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Hello everybody and welcome back to chapter select in what we are calling season zero of this inaugural show

I am your host today Logan Moore and

Today we're going to be looking at the last of us part 2 if you've been listening to this season zero as we were calling

It last episode or the first episode we looked at

Naughty Dog's original game the last of us and hot off the tails of at least when we're recording this the release of the last

Of us part 2 we're going to be looking at that video game today. I am joined by

My co-host, as always, is Max Roberts.

Max, how are you doing?

I am well, Logan.

How are you?

I'm doing pretty good.

Been a while since I said "as always, Max Roberts," which I know you always liked, so...

Usually if one of us is podcasting, the other one is there, typically.

That is true.

Most of the time, at least.

So yeah, as I said, today's episode of Last of Us Part II, we're recording this a mere

Four days after the game has released max has had this game for actually about a week now

He got he got it a little bit earlier

Which I don't know if we need to go into a backstory too much about I was just very lucky

Yeah, you found a mom-and-pop shop had the game on the shelf

Anyway, so yeah, we're going to we're going to dig deep into the game today and we're coming about this at a time where

Conversation around this game is hot. There's a lot of interesting opinions out there

Max, I don't think you or me have talked to many other people about this game at this point except for some little one-off conversations here and there.

So this is the first time that, I guess to say this, this show is going to be a lot of times not games that have freshly come out like this, so this is more of an interesting episode I think, especially compared to ones we'll do in the future, which are going to be more about looking back at older games or, yeah, primarily older games I would imagine we'll play.

It's still very hot off the presses though, so it might be a little bit of a different discussion here that we will have.

It's also interesting just because this particular season only has two games, and the idea is to bounce back and forth from beginning to the most recent, and this one is kind of just a one-two punch, and so I think that combined with the fact that one game came out seven years ago and one game came out four or five days ago is kind of interesting and not necessarily

true to the format of the show, but this is going to be a really fun episode regardless.

>> Yeah, and we selfishly kind of, I think we mentioned this in the last episode, but we purposefully did this for season zero to talk about these two games because you and I like talking about Naughty Dog games. You're obviously a huge Naughty Dog fan yourself, and I guess that's

going to be, well, we'll go over the stats here and the credits and all that stuff before we get into it. But yeah, you and I have long talked about Naughty Dog games pretty in-depth. We did one for Uncharted 4 back on our old podcast Millennial Gaming Speak when that was still up back in the day and we had a lengthy discussion about that one.

We talked about The Last of Us a lot on and off over the years, even before we did our last episode about that game last week.

Or I guess this isn't a weekly podcast at this point.

Last episode!

Anyway, so yeah, The Last of Us Part II.

It launched on June 19, 2020.

It was developed by Naughty Dog.

The director behind the game was Neil Druckmann, who directed the first game.

Neil brought aboard Westworld Rider, and what else has she done?

Was she on Mr. Robot as well?

Snowpiercer, TNT's Snowpiercer adaption.

She did the TNT version of that, or did she help with the original movie?

TNT specifically.

Interesting.

Hayley Gross is her name.

She helped Neil with the story.

She was the narrative lead on this game.

The game directors were Kurt Margino and Anthony Newman, and the composer this time once again

was Gustavo Santo...

You say his last name better than I do.

I'm not very good at it, but Santo A...

There you go.

Oh yeah, the two L's make the Y sound, that's right.

And then Mac Quail,

who, that's the Mr. Robot person. That's the Mr. Robot guy.

He helped Gustavo with the soundtrack this time around.

And Max, I guess this is going to be kind of maybe an odd segue

first question and kind of teeing this off for you to

get things started, but

Before we get into the more specifics about the story and the gameplay and things like that, we're going to analyze all those aspects in depth.

I'm curious where you're specifically coming at this one from, and is this now your favorite game ever?

Which sounds like an odd point for me to lead into a discussion with you, but the last time we had one of these conversations about a new Naughty Dog game that came out was with Uncharted 4,

and that discussion ended up being Max saying, "Yes, this is my favorite game ever now."

So I'm curious if you think Naughty Dog has one-upped themselves compared to their last outing.

It's a fair and very interesting question.

To kind of start at the end of your point there,

has Naughty Dog, you know, one-upped themselves since their last, you know, major release?

I mean, Lost Legacy is also a very good game.

I always forget about Lost Legacy. That's on me.

It's fair.

Did they one-up Uncharted 4 though?

And I think yes, so you know, with that logic it automatically theoretically should you know kind of bump up and be my new favorite game of all time.

But since then, just in general, I've had a lot of internal thoughts and discussions about like, you know, what is the best game of all time versus a favorite game and to kind of approach those differently now and internally go back and forth.

But, yes, I think this is their best game to date, which I think answers your question to a certain degree.

Yeah, I think it does. I think it's one of those weird things where it's like, I don't know how you can get to the end of this game, and...

I don't know, it's just a very complicated video game. Everything that Naughty Dog has openly talked about in the, what, four years that they have publicly been talking about this game,

about how it's a game about hate and how we're not really looking to make a game about that'll make players comfortable

And it's gonna be something that it'll be hard to get through all those things proved to be true so to then say yeah

That's my favorite game that I love to play is like

I don't know if that's something for you that you feel weird about potentially saying I know if this game

This is not my favorite game of all time by any means

I think it's an extremely extremely good one

But yeah, I don't know favorite and best is kind of a different thing so I understand where you're coming

I think particularly in the video game industry and with fans favorite and best are

often considered interchangeable and I think actually that's a disservice to a lot of things because

Favorite and best are definitely not the same no at all especially when you're talking about

Media and art in whatever form whether it's film music or whatever

Yes

exactly um

I think if so as we dive into this game and there's a whole lot to dive into and again

Far more than our last episode where we looked at the last of us because that was a game we were intimately familiar with this

Is a game personally speaking. I'm still grappling with as we were having this discussion

Because I finished this game about 24 hours ago at this point you finished it probably what three days ago by now

But even then I'd still say we're probably processing a lot of what this game throws at you

And that's not to say that we don't have hard opinions one way or another because I know I do I do about certain things

But let's start getting into the story. I think that's the best place to

Really start with all of this and I think that's the part of the game that there's the really the most to

potentially talk about and dissect

Obviously upfront if you've not played the game

Spoilers for the entirety of the game here. I this is your one

I do I I want to say really quick

Typically the show in general is just gonna be spoilers all around. I just it just

Naturally feel like we have to say it because this game did come out less than a week ago

Well for us less than a week ago if you're listening to this, it's probably been a couple months. I would imagine yeah

Hearing this in the game's been out for a while. So I'm sure aspects such as

Joel dying at the start of the game or probably yeah, I

Mean in my opinion. I'll say this Joel dying at the start of this game is gonna be such a wide open known

own spoiler and discussion point.

It's gonna be like, you know when like Marvel movies come out and it's like, "Oh, we can't talk about what happens at the end of Endgame."

And then three days later everybody's like, "Nah, all right, spoilers are off the table.

We can just talk about this openly on social platforms and stuff like that."

That's how I imagine this is gonna be within a month.

Yeah, I think it's gonna be similar to the, you know, maybe not of the same pop culture level, but the Luke, I am your father type thing.

Like it's just known.

Darth Vader is Luke Skywalker's father, you know, similarly I do believe that eventually it's just going to be like Joel dies in the second game within the first three hours.

Well I mean, and let's get into that, and I mean, okay, again, spoilers for everything moving forward.

Joel dies.

That's the first thing though, and that really is the, in some ways that seems like the biggest thing that happens in this game, which it is I guess because it sets in motion everything that happens from then on out, but it also really is the first major thing that happens in this game.

It's a wild thing to kill off your main protagonist from the last game, even though we knew leading

into this that they were going to hand the reins over to Ellie, she was going to be the main character moving forward, and that she was really going to take, yeah, she was going

to be the centerpiece of the story moving forward and that The Last of Us was going to follow her first rather than being a story that you see from Joel's point of view.

It's still very insane to kill Jolof in those opening hours and it's even more insane to place you in control of the person who does it not too long after.

I guess, not really a question here, but I mean just what was your thought process once you realized that they were moving in that direction?

How do you think they capitalized on it as a whole?

I knew it was gonna get pretty gnarly.

I knew I had a pit in my stomach as soon as you take over as Abby within the first hour of the game.

For just a brief time period, you start playing as her.

I was like, "Oh, that's how this game's gonna go."

It's gonna be a dual protagonist game.

Typically, in Naughty Dog games in the past,

whenever you play as a second character,

whoever it may be, whether it's Ellie in the first,

you know, The Last of Us Part One,

or you play as Nate and Elena's daughter

at the end of Uncharted 4,

typically those are late game moments.

And Naughty Dog kind of flipped their script

this time around and you play as the second main character

of this game within the opening hour.

Which is an interesting tease and I think helps establish

the second half of this game,

which is when you play as Abby for seven to 10 hours.

I mean, this is probably a fair time range.

I'm not very good at estimating.

- Half the campaign is probably hers, yeah.

- Yeah.

And I think that puts a pin in it for the player of,

this isn't just about Ellie

and ultimately avenging Joel's death.

And it really kind of, I was like,

"Oh, this is how they wanna go about it."

And I don't know, it just feels like it was such a secret.

Everything they've showed and talked about up to this point

is focused primarily on Ellie and they really saved

half of the game was a giant mystery

and it wasn't even known

and I think that's really ambitious and cool

and I feel really bad for anyone who knew that going in.

- My dream. - In general.

