

TROPICAL SUNSET

An outline for a hypothetical novel written by Mino.

v1.0

Preface

I like to think of writing as akin to having a conversation with my reader, so let's have a talk. "Tropical Sunset" is part of a little experiment wherein I'm attempting to convey and record my character creation process. The issue, however, is that I do not often create characters in isolation — because, to me, writing is like having a conversation, and characters are one of the many linguistic constructs we use to communicate. So, as far as my process is concerned, "creating a character" necessarily involves "deciding on a plot" and, crucially, "outlining said plot."

As a result, I've written "Tropical Sunset" almost exactly as I would write a preparatory document for a romance or visual novel. You will find character profiles, notes about the setting, ideas for potentially interesting moments, an outline to serve as a skeleton and some brief *excerpts* to showcase what form the narrative could take.

What is missing is, of course, the writing itself. You have the skeleton, and you know where the organs, muscle and skin are supposed to fit in, but those are yet to be constructed.

Speaking as a writer who has at times dipped on more experimental (and less successful) forms of narrative, I think there is something interesting in this format. It's like walking on a plot of land before construction of a house has truly kicked in — you can close your eyes and imagine how it's going to turn out, focus on what points are most interesting to you, in what ways you'd like the reality to diverge from the plan, and so on.

Speaking as a developer, however, I also see "Tropical Sunset" as potentially useful for aspiring creators who might struggle with some aspects of the writing process. I have, in essence, paved the road, handed you a map, and told you what awaits you at the end. If you are so inclined, you are welcome to write this story and walk the path yourself. You are even free to take detours, plot a different course, even walk the road only for as long as is convenient for you and, at the last stretch, seek out a different destination. Hell, it doesn't even have to be a romance or a visual novel, it could just as easily be a graphic novel, series of illustrations or many other things.

With the goal of providing a measure of freedom, you will find that in a few specific spots I have left gaps in the outline. The most notable ones are in the escalating tension of the story, in what I have called "the introspective chapters" wherein the two protagonists' backstories and dysfunctional family experiences would be explored.

If I was writing the story myself, these are the chapters I would have the most fun with and they are the most central to the overall themes of the narrative. This is where an aspiring writer would have the most room to leave their fingerprints on the story, and if I did it myself there would be no reason to stop there — for sure I would want to write this story myself.

Likewise, I have left gaps and options across the narrative. Even outside that major segment, there is much you can expand, shorten or change to make this tale yours. If you are an artist you may find these of particular interest; the quiet "what ifs" just out of scene. There is an allure in that.

If you are not a writer, I hope you may find the characters I have outlined here interesting. One can hope they might connect with a few people, and if I am so lucky I hope you allow yourself the freedom to dream about them. Take the aspects you find most meaningful and fascinating and enjoy them. Look at them from different angles. Take some tools and modify them, or transpose them to new settings. Have fun.

Special Thanks

RedBar, whose bat-like sensibilities I relied on as a compass for Alfred.

dilukha, whose touch for the chemistry between characters is always on-point.

Overview

Alfred, a bat mythical, is overburdened with bitter attachments. It has been a long time since he truly had a good time with his so-called friends. His family does not respect his autonomy, and he is often pressured to quiet down and take whatever treatment they have for him in stride. His work is grinding him to dust and he relies on prescribed stimulants to push himself the extra mile to meet expectations, even though his employer and workplace have no intention to promote him or reward his dedication. He gives too much, and any thought of taking anything in return has been educated out of his mind.

One day he meets Gomes, a tattoo artist who has recently moved into town. He has no plans of staying indefinitely, as he makes a habit of moving "every other year or so." He does not speak of his family or friends, and knows no one in town. He is quiet, but gains new life when the conversation moves to creative subjects, and his looks are wild; he dresses in full punk gear, not caring how others see him.

Most importantly, Gomes exists in a type of self-imposed isolation. He needs no permanent companionship of any kind in his life and is content with this state of affairs. He is unburdened, openly divergent and indifferent to how he is perceived — and that fascinates Alfred.

Common acquaintances and the reality of a town with a starving cultural life push these two men together. Things go from there. With each interaction Alfred finds himself more enraptured by Gomes' detachment from everything, but likewise grows in him a fear of what that would entail. There is a Pandora's box inside Alfred, and he knows that opening it would be irreversible.

It all collapses when Alfred, in an uncharacteristic period of agitation, projects his own insecurities and fears on Gomes. The bat insists that whatever Gomes' family might have done could not be that bad — a remark which would not be out of place in Alfred's own family life and circle of friends.

But Gomes has been through this song and dance before. To infringe on this boundary is a fatal mistake which heralds other unsightly aspects — perhaps even a repeat of the bad circumstances he escaped from. Gomes unceremoniously ghosts Alfred.

What follows is a period of introspection wherein Alfred reflects on his own relations. Pressure builds up until he bites the bullet and cleans up his circle of friends. Despite losing that connection with Gomes and what he represents, by his own two legs he follows that same path to its natural conclusion.

Months later, after many changes in his life and personal growth, Alfred decides that he does want a tattoo. Though the bond with Gomes is broken, he still trusts him as a professional and seeks out an appointment. During the procedure, as Alfred talks about how his life has changed since, they reconnect. Gomes notices that he still feels a connection, despite what happened, and he can respect Alfred's decision to stand up to the shitty people in his life.

Some bonds are worth keeping, after all. The two reconnect. Life goes on.

Characters

Gomes

General Concept

Gomes is a goat mythical of indeterminate origin born from a family of humans. He suspects he might be related to some variety of Satanic worship, but the truth is that he's a mix of a variety of mythical species — fauns and satyrs, Krampus-like beings and, why not?, some Baphomet-esque mythical too.

He is introverted and artistic, as well as detached from society and distant from most people he knew previously in life. He works as a tattoo artist and makes a habit of moving to a different city "every other year or so". He specializes in tattoos and body modifications for mythicals but works with humans as well, since he's not picky and has to pay his bills. He is a professional and will take any job that pays adequately — it's not personal.

On top of being tall he eats well and works out hard. He both enjoys and takes care of his body — he's often steeped in thoughts of the impermanence of things and thinks his body is a temporary shell which will inevitably be discarded, but one that must be taken care of and enjoyed in equal measure. One must enjoy their time under the sun, so to speak.

He has a goat head and legs, but a bare human chest which he has covered in tattoos. He also has piercings (no doubt a tongue piercing) and horn engravings.

He drives a van — which is how he carries his few possessions around whenever he moves to a new town. He bought it used, when it was already well-worn and cheap, and it has since seen a lot more mileage. It is extensively adorned, he has customized it with his own artistic vision, and he probably has slept and fucked in it more times than he can count.

Gomes is comfortable with the prospect of being forgotten, and has a generally detached demeanor. He gets his clients from social media and word of mouth; his work speaks for itself and is enough of an attraction to provide him with a living as an artist.

He is gay, considers himself a verse switch, and is in his 30s.

I have written him as Latin American, though that could be tweaked.

In truth, his real name is Lúcio Gomes. Symbolically, this casting out of his first name is another instance of his own detachment to his past, but it also serves the pragmatic purpose of making it a little more difficult to be associated with his past.

Appearance

- Body type: big, sexy fat muscular black goat man. Assiduous gym-goer for many years. Eats well and does not care to keep a low body fat percentage.
- Aesthetic: "punk as hell", but wearing light clothes due to the very hot weather he lives in. Often wears tank tops and loose clothing. The weather is hot and he is often sweating.
- Mythical features: goat head and legs, bare human chest. Black/dark fur and skin. Does not go full "Baphomet" but is halfway there. Some people could easily mistake him for some kind of demonic monster if they saw him charmless.
- Could be portrayed as more animalistic, with rectangular goat eyes, or kept a little more human-like by having more traditional eyes. The same thought process could be done in choosing between feet and hooves, though it might be preferable to give him human feet so he can always wear flip flops.
- Full of tattoos in his torso and chest area, maybe back too. Many piercings, too — probably feels good with playing up that "big demonic-looking goat full of body modifications" deal.
- Tongue and nipple piercings, possibly a genital piercing too. His charm is one of his piercings.

Personality & Mood

Introverted and artistic. Lives in his own inner world, keeps to himself, does not speak much under most circumstances. Becomes more talkative when around people who are similarly artistic. He is capable of connecting if there is an affinity and can be quite friendly.

Very conscious of others' boundaries. Has many thoughts about others in his rich inner world, but thinks carefully before sharing any of it. Believes that intruding on the life trajectory of others is a grave thing that, if done at all, must be carried out judiciously.

Does not need much to live. Lives in a cramped apartment on the edge of town; bed is almost the size of the bedroom, the kitchen is a cramped strip, the bathroom is tiny with no curtains so he needs to squeegee the water down the drain after every shower. His windows look out to another apartment complex, so his view is of just a wall with dirty AC units covering it.

