rules football (AFL). Made with Louis Roots for Bar SK in Melbourne, AU. (August 2018)

GAME Dream Hard

Two player *queer brawler* arcade game made for The Dreamhouse, a queer community space in Brooklyn. Made with Death By Audio Arcade. (June 2018)

GAME The Tearoom

Historical public bathroom sex simulator about anxiety, police, and sucking off another dude's gun. (June 2017)

GAME No Stars, Only Constellations

Short stargazing game about breaking-up and the possibility of advanced alien life in the universe. (September 2016)

Go play literally anything by **Robert Yang** and read his brilliant, thoughtful design blog: blog.radiator.debacle.us. Sex games can be smart! Mine aren't!

ME WANT MORE RECS!!!

TASTE IS SUBJECTIVE &
SEXUAL TASTE IS A SHITSHOW

Play some erotic games! Get a feel for what you respond to and what you don't. That's the best way to learn about what game you want to make.

FOR LINKS/REFERENCES

If you'd like a full list of links to pretty much everything mentioned in this presentation and presentation slides you can head to:

www.benmakesstuff.com/2021-presentation/

THANKS FOR COMING!

Pictured: the author after completing the first draft of this presentation, unshaven and exhausted.