It was a really cool surprise and forced me to ask a lot of questions about what are they trying to do and say.

Well I think that leads, there's a lot of places we could take this from here.

I'm trying to figure out how we want to break this down because again there is so many different

layers of this story to discuss.

We've got Ellie's entire side of things, Abby's entire side of things, we've got all the flashbacks throughout the game, we've got so many intertwining threads.

I think broad strokes though, so you're talking about how where they want to lead with this and what they're trying to do

and I think I

Think just sticking big picture before we get into like honing in on more specific plot points

I think the thing that really stuck with this game to me is

That they talk openly about how it's a game about hatred and revenge and stuff like that

and I think I texted you this one about this at one point, but it's far more a game about

empathy and understanding than I think it is either hatred or

and even love to a certain extent because the reason these characters are

the reason Ellie's chasing halfway across the country to kill Abby and the

reason Abby's can't let go of the fact that Joel killed her dad is just because

they they love these people in their lives so much and they have such close

connections to them that to them that they just can't let these things go and

I think that's a really powerful thing and that's a really human thing that

feel that sort of bond and connection to certain people in your lives not saying

I wouldn't go out of travel across the country to kill somebody necessarily

And that I think is a little bit more of the amplified tones of this game that there's one review I read

I think it may have been polygons where it talks about how

Naughty Dog thinks what thinks human?

emotion is far worse than it actually is or that and that normal humans are actually far better and more

Capable of empathy than Naughty Dog portrays in this game. I think I agree with that to a certain

Aspect then again this whole backdrop of this game is a post-apocalyptic world where everything's kind of gone to hell anyway. Yeah, it's not normal

emotional setting for people and the game

it's you know, like you said all of the promotion and

discussion about this game before release was about this is a game about hate and

we want to make you feel that through gameplay and

And the empathy that you touch on is ultimately the theme and lesson I think they're trying to communicate.

But it's not empathy that like, Ellie doesn't have empathy for Abby at the end of the game,

or vice versa.

Not in the way that you, the player, feel empathy.

And it's kind of interesting because normally the themes of this are just through the characters and the people in the story and you observe it and go "Oh, that was cool, that was great how they did that, this is..." and this is applicable in any sort of storytelling.

Books, movies, whatever.

It's like "Oh, so and so goes through this and they learn this and that."

But the empathy in this game is through the player playing both as Ellie and Abby over the course of these 20, 25 hours.

And it's, you're experiencing that emotion yourself.

And it's not necessarily or entirely reflected in the people you're playing as.

And it's, that's only possible because you do play as the two of them.

And I think that is one of the really special things that they pulled off.

Well I think the best thing about placing you in the shoes of both of the characters throughout the game is that it shows how far gone they each are.

Like there were moments, there were specific moments in these games, in this game, where I was like actively not wanting to do what the game was pushing me to do, which I get is the point to a certain degree, but it wasn't making me, I wasn't seeing myself as that character in that moment if that makes any sense.

Like I know when you play games they want you to embody the character and it's almost like you're tricking your head that like "Oh I'm playing as this person right now."

That doesn't, that's not how I always am.

Like I see Ellie as Ellie and I am just controlling them.

Like I am never, I never feel like I'm one to one with the character when I'm playing it if that makes any sense.

I don't know how you are necessarily.

That's I've, that's interesting because I do, I feel like, I do feel like that character

and like I would I'm I do try to do what that person would do like to roleplay to a certain degree. So that's actually interesting. So so like when you get to the end of this game and you're fighting Abby and you cut you cut her down and you see that she's just like super messed up and like barely hanging on to her life and she's trying to save Lev and they're trying to get out of here and they're both just in this hellhole of a place and Ellie still goes through with trying to attack Abby and just murder her on the spot.

To me that wasn't a thing of "I have to do this."

That was like a moment, and I know that's the most amplified moment in the whole game, but to me I was not seeing myself as Ellie in that moment.

In that moment I was like "Ellie, what are you doing?

Stop!

You have to end this!

You've got to stop!

This has to end!"

I felt like that a couple other times too.

The Nora torture scene I felt like that.

The murder cutscene with Mel and Owen's a little bit different because that's a cutscene so that's not something you're actively really taking part in.

But still, it just like I felt myself like, to me it felt less like I was like becoming this character who is like sinking down.

It was more just like I was controlling a person who was like deteriorating and the whole time I was I was like, "You've got to stop this.

Like this has to..."

Like I actively didn't want to do the things in this game that it was making me do.

And I feel like that's actually an amplified experiment or implementation of the end of the first game.

You know, a lot of people initially, not even initially, but just a lot of people the first

time around wanted a choice there at the end between killing the doctor or letting the surgery be performed on Ellie.

Now that has so much more context surrounding it and we'll most likely touch on that.

But Naughty Dog then told the story they wanted to tell, that you know, Joel does what Joel does, you just have to, you act it out through the controller.

And this time around, yes, there's just times, there's just, I want this to stop.

I remember kind of the midpoint, early, kind of the climax, one of the, I guess one of the climaxes of the game, is the aquarium.

And as Ellie, when you get there the first time, you kill the dog, you go in, and Owen and Mel die.

Then you start up as Abby, you're in the stadium, and not 20 minutes into it, you meet the dog and you play fetch with it.

And my heart just sunk.

I was like, "Oh no."

You know what happens to this dog?

This is how they're gonna get me with the dog.

I've already killed this dog.

I've already, I beat it with a pipe, you know?

I've never I've never hit an animal in my life

well, and then she starts having conversations with Mel about how like her and Owen are planning for the baby and like oh I heard

You guys are getting shipped over to this part of the well

I didn't want to kill I didn't want to kill Mel to begin with I you know

Yeah, you knew she was I know you took yeah

You took more active part in killing the dog as Ellie than you did melon. Oh, but at the time as Ellie

You're like get this stupid dog off me. It was another dog enemy, which you'd faced before

But then all the sudden

They switch perspective and you're suddenly like oh, this is a very nice name. It's got a boy
It's a good girl. I guess yeah, very good girl and um, I
think that's really clever and I

Thought it worked like on an emotional gameplay level. I thought that worked very well
let's

Let's get into some more character centered stuff rather than talking broad strokes

I think Ellie's probably the

Ellie and Abby are the best ones that start talking about this and then we can go from there
with some of the others

Yeah to me this game was really

I'm curious the people who thought that Joel was really messed up for what he did at the end
of the first game which he

Absolutely was like I don't think that's necessarily in

Question him going on that murder spree at the end of the first game one quick thing on that
and I know we'll probably talk

about this

The whole ending in that game and how it's recontextual eyes a little bit as we go forward

But uh, so when I've we replayed the last of us the first one a couple weeks back

Obviously I had known some of these leaks ahead of time

so when I got to the doctor at the end of the game, I

knew who he was ahead of time and

I unloaded every single piece of ammo I had

Me on his body because I just thought it was stupid

Anyway, I don't know what I felt the need to throw that in there

But every single extra piece of ammo I had I shot into him on the ground

And then I picked up Ellie and then I ran out of there

Anyway Ellie to jump into her I felt like it was super

It was just yeah, I mean we already kind of touched on it before but just going having her go
from this beloved like

Character that we last saw when she was not really like a little girl because she was like 14 last game

Which is no old enough teenager. Then I've seen her become a young woman and then to see her just

Especially at the early part of the game like especially those first two hours

Just like kind of still talking about dumb stuff like oh I feelings about Deena

I know what happened last night like just typical like high school level drama stuff and

Then to just quickly or not quickly

but more over the course of 10 hours to just see her decline and

Slowly just go like before you even ever play as Abby like I don't know about you

But I felt like Ellie was just going too far and she needed to

Dina gets pregnant and it's like okay. You should go home. It's like oh, we know we have to finish it

We're here and it's like no you should probably just get out while you can before things get worse and Ellie really

Just falls off the deep end in this game to the point that I mean by the end of it

she's got nothing left that we're aware of obviously you would think she's

probably trying to hope she can salvage something with Dina there in the future

but Dina tells her that's not gonna happen before she kind of leaves it's

really this whole game it was it's just it's interesting to me that Naughty Dog

went in a direction with one killing Joel but then two just tearing down Ellie

entirely like because I don't view her as the same character anymore and that's

not to say I dislike her or anything like that I think she's a way more

fascinating character now which is actually the one good thing I wanted them

to do in this game because I didn't care about Ellie that much coming into this

game and I think she's way more multifaceted now. I actually think she's a

lot like Joel a lot more like Joel now and I think the same for Abby so you

You know, it's implied in the first game, you know, Joel and Tommy did a lot to survive

and Joel did some pretty terrible things.

Just it's implied, I mean not even implied, just directly talked about when they enter Pittsburgh.

Joel did some pretty messed up stuff to stay alive.

And now you actually get to see the kind of messed up things that Ellie did in the name of justice and revenge.

And you actually get to see Abby's revenge quest succeed early on in the beginning of the game and you kind of fill in the context of later on of just kind of why she did it.

And as I play the game now for the second time, I feel, you know, very sympathetic toward Abby in the beginning of the game because I know what this is going to cost her and I know how she feels emotionally.

And you get to see Abby's almost a few steps ahead of Ellie and her journey.

And in the end, Abby finds this form of redemption through Lev and their relationship and trying to find the fireflies once again and then that gets pulled from them for a few months or however long that gap of time is.

Abby does find redemption and so I would hope that Ellie can find it too.

I imagine she goes back to Jackson and tries to rekindle the relationships there.