Has a history of getting into bad and messy relationships. Is emotionally deprived and inhibited, as well as socially isolated. Has been in relationships with people he didn't have much

of an affinity with, as well as hyper-critical partners who were similarly toxic as his relatives. He has learned life lessons through a great deal of trial and error.

Is not afraid of dying alone. Is often lost in thoughts about the temporary nature of things. When he looks in the mirror he likes what he sees, he is comfortable in his own body, and is not afraid of aging.

Has a very high pain and discomfort threshold. Uses medicinal cannabis and is very responsible about it. Does not talk often about this aspect of his life, even though his usage of cannabis is no secret.

Backstory

Gomes was born from a family of humans who had a mythical ancestor. This mythical ancestor was themselves a goat-like hybrid of multiple varieties of mythical — ranging from Greek fauns and satyrs to Baphomet-like and Krampus-like beings. This distant ancestor was not particularly knowledgeable of their own origins, so their descendants are even less aware of it as time and generations have corroded what little knowledge they were able to pass down.

This ancestor had children with a human spouse. They were humans, most but not all of them. Sometimes the "mythical gene" skips a generation. This family has managed to hold enough knowledge across that they are not too surprised when one of their children is born a mythical.

Gomes is the seventh son in his immediate family, and the only one to have been born with the "mythical gene" being expressed.

Gomes's family was not hateful towards him for being a mythical, nor were they homophobic later in life. They were generally devoid of the most common forms of hate that parents and siblings can harbor towards another family member. There were no particularly *visible* "red flags" in their family life — one would not guess they were troubled if looking from the outside. That said, this was still a very troubled family that harmed its children in more insidious ways. In the present day, his siblings are a mess.

Gomes became an artist, and later specialized into being a tattoo artist. He's very creative and a free spirit, so to speak. He tried living a more normal life during his 20s but as his personal relations crumbled one by one, he found himself having fewer and fewer reasons to try being normal. Since he's content living with very little, he decided to become a tattoo artist. In the present day he moves around often, does not set down roots, does not actively look to form lasting relations. Highly prizes his sense of autonomy and believes he should be able to

maintain his possessions and survive by himself. For instance, knows a lot about car maintenance.

Probably has social media to showcase his work, but aside from that has no online presence as a person and has not kept contact with anyone from his hometown.

He is, in essence, someone who's entirely disconnected from the people making up his past.

Notes About Family Life

I leave the specifics of his family dysfunction open to reinterpretation by anyone who tries to write this story, as I consider this a key aspect that defines the precise nature and tone of the narrative, but some pointers I used while writing the outline may serve as a consistent starting point:

- During his childhood and teenage years, Gomes was subtly divergent from his family's demeanor, which his parents tried teaching out of him, but one could say his personality and values were "stubborn". He was not easily molded, but the many and varied attempts at doing so caused subtle, hard-to-identify damage that would persist into adulthood — he's a square peg hammered into a round hole, until the hole broke. His nature was stronger than his nurture.
- There was no *single* devastating incident in his childhood that set him on the path of cutting ties with his family. Gomes's sense of detachment from regular life is the ultimate result of an oppressive and damaging daily reality, coupled with a family dynamic that made any positive changes essentially impossible.
- There were, no doubt, particularly egregious incidents — but the *key* is that they were extremely frequent but never so radical that coexistence was entirely impossible. They were bad enough that cutting ties was certainly a possibility one ought to consider, but what truly broke the camel's back was that the family unit was unwilling to acknowledge these issues, make any corrections or give in a single inch.
- **Gomes tried to improve things with his family before cutting ties.** Not only did he fail, these attempts painted a target on his back and he became the "agreed-upon troublemaker" of the family, because he broke the silence and the peace.
- That is to say, Gomes is someone who tried to establish and maintain a healthy relation with his family despite their troubled history, but every attempt at doing so backfired. Though his relatives are not explosively toxic, there is no "safe distance" from them.

They are like alcohol in the sense that there is no "safe dose" that does not bring about some variety of harm.

- As a result, the deeper reality about Gomes' sense of detachment is that he was not born this distant and unreachable person. He is willing and content to form bonds, he is naturally caring, but circumstances have forcibly taught him to watch out for himself, stay away from others, avoid forming lasting relationships, etc.

If one were to write *Tropical Sunset*, it would be important to decide on (1) at least a few family incidents and skeletons in the closet to motivate Gomes' distancing, (2) follow that with a few attempts at improving their dynamic, and (3) the negative consequences that came up from trying to fix things.

One can assume that the source of the dysfunction goes back to Gomes' parents, grandparents or some other living or dead ancestor, but another crucial aspect is that his siblings (and he has many) have become enforcers of this status quo. In this family the oppressed have been successfully educated into becoming oppressors and the cycle of generational abuse is at nearly full power.

Gender and Sexuality

I conceptualized Gomes as a cis gay man — when time is scarce, it often pays to default to what one knows well, after all. But one could easily see him as a trans man, which would in fact provide more elements to work with in regards to his family issues.

Regardless, Gomes is an exploration of two erotic ideas: "big strong fat man" and "punk as hell". Both are compatible with a trans character. If one goes cis, however, I believe that giving him big, saggy balls as a key erotic feature complements and ties everything together. It also works with him being a goat, of course.

I wrote him as a verse switch, topping and bottoming, subbing or domming, in equal measure, though this can of course be tweaked. There is a well-established appeal with the idea of a big, strong, fat, sweaty man being a heavy-handed dominant, and Gomes would fill this role well.

It would be possible to write this story with him being as vanilla or as kinky as one desires. I think kinks in the BDSM space would fit him well, but realistically he would lack the funds for the bondage and leather implements. A more grounded take is that he might have delved specifically on S&M.

With him having a variety of tattoos on his midsection, it follows that he must have gained a high pain tolerance. That open the door for a subversion wherein he's the sub who gets off to pain.

It would be possible to portray his kinkier side as a sublimation of his troubled emotions and conflicting thoughts about his own self-worth. Ultimately I decided against it because I wanted to portray his detachment as a very concrete choice to move on from the ruinous patterns his family tried to teach him. But one could portray him with the sort of lingering issues that would reasonably take many more years to overcome.

His access to medicinal cannabis leaves open the implication that he might have suffered (or still suffers) from a chronic pain or mental health conditions. The nature of this hanging thread, and whether or not it should be explored, is up to interpretation. Usage of cannabis during sex, of course, would not be a big leap for him, and it could easily be explored.

Alfred

General Concept

Alfred is a "Camazotz", a Mayan mythical bat associated with death motifs. Though his origins and ancestry point to dark subjects, to the inevitability of death and an end to things, he has been hammered into a socially-acceptable mold by society, family and friends. He is a good, productive and responsible worker. This has come at a great cost, both mental and physical. As such, there is a persistent internal conflict inside of him between his innate self and the identity imposed on him.

Alfred is nocturnal, but has adapted to being awake during the daytime for the sake of his job. This significantly worsens his quality of life and he always feels like he's not quite awake. Due to this, and possibly an unrelated ADHD diagnosis, he makes use of stimulants like Adderall or Vyvanse to maintain a high level of productivity.

A central aspect of Alfred's character and conflict is that he's surrounded and overburdened by rotten attachments. On one level he is aware that his situation is not good and subconsciously seeks out a break from it — which is the origin of his fascination towards the detached Gomes — but he has been indoctrinated into seeing that as a bad thing. He has, likewise, smothered many aspects of his innate sense of self (almost everything relating to his nature as a Camazotz). He is in frequent internal conflict, a pipe bomb about to burst at the slightest shake.

When he's in tune with his more authentic self, Alfred can be *wild*. He has notes of a strong death drive, is impulsive and unpredictable. He can even look **scary** when the "death bat mythical"/"ominous augur" persona shines through, which is a stark contrast from his socially acceptable "cute and fuzzy" look.

Appearance

- Mythical species: Camazotz — a Mayan bat mythical associated with death motifs.
- Body type: tall twunk, lanky. He comes across as "tired, but cute and fuzzy" under most circumstances, but becomes ominous and more imposing when he's "in the zone" during sex.
- Anatomy: His wings are fused with his arms, like a real bat. Alfred often has to keep his wings "tucked in", particularly in cramped spaces and crowded areas, which serves as a subtle pointer to him also keeping himself crunched up for the benefit of others.

