

= Kingdom of Loathing =

Kingdom of Loathing (abbreviated KoL) is a browser @-@ based multiplayer role @-@ playing game designed and operated by Asymmetric Publications , including creator Zack " Jick " Johnson and writer Josh " Mr Skullhead " Nite . The game was released in 2003 . Because content is added frequently , the game is considered unfinished and officially remains in open beta .

It uses hand @-@ drawn stick figure graphics and writing characterized by surreal humor , word play , parody and references to popular culture . In KoL , a player 's character fights monsters for experience , and acquiring meat (the game 's currency) , and / or items , through a turn @-@ based system . Players may also interact with each other through player versus player competition , participate in the in @-@ game economy by trading goods and services , organize their characters into clans , work together to complete clan dungeons , and speak to each other in many different chat channels .

The game is also particularly notable for managing to be financially successful purely from donations and the purchase of merchandise rather than from advertising or subscription fees , which are used by many online games . In 2008 , the game had between 100 @,@ 000 and 150 @,@ 000 regular players . These players form an active community which frequently organizes fan meet @-@ ups and runs an internet radio station . The game has been generally well received by critics . In 2012 , Mr. Card Game , a tabletop game based on Kingdom of Loathing , was launched on Kickstarter .

= = Gameplay and features = =

Gameplay involves fighting monsters , completing quests , gaining skills and stats , and accumulating items and meat .

In KoL 's turn @-@ based gameplay , a player 's character is supplied with a number of adventures each day , at a base of 40 , although this can be increased . The game day resets at a time called " rollover " . Characters are allotted forty adventures every rollover , though they can increase that number with various equipment and items . Additional adventures can be acquired by consuming food and booze . However , only a limited amount of each can be consumed each day , and drinking too much booze puts the character into a drunken stupor for the remainder of the day . During rollover , drunkenness and fullness levels are reset , and minor amounts of health points and magic points are restored . Although a character can accumulate a large number of adventures , the number is reduced to 200 at rollover .

Most actions in the game use up adventures , including crafting items and exploring the game world (adventuring) . When exploring , players experience combat encounters , in which they fight monsters , as well as non @-@ combat encounters . Combat is turn @-@ based , meaning that the player and the monster take turns attacking one another using weapons , skills and items . Players who successfully defeat a monster receive experience points , pieces of meat (the game 's currency) , and various items . Non @-@ combat encounters simply present the reader with a text description of an event , occasionally allowing the player to choose how to respond to that event .

After gaining enough experience points , players will gain levels , allowing them to access new areas and quests . Characters can combine items by using " meat paste " (a substance analogous to glue) , and can also cook food , mix cocktails and smith weapons and armor . Characters may also earn trophies or tattoos for various in @-@ game achievements . Puzzle @-@ solving is an important part of the game , with the solutions often involving a certain item combination or the completion of tasks in different zones .

= = = Player interaction = = =

While Kingdom of Loathing 's player versus environment content is largely single @-@ player , some features allow multiplayer interaction .

Player versus player (PvP) combat is voluntary , features a randomized selection of non @-@

interactive minigames , and is subdivided into seasons . The winner of the PvP battle can take fame or items from the loser .

The game features an integrated chat system which is available only after completing a basic test of English grammar and spelling . There are many chat channels , including a channel in which all chat must follow the syllabic conventions of English haiku . Most of the chat channels are moderated ; those who violate the chat rules are banned . Players can also send messages and gift packages to each other in @-@ game , and the official Kingdom of Loathing forums are another active venue for discussion among players .

Upon reaching level 3 , characters may join a clan , a band of cooperating characters . A clan has a clan hall which can be furnished with beneficial equipment as well as a clan stash for sharing useful items . Clan members can chat with each other in a private chat channel . In 2008 , a multiplayer dungeon was added which allows clan members to raid cooperatively in Hobopolis , the underground city of hobos . Eurogamer likened Hobopolis to World of Warcraft instances . Additional clan dungeons have since been added , including the Slimetube , Dreadsylvania , and the limited @-@ time Haunted Sorority House .