But they are, you know, you see what Joel's journey led him.

Abby's just, you know, emotionally beat for beat, kind of a few steps ahead of her in this specific quest for vengeance.

They're very, they're two sides of the same coin.

Yeah, I think that the thing, there's a lot of parallels.

I mean, we could talk for the next three hours about all the parallels between Abby and Ellie in this game.

fascinating one though is what you said is that Abby finds her revenge early on and then Ellie is consumed by her quest for revenge throughout the remainder of the game until the credits roll essentially or until she finally lets it go but what's fascinating about Abby's cycle throughout this game is that she

finds her revenge early and it doesn't satiate her in the way that she expected it to or that she thought it would.

It actually emotionally disconnects her from her friends, her friends are messed up by it, it causes tension and turmoil within her group, it doesn't give her the piece she was looking for.

Well I think in turn too that a lot of this isn't explicitly ever shown or stated but she's like the top person for the WLF throughout this game, the Wolves, and she is like number one murderer for their squad. It's implied that she's Isaac who is the head of the WLF. She's like his right-hand woman for the most part and she has killed more scars in Seattle than a lot of other people have. The version of Abby we meet when she's 14 or 15, same as Ellie, when we first see her in that first flashback with her dad and the zebra and all that stuff. That version of Abby is not the Abby that we then see later on and I think it's her hardening herself and her kind of this constant, you can tell that she's got this constant motivation and this drive to hunt down Joel and eventually kill him. Like she hasn't let it go and all the flashbacks we see with her and in the interim she's getting harder and tougher by contributing to this group in Seattle and this ongoing battle they have back and forth between another group in the city, the Scars or the Seraphites. So she's become so consumed by that that it's led to her killing these other people, taking involvement in this ongoing war in the city, and then when she finally does, she's still expected to be that person afterward, and she realizes she doesn't want to be that person anymore, and she realizes that Joel's death really didn't provide any sort of closure for her, and she feels like she needs to rectify it somehow by then doing a good act, because the act of seeking justice even if she felt like she was in the right for it really, it just didn't end anything. And that's what I think is the most interesting part of this whole game, was that Naughty Dog, Druckmann specifically, talks a lot about the cycle of revenge and how "oh if Abby kills Joel then that means Ellie's gonna want revenge" and that's one cycle of it, sure, but I think the other cycle is more like an internal one

with these characters and that even once you do find,

once you, or just the cycle of, not closure,

but just feeling, I mean, closer to a degree,

because yeah, even when she kills Joel,

she still doesn't have that sense of like finality.

And she doesn't feel like she has any sort of inner peace,

I guess is a good phrase to use,

which is why she then tries to go out of her way

to start helping the kids she comes across

throughout the game,

Which I do have one bone to pick with that, but we can maybe talk about some bones to

pick we have with the story later on.

Let's talk about specifically the WLF or the wolves and the Seraphites and/or the Skars.

Because that's another exploration in empathy through the player and gameplay.

Early on, E3 2018, they revealed this feature that they had built that every NPC had its

own name, every dog has its own name, and you know when you kill someone, they call

out to their friend, "Logan!" and...

"Dog!"

"Dog!"

Alice!

Joe!

Whatever!"

And, as a gameplay thing, you can imagine that getting really annoying.

time you kill someone it's like, "Bruh!"

Bruh!"

And you're just like, "Eh."

But I thought it was, it wasn't every time, I thought it was pretty well pieced out.

And so you know, they're trying to get you to feel like these are real people, but only in the back half of the game when you play as Abby and you specifically go on a journey with a pair of Seraphites that save, save Abby and then you know, so Yara and Lev, you learn about this Seraphite culture and these people and the history of this conflict between the WLF and the Seraphites.

And really it was just their people fighting over this space and this land, honestly not even sure why they're fighting, they can't come to peace.

And you really get to explore empathy for the people that you spent the front half of the game killing because they were trying to kill you and just kind of how this is again focusing on the cycle of violence in a broader sense of just, these people don't even know what

they're fighting for. There's nothing to fight for. And I thought that was actually a pretty effective way. I genuinely, by the time you get to the Seraphi Island, and you're trying to make your way to Yara and Lev's hut, I was trying to sneak through those combat encounters without

killing more people not because ah they're you know they're just good people it's just like these people have been through a lot they are not my enemy right now my goal is just simply to get to this hut to see this mother and to save Lev but then you know I get spotted in attack and I'm I had you know gameplay wise I had to kill these people and I just I thought that was really interesting they gave weight to and you know typical just game enemies they gave some emotional weight to them and doesn't mean it always hit you know ah

Joe

It's yeah, okay. I get it. Yeah, but I don't know if that was the best way to go about it but but I think yeah, I think I

Think it showed. I think that my big takeaway from both of those groups is that

Yeah, the problems within them were within each and the reason why they were just continuing to fight each other were

It's a systemic and how how

Maybe not systemic. It was it was an issue from the top down especially with the WLF

Like the reason that they acted the way they did is because Isaac was unhinged news and nutcase

Most of the WLF members you come across throughout the entire game

Especially on Abby's and like they seemed like totally normal chill people

Come across some chickies plant. She's playing hotline Miami just chilling out in their base and then

Ellie later kills that person. It's like you see these people

When you're playing as Ellie when you play as Ellie you're seeing all these out

Wlf members as psychopaths throughout the whole game, and then you actually play as them and you'd like yes, they're a militant group, but

The only reason they're really fighting is because I mean from what you're really shown is that Isaac is just this blood-hungry

Leader who's kind of calling the shots and is kind of

Dictating what they're gonna do and when they're going to do it to a certain degree

Well, I think to a certain I think Isaac

wants the fighting to end but the only way he sees that is

Through more fight through just an all-out war, you know violent to end all violence. There's there's a lack of

no one wants to come to the table and talk and

Between the WLF and the scars. It's part of that is because they had a peace treaty and it got

You know that fell apart because of you know, well this group did that and this group did that

And so it just kind of devolved back into their violence, but even just Ellie and the WLF and the Scars, like Ellie and Dina come into Seattle and shoot first, ask questions later.

And you kind of can look at Jackson and how Joel and Tommy offered Abby and, you know, all that, or their whole group, come back to town, refill, restock, you know, like Jackson was a community that you could identify with today, it was a peaceful people that wanted to help.

But these two groups in Seattle, and even the group down in Santa Barbara that you meet in the back half of the game, the Rattlers, these are just groups,

they're ruled by the violence surrounding them and they can't get out of it. It's an endless cycle that they can't get out of. And that's part of why Owen wants to leave he's just like I'm tired of fighting for land I don't care about.

It's very unique to give emotional weight to the enemies that you're fighting.

It doesn't mean that you're like I don't want to kill a single person and I agree with all of them such and such but it's definitely a long way from Uncharted where they're just the, you know, mindless bad guys to shoot.

It's just fodder in front of you.

Me want treasure, die.

I'm Nathan Drake.

And Uncharted is obviously a different vibe and feel and it's okay.

It's much more pulp-action-y.

Yeah, but it works within the world of The Last of Us.

And I think that's pretty unique.

Yeah, I thought that whole back and forth was really well done as well for the most part.

Let's talk about flashbacks.

Flashbacks. We can do that. Okay, I want to talk about some of the side characters at some point,

but yeah, let's talk about some of the flashbacks because the, I mean, honestly, the third major character in this game still is Joel, and he's not in very much of it. He's probably honestly got, I don't know what, I mean an hour of screen time maybe, or a little bit more.

Maybe a little more than that, but honestly, Troy, it was a pretty short shoot for Troy.

Yeah, he got his check and went home pretty quickly. But he still has the largest effect on this game not only because Joel's death kicks everything off but these flashbacks really recontextualize the events of the last game, one, and then two, just how him and Ellie tried to move forward through their relationship.

The biggest fallout after the first game is, well, does Ellie know that he's lying to him?

The answer to that question is, to a degree, yes, she knew he was lying because it was something between them that no matter how much they tried to move past over the years, it just kept deteriorating and it always came back to that.

That was the through line of every single flashback.

The first one at the museum was largely a happy sequence, but it ends on that kind of sour note with the fireflies kind of popping back up.

The next one kind of has them talking a little bit more back and forth and she brings up the whole situation directly to him at the very end of it when they're in the hotel.

And then the one after that, she just flat out has to go back to Salt Lake for herself

To see what actually happened there. Oh, man that that that one killed me that threw me for a loop. I wasn't expecting that one

Yeah, that was when they did the Marvel style trailer where I was like

When's that scene gonna show up with Joel and her looking at each other or whatever and then over there crying?

That's not yeah, and I was like wait a minute. That's not the Joel that showed in the pre-release footages or this

He was older in those they

Yeah, they did a great job with the marketing and then he just outright and tells her the truth which I thought was

good and she breaks down and I don't know man that the final one is obviously the biggest one where they finally kind of come to grips and try to she decides she wants to forgive him for it not yes like that's obviously the big one but the one before that is the dance which they show back at e3 2018 which is the basically the end of the game which is pretty crazy.

But the way that they do it is I think rather smart just narratively is you think those are the last words that she says to Joel.

Basically just tells him, "Get lost, I don't need your help."

And then it cuts and just like, "Ugh, those are the last things you said to him?"

Like that's terrible.

That, I get, you know, part of why you're mad."

And then later, was it after the fight?

I know you get the flash in the fight,

but after the fight, you see there was one more moment

later that night where she was trying to work on

forgiving Joel for his lie and to mend their relationship.

And that really hits home

because they didn't show that earlier.