- Inordinately long tongue and big fangs. This goofy motherfucker, it turns out, is a great kisser.
- Almost always looks tired — sunken eyes with dark circles under them (assuming that is visible with his fur pattern). His fur could seem a little "floppy" or shaggy.
- Dresses like a normie, works an office job, but you can see some of his freak leaking out even when's trying his best to appear normal. This appearance of normalcy is thrown out the window when he's in a more active (if not hyperactive) mood.
- The slightly hyperactive sort — I joke that he's Adderall-gendered in the sense that he's hyper productive and hyper adjusted to society, to the detriment of his mental and physical health.
- Age: 30s.
- A mix of cute and fuzzy guy with a layer underneath of implicit savagery — subtle death motifs that come out the more he drops his hyper adaptive persona.
- Particularly big and prominent fangs.
- When the thin veneer of normalcy is stripped, when he's letting loose or even in a sexual environment, his threatening features (like the big, sharp fangs and ominous silhouette) should be highlighted. **He is the scary type of sexy.**
- As the story progresses, he gradually seems less tired and more punk — he's letting loose. By the end he'd look about halfway as punk as Gomes.

Mental Health

I am purposefully leaving it ambiguous whether or not Alfred makes responsible use of his medication or not. Outright stating and showing that he is abusing stimulants would push the story into a darker tone, but leaving that as an implied possibility adds a layer of concrete depth to his conflict. He is, one could say, on the verge of doing serious harm to his mind and body to better fit into expectations.

What is certain, however, is that Alfred has at times made tactical use of his medication to have "a good time". I make use of that in Chapter 3, where he attends a get-together having taken, earlier, his medication when it was not exactly necessary.

On the matter of the possible ADHD diagnosis, I am also leaving it ambiguous whether he was diagnosed or not, and if so how reliable that diagnosis is. I like the complex and paradoxical idea that he was pushed to use stimulants by his parents who were somehow unsatisfied with him (that is to say, he was made to use these drugs for the wrong reason) but that there is a

kernel of truth of there, that his mental health indeed merits some usage of stimulants. In the end, however, *how* he uses this drug has been made harmful as a result of the oppressive circumstances he is in.

Backstory

Alfred comes from a family whose existence has been defined by the smothering of the self to better fit into society. His parents and ancestors were painfully aware of their origins as a dark, ominous species of mythical closely associated with death — from a culture that collapsed, no less, and whose splintered lineages suffered under Christian colonisation. It would be no understatement to say that, for centuries, they have been trying to erase what makes them unique and who they are.

This reflected on Alfred's upbringing. His sense of self has been smothered by an oppressive (but not aggressive, nor violent) family that has done everything in its power to turn their children into the most socially acceptable and brilliant workers.

This clashed with Alfred's personality. He was an unruly and chaotic child, a "gremlin", though not necessarily to an extraordinary or pathological degree. At some point they took him to a psychiatrist and got started on stimulants to improve his focus. Whether or not that diagnosis was right is hard to say, but it is undeniable that his parents were not entirely motivated by the well-being of their son.

Even now, as an adult in his 30s, Alfred still carries on this and many other practices his parents have taught. Though they no longer pressure him nor breathe on his neck, the indoctrination has in a way taken hold and now Alfred can be trusted to hold his own leash and remain on track.

Another toxic aspect of his upbringing is that he's been taught to not question when two incompatible things are presented to him. For instance; he would often hear his parents ruthlessly criticising relatives, family friends, co-workers, his siblings, each other and even himself, but they would quickly change their tune the moment they got something out of the target of their poison. People would fall in and out of grace at a moment's notice, and he was taught to see this as normal.

This dynamic has carried on to his circle of friends, which date back to kindergarten and middle school. His so-called friends do not respect or value him, they never do anything that is truly enjoyable together, they are mean and subtly cruel, there is much in-fighting and shit-flinging. They don't even have much in common anymore. If he were to take a moment to reflect about them, or even about whether or not he is having fun when they are around, he

would quickly realize that he has no real reason to stick around. But he has been taught that this is what friendship is supposed to look like, so he continues hanging around.

Alfred works a regular and unremarkable office job, with no prospects of rising in his organization. On the matter of a pay raise he only has distant and immaterial promises. Regardless he gives it his 110% to the company, making questionable usage of his stimulants to achieve extraordinary results.

Alfred is not that far off from having a nervous breakdown, it's just that he's on the "chronically burnt out" stage that precedes the "crippling and life-changing meltdown."

Personality & Mood

Alfred has two modes: "burnt out, crushed and exhausted" and "hyperactive gremlin," though in truth the "gremlin" part is just his normal self when he's well-rested, which is only pushed farther when he's under the early effect of stimulants.

He likes driving — *fast*. His parents put him on kart lessons when he was a kid, where he was taught some frightful driving habits.

He was also put under marksmanship classes when he was a teen and he won a few competitions. As an adult he's knowledgeable about guns and attends a shooting range a few times per year, though his frequency has diminished recently as the clientele has shifted closer to paranoid-schizo right wingers.

Once he took parachuting lessons — of course, he wore the parachute just for safety, as he has fully functional wings. This was the closest he ever had to a religious experience — the adrenaline from the whole affair lasted more than a week, during which he was almost an entirely different (calmer, self-actualized and kinder) person.

Gender and Sexuality

Alfred is a cis gay man. I envision him as a verse switch, but one could easily push him closer to submission and/or bottoming if that is their preferred flavour. Regardless, a core part of his eroticism is his "death drive" — that he's prone to impulsive and sudden decisions, and that there is something darker and scarier in him. He can look and feel scary during sex.

If one were to ask him to bite their neck during sex (not too hard, of course, just as a roleplay thing), Alfred would instantly become a savage sex machine that would leave their partner overwhelmed.

He can take it just as hard as he can dish out, and I've left notes for him awakening to a masochistic kink halfway through the story.

That said, he can be portrayed and explored as a more sexually vanilla character, as long as his impulsiveness and wildness are explored elsewhere in the story.

Has an oral fixation and will suck your soul out from your dick. Ass eater.

Setting

Gomes' lineage goes back to a mix of European mythical creatures, whereas Alfred's is Mayan in nature. It seemed plausible to me that their story could happen somewhere in Latin America, where both cultures have met, clashed and woven themselves together. One could easily place it in North America or even Europe, however, and if sociological accuracy is not a concern there is nothing stopping this plot from being adapted to other locations still.

As this was a very short project, I defaulted to writing what I know well as to save time on research. I situated the story in a town more or less like my own, and leaned on the idea of having most of the scenes happening during sunset. I thought it would give it a distinct aesthetic, if one were to seriously write and illustrate it: all scenes bathed in the orange and gold of late afternoon shifting to pinks, purples and darker blues of dusk. It also highlighted Alfred's forced adaptation to a diurnal lifestyle — though he would be naturally nocturnal, adapting to daytime life is another way in which he overextends himself to fit into society.

One should also keep in mind the socioeconomic setting. Gomes is a free-spirited tattoo artist, and the reality is that he lives in very precarious conditions. He is poor, and chances are he's not going to get rich with his work. It is unlikely he will ever own a home and he lives in cheap, dilapidated rental units on the outskirts of big cities, where the cost and quality of life are often lower.

Alfred, meanwhile, is perhaps a little closer to middle class. He works an office job and is using his college degree, but he's also burning himself out for an employer who will not be there for him when the camel's back breaks. Though Alfred is doing alright now, that will not be the case for long if he does not change his tune. I leave the exact nature of his work up to interpretation.

Aesthetic

If I were to turn "Tropical Sunset" into a fully-fledged project, I would lean further on the "Latin American" setting to compose the visual novel's aesthetics. I'd like to incorporate a bit of humidity and dampness in the visuals. The story happens in hot and humid weather, very near the coast, almost always during the afternoon.

I'd want the sprites to have a bit of an undignified layer of sweat to them. I do not mean "sweaty" as a sexual thing, mind you. I'd want everyone to be just a bit unkempt because the weather itself does not permit anyone to be perfectly manicured for long.

I'd want the scenery and backgrounds to have a bit of an analog camera effect to them, like old pictures taken from Kodaks during the 90s and early 2000s.

Outline

Chapter 1

- We begin *in media res*, "in the middle of things" so to speak. Alfred is in Gomes's tattoo parlor, a small, cramped and very discreet place in town. It's late afternoon, the sun is setting, lazy orange hues are coming in from the window. The floor tiles are old, some are cracked, the paint on the wall is peeling in places, but it's all very clean aside from these structural issues. It's a cheap commercial rental unit maintained by an uncaring landlord.

Alfred is uncomfortable, out of his element, fidgeting in ways that would be outright undignified if he wasn't so tired and sluggish. He has been dragged in to be the emotional support for a friend, André, who's thinking of getting a tattoo with Gomes.

