

## Introduction

When it comes to poetry in the common eye, not many people can say they actively consume poetry. Yes there are people who do and enjoy doing so. But for the far majority of consumers, poetry comes after a long list of other forms of media they consume on a daily basis. While this is unfortunate, I am grateful for the fact that poets realize that they aren't physically bound to mediums typically associated with poetry. Many movie directors, video game creators, and TV show runners understand the importance of certain poetic qualities in regards to their medium. Which is why it's no surprise that poetry exists in far more corners of the entertainment sphere than one may typically think. It is because of this that I would like to make special notice of one such example of "poetry in motion." Created by game developer Rose Engine, Signalis fits the definition of a "poetic game," to the point where I consider Signalis to be a genuine article of poetry.

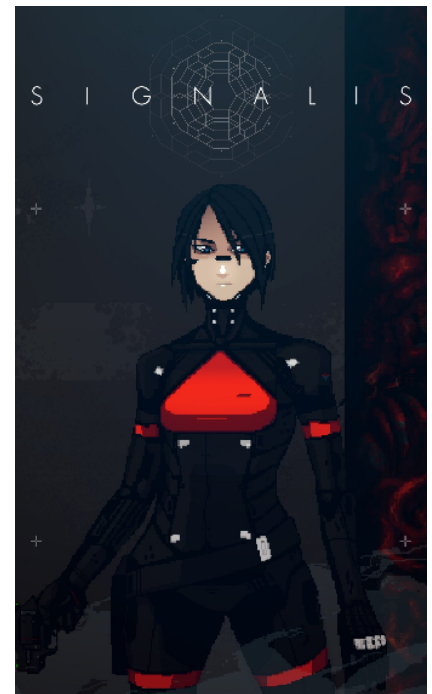
## Summary

To put simply, Signalis is a survival horror game in which you take up the role of a Replika on an outpost looking for your missing "friend". A Replika being a clone of another person who is created with an exo and endo skeleton. They are worker units designed to undergo and do certain tasks. For our protagonist, LSTR, that task is: repair and survival. This ends up becoming quite useful for our protagonist as the challenges ahead are ones where knowing how to survive, repair, and think critically are required for survival. As the player, or LSTR, continues throughout the game, you encounter zombie-like Replikas who attempt to halt your progression. As you do so, you learn more about what is going on in the outpost and what exactly it all means. Unfortunately, my ability to explain the plot ends there. There are still many complex areas of narrative that aren't fully explained that are left as mysteries to be determined by the audience. Beyond that, there is a multitude of spoiler territory that comes up later which I will explain now. So if you haven't played the game and wish to do so, please do now.

Towards the end of the game, the narrative becomes more amorphous. Not only do you learn that LSTR's lover is "alive" so to speak, but also that they have the power to rewrite reality. The zombies weren't zombies as much as they were a corruption of reality itself. Again, it's hard to really explain due to the more vague and unnatural approach to eldritch horror, so truly the only way to understand it is by playing it yourself.

## Gameplay

The gameplay of signalis at its core is a survival game. You run around solving puzzles and picking up loot. One thing this mechanic does well is that you never feel like you have too many items to the point where you are never scared of the monsters, but also that you never



really find yourself running out of items, always having an extra bullet in the magazine. This level of balance is something to be astonished at. Survival games often find themselves falling into one or the other extreme, so being able to sit right in the middle is impressive if nothing else.