They saved it.

And I think that was really smart.

That's cool.

Yeah, I think the flashbacks were really cut in tactfully throughout this game.

I've been going back and forth trying to decide how I feel like they placed all of them.

I'm waiting for the YouTube video that will inevitably come out that is like The Last of Us Part II in chronological order.

Chronological order, yeah.

And they will just cut it all together.

You know, this is the exact order of the events in the game.

Well, because part of the thing is like, for the opening part of the game, I think it's

It's a little bit jarring trying to figure out why Ellie is so gung-ho trying to get revenge for Joel.

Especially halfway through the game when you find out that they had this huge falling out.

He actually decided to tell her the truth and is like "yeah this is what happened" and

she's like "okay I'll live in the same city as you but I'm not having a relationship with you anymore we're done".

And so seeing that about halfway through the game and then jumping back into the modern

times where she's just trying to do anything in her power to kill Abby and take down all of Abby's friends or everybody who was complicit in killing Joel.

Like it's a little bizarre at first.

It's a long payoff.

I think them putting that scene where they kind of have closure on their relationship and she says she wants to forgive him, I think putting it at the end was a smart call overall, but it does leave things kind of lingering throughout most of the game.

Why does she want to get revenge for Joel so badly if they didn't have a good relationship up until the point where he died?

And so that was a little bit of a head scratcher for me while I played personally, but I also, I don't know, it wasn't anything I ever dwelled on too much I guess.

Because you know deep down she still cared about him deeply even if she never vocalized it.

That's kind of how I felt about it and also I think as the player you're also channeling your own emotions into that a bit.

They smartly kill him off in the beginning and give you this like "Oh.

Now I get it.

Like I want vengeance."

Because we as the players have a connection to him just as much as...

Or maybe not just...

I don't know.

We have a connection to him because we played as him in the last game.

Yeah, I think the flashbacks though, they really...

much needed to I think outside of the one in Salt Lake the tone of the theme was all for the most part very pleasant most of the time. Well they honestly were very similar to the Left Behind moments with Riley in the mall. They're very peaceful, people interacting, discussing, exploring a space. Instead of

a Halloween shop or a mall it was a museum with the dinosaurs and space stuff or an aquarium and just the space around there.

And those not only give you gameplay-wise a moment to breathe, just have some peace, and find some levity in the world, even though these happened years or months prior, it gives you further context for the relationship and how things fell apart and importantly for

be the relationship between her and Owen and Mel and their whole friend group and her journey

for revenge.

So yeah, let's speed things up just a little bit.

I want to talk about these side characters that they introduced here.

I don't want to spend too much time on this because I know we haven't even started talking about literally any other aspects of this game.

How did you feel about them as a whole?

I mean I can run down the full cast and kind of give my general impressions.

I like Dina.

I wish she would have felt a little bit more...

I wish they could have fleshed out a little bit more because I felt like too much throughout most of the game she was just simply Ellie's girlfriend rather than being her own character.

There were parts of her character that I really liked that they fleshed out like the whole sequence in the synagogue where she talks about her background and her faith and stuff like that I thought was good for her.

I didn't feel like she got enough of those moments throughout the game and once you got to the theater it just mainly became "Oh I'm pregnant I can't go anywhere" and she was just kind of confined to the theater the rest of the game which I thought sucked.

Jesse I also generally liked and thought was cool, which we could have gotten to know him a little bit more.

He's somebody that you quickly like though, which makes it that much worse when he dies.

So I like both of those characters a fair amount.

Yeah, Dina and Jesse are cool.

I think it's a good trio of friends between the three of them.

If you look in Ellie's room, there's pictures of them and art and things like that.

And it's also that interesting kind of love triangle and parenthood triangle technically, since Jesse is the father.

It feels real.

It feels like one of those real messy type of relationships that you kind of could see or imagine, especially in a messed up world.

Jesse's really cool, easy to like, easygoing.

He has values that you want friends to have, you know, my friends' problems or my problems.

He's very cool, laid back, especially in the beginning of the game and things like that.

When he leaves to go after Tommy, because that's what's best for Dina, you kind of see where his line is, like morally and what's going on, and I think that helps isolate Ellie both to the player, because you can tell she's obsessed with this goal, and grounds him as like a good, decent person.

and I think that makes his death hit much harder, much quicker.

I do agree that Dina didn't get kind of, I think, the upfront love that maybe she deserved to kind of be fleshed out.

Maybe more of those types of conversations that were in the synagogue happen more in that bulk beginning area of Seattle, which we'll talk about in a bit from a gameplay perspective.

But I think she didn't feel out of place, or just kind of- of thrown in. She wasn't like Nadine in the way. I feel like Nadine, especially in Uncharted 4, just kind of felt like she was there more of the time.

Yeah, especially because like Rafe was the main bad guy.

Dina did feel fleshed out to me in that way, and especially she carries a lot of weight

in the house when you're at the farm, and obviously at the end of the game when you go back to the farm. I think she, you know, that loss and that emotional tension worked there. It didn't feel just cashed in or wrote in.

Yeah, she, yeah, I just felt like she had more potential to be, that they could maybe explore her a bit more. I feel like the pregnancy revelation really cut off her line a bit earlier than it needed to, because she doesn't really play any sort of major role, even in the cut scenes that she's in, throughout the rest of the game once she kind of gets sick and dealing with her pregnancy pains really until the very end when she just kind of flies out of nowhere and tries to start attacking Abby.

That's one of the last times and then when she kind of helps clean up Ellie after she gets really messed up.

Those are really the only two instances you see her throughout the whole middle portion of the game, which I thought kind of sucked.

As far as Abby's friend group goes, because obviously there's a lot of people there with Mel and Owen and Manny, I thought there were some interesting dynamics at play in play with her friend group. My problem was that I just couldn't care about any of them.

It was a two-part thing where one, you are by proxy carrying the hate of them being part of the group that killed Joel in the opening of the game. Yes. So you're kind of by proxy not really wanting to... You're mad at that whole group of people who killed Joel at the start of the game and they are able to see they're able to get you to kind of feel empathy for Abby specifically because they sit with her for 10 hours but they don't sit with all the other characters for 10 hours and right I guess that was my my thing with them is that I never really felt any sort of compassion for any of them on a deep level Owen and Mel are the two they really hone in on yeah even then it was hard for me to really ever feel anything too much for them because you know how their stories end which is a tragic thing to a certain degree but also like when you see them pop up and you start playing

as Abby and you're running around with them pretty quickly it's like "oh I know what their fates are, like I know what's gonna happen to them" and to me that just made me really less prone to connect with them to a certain degree.

But if I really quick specifically just for you but like going into the game you knew Jesse died.

I did.

So you knew his fate as well.

Maybe not like- So then I guess it's just poor writing.

Or maybe, I don't know.

I think, especially with the Abbey group of people, they had a much tougher challenge to make you connect with those people because they're all new people and they do a really messed up thing that you don't enjoy.

Well, I feel like there was too many of them, too, honestly.

I think Manny- Like throwaway- One's like Nora.

like Nora's in like even through Abby's plotline she's in like two scenes she's in one scene where she's like hey this dude died and then hey I'll break you out of your handcuffs and help you get away and that's it right and I don't you know I don't think you're supposed to like really care for each and every one of them you're right that the main focus is Abby Owen and Mel and also Yara and Lev but that's from the Seraphite side of things so Manny Manny's very quick to like easy, he's just a cool laid back, really great soldier, kind of Abby's friend.

You just get that vibe.

It's just like cool.

Man, he's a cool guy.

I'm fine with him.

He's kind of like the Jesse of that half, so to speak.

He's easy to like.

Nora is there essentially as a friend
and a connection between just, you know,
she's the one that rats Abby out to Ellie through torture
and she's the one that helps Abby escape custody.

Like Nora is just there.

Mel adds again that kind of love triangle thing
just on the side because these two sets of friends
and stories mirror each other intentionally.

I think the Owen and Abby stuff was pretty good.

And I felt, I genuinely felt bad for Owen.

He definitely was a person that had big dreams
and was lighter.

He just, he always tried to have fun and joke around.

You know, he owned the aquarium and all this sort of stuff.

He always tried to bring Abby's seriousness down.

And you could tell that there was just this
connection and tension and heartache
between the two of them and they have this history.

And I think that also shows when they go to Santa Barbara,
and you see that Abby writes to Owen
in the note there if you collected it.

So I think the ones that they needed to focus on
or that they did focus on, I think work out narratively.
but they had to basically make you like Abby, and I think they did that.
That was their focus.

Do you want to talk about Yar and Lev?

I mean, they're two pretty big characters there, I think to a degree as well, that we can touch on.

Yeah, to touch on them, I was surprised how big their role was.

I really didn't think they were going to be so instrumental, especially Lev.

Just in general from that initial Paris Game Week trailer, I just thought they'd be side but they really carry a lot of weight on the Abby side of the plot.

And I liked both of them.

I think they offered a really cool lens into the Seraphites, and their story's just, you know, a kid disappointing family, friends, tradition, and just trying to fit in and try to be accepted.

And I just thought that was just, it was kind of a decent, wholesome side of story.

And you, again, I think you can quickly empathize with it, just on a trying to fit in sort of level.

And it also mirrors Joel and Ellie.

It's two people that don't like each other in the beginning.

And then in the end, they end up becoming great companions and friends and kind of look up to each other, not necessarily in a like mother-son relationship, but just, you know, two companions that are really tight and work together.

- Yeah.