- Context: Alfred is part of a little group of mythicals in this town. They don't have much in common, they don't exactly have fun together, every few months they have arguments and say hurtful things to each other, but they hang out infrequently because they're mythicals and they went to school together. They don't *suck*, they aren't bad people or anything, but they are pulled together by habit and the lack of something better. It's an existential limbo that none of them are willing to acknowledge — though, truth be told, they are all so used to it, and so unaccustomed with authentic connections, that they cannot perceive that this is not a real friendship.
- Gomes's tattoo parlor is in a very discreet place in town. You can only go in with an appointment. Alfred's friend, André (and his friend group in general) are curious about Gomes, this semi-notorious tattoo artist who works on mythicals and has just moved into town — they want to invite him to their group. They communicated ahead of time they were mythicals, so once inside they all took off their charms and see each other's true selves.
- While Gomes is focused talking with André, Alfred gazes at the goat. It's not love at first sight or anything like that, instead it's *fascination* at first sight. Magnetism towards this huge punk-looking goat mythical who's more focused on the *art* he wants to work on over the chit chat André is trying to pull.

- As the conversation goes, Alfred starts noticing details on the work space. Posters and prints on the walls. Some sense of logic and order to the chaos. Even if things are cramped and maybe kitschy, it's all very *expressive*.
 - Alfred is attracted to Gomes but it's not entirely a *physical* attraction.
 - Alfred can also notice a few odd things leading to some intrusive thoughts. Maybe he sees a few horny, profane or very graphical art pieces on the walls and thinks to himself "God, I wish it were me." It'd be a funny thing, but it'd also show some of his inner gremlin very early on, while serving as an in-story hint, to Alfred, that Gomes is gay or bisexual.
- André is the kind of person who plays mindgames, and Gomes is the kind of person on whom that does not work. He's generally flat and neutral throughout the appointment. He pokes André with questions about what he has in mind for this tattoo. He is irritatingly indecisive — he throws around a list of disjointed things he *could* want, but when Gomes tries talking specifics and logistics he backpedals.
- In truth, this person is just wasting Gomes' time. He is more interested in Gomes as this *notorious figure* than he is in his work, or even him as a person.
- While showing some tattoo ideas, Alfred could see something that catches his attention — no doubt something sexual that immediately clocks him as gay. He has a Freudian slip and says the quiet part out loud. André gives him shit, Gomes takes note of it but says nothing.
- The tattoo appointment goes nowhere. André is way too indecisive about what he wants. Despite that he still invites Gomes to hang out with them later with their friend group.
- Gomes doesn't exactly accept the invitation. He's not impressed by how things went, and it's not the first time he's had a potential client waste his time in this way. He's perceptive and experienced enough to guess what this person really wants. That said, he *has* just moved into town and he's heard how provincial it is around these parts... So he's willing to keep contact. He exchanges phone numbers with André.
- Gomes, at this point, feels mild irritation towards André, and indifference towards Alfred.
- After they leave, André complains that Gomes is *weird*. This person interprets Gomes's unresponsiveness to mind games as a negative trait, something he cannot quite stomach or interpret. Regardless, he still wants Gomes joining their friend group — a hypocrisy Alfred notices, but does not comment on as he's too used to it already. To him it's normalized. This is how he was raised and grew up.

It was as if he was bathed in gold. One could believe that thick nose ring, as well as every piercing and earring on his face, was made of the stuff. His fur — pitch black — glimmered with an incredible sheen, shifting and dancing as the golden light of the sunset draped the tattoo parlor.

Gomes was an imposing creature. A tall and portly goat mythical who already took up most of the space in that cramped room even as he sat on a plastic stool and hunched over his desk. He went over a variety of designs he had attempted before, and when that seemed unsatisfactory he spoke of aesthetics and styles, showed references, browsed social media and, as a final resort, he pulled out a binder of stock designs.

"No, I'm not feeling it," said his client. "I was thinking something more in line with..."

He raised his right hand as if reaching out for something above, while his left curled into a shaky fist.

"Know what I mean?" the young man smiled.

"I'm afraid I don't."

Gomes scratched behind his horns and sighed.

"Let's rewind. You said you wanted some geometric patterns on your forearm..."

"Yes, but no. I said I thought they could look nice."

"So, is that what you want or...?"

"Oh, I don't know..."

The client went off again. If not triangles and hexagons, it could be flowers, or maybe frogs, or his girlfriend's name, or his parents' names, or a scenery he liked, or a cartoon character from his childhood — but, actually, no.

Gomes tuned it out and let him ramble on. This was going nowhere. And that's when he looked at the tall, lanky bat mythical sitting by his client's side — the "emotional support" friend who'd "help him with making a decision."

Alfred was unlike Gomes in every way. He wore a crumpled polo shirt bearing the embroidered logo of his workplace, his fur was disheveled and he had dark circles under his eyes. Completely tuned out from what their friend was saying. Motherfucker looked like he was in dire need of coffee.

For a moment they stared at each other, for no reason other than boredom...

"...but what if it was on my back instead of my arm? You think you could do that? I mean, we'd have to talk about something else since we were discussing ideas for my forearm. You don't mind if we start from scratch, do you?"

It was too much. Their poker faces broke all at once. Alfred, so used to this situation, knew to cover his mouth and hide his giggling, but Gomes had no such timidity. His laughter came out as a harsh and sarcastic snort.

It went unnoticed. As the rambling continued, Alfred kept his focus on the large goat in front of him, framed as he was by the backdrop of garish posters and prints. Almost every inch of the wall was covered with something, all of it eye-catching and mixing blacks with bold colors. The furniture was all improvised, plastic stools instead of chairs, wood pallets nailed together forming a desk. From outside the tattoo parlor was so unremarkable, hidden away in a failing commercial spot in the poor part of town.

But the actual tattoo space inside was clean and well-equipped. Immaculate, even, much like the goat himself. He smelled vaguely of flowers from what must have been the oils he applied on his fur to keep it moisturized. And his piercings? They sure looked made of gold when the sun hit them just right.

But perhaps what captured Alfred's attention the most was a detail about the goat's life.

"I think," Gomes interrupted, "you need time to think about what you want. You have my number. But remember I'm staying in town for only a year, so if you really want me to work on you..."

What a fascinating thing, that lack of roots. Jumping from town to town every year or so. How did he do it? Did he not miss his family and friends? Imagine the stress of looking for a place to rent that often — and a commercial space for his parlor too! How did he keep contact with his loved ones?

Alfred could never do it. It all seemed so overwhelming, so wild that beast. That is what he took away from that first encounter.

As for Gomes, from this first encounter he took away a hunch: of that tired bat fellow with his wings tucked in, cramped in that tiny room. Wings too big for such a man his size, too big for that room — something barely contained and yearning to burst out. And he looked so tired, too...

Chapter 2

- We skip to a few weeks later. Alfred and his friends are in a music concert. They're going there together, but they aren't having much fun. There is some in-fighting going on; someone promised to bring this or that but didn't, someone promised to be the driver for the group but they suddenly couldn't (a bullshit reason was given, in truth they just wanted to get drunk) and another person became the driver for the day, etc. No one is having a good time.
- Gomes was invited to attend and he did say he was going to the concert, but he didn't confirm that he'd be hanging out with them as a group. So, basically, he told them he'd be there but no promises beyond that were given.
 - Alfred's friend has quietly given up on getting a tattoo in the first place, not bothering to inform Gomes. They're kinda lame like that, but this idea of "ghosting" someone will come back later.
- Late afternoon, the sun is setting, outdoors. They find Gomes in the concert. He is by himself, maybe smoking a blunt, having a good time on his own. Again Alfred is struck by Gomes, who in turn is largely not impressed by this group of friends who don't quite mesh with him. Things are going kind of "meh" until Gomes directs his attention to Alfred and shows some curiosity about him. He notes that Alfred looks very tired, which prompts him to bring up how he's nocturnal but his job demands him to be awake during the day. They strike a genuine conversation.
 - Gomes doesn't mention it, but he likes how Alfred looks, and he feels a little more comfortable around Alfred because so far he's not been very invasive. In a way, Gomes is spooked by how these people are trying so hard to get his attention, while Alfred is just acting normal despite being a gremlin deep down, just barely holding himself together.
- When the friend group is distracted they walk away to get some drinks together and keep talking.
- Some wiggle room to introduce more subjects here. It would be good if, again, Alfred has a Freudian slip and says the quiet part out loud — we want something considerably unhinged but with enough plausible deniability. That way we can foreshadow what a gremlin Alfred is without breaking Gomes' perception of Alfred as an unassuming guy.
 - For example, maybe Alfred sees Gomes' tongue piercing and loses his composure over it.
- They have a good time but don't exchange numbers. Things aren't that advanced.

Their next encounter came a month later.

André, who still had not come up with an idea for a tattoo, had shared his opinion that Gomes had a bad temper and was too cagey about sharing anything about his life. After casting half a dozen other judgements about this man whose time he had wasted, he said Gomes would make a fine addition to their friend group. It was decided that, despite the bad attitude, he was "cool" and would, indeed, be a good asset.

