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Hi. My Name's Ada...

and I'm an addict.

That opening is a gamble and, while true, either you are incredibly intrigued as to why someone would start off a cover letter to github in such an unconventional way, or I'm now typing words that only the heap of memory that's dedicated to your computer's Recycle Bin will ever witness. However, I'm going to proceed under the assumption that my audience is, in fact, human as I think that the `electron` team is probably made up of unconventional thinkers.

In February of 1989, on my seventh birthday, instead of the Nintendo that I so desperately lusted-after, I received a 10-year-old, garage-sale-purchased, second-hand, beat-up, yellowed-from-cigarette-smoke Atari 400. At the time, my pre-adolescent sense-of-entitlement was devastated. However, this gift lead to the single most defining moment of my life. Miraculously, the previous owner had kept all of the original documentation which included an [Atari BASIC Reference Manual](#). I poured over that book for weeks. It took me a while to figure out that `BASIC` was not a game like the other cartridges. It was, to my seven-year-old understanding, "a game that I could play to make my own games", an idea that excited me to no end. For months, where ever I went, so did that book. I read it on the bus to school, during lunch, during "reading time", and before going to sleep. I even got caught reading it during church once, an act that caused my Southern Baptist Minister of a father to literally deliver a special Sunday-evening sermon entitled *"Computers Belong to Satan"*. This only caused me to work harder at my goal. I would write small programs on notebook paper at school and then type them into the machine as soon as I got home.

The first "game" I wrote took weeks to develop, due in part, to my parents belief that if I was in front of the tv, I was rotting my brain, and because every time I turned the machine off, I lost all of my code. I either had to leave the machine on (that television forever had

`10 PRINT "HELLO. MY NAME IS ATARI"` burned in to picture tube) or copy the entire program by hand to loose-leaf. The game was a simple text prompt that asked you to pick a number between 0 and 100 and the computer would try to guess what it was (using, what I later discovered to be, a simple binary

search). The first time it worked, I felt an overwhelming sense of accomplishment and unadulterated joy.

I've been an addict ever since.

Of the criterion that the [DSM](#) identifies to classify a disorder as an addiction, there exists a requirement that the addiction has to have negatively impacted one's life. As I believe that a person's failures do not necessarily diminish them, and in fact, provide opportunities for learning and growth, I take pride in some of my past mistakes. As an example, I was kicked out of high-school for "hacking" and, in an act of youthful rebellion, I moonwalked out of the principal's office while defiantly brandishing a double-handed one-finger salute (a maneuver with a difficulty rating of 6.3), hopped in my car, drove straight to the community college, and asked to sign up for the next scheduled G.E.D. Exam Administration. As fate would have it, the next testing day was the coming weekend, and only one spot was left. That Saturday, at seven in the morning, I stood in line with two No. 2 pencils, a Discman loaded with *OK Computer* hidden in my jacket liner, and the \$40 exam fee. Less than hour later, I walked out of the last public school classroom I'd ever step foot in.

Overall, though, my *penchant* for code writing has been an overwhelmingly positive experience: I spent a year in Boulder, CO creating stock research visualizations for websites that had millions of daily users; I've written articles and tutorials that have become seminal in the communities they were created for; I designed and developed video games for the debut of world's largest arcade machine at E3 2016; and I've become friends with people who possess the most creative minds in modern computer science.

But, something's missing. To this point in time, I've mostly worked at agencies. In the past, I've enjoyed the challenge of fast-paced development and the "always something new" aspects of agency life. But, my experience at E3 last year broke something in me. On a Thursday afternoon in October of 2015, my VP of Development off-handedly and somewhat incredulously mentioned that a marketing firm had asked for a prototype of an arcade claw-machine that could be controlled via a web interface with realtime instant video feedback with a demo by the coming Tuesday. I shrugged my shoulders and said the five words that changed my life: "Yeah. I can do that." The truth of the matter is, while I had the confidence to pull it off, I had never worked with any of the technologies that I had mentally identified would be needed (It should be mentioned that I have, perhaps, an over-abundance of self-efficacy.) By Friday afternoon, I had ordered a battery operated toy claw machine, two raspberry pis, and a couple of arduino starter kits from Amazon. While waiting for the shipment to arrive, I read every "Getting Started with Arduino" tutorial that I

could find. The demo was scheduled for Tuesday at noon and my materials arrived at my apartment Saturday around 2pm. I set my wall timer for 70 hours and went about the task of getting the arduino to blink it's on-board LED.