The thing I really liked about "Eleven Yr"

Is that it didn't go down the path I was expecting with them

Where you quickly get with them and you realize that they're on the outs from their own group

I feel like there's a lot of cliches where it's like, oh, why are you on the outs from your religious cult?

It's like oh because we betrayed our cult and we don't we we don't believe the same things that everybody else believes or whatever

Like I felt like they were gonna go down that route. I've been at first no, like they're still very much

They buy into the religion. They have faith in that whole

The whole scar religion whatever the heck it is with following this a woman there. Why the Seraphites?

I guess there's no like name for it. But yeah, it it really was because

Lev shaved her head or his head. Yeah, so it's really just defying

It's just trying to be that Lev wants to be himself

with and still be part of this group and still

be part of this faith that this larger faith that this

group has and feels like he feels like he can't

It's not even that he feels like he can't it's that they straight up come after him for it

I really liked getting to know both of them. I feel like

There were I feel like the touchstones of I feel like some of the arcs within it were a little long. I

also felt kind of like it was a

And I get that it's like supposed to be a punch of the gut like when Yara dies

But the first thing I thought of when she died was like did I really just spend like three hours in game going across the

City to go to a hospital to amputate her arm only for her to die 12 hours later

Like that was how I felt and again, I know it's like a brutal world and you're not supposed to really have that mindset

This was a larger thing with Abby's whole path to the game or her whole arc

I thought was a little bit strange in this way or all of her levels I should say

Because to me every single one of her levels was like where do I need to go?

So, the hospital for instance, where's it at?

Oh, it's on the furthest corner of the screen

that I can't see right now, hardly.

Okay, I'm headed that way.

Same with the aquarium, same with the island.

Oh, where do we need to get on the island?

Oh, we're way back here in this,
our village is way in the middle of this island.

Okay, I guess we're headed there.

Like, her destinations were always like
way the heck out of the way,
and you needed to walk through them all to get there.

Whereas Ellie's I thought were a little bit different
in some instances where it's like, where do I need to go? Hillcrest, okay well we're just
gonna skip you right there and then it's gonna take off from there. I feel like some of that
would have been a little bit better if you could have jumped through some of that rather
than wading through all of these sections full of enemy encampment and then a little
bit of walking and another enemy encampment a little bit of walking. I felt like, I felt
what you're talking about specifically on the island. Yeah. It was just like, where's
your village? Or like where's your hut? Oh it's way over here. Yeah. I was like okay,

When they when they were like we need to get a bunch of the island

They're like when we need to get to a boat. I was like, where's the walking? Oh, it's both. So
every where's the where's the boat?

Oh, it's all the way over in Haven on the other far corner of the island

It's like what on what it's like always like it always felt like Abby's destinations were way the
heck away

And I know they spent some of the mouthlet like getting the horse in that last section or
whatever

But yeah, that was like that got really played out for me with Abby's levels in particular

Anyway, I know we were talking about Lev and Yara. Yeah, overall I like them. Yara getting
killed the way she did sucked though

'cause it made me feel like it.

But also she had one of the coolest
surprise just kills.

She did.

That was good.

Did Isaac die? He just got shot in the shoulder.

Was it this- I couldn't tell- it had happened so fast

I didn't know if it was just his shoulder or not, but

It's one of those open-ended things.

Let's get into problems I have if that's okay.

Because there are things I haven't brought up yet that I do have issues with, and I feel like this might be a good place to close out some story stuff.

I talked about it in one of the things there with Abby's sections feeling just way too long in the tooth, and I think the game does have some pacing problems in the second half because of that.

My one big issue with, especially the opening of the game, I'm talking about pacing and then I'm gonna say I felt like they needed to artificially lengthen the opening of the game.

I felt this way in the opening three hours and I still feel this way now.

I don't like the way Joel died was he just happened to come across Abby.

That is just too happenstance for me because you need to get the story kicked off and you need to get something going.

I think they could have done some way more interesting things because Abby was clearly there.

She knew where Joel was.

She knew he was in Jackson.

Well no.

She should have tried to get- No, they needed to confirm it.

I think it adds- She had a good idea.

That's why they were there.

Yeah, they thought he was there.

I think it adds a really great sense of dread.

Because the storm is building, it's just like, of course this is how it happens.

Because if they like, struggle- Well when I saw Joel show up I knew obviously she killed him, so when she's like, "Here, I'm here to help," whatever, I'm like, "Oh gosh, I know what's gonna happen now."

And maybe part of that is because you knew that specific interaction was going, like, she kills Joel.

To me, I'm sitting there going, every time it switched back to controlling Abby, I would say to my wife, who's also named Abby, "Abby, this is not good."

Like there was a dread building in me, because I knew what they, I had a feeling, like this is what they're gonna do and there was nothing I could do to stop it and I think it also now in hindsight portrays her obsession her drive to go you know Owen shows her where Jackson is and then she goes off on her own to try and just find someone from Jackson to interrogate them and figure it out and just so happens that fate puts her with Tommy and Joel.

Yeah and I just it's just very convenient I don't know like they came all the way down there from Seattle I think it would have been more interesting if they could have like somehow infiltrated the city and found out where he was and they could have done something gone in a different direction again I get that they had to get I to me it just came across the way that they wrote that it just seemed very much like we got to get the events of this game kick-started somehow what's the quickest way we can do that oh Joel just falls into her lap and it just felt like I don't wanna say anything in this games poor writing but that just felt like way too convenient and I wasn't a fan of that. Again if he's gonna die at the end of the day he's gonna die. I know that that whole moment really just serves to get Joel dead so we can get on with the other 25 hours of this game or

however much there is left. So that kind of rubbed me the wrong way at first and I thought it was kind of strange and I thought it was kind of strange that Joel was so quick to trust them and I know he really had no choice because there was a million clickers and cordyceps behind them.

And then I guess the other thing is just, I guess this can kind of tie back into Abby a little bit.

I didn't feel much of a connection to her character by the end of the game, and that's not to say she's just very stoic and hard to get too invested in.

Whereas Ellie, despite Ellie turning into this far gone version of herself throughout the course of the game, she still has certain character attributes that we can identify with.

She likes to play the guitar, she is into comic books, she is a gay.

We know these aspects of her personality to a certain degree.

I don't feel like we ever really got too much insight with Abby in that regard.

Huh.

I know a lot of it is because she's very...

I mean, unless you can think of things that I'm not thinking of off the top of my head here.

Actually, I in particular related more to Abby in one aspect, the coin collecting.

I used to collect state quarters.

So I got really excited when I'd find the state quarters.

I really connected with her on that level of like, yeah, that's...

I do that.

That would be totally something I would do in this type of setting.

But that felt like something she did because her dad did, I guess, if that makes any sense.

So it felt more like a character attribute.

It felt like she was doing it just because it meant something to her sentimentally, more than so like, where Ellie's like, "Whoa, I love superhero comic book cards," or whatever.

Okay, and maybe...

This is rad.

I don't know, and maybe I collected state quarters because my grandmother got me into it.

So maybe I just... that just lined up with me perfectly, and I just related to it.

I thought that was cool.

And I think Abby also, and again,

maybe this is just personal happenstance,

but the Abby in the game,

super into animals and like scientific knowledge and stuff,

she knows things about nature in general,

'cause she's like a survivalist,

her father clearly had a passion for animals.

You see that with the zebra stuff in particular,

she just has that thing.

And my Abby, science teacher, loves animals,

knows just things that I don't know.

So again, maybe just personal habits,

but I really found these characteristics

or personal traits of Abby that I connected with.

- They were there, I'll say that.

And I just felt like we saw them so infrequently.

And I guess in a game, it's about hate and revenge

and all these other threads that are going on.

you're not going to have many instances where Abby's like "Whoa, I love stakeholders, man!"

So I'm not looking for anything like that, I guess I should say. But she had less identifiable characteristics and traits than I really found throughout the game. She more seemed like a

"I fight for my friends" type in some regards where she was... I don't know. That's kind of the lens I think it puts on her campaign, especially once you know that all her friends die.

Anyway, um, I don't think Abby's a bad character. I think she served as a perfect foil to Ellie in a lot of ways, but

Yeah, I don't know if I'll say if C were to tell me the last of us part 3 is an entirely Abby game I'm not sure if I would be down for that

Whereas if you told me it still followed Ellie, I would be interested to see where that goes

Not really. I don't really care too much to see a happy again in the future

But I thought she I thought her purpose with in this game was good

What one more thing about Abby and just in particular maybe to kind of put a pin in her I?

Do think it's impressive that

naughty duck

took a

character that

If I had been told this before the game. This is the person that kills Joel I

Naturally would not her for ten hours

Yeah, not even that but just the person that kills Joel you're gonna end up

Liking at the end of the game a lot like good and this is me personally like you're the person that murders the character

That you played as and really like

you're also gonna really like by the end of the game like you're going to

align with her and

You know enjoy her presence and like her story. I

I think to do that in the span of particularly just for Abby in particular her gameplays

all in all 12 to 15 hours probably depending on how slow and methodical you explore the areas I think that is incredibly impressive.

Abby has the deck stacked against her really hard up front.

To some to some degree I think I think I will say that I think you come into it you come

into this game acknowledging that what Joel did at the end of the last game is pretty messed up. So when you quickly get contextualized that the person you killed was her dad, you

can feel for her pretty quickly. But again, that happens halfway through the game. So up front, yes, at the opening hours, you don't feel that way.