Alfred had read these messages on the group chat, but kept to himself. It was just another usual day — his friends were always like this, and he was exhausted from work.

Since there was an agreement, they extended an invitation for Gomes to go with them to this concert, who said he already had plans to be there — he provided no further information, and did not seem interested in arranging a meetup.

(...)

On the outskirts of town, under the setting sun, Alfred and his group of friends watched the concert. They stood at the back near the concession stands, where they could barely hear the music, not too far from the precarious ditch used as a pissing trough. Despite Alfred's protests they were not too bothered by it — it was convenient, even.

It did not take long for Alfred to disconnect from the gathering. He wandered closer to the stage, feeling the beat and bass shaking through his core with each step. And there amidst the crowd he saw him; the black goat standing alone and to the side of the crowd, smoking a blunt. He was seen too; his wings cramped and tucked in to protect them from the erratic crowd.

They stole glances, recognising each other through their charms, but did not approach. Surrounded by strangers, with that conspicuous gap between them, they enjoyed the music, the beat mixing with their own hearts. Step by step across half an hour, like cats approaching through twisted paths, that gap closed. When they were just a few meters from each other, Gomes spoke.

"You're that guy... You looked like you were about to fall asleep that day."

Still with black circles under his eyes.

"You're even taller out here," Alfred said.

Chapter 3

- We cut to a few weeks in the future. One of Alfred's friends has organized some kind of get-together at a beach or some other remarkable location. They invite Gomes — who's still not very impressed with these people, but he accepts the invitation because it'll have free food and drink.
- This gives room to develop things with Alfred and Gomes, who are now in the same location for an extended period of time.
- Gomes keeps showcasing his detachment from most things. He does not talk about his past, does not talk about family, does not talk about friends. But he sure likes talking about art and music!
- Alfred, meanwhile, is loosening up. We start showing more of his ADHD-esque hyperactiveness, as well as his "sunshine character" tendencies. He took a Vyvanse or Adderall earlier, you see.
- As for the rest of the people in the room: no one is having a good time, they're actually being horrible to each other, but they have convinced themselves this is what friendship is supposed to be like.
- This is when the dynamic between Gomes and Alfred solidifies, or at least semi-solidifies. Alfred is kind of hyper and cheerful but respects boundaries, while Gomes is reserved and cagey but constant and predictable when he feels comfortable with a subject. They tune out the shitty friends.
- Gomes becomes increasingly annoyed with Alfred's friends as the day progresses, but doesn't say it out loud. During sunset he suggests to Alfred that they ditch the rest of the group and go off somewhere else.
- Assuming this happens in a beach house (let's say a fancy place owned by one of the people in the group or by that person's family), Gomes and Alfred go outside and walk along the coast for a while. Wind and salt on their faces, nice weather.
- At this point Gomes is aware that Alfred is into him, and he's slowly realizing that he's into Alfred as well. He's cute. It's not love, it's just two guys making out away from the party, in some secluded part of the beach, with music blasting from the speaker's back at the party.
- Pure chemistry. But, also, *fear*. Gomes feels a tinge of fear because Alfred's Adderall-esque vibe is showing more and more, and it's something that triggers and grinds against his sense of detachment. Meanwhile, Alfred himself is attracted and afraid

of that same sense of detachment, because deep down he knows he's surrounded by people that aren't really that pleasant.

- No sex, just making out.

Alfred's mind felt clear. All the questions that had been floating in his mind, disjointed and dampened by the sheer exhaustion of his work and social life, could finally take shape. And with the medication acting up it only became easier to grab them, one by one, and giving each one a voice.

"So, where're you from? I can't really make sense of your accent." That's how it began, with such a simple and commonplace question. But each thing Gomes said provided the bat with two or even three more leads. And with his mind running faster than his mouth, it only made sense to bundle them together.

"Oh, man, I went there when I was a kid. My parents wouldn't stop talking about how the beaches there were so much better than ours, but when we got there everything was overcrowded with tourists — when you lived there did you, like, actually frequent the beach? Which was your favorite? Did you get pestered like we did to buy sunglasses and shit or did they leave you be since you were a local?"

(...)

The oranges and reds of the setting sun were giving way to the pinks and indigos that precede darkness. Gomes, still looking out to the sea, took one last drag of his joint and put it out.

"Is this what you're like when you're not burnt out from work?" he turned around to face Alfred. He let out a nervous laugh, which in his bassy tone could only be interpreted as some sarcastic, confident grumble.

Alfred hesitated — for him it felt like a long pause, but for Gomes it was barely noticeable. In that split second his eyes leapt to the blunt pinched in the goat's fingers. Something in him made the decision to share it, say it, go ahead, before his consciousness had finished the line of thinking.

"I took a Vyvanse before coming here."

Gomes' hands tightened on the railing behind him. His mind, whose speed could only be measured in magnitudes of difference from Alfred's, measured the bat's every feature. The eagerness with which he launched his questions, but also how harmless they had all been. How far they went from anything truly sensitive and revealing.

He was harmless. Just curious. And, with that realization, he relaxed and smiled. Breathed in, closed his eyes, and let his thoughts and desires drift — and there, amidst the floating ideas, he saw something enticing.

"Wanna go out for a walk on the beach? Before it gets too dark."

(...)

"Your friends suck, you know that?" Gomes said, but Alfred could not hear him through the crashing waves.

"What?"

"Your friends, they fucking suck. They hate each other."

"Nah, it's not like that. That's just how they are, y'know? Just banter."

Gomes rolled his eyes. "Sure."

(...)

Their hands brushed as they walked along the coast. Alfred had to keep his wings tucked in, lest the sudden gusts of wind pushed him around. More than a few times he stumbled towards Gomes, who kept enough presence of mind to grab him and keep him in place.

He laughed, they laughed. Even as the goat, with his overbearing weight, struggled to move with the same agility and weightlessness as the bat. But it all melted away when, passing by a large rock formation providing them both cover from prying eyes on the stretch of houses lining the coast, he slipped a hand around the bat's waist.

"Oh," Alfred said. Surprised, but not displeased, as the goat pulled him in and made him look up to his red eyes.

"Harmless," Gomes thought. "I can just enjoy this moment," he told himself. He dove in.

For the bat, it was electric. For the goat it was floaty and warm. In their 30s, they felt like teenagers again, thoughts obliterated by the minute sensations of taste, smell and the much-desired exploration of each other's bodies. Inhumanly long tongues clashing, fighting, giving in and claiming, much like their wandering hands.

It was the kind of makeout session you only have once, when you are young and inexperienced. But, by a miracle or some great mercy of destiny, they enjoyed this unexpected gift.

Their kiss lasted until darkness set across the beach.

Note: One could expand the kiss at the end, have it as the first moment wherein Alfred goes wild and shows some of his "scary death bat" motifs, and Gomes actually finds all that passion hot.

Chapter 4

- First date! Gomes and Alfred decide to go out for a burger during a weekday, after work, but things get delayed. Gomes is running late and Alfred decides to wait in the parlor.
- Here we have a little funny/sexy episode where Alfred sees Gomes tattooing someone, and it starts awakening something in him — could be a masochistic kink, or the beginning of his desire to strip himself from all the forced layers of normalcy he's imposed on himself, or perhaps both.

"Sorry for running late. Do you wanna watch? Better than staying here and wasting time on your phone," said Gomes. "Just put on a face mask, there's a few on my desk."

Alfred had gotten a brief look at the tattoo room, when he had first come with André for his failed appointment. It was too short to truly capture the atmosphere — and now that he had the time to pour over every detail, he appreciated the impeccable order and hygiene of the place.

Which was, of course, a tactful way of avoiding the sight of the needle piercing the man's skin, leaving an indelible trail that would follow him to the end of his days. His hands curling in pain, the groans echoing, his calves and tensing, all with Gomes's massive body overshadowing him.

The air in the room became stifling. The AC wasn't working, the building was still steeped in the heat of the day. Alfred watched in awe as a drop of sweat dripped down the goat's brow — and for a moment he imagined himself in that vulnerable position, laying on his stomach, as Gomes' massive presence loomed overhead, drawing a trail of searing fire on his bare skin, staining it forever, that branding and indelible mark.

"Beneath it all," Alfred thought, but did not complete the sentence. All animals, all naked beasts, all covered in wrinkles and defects — what's a little ink atop it all? When all are fated to age and grow frail, when one's body is nothing but a flame that flares up and goes out, not even an indelible tattoo is truly permanent. So, why not? Why pretend to be a pristine body, a pristine mind, when to grow ugly and stained and full of microplastics is the fate of all that live?

Why not enjoy one's time under the sun?

"Mind helping me? Wipe the sweat off my brow, please."