Players can buy a store in The Mall of Loathing and sell their character 's items to other players . Direct trading between two players is also possible , and in the trade chat channel users can auction items and advertise shops . This functionality has created a complex in @-@ game economy which author Ted Friedman , in his book *Electric dreams : computers in American culture* , described as " vibrant " . The Kingdom of Loathing economy was the subject of an academic study , *Economics in the Kingdom of Loathing : Analysis of Virtual Market Data* in 2011 .

== Character classes ==

Players choose from six classes when they create a character . Each class has various items that characters obtain by completing class @-@ specific quests . Characters also receive non @-@ tradable class @-@ dependent items as a reward for completing harder ascensions . The classes can be split into groups based on the primary character attribute associated with them .

Muscle classes : The two muscle classes are Seal Clubber and Turtle Tamer . Muscle classes depend on strength and fighting ability . A character 's Max HP is determined by his / her muscle , and Muscle classes gain an innate + 50 % boost to their Max HP.-

Mysticality classes : The mysticality classes are Pastamancer and Sauceror . Gameplay for mysticality classes is focused on spellcasting and the use of magic . A character 's Max MP is determined by his / her Mysticality , and Mysticality classes gain an innate + 50 % to their Max MP .

Moxie classes : The moxie classes , Disco Bandit and Accordion Thief , use charm and dexterity to achieve success .

== Familiars ==

Familiars are creatures that can accompany players in combat , performing (usually) helpful actions . Familiars are often instrumental in the completion of quests . Familiars possess many abilities ; for example , a Sabre @-@ Toothed Lime attacks monsters , a Leprechaun grants extra meat after combat , and a Hovering Sombrero increases stat gains from combat . Some familiars , such as the Ninja Pirate Zombie Robot , are very difficult to acquire .

== Ascension ==

Ascension is a feature that allows characters to start the game over and play through it again from the beginning , similar to a New Game Plus feature . This feature becomes available after the game 's final quest is completed . Players who ascend have their character 's experience levels reset to one , but they retain their currency and items . Ascending players can also choose to make their ascension more difficult by taking on various restrictions , such as not being able to eat or drink , in exchange for special rewards . In addition , the game features a leaderboard system which allows

players to see one another 's ascension speeds and compete for the fastest ascensions .

= = Plot and setting = =

The player takes on the role of an adventurer who is tasked with solving problems and killing monsters in a fantasy @-@ based kingdom . The game is humorous in nature , and most quests , battles and individual item descriptions include jokes , witticisms , or references to popular culture . Many quests parody the tropes found in other role @-@ playing games .

The premise is that the Naughty Sorceress has captured and " imprisoned " (imprisoned in a prism) the Kingdom 's ruler , King Ralph XI . The ultimate objective of the game is to defeat the Naughty Sorceress and free King Ralph . In King Ralph 's absence , most of the power in the Kingdom of Loathing is held by the Council of Loathing , which gives quests to characters as they increase in level , with the final quest given when the character has reached level 13 and finished the other quests . Players can also unlock quests from other sources , some of which are available only after ascending .

= = Development = =

Zack Johnson , the game 's creator , developed several games before Kingdom of Loathing but did not feel that they were good enough to release online . Deciding that he was taking the games he created too seriously , Johnson then set himself the challenge of creating one within a week and publishing the result online . The result was more of a joke than a game , and the initial content including classes and even the name of the game were stream of consciousness . The game was released in early 2003 , and Johnson soon invited his childhood friend Josh Nite to contribute content as a writer and designer . Within a year , 300 @,@ 000 player accounts had been created , far exceeding Johnson and Nite 's expectations ; Johnson has referred to the game 's success as " a never ending series of astonishments " . In 2008 , the game had between 100 @,@ 000 and 150 @,@ 000 regular players .