Fast forward to Tuesday, I had pulled apart the claw machine, attached it's moving bits to my arduino board, gave up on arduino and instead wrote a hardware controller in node using the `johnny-five` package, added a web socket server to the node application so that the controls on the webpage were real time, and setup a webrtc video stream so that the video feedback would be as instantaneous as possible. All of this came together thirty seconds before the client was given the demo link.

We won the bid, and the next 8 months consisted of 3 different projects for this client: a website with a collection of classic game clones with client branding, an actual full-size claw-machine with TwitchPlay integration, and a six-story tall arcade cabinet with extended versions of two of the website games. This project meant a lot to me and I poured myself into it. I spent a month sitting in a claw machine, figuring out how to hack its motherboard via a node-powered serial tty connection over USB, and building an electron-powered controller app. I spent months building the web site games, and even more time re-designing and expanding the games for the arcade cabinet. If -my- games were going to be going to E3, then they were going to be -perfect-

The day before the unveiling, I had a -very- early morning flight from my home in Dallas to LA. I boarded the plane without having slept (partially due to excitement, and partially due to "last minute perfection tweaking"). On the ground in LA, I taxied to the E3 convention site and given access to the arcade cabinet to test my games. What I hadn't been told during development, was that the computer running the cabiner was running a special "kiosk" software suite that scanned every frame the computer rendered for malicious input. My beautiful and diabolically difficult game that ran 60 frames per second on every machine I'd tested it on, was unplayable on the cabinet. Worse yet, the convention staff was closing everything down in preparation for the convention's opening in the morning. So I did what any one would have done in my situation... I hid.

The rest of the night was spent sitting inside the arcade cabinet in a mad-dash to make the game playable. I yanked out un-needed visual effect shaders, simplified the more processor-intensive enemy behaviors, and rebalanced the boss battle's difficulty. At 5:15 in the morning, about 48 hours since I'd last slept, the game was, if not perfect, playable and fun. I stumbled into the on-campus Starbucks, ordered a Double Red-Eye, and proceeded to fall asleep in my chair before my order was ready.

Sometime later, I woke up due to the heat that many people in a small area can produce. My coffee had been carefully set on the table so that when I woke up I wouldn't accidentally knock it off. I downed it all at once. You know that disorienting sensation you get when you think there's one more step at the top of the stairs, but there isn't? That's the same thing I felt when I realized that my coffee was cold. I suddenly had the realization that I'd been out cold for hours. The convention had started. I'd missed the unveiling. My phone buzzed and the notifications informed that I had 50 unread messages. The one-sided conversation started with early morning salutations, followed by annoyance at my failure to respond, which moved quickly to anger, then panic regarding the status of the project, and finally worrying about my personal safety. I responded with "I'm alive. See you in a moment." and made my way to the arcade machine.

I moved through the convention and came up to the Doritos Mix Arcade from the backside of the machine itself so that I could see the VIP section where the six-foot tall joystick was located. The area where the coin-mech would conventionally be (and where I had spent the night writing code), was being setup for Big Boi's short-set concert later that evening. On the ground in front of the machine were about a hundred people all with their head tilted up watching the huge display, and in the VIP area, there were about thirty people standing around a guy who was getting ready to play the game. My game. I didn't need to see the screen to know what was happening. He easily made it through the first level, which was a basic *Space Invaders* conceit. The second level, which introduced a new play mechanic where the enemies would dive down the screen a la *Galaga*, proved to be almost no challenge for him. During the the third level, which had enemies that would dive and seek the player, he mis-dodged an enemy and lost a life. Something interesting happened the moment he died, though. The crowd, which had doubled in size since the beginning of his play through, all groaned. They had become emotionally invested in the outcome of this battle of man vs. machine. The MC announced that he had set a high score and the crowd cheered a bit. While he finished mopping up the enemies on the third level, he audibly exclaimed "Oh! Now **that's** interesting!" I knew immediately that he had discovered something my play testers had never noticed and the key to beating the boss: if a player's blue bullet collided with an enemy's red bullet, they melded together into a purple ball of plasma that would seek the nearest enemy. The next and final level started out looking exactly like the first, until an enormous boss enemy, only partially visible on screen, wiped out all of the normal enemies. The game's perspective shifted to reveal exactly how tiny the player ship, was compared to the enemy the player now face. The Boss Enemy completely dwarfed the player's ship and immediately began orienting itself towards the player. The sound of the boss's laser