Right. And again, if you had just told me that ahead of time, not even that you'd be playing as or any of that stuff, but you just, you told me, this person does this and you're gonna feel this way, I'm not, you know, that wouldn't have happened.

I think that's something that really good TV shows can do, you know, make you empathize with a villain over the course of seasons, you know, they've done it in Game of Thrones, or The Walking Dead, big stuff in general, like you can really care about a character that you didn't care for in the beginning.

And they managed to do it over the span of 12 to 15 hours of gameplay.

And I think that was really cool.

Let's move on from the story.

I was waiting for that one.

And we, I mean there's so much more we could unpack with this.

There really is.

And you and I will probably keep talking about this game on the side for, I don't know, days, weeks, years to come.

But let's start talking about the gameplay, because I know this is where we're going to differ a bit.

I'm worried about this because we specifically haven't really been talking about the gameplay together.

Well Max, here's my biggest issue with this game.

So in the first Last of Us game, if you were carrying a bottle but you ran across a brick,

You can swap the bottle out for a brick.

Amen. Amen.

In this game, you can't do that.

I'm curious, I didn't really test it, but does that imply that bottles now have the same impact or like characteristics as a brick?

Cause I didn't try to like beat a clicker over the head with a bottle.

I'm not sure.

I'll tell you what though.

I didn't try to do that either.

The whole game if I there was a brick there and I had a bottle I threw the bottle and I picked up a brick

I

Got like a hat. I got like a quarter of the way into the game. I'm like wait a minute

I could do this in the last game. Why are you not letting me swap the bricks? I'm a brick guy

Let me carry a brick. I don't want this bottle throw it on the ground

I felt like that meme with the stupid guy who finds the scroll and then chucks it if you know I'm talking about

That's how I felt every time I had a bottle

That's number one game play sin. Thanks a lot naughty dog

Overall, I guess in a general sense

Game play is really solid. I don't think it's bad by any means I

Think it is I can lump this in here. They do the thing in this game where

Everything's obviously bigger than the last game which in a lot of ways

I think is good more room to play around in the combat situations more areas to kind of

Hide yourself in and get the drop on enemies way more verticality to which I liked for the most part that stuff's all cool

But bigger isn't always better as banjo-toui showed us back in the year

What's 2000 or whatever?

And so I think to a certain degree some of these engagements are just a little bit too gaudy. Whereas I preferred the

more tight-knit

focused

engagements of the previous game

I also feel like they didn't incorporate enough of the things that we were talking about before that we were hoping they would add

like more instances of oh I can turn the the cordyceps or the clickers on the

Soldiers and there wasn't like what like two situations like that throughout the entire game that I can think of

Other than that, I think the gameplay obviously in a general sense is still very much the same

They added a few things here and there again the verticality of the levels is it's levels are more vertically designed

which I think is cool. And then you can go prone and sneak through some areas and there's some new enemy types and things like

that. But I didn't feel like it was like wholly reinventing the wheel, which I'm not asking it to do, I guess.

I know that's like some weak criticism, I feel like, on my part. Like, "Oh, it's not something totally different."

Well, it's like, yeah, I know it's a Last of Us game at the end of the day, but I don't know.

It wasn't anything that impressed me overly.

And considering this game is much longer than its predecessor,

I was getting a little bit worn down by the end of it more so than the last game in regards to the size I

found and

This probably is because it was just like a first time playing through

Obviously didn't know these scenarios and setups and situations

But I found I always felt like there were more enemies

Than I expected to be in a space

and not

necessarily like the space was so much bigger than I thought but just

The spaces were very dense and maze like there were a lot of places to slip into and out of and hide under and through

And that applied to the enemies too and my I didn't use a listen mode. So I didn't have some sort of like

You know otherworldly I actually did use it you did

Yeah, I'd which is another criticism

I had the game was too easy.

I would prefer to just go full auto in a lot of these situations because I thought it was easier, which means I just need to bump up the difficulty.

I wasn't using listen mode.

I felt just these situations I thought I was handling really well, being super sneaky, popping off here and here and here, and then someone would just kind of notice something or my silencer would break or whatever the case may be, and then I had more enemies and And that led to a lot of think on your feet, quick reactionary scenarios for me.

And I think that's where a lot of the thrill kind of lies.

And I enjoyed that.

There it kind of you brought up Banjo-Tooie.

I kept thinking of Hotline Miami 2.

Not just because Hotline is in the game, but Hotline Miami 2 dealt with much bigger spaces, enemies out of sight that you couldn't see.

a sense of like, "I don't know where these people are coming from."

And in The Last of Us it wasn't just like an infinite spawning like, "Oh, these enemies are coming in."

It was just a, "Wow, there's a lot more going on here than I'm aware of."

And that, I thought, led to some interesting scenarios.

As far as the actual kind of gameplay itself, instead of reinventing the wheel, which no one I don't think was really quite asking for.

It's more of a refinement.

It is just refining those mechanics and making them more realistic.

And I found that there was a significant fluidity in the design of how you flow through melee, to shooting, to diving, all that stuff.

And there's also weight behind everything.

One of the things that I really thoroughly enjoyed was, like if I got shot, there wasn't an immediate recover and aim and shoot.

If you got shot and knocked back on your back you'd be lying down, aiming on your back and prone then you could get up and roll.

There was a fluidity but weight to all of the movement in the game that I really ended up enjoying quite a bit.

And using those situations and reactions to be reactionary instead of "Well I'm just going to get back up, crouch, go over here, hide behind cover, and pop out and shoot.

I was always on the move.

I never was staying in one spot just kind of picking everyone off.

Did you play on normal?

I did.

I assume.

Okay, so that's what I played on as well.

Yeah, and my whole thing with the difficulty, I had just, I mean literally, so if you listen to episode one of chapter select here in this first season, as you may have heard us talk about, like we recorded that probably 10 days ago, so I had just finished playing the other original game two weeks ago and that was a survivor run.

So coming into this felt like I had turned on god mode in a lot of respects.

I felt the same way, especially about item pickups, like pills and things.

I had three health kits on me throughout the whole game.

Like I never ran out.

So I just felt like when I talk about how I was getting a little bit burnt out with the combat in the later stages of the game, I mean there were just quite literally some sections where I was like screw it, pull out my hunting rifle, I'm going to start popping people in the head and just get through this area really quickly because I'm

running across enough ammo, enough materials, enough... I don't ever feel like I'm actually dying in these situations unless I just do something really stupid like run directly at somebody when I shouldn't be. I mean part of it is just because like I said I just come off of playing a survivor one where it's like you're trying to really really be careful with every single shot you take and in this it was just I was way more loosey-goosey with it and so obviously what's the fix for that well I should have turned it on a higher difficulty but I was also trying to just see through it the story through to its conclusion so that's on me and I'm not faulting Naughty Dog for that anyway maybe a part of it so I played it as if I was on survivor mode I again I wanted to just kind of like feel the game out and just kind of see what it was normally I definitely tried to play stealthy I should say but once I blew my cover I didn't make any attempt to go back and stealth a lot of times.

Really? Oh, I did. I was always, if my cover was blown I'd try to handle it and then go back into stealth and use that to my advantage. Early on when you get to the TV station, which is also where you get the first, you get the stealth or like the covert skill tree, I had so many pills up to that point that I just automatically maxed out that category. I think I did too.

And I immediately, I was like, "Ugh, is that really what this is gonna be like?"

Like, I'm just gonna be able to max out a skill tree?

Like, I'm not gonna have to make an actual choice here?"

But I found after that, when combat became more frequent,

because at that point in the game, I think that's when combat kinda became a more regular thing.

It was a bit more sporadic before then,

and you would just kinda come out of the open area of Seattle from that point.

So that kinda makes some sense.

I found that I was more strapped for ammo and stuff than I definitely was most of the

time.

I wasn't really hurting for health kits like you.

That never really was like a too tough of a situation.

But ammo in particular, and maybe I'm a terrible shot, but I just, I did feel kind of the weight of that and I thought things balanced out after that.

I tried to also force myself to use the stun bomb and the trip mine and teach myself to use those things instead of just throwing molotovs and using ammo.

I tried to expand and use the new mechanics and stuff too and approach situations.

So I do love that you could craft bow ammo.

That was really really nice.

Very much appreciated.

There are a couple other things I think we could touch on gameplay wise.

I think the large open downtown area, downtown Seattle area is cool.

I don't have much else to say other than that.

I like kind of checking off every house and exploring everything there to the fullest of my ability.

I do have something to say, cause I didn't, I didn't know that was the only open area.

I thought there was going to be more.

So I kind of, I did explore some of the spaces and did a couple of extra things.

And then I remember distinctly, there was this one part down by the water.

There was kind of this...

With the convoy or whatever?

Yeah, there was like a cliff I couldn't get to.

And I was like, "Huh."

Yeah.

I saw that too.

Well maybe I'll get an item later, like a rope or something, and I'll just come back

and be able to do this later.

Maybe it's kind of, you know, the Metroidvania style thing where I just don't have the item to get to the space.

So I kind of left and just did the next objective and moved the story forward.

And then about halfway through Abby's portion I thought, "When is this game going to open back up again?"

I was like, "When?"