Alfred obeyed — too quick, too eager — and that's when he noticed the sticky wetness in his pants. He was hard, painfully so.

"Oh my fucking God," Alfred thought, except, of course, he said it out loud as well.

Optional Chapters: Extended Development

Chapter 5 will be a climactic moment where Alfred and Gomes have sex for the first time. Though we could go straight to it (that is what I'd advise if one wants to keep the word count down), this part of the story would be quite enjoyable to expand. Here you'd have the room to show Gomes and Alfred gradually polishing their dynamic, with both of them coming out of their shells and showing more of their true colors.

If I was writing this, I'd have at least one little adventure, another date, this time doing something decided by Alfred. It should be something at least moderately unhinged, like go-karting, very aggressive offroad driving, going to a shooting range, or any other wild hobby one could cram into Alfred.

These chapters could drift closer to Gomes' perspective, as well, allowing the reader to experience Alfred's gremlin-esque antics from the eyes of a much calmer and less impulsive person. We could, likewise, see what's so attractive and magnetic about Alfred too. It would make sense if Gomes had fun with Alfred's impulsiveness, and he could get quite riled up from getting a few glimpses of Alfred's wilder nature.

This would also be a chance to show more of Alfred's usage of stimulants — to what extent that should be done, if at all, would depend on how dark one wants this narrative to be. For more details, check Alfred's Mental Health section.

Another that could be explored is Alfred's wings and flying. In the structure I have outlined I keep him grounded at all times, but one absolutely could show him flying, which I believe should be presented as a very significant moment — a setpiece, in a sense.

There are two main moments where this could happen. The first one is here, where Alfred's flying could be perceived through Gomes' perspective — him on the ground, looking up at this majestic beast as he soars during the sunset.

We can explore Alfred's own point of view while flying — but that comes later.

Chapter 5

- Gomes and Alfred have sex for the first time.
- The lead-up paints a portrait of Gomes' living and socioeconomic conditions. This man, detached from family and friends, never setting roots and always moving every other year or so, does not have much to his name. What little he has is under precarious condition.
- But that is no impediment to good company. They are both into each other and those material concerns are of minor importance.
- Perhaps Gomes plays the role of power bottom, but one could just as well see him dominating Alfred. If it's decided that Alfred has a masochistic streak, it could be explored here, but one could just as well have a little twist with Gomes (who has a very high pain threshold) revealing a bit of masochism himself. That is to say, this scene can be as vanilla or kinky as one desires.
- It could also be interesting to have the sex scene happen in two "stages":
 - First Stage: The narration describes it from Alfred's POV, focusing on Gomes and his eroticism, his body. It's him power bottoming and being this magnetic presence on the scene, or maybe he fucks Alfred silly.
 - Second Stage: After cumming, Gomes is surprised with Alfred wanting to keep going. They have a second round, but this time the narration describes it from Gomes' perspective. It could focus on Alfred and his oral fixation, with him sucking Gomes off or performing any other oral-focused activity. As this is happening, the narration highlights Alfred's wilder aspects, he is described in more imposing terms, physically broader. The sex gets wild and reaches the kind of climax where, figuratively, you feel your soul slipping out of your body — let's press the "death drive" button.
- Character-wise, this is the chapter where Alfred sees the reality of what Gomes' detachment can bring about. It did not come cheap for Gomes and is reflected in his living conditions. But, most revealingly, he does not find it in himself the drive to be bothered by it, which points to Alfred's own unvoiced and growing impulse to reassess and possibly cast away his toxic relations.
- We can close the scene with another mention of the setting sun, which is a recurring motif in the "Tropical Sunset".

The goat lived in the outskirts of town, in an apartment complex accessible only through a dirt road. There were fourteen low rises, each one with five floors, each floor with eight cramped units meant mostly for renting. There was only one elevator per building, but Gomes gazed at it with an ominous air that convinced Alfred not to insist on using it.

"Come on in," Gomes unlocked the door. "Make yourself at home."

Once inside, a short hallway led directly to a living room spacious enough only for a couch and a television — though Gomes only had the frame to put the TV on the wall, and not the TV itself. The kitchen, with its old cupboards missing handles and with wood panels expanded from moisture, was a thin strip that could fit only one person at a time. There was no dining table.

The bathroom had no shower curtains, such that water went everywhere when showering, but Gomes had equipped it with a squeegee to assist in the always necessary task of pushing the water down the drain. It had an exhaust fan, which had broken under the care of a previous tenant, and which the landlord had procrastinated on repairing.

The bedroom was big enough for a twin-sized bed, leaving only enough room to walk around it.

"It's not much," Gomes added. Alfred kept quiet, expecting the comment to be followed by some witty remark, but that really was it. Not much.

But it was enough, because the living room couch made a good hamper for their clothes, and the cramped bedroom, despite its lack of effective ventilation, felt like a safe and private hideout for their souls. The old bed complained under their combined weight, but there was something familiar in the scent of those old bedsheets — that distinct smell of cheap fabric washed a thousand times over.

"Give me a minute to prepare," Gomes said before disappearing to the bathroom. And not even that sudden solitude could be unpleasant; the sex playlist Alfred pulled from his phone (saved on his device, for there was no reception) seemed to echo just right in that tiny, cramped room.

Gomes, for his part, stood under the doorway for a moment and appreciated the sight of that beast. Never had Alfred's wings seemed so in place, even with how cramped the bedroom was. And the man had a real tool — long, very long.

For Alfred, Gomes was like some pagan god given flesh. His cock was certainly more than adequate, but his balls were nothing short of prodigious. Deserving of worship — he was already salivating. But that would have to come later, he realized, as the goat climbed on top of the bed and positioned himself on top of the bat's lap.

"You're gonna show me how hard you can go, won't you?" Gomes reached down to grab the bat's head. Make sure he was looking the oversized goat in the eyes. "You're going to satisfy me."

Never had Alfred been harder in his life.

(...)

Gomes passed him the blunt. It was the first time Alfred, who was by far more accustomed to stimulants, allowed himself that kind of relaxation.

He sunk onto the bed, on the goat's fur. A sliver of sunlight, growing thinner by the minute, came in from the setting sun. For a moment, as he let out the first puff, Alfred told himself that this was more than enough.

Production Notes About Sex Scenes

There is a sort of engineering to writing sex scenes for a visual novel.

Shorter sex scenes are, of course, less demanding in writing and assets. But make no mistake, if you want it to be enjoyable, you need to have quite a bit of writing to make players linger on the beautiful CGs you are providing them with.

But there is another problem here; what exactly is going to happen in this sex scene, and will it be pleasing to the reader? To all your readers?

If you have more budget — more time to write, more resources to commission assets — you can make a longer sex scene that responds and adapts to the reader's choices and preferences. For example:

- Some readers don't want to read a sex scene at all, for a number of reasons. Maybe they're in a public space, or maybe they do not get a thrill out of reading porn. So, maybe, you can implement a way to shorten it, focusing only on the most essential aspects, or skip the scene entirely.
- Some readers, in contrast, want to see everything and they want it to be as long and gratifying as possible. If you can provide multiple options of sex acts, these readers can have a very enjoyable experience.
- Do you want it to be vanilla? Kinky? Hardcore? By providing options, you give players the tools to pick what they prefer, and chances are many more of your readers will come out satisfied. Of course, you have to weigh this against what the characters would do and would enjoy — breaking character for a gratifying sex scene can and will backfire on the quality of your work.

Still on this topic, I have left room for this story's sex to be on the kinkier side. There is room for S&M topics, which is a world on its own. But it would also be quite possible to cut away from sex, or to present it in a less pornographic and more oblique way. It'd be up to you and what tone you'd want.

One thing, however, should be very important to establish: it's great sex. Alfred and Gomes are very much into each other, and whatever they do feels pretty amazing, if not revolutionary. The better this is established, the more the story will work when they part ways. It makes it hurt so much more.

Chapter 6

- This chapter marks the turning point of the story. Up to this point we've been building up the affinity between Alfred and Gomes. There were a few obstacles and things didn't begin explosively, but it's been up and up. We built Alfred's growing attraction towards what Gomes represents.
- Now we're going to introduce a conflict. Alfred may be captivated by what Gomes offers, so to speak, but he's also afraid of the real deal, of the introspection that his own relations may be rotten to some extent.
- He's going to externalize it in a dysfunctional way. It'll seem initially like an increased curiosity about Gomes, which will seemingly fit with his "sunshine character" vibe, but then he'll start poking him for information about his past, his family and friends.
- Gomes is not exactly very open about details, but little by little he does open up. He speaks of having cut contact with his family and old friends because, in essence, they were not worth the effort. He tells Alfred a few noteworthy occurrences but one cannot summarise the weight of long, extended trauma into a few sentences.
- When Alfred definitively learns that Gomes has cut contact with his family he'll be dismissive about it. Surely it couldn't be that bad, could it? This may seem innocent, but it coexists with a darker and more ominous feeling that he's crossing a threshold, a point of no return...
- Crossing this boundary — dismissing his experience and, indirectly, pushing him towards his family — is a black flag for Gomes. And Alfred brings up one too many times that surely things aren't so bad. It perceptibly cools Gomes down. An air of malaise spreads between them as these two men feel their boundaries and perceptions of themselves clashing.
- There's room to add a lot of detail and exploration of ideas here. The specifics of Gomes' issue with his family can be tinkered with.

