

Hoc est Corpus

SALOME

character design with roleplay paths outline

'I will never let myself get humiliated again. Whatever it takes, there will be no more tears.'

Name: Salome Cléase

Gender: Female

Age: 26

Nationality: French

Occupation: Rock opera artist, an acknowledged musician around the world

Role: Protagonist

Character overview

Salome serves as a protagonist in 'Hoc est Corpus'. Charismatic and fearless, she enjoys the thrill of a celebrity's lifestyle. Keeping pace with an ever-changing Western world comes with a price, though. She is young, in her prime one could say, and yet, she has no meaningful relationships, no one to love. Salome doesn't seem to mind, however; life in Paris is fast-paced enough not to leave time for philosophical reflections.

Having arrived in Young Leningrad, a place not at all comparable to noisy French streets, she is, for the first time in a long while, faced with her own loneliness. Experiencing prelude to the end of the world, as well as finding a piece of herself in another human from the other side of the globe, leads Salome to question her beliefs and attitude towards life.

Her eccentric silhouette of an adrenaline-addicted, bold artist stands out from the once flourishing, now silently dying out Leningrad. It's as if she was too accelerated by a luxurious dream of late-stage capitalism to fathom an idea of humanity collapsing.

Roleplaying potential

As a playable character, Salome demonstrates core personality traits and her character isn't completely dependant on the player's choices. 'Hoc est Corpus' leaves room for roleplaying aspect, pointing to two major directions in which her personality can evolve.

- **Nihilist Salome**

Exposure to Young Leningrad's reality confirms Salome in her hedonistic tendencies at first, then makes her more of a nihilist. She abandons the concept of greater good or salvation and focuses on what's here and now. Salome doesn't care anymore about established rules and social norms. She accepts the worth of the freedom of choice towards living while facing loss.

- Existentialist Salome

Having discovered the mysteries of Young Leningrad, Salome decides to rebel against her own nonchalance. She finds meaning in working towards a better future and clings to her hope of salvation. Salome believes in the need of forming a strong community that will support each other in times of loss.

- Exception - Escapist Salome

There is a possibility of the player rejecting Salome's internal change. Instead, the protagonist avoids truth and shuts herself in her own worldview. After a few years, as the responsibility catches up to her, she is forced to face the consequences of escapism.

Backstory

Salome hails from Parisian inner-city slums, a neighborhood bustling with those seeking cheap pleasures or an escape from life. Her parents were both active in the illegal sexwork industry and they had definitely not planned a child. Salome grew up neglected and exposed to street violence - this is where her bravery and independence come from.

She formed a distorted idea of body image and never learned about boundaries. Despite being surrounded by sexual abuse, she was *never* a victim of it - unlike her female peers. Salome, even in her adulthood, will mistake offense for praise and exploitation for tenderness. This is crucial for the plotline and the protagonist's relationship with Magdalena.

Salome promised herself to break free from her dreadful childhood - and she did, by replacing the need of parental gentleness with mad ambition. After gaining recognition as a musician, a promising artist moved out from her district and cut off all contacts.

It turned out to be easy, getting used to the luxury and adrenaline of a celebrity's lifestyle. For the first time, Salome felt in control of her life and promised herself to never come back to her old self, desperate and lost.

In Young Leningrad, she was supposed to give a concert. After Salome's show, however, her flight home was canceled. Leningrad's government doesn't want to send her back to France, so it purposefully extends her stay here by messing with travel documentation.

Defining character traits

Listed character traits are square one in Salome's journey through 'Hoc est Corpus'. All of them are addressed at least once in the plotline. This is just an essence of protagonist's uniqueness.

- Nonchalance and bravery

Salome states to love living, the thrill and speed of her stardom, and yet, she acts as if she could toss her life away anytime.

Violence was an usual sight for her as a kid. To be respected on the streets, Salome had to be fearless, or at least act to be. This lesson, the one actual thing she actually learned from parents, made her incredibly brave but often unaware of the danger she puts herself in. You know what they say - a line between courage and recklessness is thin. At the beginning of the story, Salome does not value her health much: all of the excitement in her life comes from taking risks - at parties, night races, or concerts. Her behavior suggests she might as well die tomorrow day. It's almost as if Salome had suppressed suicidal intentions. Experience gained in Young Leningrad can change this nonchalant attitude.

- Charisma of a worldwide star

Rarely can you see a star that shines as bright, as Salome.