Because I remember in some of the pre-release footage that like there was a shot of Ellie by herself riding through this

Open area of Seattle that I hadn't seen before there was like this overpass that you drop down on a rope

I was like when is that stuff gonna happen?

lo and behold it happened back in the beginning of the game and I didn't know that ahead of time or a I

Didn't figure that out

And so I'm excited on the second playthrough to go through and explore everything because it's actually one of the trophies

But I do wish

Not that there were more open areas necessarily, but that I had known or

Could infer that this was the only time this was gonna happen

It was very much the lost legacy in that regard like once you got past that one area. It's like cool

Hope you enjoyed that we're on rails for the rest of the game for the most part

And I felt like that was more obvious in lost legacy. It was like get these three things

Yes, I go forward because there was like a distinct side quest in that game

It was like Dave you if you leave the area, that's it for you like they kind of made it very clear

And obviously that's easier to just kind of say in Uncharted, given the type of game it is and just kind of the vibe.

But I do, I wish, I just wish I had known I would have spent more time in Seattle, like that portion.

I think the one other thing I have to say about the size of this game is not only that sometimes I felt like it made combat encounters a bit too, a bit larger than they needed to be,

but I preferred the smaller, more confined sequences of the first game. The other place that I really preferred the first game in that area comes with scavenging. At the end of the day, this is a survival video game. Again, I talked about how I had so many materials on me throughout the entire time that I was playing this game and that's because I spent a hell of a lot of time poring over every single area in this video game. Like when I got to the end and I saw how many collectibles I was missing, I was kind of shocked to a certain degree. I honestly expected that I would have way more because it felt like I thoroughly explored every aspect in this game. That said, man, I think the larger scope in a survival game of this kind where you're trying to really find every scrap and every item and every bullet that you can, and then everything's blown up so much more in every environment makes that pursuit a little... it just makes it more tiresome in the long run.

I mean, again, this game is 25 to 30 hours or so.

So having... for me to pore over every area as much as I did when every single... not every single one, but for the most part, every combat environment that you come across in this game is bigger than anything we saw in the last game.

So for me to then clear out all the enemies on all those areas and then run a loop of trying to find everything that I may have missed in that area and then move on to the next area and inevitably do the same thing. And in these towns too it was like, "Okay, well there's a building over there and there's a building right here. Which building do I need to explore and which one is going to take me on the main path of the story and which one isn't because I'm going to go out of my way to search the other ones first." And a lot of times I found too, and the reason I bring this up is because a lot of times I would find that I'd go off the beaten path or I'd spend extra time in these areas trying to make sure that I didn't miss anything. I mean, one, yes I am looking for collectibles, But I am trying to make sure that I have as much on me as I can because this stuff is

sparse in this game.

A lot of times I'd go off the beaten path and I wouldn't really find anything.

Again that's not like I wasted 20 minutes doing something like that every time.

I'm wondering how much those little times added up to where I like thoroughly explored things in these environments not to really find anything.

I'm like oh well crap I guess I'm just set with the number of honey rifle rounds that I have right now.

I didn't find any here.

I'm wondering how much that stacked up throughout the course of the game with me just painstakingly

searching through every single environment because honestly I feel like that is 50% of what I did in this game was just agonized over every square inch of the environment in the game.

I did the same thing.

I would open every drawer, every cabinet, like that's just how I played this game.

But that really didn't bother me?

I hear what you're saying, and I'm not...

- It just got older as time went on, I guess.

Whereas the last game it was a little bit more tolerable because everything was a little bit more compact.

This game very much wore out its welcome more quickly.

Is I guess what I would be saying.

- Yeah, I'm not, yeah, I'm not arguing that at all.

I just, I don't know, it never bothered me.

Yep, this is what I do.

And I enjoy doing that, I guess.

- You're just a scavenger, you like opening the drawers

and you like...

- I do.

- You like doing all that stuff.

Just a couple more gameplay specific things, and I think we can touch on these pretty quick.

I was impressed with the set pieces in this game.

Obviously not to the scale of truck chasing downtown in Madagascar, but I was surprised at the actual set pieces that this game had.

Riding the horse through the burning town, shooting people, that was really cool and fun. The truck chase with Jesse, that, I mean that was awesome, super awesome, and that is an Uncharted style moment. I was really happy that they found a way to incorporate that kind of stuff that they're really known for into the world of The Last of Us in a way that made sense. Super cool, super fun. Also, the most boss fights I think any Naughty Dog game has had in quite some time. What did they have? Obviously the two different

- No one's between Abby and Ellie.

- Which by themselves, very cool, especially where you play as Abby fighting Ellie.

Really great moment, had a lot of fun with that.

There was also the monster from Inside, which super spooky part of the game.

- You know what that thing is called?

- No, I haven't figured it out.

Yeah, I didn't know what it's called.

- It is called The Rat King.

- Very nice.

It is that super scary moment, really fun design, especially the one clicker that crawls out of it.

Super cool.

- Yes.

- And then the big scythe Sarah fight that you fight while in the burning town.

Also cool fight.

I thought they, specifically the final fight with Abby and the Scar fight did feel like the sword fight in the end of Uncharted,

like that cinematic kind of weight quality to it.

But I thought the mechanics, unlike the sword fight, which are introduced literally in that moment, the mechanics were established beforehand and very simple, just dodge and hit.

I thought they worked really well.

They weren't bloated, it wasn't something new.

It gave you just enough mechanics so you could focus on what you were doing, but also had that cinematic kind of feel to it.

And really cool.

And then the Ellie fight and the Rat King fight were with the full set of full-blown mechanics.

Here you go.

is against a human and one is against you know an infected it's kind of like the David fight in the first game just you're sneaking around trying to hit and fight I thought they were done well done the Ellie fight between where you play as Abby got I got annoyed did you really there were some there are some annoying parts for that one and then finally I picked up a bottle I was like we can I just chuck this at Ellie's face and I did oh did it take you a while to figure

that out oh I did the first time she dodged it I was like this she dodged it every single time. - Now you gotta be sneaky about it.

- She killed me, she killed me and I respawned and I tried it again and then pow.

Yeah, I liked most of those sequences as well.

There were some, yeah, there were definitely some moments, the truck one, the horse one, I was like, oh, this is, we're gonna full on chart here, this is cool.

I definitely liked those as well.

Yeah, overall, I think, yeah, I kinda alluded to it.

The gameplay wore out, it's welcome a little bit more

for me this time, and I think that's just 'cause

the games longer by comparison so but I don't think it is inherently bad I get tired of any game these days when I play it for 20 to 30 hours so this is not necessarily just the last of us we'll see how you feel that goes to Sushi we'll see how I feel with if I try to dive back into persona here pretty soon and I'm like oh man I'm 50 hours in this game now I'm not sure if I want to keep playing this so it's like that with that's what happened to me for four

years so I feel like it's just like that with most games so I for me to get a

little bit burnt on last of us near the end is pretty par for the course

honestly let's talk about the aspect actually we can run over the music real quick so I don't think there's a whole lot to touch on here it's good it's good

Gustavo's music is still really good there are some new tracks in this that I

think are really well done I think the theme that plays I think it's Abby's

theme that plays most of the time is really well done and haunting.

I assume Mac Quail is the guy who probably did.

Gustavo is the guitarsman so I'm going to assume Mac is the guy who was putting in those

just foreboding, like pounding noises you hear throughout the entire freaking game.

Yes, he does a lot of the combat music.

That is very stressful.

stuff put a knot in my stomach throughout most of the game even though it was just very simple background sounds to a degree.

I'm gonna assume you haven't actually listened to the soundtrack on its own.

You just beat the game yesterday.

It's on Spotify, Apple Music, whatever you listen to.

I've been listening to it throughout the day and it's...yeah.

It's good stuff.

I intentionally didn't look at it or listen to it until I beat the game because I wanted to experience everything in the moment,

but I highly, highly recommend it.

It is, I love it when you hear the themes

from the first game in these new tracks,

and it really pulls out the emotion

and really hits at the right time.

They just A+ work on both, for both Gustavo and Mac.

- Yeah, it's something I'm planning to spend more time with.

Yeah, all Gustavo's tracks in this game.

And to touch on the music,

everything with the guitar is awesome.

Like, I know I've jokingly been like,

"Oh, Pearl Jam in this game!"

Them getting the rights to Future Days for this game was actually awesome, and I love how they bring that up and it's just kind of like this reprise throughout the entire game that is a callback between Ellie and Joel, and every time she sits down on her

guitar and tries to play it, like it's... she first plays it there with... when Joel first plays it at the start of the game and then she plays it in the music store, and she...

Dina's like "What's that?" and she doesn't really say anything, and then she starts playing some aha music which is a strangely an emotional part of the game and then ice cubes in the game I don't know every all the involvement of all the different tracks and all the different all the difference of license and non-licensed music and then the fact that you can twirl around on the guitar and people are starting to figure out how to actually play songs and that's really just a cool thing for Naughty Dog to flush out and throw in this game for no reason in particular other than it's just kind of a cool thing to tool around with and to meme on if you're Dunkey. Yeah all that stuff I really dug. I wish that they could have had, I wish they could have had more licensed stuff for real bands rather than walking in rooms and seeing like these fake bands everywhere. I feel like if you saw more Pearl Jam stuff thrown in throughout the whole game it would have been, not Pearl Jam alone but other bands like that I think would have been kind of cool. Final thing we have on our list here and the thing that I think is far and away the best part of this game hands down without a question even if you hate the story and you're trying to give this game a 0 out of 10 on Metacritic you will see people say well the graphics and animations are really good which I cannot say enough I don't know about you but it is it's unreal what they have been able to do with this game at the same time I saw issues like there's a fair amount of texture pop it and stuff like that throughout the course of the game where I'm almost like, "Ah, I see how that fast SSD will be able to help in the future with the PlayStation 5.

Looking forward to revisiting this game on the PS5 as a backward compatible title." It equally shows off what a great studio can do at the end of a generation.