"Were they homophobic?" Alfred asked.

Gomes became quiet. His gaze drifted upwards, to a point beyond the horizon. He knew the answer to that question, it was at the tip of his tongue, but nonetheless he searched the jigsaw pieces. There was a greater picture he had tried to assemble a hundred times over — and that was the honest answer to the broader question of why he had cut contact with his family.

"No, they were not homophobic." He was still searching for the answer.

"You said they're humans, right? Were you adopted, did they have an issue with you being a mythical?"

"Not adopted. They didn't have an issue, no. A distant relative was just like me so they weren't too surprised."

"Did they take a loan on your name and leave you in debt?"

"No."

"Did they hit you? Kick you out?"

"No."

"Then why did you cut contact with them?"

Gomes looked down to his hands — the flesh, the body formed in his mother's womb.

"How can you describe a spider's web?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say; how can you describe a spider's web? How can you put it into words?"
He stared at Alfred's eyes, and for the first time the bat noticed something threatening in them.
"A spider's web can be a beautiful thing, one might even feel tempted to touch it. But if you were a bug, wouldn't you be correct in fighting to the death to escape it?"

"I don't understand."

"Correct. You don't."

"Look, all I'm saying is... Cutting your family and friends out of your life is a big thing. Are you sure this is what you want? There's always time to patch things up."

Alfred did not know what to expect, but on some level he had prepared for an argument. But when that thin smile spread on the goat's face, along with the saddest eyes the bat had ever seen, deep down he knew he had said something he'd regret.

And yet, some part of him felt relief.

Chapter 7

- Gomes has unceremoniously ghosted Alfred.
- And here we begin the introspective part of the narrative. We immediately follow that ominous ending of the previous scene with a stark revelation that Alfred's own relations — friends, family, job — are all unsatisfactory and weigh heavily on him.
- He does not enjoy his "friends", and in fact has many grievances about shitty things they've done over the years, but simply has trained himself to not think much of it. Likewise, his family relations are all based on overstepping boundaries, a lack of respect for his individuality and independence. His job is oppressive and he's too much of a good boy, he gives too much of himself for an employer who cannot, will not, structurally should not see his employees as valued individuals.
- What becomes clear is that Alfred questioning Gomes' choices was both the crossing of a point of no return and a form of reassuring himself. The conditions were all set for Alfred to reassess his own personal relations, but he had been avoiding it, looking away, running away from it — and that's what so enticed him about Gomes in the first place.
- Gomes ghosting Alfred becomes itself a catalyst that forces Alfred to reassess his relations. Now he's suddenly more available to hang out with his friends, who in true "shitty friend" fashion have some grievances over him becoming so enamored with the guy they wanted to add to their friend group. They make sure to rub it on Alfred's face.
 - Alfred could blow up at them, which would be conducive to a more heated story. But it also would be a bit more childish. A jaded adult would, instead, ghost this group of so-called friends — which would be the third time an unceremonious ghosting happens in the story, thus forming a cohesive pattern from start to finish.
 - Regardless, both options would be viable, requiring only a few tweaks in the narrative to make it work.
- To add insult to injury, this would be the time to show that the same pattern repeats itself in Alfred's other relations. He associates with uncaring people with whom he does not have much affinity, and stays with them out of uncritical habit. He learned it from his family life, which already says much about how his parents see others and treat their children, and of course it's also the same at work. So, even after putting some distance from the shitty friends, he's still living this bitter reality.
- This introspective chapter could play fast and loose with the format. Expressiveness over form. For best effect, this chapter could cover a period of a month or more — Alfred has

made his bed and now must lie on it, and the longer the timespan the more time he'll have to reflect about his relations and blow up at them.

- We do need Alfred to start cutting ties, as that is necessary for his reconciliation with Gomes.
- We end this chapter with Alfred, having cut more than a few ties, thinking back to his time with Gomes, which segues into the next introspective chapter.

Going forward, I will not provide any excerpts. The way I have structured Tropical Sunset, these introspective chapters will be determinant for the themes the story touches, and the chapters afterward will hinge on them. Altogether they would also be, in my humble opinion, *the most fun parts to write*.

If I wrote excerpts for it, there'd be very little room for anyone to try and inject their own twist to things. Moreover, at that point I might as well bite the bullet and actually write the entirety of the thing myself.

Past and ADHD Diagnosis

In Alfred's Mental Health section I described part of his past — that his ADHD diagnosis might have been incorrect or, at least, motivated by wrong or corrupt motives.

If one wanted to plunge deeper in this chapter, particularly towards his family's dysfunction, there is room for a flashback to earlier in his life. Perhaps the diagnosis process can be shown, highlighting medical malpractices and undue interference from his parents. Likewise, the harmful side effects of medication on a young boy can be touched — or, alternatively, if one wishes to portray Alfred as *correctly* diagnosed and treated, the morally questionable diagnosis process could have nonetheless led to the correct treatment.

That something good came out of a fucked up situation is its own flavor of bittersweet, and a dysfunctional enough family is bound to stumble on the right decision through wicked ways every now and then.

Chapter 8

- We now see Gomes' POV.
- It's a Saturday afternoon. He's at his place. There's dirty dishes on the sink, he's not wearing much, things are messy.
- In truth, Alfred's push for him to reconnect did some damage, it has shaken his resolve. Doubting his previous choices, Gomes is calling one of his siblings to check how everyone is doing.
- What follows is, like the previous chapter, a segment that could prize expressiveness over a rigorous structure. Talking with one sibling segues into calling another, then another, through which we can paint a portrait of a dysfunctional family.
- Returning to Gomes' cryptic spider web analogy, we can have this family as one where each participant's boundaries are enmeshed and ill-defined. There is no respect for individuality, autonomy or integrity. The parents rule and have an absolutely oversized say over their adult children's lives, and the siblings have been taught to accept it.
- The parents can be portrayed as well-meaning but thoroughly maladjusted, and incapable or outright unwilling to consider the harm they do to their children. The siblings, meanwhile, are mentally unstable, at their wits' end, and incapable of ever assessing the source of any issue.
- To put this family dynamic in a short sentence, this is the sort of family where the parents have worked long and hard to obliterate their children's sense of self, but they are just well-adjusted enough to never yell.
- For added complexity, one of the parents can be the ringleader and the other an enabler who smooths things out when the ringleader goes too far.
- Gomes *almost* goes as far as calling his parents, which would be a terrible idea, but stops himself before it's too late. Calling his siblings was enough to reveal that nothing has changed. He really did make the right choice by leaving.
- The parents are not shown nor contacted. An ominous sense of mystery remains around them.
- This process is distressing to him — and it ends on a sour note as he reflects back to Alfred, and realizes that he had been forming an attachment with him. He chastises himself for allowing such a thing to happen. He should have known better.

No excerpt for this chapter.

Alternate Format

Everything leading up to Chapters 7 and 8 was reasonably extroverted. We get these characters interacting, we get outdoor scenes, we get sexual tension. These two introspective chapters, in contrast, ought to feel like a break from the norm, a surprise.

In the previous section I've outlined a format that would be, I believe, reasonably balanced; not too long, not too deep, just enough length to explore the characters and their conflicts. But if one decided to extend these two chapters in order to explore more of the characters, it would result in a more literary approach and tone which could work quite well.

But how should we execute this idea? What changes would be necessary to make a lengthier introspection work, in terms of pacing?

If I was writing it, what I would do is:

1. Bring it together into a single, longer chapter. This way we are going to explore both Gomes and Alfred in the same section of the story.
2. Instead of exploring first Alfred and then Gomes, I would switch back and forth between them. By strategically flipping back and forth, we can gain some mileage out of comparing and contrasting what they are going through.

For instance, there could be a lot to be gained by juxtaposing Gomes' and Alfred's complicated family histories. Even when they are apart, they are together, having a dark night of the soul.

By adopting this new format, we would avoid a specific pacing problem. Imagine that someone is much more interested in Alfred or Gomes. They might lose interest in the story if the introspective chapter of the character they don't like is too long. By flipping back and forth strategically, we can maintain that reader's attention despite any reservations they may have to specific characters.