In the game 's early days , Johnson would work on the game during breaks while at work , but eighteen months or so after launch , the game was bringing in enough money for Johnson to quit his day job as a programmer and develop the game full @-@ time . He then began to pay Nite for his work and after approximately two years hired two more developers . There are currently eight full @-@ time employees working on Kingdom of Loathing , as well as three other employees who are working on a separate game . The game 's creative process is fluid and loosely structured . According to Johnson , " At this point , I provide the overall direction . I do about a quarter of the writing , a quarter of the coding , and almost all of the artwork . " The bulk of the writing is done by Nite , who also contributes design ideas , while two other developers , known in the game as Riff and HotStuff , work on writing , design , and coding .

According to Nite , the game 's writing style owes itself to a humorous email exchange between himself and Johnson that began when the two separated after high school . These emails " helped us develop the shared comedic voice that KoL 's written in " . The game 's developers cite text @-@ based games such as Zork and Legend of the Red Dragon as creative influences , and Nite has compared the game to the Choose Your Own Adventure series of children 's books .

The game has been in open beta since its initial release , and is continuously being worked on . New content is released weekly or monthly , and there is also unique holiday @-@ themed content every Christmas , known as Crimbo . Occasionally , the developers stage world events such as the Gray Plague , which was similar to the Corrupted Blood incident in World of Warcraft .

In November 2014 , Nite was laid off from Asymmetric Publications .

= = Business model = =

Kingdom of Loathing is advertising @-@ free and does not charge subscription fees .

Maintenance and development of the game is supported primarily through donations and players

who donate US \$ 10 to the game receive a powerful item known as a Mr. Accessory . Mr. Accessories can be equipped to give stat boosts or spent in the " Mr. Store " to buy powerful items (including special monthly items) . Mr. Accessories and Mr. Store items may be traded freely between players . According to an interview with Zack Johnson from 2010 , Johnson originally established the Mr. Accessory revenue model as " kind of an afterthought " , but it became lucrative enough to allow him to work on the game full @-@ time and eventually to hire several permanent employees .

= = Community = =

Kingdom of Loathing has been praised for its welcoming and active player community . One of the most unusual aspects of the community is the large number of female players : according to Johnson , approximately 40 % of players are female . Fans often gather at both official conventions , run by Asymmetric , and unofficial player @-@ organized meet @-@ ups , including the annual KoLumbus event . Players support the game by writing scripts to perform various in @-@ game functions , using Greasemonkey , Java , Perl , and Lua , and have also developed a player @-@ run wiki which offers puzzle solutions and walkthroughs . Longtime player and nerdcore rapper MC Frontalot is active in the community and included a Kingdom of Loathing @-@ themed song on his 2010 album Zero Day .

Brett Bixler , founder of the Educational Gaming Commons at Pennsylvania State University , has hypothesized that the Kingdom of Loathing community is successful because it accounts for Richard Bartle 's model of player personality types in massively multiplayer online roleplaying games , creating a balanced gameplay system that appeals to a wide variety of players . Researcher Martin Oliver addressed similar issues in a 2009 study of the Kingdom of Loathing player community , " Playing Roles in the MMORPG Kingdom of Loathing " .

A Web @-@ based SHOUTcast radio station , Radio KoL , is the " official unofficial " radio station of KoL . It is a 24 / 7 DJ @-@ hosted station , with volunteer DJs drawn from the KoL user base . Twice weekly , development team members host shows on Radio KoL in which they discuss the state of the game and answer questions from players .

= = Reception = =

Critical response for Kingdom of Loathing has been generally positive , with consistent praise for the game 's humor and surrealism . The gameplay and content have been praised as " well designed " and having a " huge amount of content " . Matt Gallant of Gizmodo said that the game is " actually very full @-@ featured " with " a lot of content " , and according to Worlds in Motion , " Kingdom of Loathing isn 't just a great game , but a really unique and interesting MMO . " Jay Is Games called it " a ' must play ' game for RPG fans who want something different " . Gamezebo criticized the interface as well , calling it " clunky " , and several reviewers expressed concern that the game might be confusing to new players .