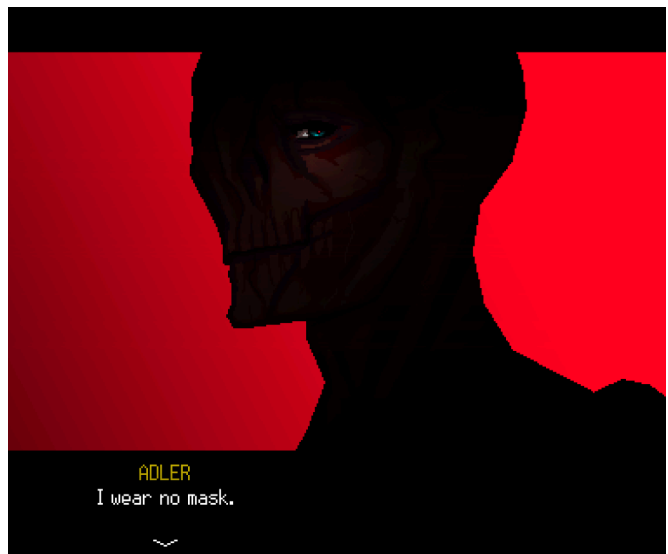
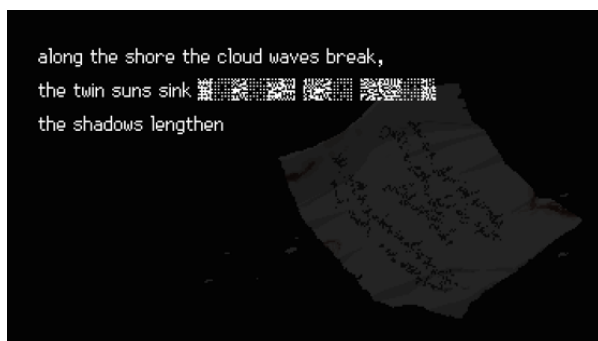
Beyond this, Signalis is a top down isometric shooter. This means you control LSTR more than you become LSTR. This is her story after all and you are just helping her find her way. Occasionally though, the game will break from this point of view to give you a first person mode. This is done during specific narrative moments, typically involving exploring unfamiliar terrain, or even memories.

## Queer Representation

Signalis is very much a sapphic title with every relationship shown, including the protagonists, being a lesbian relationship. This concept is never “shoved down the throats of the viewer,” so to speak. Their relationship identity is merely who the character is and becomes something incredibly sweet to watch in motion. Especially when you are given moments of LSTR and her lover in the past slow dancing to music and saying they miss each other. It's truly adorable. Beyond this, all sapphic relationships are shown with respect. There is no oversexualization of their identity or any others. They exist not to “be lesbian.” but to show love in a horrifying place. Due to this, it becomes hard not to root for LSTR to reunite with her partner, even if it isn't in the best of circumstances

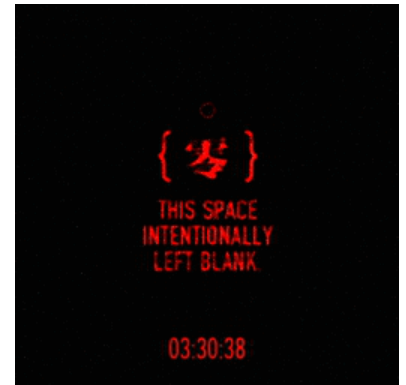
## The King In Yellow

Signalis doesn't merely use itself as reference, but also uses my favorite book of all time. Multiple times throughout the game you will find The King in Yellow as a physical tangible object. Evenmoreso than this, lines said by some of the characters are taken straight out of the book. My favorite one being “I wear no mask.” The game also countless times uses black out poetry, not only creating new meanings from what they are originally meant to be (progress logs for instance), but also as a way to hide information from the player to seep in a sense of mystery and truth buried just beyond your view.



## This Space Intentionally Left Blank

One of my all time favorite visual themes in Signalis are the cutscenes. Cutscenes in signalis tend to get even more poetic than the game itself, literally delivering to us poetry itself. This becomes evident in phrases like “perhaps this is hell” and “this space intentionally left blank,” both consistent still frame images that show themselves repeatedly. My favorite part about these is when they bleed into the dialogue itself. For instance “This space intentionally left blank” can be taken at face value. It's a blank spot. However with my first experience with it I read the line as if it was part of the poem. This gave itself meaning. For instance let's imagine the line “Perhaps this is hell” - “This space intentionally left blank”. This combination of sentences shows up more than once in Signalis, and what I love about it is when read together it sounds as though it is referring to *this space*, the setting of the game, the monsters, and the outpost. Perhaps it is hell - more than that. It is a spot left blank. Reading it in its base interpretation, it is a blank spot. A spot where no one is reading, no one is writing. An empty page gone from existence. A place where the horrors present in the game are left to run as they like. Absolutely beautiful.



## Ending

Signalis is a game I urge people to play, if nothing more than to support the creators behind it. The ending to the game itself was gut wrenching and I found myself actively sobbing towards the end. It even has a secret ending for those willing like I was. This game is beautiful beyond words and truly is art.