Night Flying

I mentioned in the "Optional Chapters" section that we could have two flying moments in this story. Here is where we can insert the second moment, but we'd do it with a different tone. If the first flying segment was hopeful, perceived through the eyes of Gomes as he's becoming

increasingly attached to Alfred, here we could portray it as a moment of solitude. It's Alfred flying alone **through the night**. He is free and unencumbered, in fact he might be flying better and more dextrously than he would during the day. But he is alone, and he is reflecting about life. Maybe it happens after he's shed away many of his toxic relations.

It's important to focus on the sensations. Not only the basic and obvious things like the wind on his wings. Think of the balance as he soars through the sky, subtly adjusting himself to respond to the gusts of wings. His screeching, the echolocation, perceiving the crashing sea through this entirely different sense. The darkness around him as he is going forward in this new direction in life — the death of his relations and what comes next. He is a bat of death, and here he is experiencing grief over his past self.

Chapter 9

- They reconcile.
- It's been a few months since Gomes and Alfred stopped talking. It won't be long now before, one would assume, Gomes starts looking for the next place to move to.
- We begin the chapter from Alfred's POV. He's now living a new reality:
 - He's no longer encumbered by his toxic friend group. He has more free time and less grief in his personal life, less drama, but he's also solitary.
 - He's no longer putting in an excess of effort into his work. In fact, he's looking for a new job, as he has accepted that he doesn't have much of a future in that workplace.
 - He's not taking as many stimulants as before. He finds himself having an easier time functioning without all the stress from his bad friends and intense job.
 - That said, the matter of his family remains unaddressed. It is not that he wants to confront his parents about old wounds, but he finds himself becoming annoyed, angry and oppositional to things he would have previously taken without complaint. **Alfred is very conscious that something is changing in him, and he can outright verbalize that tensions and confrontations with his family are in his future. Perhaps his family will be more functional than Gomes' during this process, but he can clearly see that their situations are not so different.**
 - On a deeper psychological level, Alfred finds some sense of profound inner peace. His "death drive" has been fed in an unexpected and bitter way. He is living through the controlled demolition of his social life, and is finding a sense of competence, clarity and even happiness in this new, more autonomous life.
- All of those big life changes are brewing up inside of him, taking a new shape: he often thinks back about getting a tattoo. Something to give shape to this new stage of his life.
- He's told himself it's stupid many times, but the thought inevitably returns. He's had at least two months of frequent reflection about it. At last he decides to do it — but Gomes is the only tattoo artist in town who can be counted on to work on mythicals. Moreover, if Gomes tells him it's a stupid idea, he knows that'll be enough to bury these thoughts.
- Alfred books an appointment with Gomes.
- The day comes. Alfred returns to the place where he met Gomes and goes inside.

- Gomes' attitude is professional and reserved. Alfred, meanwhile, is afraid that this whole thing may be unpleasant to Gomes, so he's not expecting much and is trying to not put his foot on his mouth.
- The air is thick with tension. Long pauses where things go unsaid. Gomes believes he's over Alfred, Alfred thinks he has given up on getting together with Gomes again, they both think the moment has passed, but that *tension* shames them into seeing that they still harbor unresolved feelings.
- What does Alfred want tattooed on him? Could be something stupid and Gomes really has to explain to him why it'd be a bad idea. Maybe it's a decent idea, but not in the exact way that Alfred is thinking. Or maybe it really is a good idea but there is a fatal flaw that demands a serious rework from the ground up. The essential is that it's something that demands care and attention from Gomes as a professional, and from Alfred it demands authentic openness. But Gomes goes the extra mile to make it fantastic, because he *cares*, and Alfred notices it. They truly communicate with each other and reach the same page.
 - But what exactly is getting tattooed? Well, if I was writing this story I think I'd go with a very stylised sunset. But what do *you* think?
- They agree on a design and end things for the day. As Alfred is leaving there is a moment of hesitation. The two of them want to say something, but choose not to.
- Alfred returns a few days later for the actual tattoo appointment. They begin and it's nothing like what Alfred expected earlier in the story, when he became excited at seeing someone else getting tattooed. It's painful, but not agonising. It's tense. But, mainly, it's *intimate, for the both of them*.
- Explore every detail, every minute physical reaction. Alfred curling his fingers and toes, his quickened breathing, his attempts at distracting himself from the pain. Gomes' own breathing, the pressure he puts in, the ink and the needle. His broad figure overshadows Alfred's, a drop of sweat falls. Time slows to a crawl, the world outside stops existing, and the both of them are forced to face the truth: there is an attachment between them.
- Gomes starts talking. He asks how life's been treating Alfred. After a little hesitation he confesses that he's cut out his friends, is looking for a new job, and he "bitches" about family issues.
- Gomes does not show his surprise, but he *is* surprised at this turn of events.
- Then, to an even greater surprise, Alfred apologises for what he said months before. He shows genuine insight and spells out what has been clear for a while: he was

uncomfortable with his own shitty relations for a while and did some weird projecting onto Gomes. He was afraid of making the necessary decisions for his own well-being and, by telling Gomes that surely things weren't so bad, he was trying to convince *himself*.

- This genuinely surprised Gomes. He's not used to people apologizing to him, let alone showing this level of reflection and insight. It touches him deeply, because this is what he had hoped his family would have shown him when he tried addressing their own issues. He chokes up a bit, and has to look up to stop a tear from falling.
- Things go quiet. A few minutes later Alfred asks about Gomes' plans. Where is he moving to next?
- Gomes mulls over his words for a minute, then says he's not sure. He doesn't really like this town too much, the art scene kinda sucks, the weather's too hot... But he's not in a rush or anything. He still has a few months on his lease and maybe he's going to get a decent deal if tries to renew it.
- After a while, Alfred gets used to the sensation, to the pain. It's not too bad. They both get into the zone, so to speak, but all things come to an end.
- As Gomes is finishing up, he hesitates. He lays his hand on Alfred's back or shoulders, the touch lasts just a little too long. Alfred responds in kind, maybe leaning onto that touch, or sighing, anything to show that he's finding some comfort from that gesture.
- Gomes wants to say something. It's his chance, his one chance, he cannot let the moment slip.
- "Hey..."

No excerpt for this chapter.

Chapter 10

If it were up to me, I'd fast forward to a few months later to another intimate moment between the two of them, this time it happens just as the sun is setting and it's all going dark. I'd make it sexual and romantic, but also wild and intense. Alfred is sporting the tattoo he got from Gomes and perhaps a nose ring, or a piercing somewhere. He's looking more punk-ish than ever before. Their roles are reversed from the Scene 5 sex scene (though what those were is up for debate anyway!).

Are they dating, are they boyfriends? I don't think so. Maybe that's what they'll become if given enough time. But, for now, they are enjoying each other and whatever it is they have going on. Gomes has decided to stay in town for a while longer, and Alfred is exploring his new sense of self. Some things are changing in his personal life and it's not all sunshine and rainbows.

Both Gomes and Alfred have cast out so many attachments, they've had to sacrifice a lot to reach a measure of peace. But some connections are worth keeping. Some attachments are worth the risk, the pain, the fear. Life is worth living.

But that's just what I think. How about you? How should this story end?

But What Happens Afterwards?

I tried to keep this outline and its story compact. If I were to develop this idea into a full visual novel, it would be a "one and done" deal — the game comes out all at once or, at most, in two or three updates. I'd probably write in one single go and would only get illustrations after the first draft was done.

But there are other ways this could be developed, and it would be possible to extend the story past the ending of Chapter 10. I have left plenty of hanging threads that could be developed into entirely new arcs for these characters. To name a few:

- Alfred's usage of stimulants has not been fully explored — how would Gomes try and affect this aspect of Alfred's life if they got closer?
- Is there more to Gomes' high pain threshold and usage of medicinal cannabis? Are there chapters of his life that affected him just as much as his troubled family history, but which he has not yet shared with Alfred? Just what happened, and how does it affect him today?
- The story ends with the two of them having a "situationship". They are not officially dating. But, assuming all goes well, it could reach that point, and Gomes would have to confront his own fears of forming long-lasting and stable relationships. How does he stumble here, and how does he rise up from it? What aspects of his trauma will be flared and discussed with Alfred, and how?
- Where does Alfred go from here? How will his personal changes during the last stretch of the story affect things like his job? His position in society? His future?
- If Gomes and Alfred start dating and things go well, do they stay in this town or do they move somewhere else together? Alfred is the one who has the most roots here, though they are dwindling, and one can imagine a story where Gomes has to set down roots. But it could also be the opposite, and Alfred is the one who has to let go further, leading to the two of them traveling to some other place together. Maybe they'll find a permanent home there.

But that's up to you. Even if no one actually develops this story, I hope it can at least give you room to dream.

— Mino.