powering up completely overwhelmed the driving beats of the background music. The guy at the joystick was visibly caught off guard and started talking himself through it... Audience members started occasionally offering encouragement. The laser fired, and the player dodged, which elicited an unexpectedly genuine cheer and from the audience. The boss went into a patrol mode which brought with it an old-school bullet hell. The crowd went crazy, the player, now fueled by the support of the people, exclaimed "OH. OH. I SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING. I GOTCHA! I GOTCHA!" and began shooting every bullet that came his way. These bullets, in turn began flying back towards the boss and damaging it. As the boss's health meter fell, the crowd got louder and louder. The final hit on the boss was met with a roar of cheers and exclamations. Not only was the player victorious, but so was everyone who was there. That guy, the people watching, and I all had a shared life experience because of my work, and the amount of myself I put into it.

I ran back stage and uncontrollably began weeping next to a beautiful sky blue Stratocaster. I consider myself an introspective and I generally know how I'll react to a given situation. But I'll be honest, I was completely confused by my tears. At first, I figured it was lack of sleep, but the more I thought on it. I had just been a part of something that -mattered- beyond a client's conversion rate. I had created something more than a shiny object meant to grab the short attention spans of a fickle consumer-base. I then realized that -I-hadn't created anything at all... we, the player, the audience, and I had all built an experience together.

And in the moment of that realization, I broke. I immediately no longer wished to continue building ephemeral noise-makers. I wanted to create something that would allow others to experience this same feeling of connectedness. I didn't participate in the rest of the convention. I went back to my AirBnB, slept for 14 hours, and then got on a plane back home. I took some time to mentally recover and then began working on finding a community of developers that I could both help and learn from. I found it, quite unexpectedly, after watching an episode of Daniel Shiffman's "Coding Rainbow" (now "Coding Train") which focuses on creative coding using Processing and p5.js

Daniel has setup a slack channel for The Coding Train community that provides a safe space for both seasoned developers and new comers her want to learn without having to worry about the exclusive and entitled attitudes that often plague the white male dominated world of engineering. I teach and tutor there most days, answering questions and offering advice when I can. Over the past year, I identified a need in the community and began working on a personal project to create an easy to use, pluggable, dedicated IDE for creative coders. Most of the people who are attracted to this community are not developers and

have no idea how to use an editor like Atom. What is needed is a tool that offers more rigidity than a classic IDE, but that has some of the more powerful abilities than just a text editor. When considering the tools I'd use to build it, electron was the first and basically only consideration. It would allow me to use my core language, I had used it on personal and professional projects in the past, and 1.0 had recently been released and I was interested in looking at the new feature and abilities. To make my life easier, I joined the atom and electron slack channels and have found the community to be incredibly supportive and helpful. It took a little while for me to get back into the mindset of electron, but once I did, I started trying to give back to the community, answering questions and providing help in what manner that I can.

In early February of this year, I found out that I'd be losing my job the first week in March due to a corporate restructuring. I started taking a look at how my interests and skills could help me achieve the goal of helping others. A friend of mine, being a fiction writer, threw an old author's adage at me: "Write what you know."

I know code and I know the people who use it every day to create things for the people they know. I want the thing that I'm passionate about to help inspire and support others in the things they are passionate about. When I learned that github was hiring for a position with a job description of doing exactly that, I sat down and wrote this letter.

My apologies for the long winded, and somewhat unprofessional nature of this document. In the past, my cover letters have been form-filled templates, as I've never particularly cared -where- I work, just that I do. But this time, I wanted to get personal.

If you made it this far, I'd like to say thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope you've found it, at the very least, entertaining, but more than that, a reason to contact me. My phone number is 214-505-5241 and my email is ada@codevinsky.com. I'm available to talk pretty much whenever is convenient for you. I look forward to hearing back.

Sincerely,

Ada Lovcraft

PS: If I made a mistake in judgement and you are, however, the recycle bin, would you be kind enough to also forward this letter to Bezos's and Zuck's recycle bins? kthxbai