The charismatic and proud star is not just an act - it's a persona Salome merged with while gaining popularity. She had to learn her confidence and sharp tongue. With time, it stopped being just a stage image, it became her true self. Salome was aware of this process. Young Leningrad puts this charming persona to the test. Salome, with the player's help, can pass it, changing attitude toward life while maintaining these qualities.

- Hunger for admiration

Salome is a 26-year-old small girl, craving any sort of attention. Parents or strangers - it doesn't matter, as long as they make her feel visible.

Salome was not only denied parental love - she also felt significantly less attractive than other girls her age. This lack of attention left a hole in her heart, a never-ending hunger for being admired. Salome tries to satisfy this feeling with fame - but it isn't enough. It will never be enough. Mistaking lust for love, Salome is incapable of developing deeper connections with other people. She is alone, going in and out of brief romances. New acquaintances won't provide Salome with a healthy relationship, but they can help her face loneliness and learn vulnerability. After all, love can be platonic.

- Wisdom of the foreign streets

Salome had not forgotten where she came from - even though she tried to.

The protagonist knows how to handle a good fistfight. What's more important, however - is that she is clever enough to avoid it. Salome has learned a trick or two during her years on the streets. Violence is an universal language, but the Western underworld tends to be less direct in its ways than the soviet one. Salome was taught to play dirty. It seems that here, in Leningrad, common deceit tricks from France are a novelty. Convenient - unless the player believes in honor among thieves.

Dynamic with other key characters

- Magdalena

Pain and memories repressed by Salome - Magdalena embodies them all.

Magdalena and Salome are like mirror reflections of the same object from two different perspectives. They share twisted ideas about sexuality, both hurt by violence and injustice around them. Only one of two heroines managed to break free from a corrupting environment, though. Salome became a new person after running away from a painful past - unlike Magdalena, who was forced to accept scars on her heart.

During Magdalena's path in 'Hoc est Corpus', both women explore their concepts of femininity. With help of a new friend, Salome learns how to open up before other people - she tries to find worth in vulnerability. Magdalena on the other hand bids farewell to her body, for the first time cherishing its beauty for herself. As a parting gift, the dying ex-sexworker shows Salome how to deal with trauma.

If the player follows Bernard's path, Magdalena shows a hostile attitude at worst, passive-aggressive at best towards Salome. Stripped from the ability to decide on her own, the sick ex-sexworker becomes a constant reminder to the protagonist about the desperation of a suffering woman - after all, Salome experienced similar feelings in the past when she was stuck in her toxic family with no prospects for better future. What Magdalena is forced to go through, reminds protagonist's worst dream - a hopeless fight for each day, a spiral of desperation.

- Bernard

Bernard is a hopebringer, not a brute. When peaceful options run out, he is forced to rely on Salome.

The priest is everything Salome is not. He believes in fulfillment through work for the community. Bernard contrasts the protagonist's initial carelessness with his somehow compassionate utilitarianism. The most important conflict about their characters are their ideas about misery. Unlike Salome, the priest finds value in suffering. At the same time, he

tries to protect life at all costs, believing in the invincibility of human determination. Bernard's ideas seem foreign to Salome since her own philosophy rejects the meaning of any pain. Although the priest and protagonist are allies from the start, their beliefs contradict each other. It may make cooperation significantly harder, especially in the beginning.

Bernard is absent during Magdalena's path.

Following Bernard's path gives an option to change his mind about suffering. Originally, he wishes to make an example of Magdalena, some sort of martyr: except for helping her, Bernard tries to use her as a symbol of hope. The priest is so convinced about his beliefs, that the only way to successfully question them is letting the church burn.

For artists - Notes on appearance

- Salome enjoys drawing public attention with her unique wardrobe full of flashy clothes. She serves as a representation of 2081 Western European fashion; lots of synthetic fabrics, practical outfits incorporating bold shapes, and a total eclecticism of all previous trends, from the 20's of XX-century to 2081. Maybe a nice inspiration for her would be Mugler's signature style in ready-to-wear clothes.
- When it comes to her silhouette, it should convey her inviolability. She does not let anyone harm her or get close to her heart. Perhaps some sort of spikiness would be in order? It can't feel heavy, however. Salome is an artist, not a street brawler.
- Salome comes from a poor neighborhood of a gigantic metropolis in the middle of Europe. It's a part of her she desperately tries to get rid of - however, it had been carved into her soul too deep. Although the daughter of immigrants, this character feels a deep connection to Paris - way deeper than her relationship with her parents' cultures. Her ethnic identity is not a focus in the quest - her appearance is up to you.
- This character is non-conventionally attractive. Her charm comes from confidence and charisma, not looks.