It also shows off the limitations of the hardware after seven years.

Yes.

It is incredible that they can squeeze this much out of it, but it also makes me very, very excited for the future of, you know, with the PS5 and the Xbox Series X.

Very much how I felt when the last game came out. It was like, "Oh my gosh, this game looks so good. Wow, what a great final game for the PS3." It's the same way I feel with this one. And we got Ghost of Tsushima left, I can't wait to see what they do with that too. But yeah, like, I can't... I don't know how much else there is to say other than just holy smokes, this game is pretty and every aspect of it looks good. I seriously believe that the forest sequence, the one from the Paris Games a Week trailer, is like one of the most well-lit things I've ever seen in a video game. Which is strange because there's like no light in that sequence other than the torch, but the way that the light illuminates off that torch and just gives a large enough glow to everything in the proximity to around it and then all the, just everything else is pitch black. It's so, it's so

Imagine what they're gonna do with ray tracing

Again, it's just it's equally like wow. This is incredible and oh my gosh. What are they gonna do on the next thing?

Well, we thought like we thought God of War was like staggering two years ago

I guess puts that to shame and that was only two years ago

Same with the Red Dead like red did a really pretty game as well

And this is just like I really like I'm hard-pressed to think of anything else that looks as good honestly Gears 5

I think is the other big one I would pay and

And another, it's an example, another example of a first party studio really honing in on that hardware.

Yeah, yeah I think Gears 5's, it's kind of the antithesis to The Last of Us 2 in a lot of ways, because The Last of Us 2 is playing with a much dimmer color palette.

There's a lot of, there's a lot of colors in Gears 5 surprisingly in certain areas of

that game and it really pops crazy well.

This game, yeah, it's just...

It's funny because I think the one thing I can say...

Well, there is one other thing.

Is that Naughty Dog gets a lot of backlash for...

Or not backlash necessarily, but people are just like, "Oh, I don't know about how often you hear this."

But I hear people, like at our websites, commenters, or just the people who read our site that I associate with, say like, "Oh, I'm tired of these realistic..."

Like great, the hardware is getting more powerful only for them to more realistically design an actual looking human in the future.

And like I get that complaint, but I also think that Naughty Dog's art style and art direction in this game is just very consistent throughout and it is just a constant.

And they really, the visuals are very much in service of the direction they decided to go with in a, the direction they decided to go with with the art.

And so it's less so that the games are just visually prettier and it's more just that the direction that Naughty Dog went as a whole visually is just really fascinating in this game to me.

I don't know if any of that makes sense.

>> I mean, these are the types of games that Naughty Dog has been making for, you know, since 2007 and technically that was a release.

So, you know, they've been working on this type of games for over 15 years, just realistic human visuals.

>> But the art style between something like Uncharted 4 and between this, even though they both feature like realistic character designs and things like that in a realistic world.

The palette of both games and the art pieces and stuff like that throughout are like completely different.

Yeah, and it's it's the more it's

It fits with the themes of those games. I mean look at Uncharted 4, it took a lot from The Last of Us with

Libertalia and dilapidated buildings and overgrowth and just beauty coming through, you know nature reclaiming places. In this game

they do that a lot. There's beautiful skies and scenes and places,

Seattle it's always raining. There's green overgrowth. It's just a very

Dense and rich place, and I think they do

Quite a bit there, and it just the game consistently looks great everything feels super lived in which I think is like them

One of the highest compliments I can give it is like every single area you come across in this game feels like a legitimate

Jackson feels like an actual city. I could go live in right now and all these

These old of the houses that you're running through that ps3 is plugged into the entertainment center

Also, why can't I shoot a ps3 Sony? Did you try to shoot a ps3? I didn't try to shoot

It won't let you it's the same thing

Like if you hover your gun over another character in the game

It won't let you shoot them and won't let you shoot a ps3. I want to shoot a Sony console Sony

Let me do it pretty funny

Yeah, you can't shoot the dual shocks you can't shoot the Vita you can't shoot the ps3

three. They don't want their, they don't want their, their, their, the stuff they

own getting damaged apparently. Last thing, and then we'll close up, is you

have wrote down the legacy, which we're only five days out from the release of

this game, so we don't know what its legacy will be. To me, I, what I meant by

that, I guess, was I can't look at The Last of Us Part 1 the same. Like, they, they

They are two halves of the same whole now.

And I-

It earned the part two in its title.

Absolutely.

Yeah, and I just- it'll always be a pair of games to me in the way of whenever a few years from now when I get the itch to replay The Last of Us, that will include replaying The Last of Us Part II.

Like it is- it is a whole experience.

It's not game one and game two, like you said.

They earned the part two in the name, and that's impressive.

Yeah, it's really

Yeah, they feel like two complete pieces of one whole and obviously the immediate comparison that I think even Druckmann made when they

Revealed the title for the game was like Godfather and Godfather part 2 because they use the same naming convention

And both of those movies do very much feel like they are part of one larger story

Which is maybe a cautionary tale for part 3

everybody tries to act like the Godfather Part 3 does not exist.

Ellie will just turn to the camera and go, "Well, I thought I was out and they'd pull me back in!"

Yes, exactly. I'm sure that is well on Neil and the team's mind over at Naughty Dog.

Yeah, I think that is the most impressive thing to me is that I have long been...

I think you to a certain degree, I don't know, I know you wanted them to make a sequel,

But I know you were also kind of you trusted them more than I did

I very much thought the first game should have stood on its own in perpetuity

they totally proved that the

making this game was a good call I feel like they

carried out what they wanted to do with it made some bold decisions along the way and told a

Story about with a lot of different themes going on that we could keep dissecting for the next five hours if we wanted to

because there's just so much to unpack but I

Am I know you talked about legacy in terms of how both games line up?

But I am curious to see how this game is received over the years because obviously right now sitting in where we're at

It's very divisive. I've not seen anything like this since

What the last Jedi probably and I'm hoping that this game's legacy is not the legacy of the last Jedi

We're even invoking its name

Two years how many years have been that since I'm gonna be came out three years four years?

Well, that's a different issue with just the toxicity of the internet.

Yeah, I mean I know it's a whole different conversation.

I mean, The Last Jedi is a great film.

It just is.

Uh oh, you just pissed off some of our prospective listeners down the road.

Yeah, I'm just hoping that, I guess my point is with the legacy of this game is I'm hoping that you can mention it down the road and it just doesn't immediately devolve into just a firestorm of comments.

Because again, The Last Jedi is very much that to this day I feel like.

I can't see anybody having public discourse about that game where it just becomes a trash heap.

And I don't want this game to be that because I think there is so much to unpack in this game and so many interesting threads and so many interesting decisions that Naughty Dog made along the way.

And it's not a game without fault, but it's a game that I don't feel like...

One, I don't feel like many other studios have resources to make because they don't have the money at their disposal to do something like this.

So for Naughty Dog to then go in and direct, to have those resources and not make a quote unquote safe game like they could have is, I don't know, I at the very least can respect that and I appreciate what they did with this one.

So yeah.

Do you have any other last nuggets of wisdom you would like to throw in here, Naughty Dog

fan number one?

about nuggets of wisdom, but it, yeah, the game, the game's real special. Whether you think it's a 10/10 masterpiece or not, it's undeniably special in the way that it was presented, the way that it's executed, or how you feel about it in the end. And I think that's gonna be part of its legacy and just the impact of the game as a whole.

Last question, do you, what do you, what do you personally, just so we have this on the record what do you actually want Naughty Dog to do next? I want to have this on record for multiple years from now. I mean I've already told you I want them to make a new IP I think that's where their heart lies. I mean their next game will likely be this whatever The Last of Us multiplayer thing turned into so you know I'm not waiting for them to announce brand new IP but I think yeah let's see what you can do in a new world new setting new new characters, new story.

Let's cross over Uncharted and The Last of Us.

Let's see how that goes.

Make a spy game.

Make a spy game, that would be interesting.

Make the Henry Avery game, just do that.

Yeah, so that'll do it for this episode of Tractor Select.

Again, I feel like this will be far different compared to future episodes of this podcast that we will be doing.

This also brings about the close of Season Zero.

It's a quick two part series here to kick off the, to sort of kick off, I don't know, Zero's not really an actual number, it's more of a trial run that we're doing here in some respects for this, but yeah.

This is the end of Chapter Select Season Zero.

We hope you have enjoyed our discussions here of The Last of Us and The Last of Us Part 2.

Join us in the future, Max, should I even say what our next season is going to be for this?

Do we have that penciled in officially?

No, don't tell people yet.

It'll be okay.

As for myself and Max Roberts, if you want to keep in touch with us, you can follow me.

I am over on Twitter @Mormon12.

If I am still working at Dual Shockers, you can read my written work about video games over there at DualShockers.com if you want to keep up with me.

As for Max, you can follow him over at...

Is it just Max Roberts now?

I'm so used to saying Max the White.

It's maxroberts143 and you can find my writing over at maxfrequency.net.

Yeah, and this podcast is a product of that website, is it not?

I mean that's where it'll technically be hosted there I suppose.

You can also follow us on other platforms like iTunes and Spotify and wherever the heck else we end up posting this.

As you can see we are kind of recording this out of order.

But anyhow, thanks so much for listening to this episode.

We hope you enjoyed this.

Hope you enjoyed the last of us part 2 if you played the game along with us

And we hope you join us for whatever future seasons of the show we have in store so until next time for max and myself

We love you. Bye adios

videos.

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